



POPULAR CULTURE AND YOUTH: VALUE, ATTITUDE, AND BEHAVIOR FORMATION THROUGH MUSIC, FILM, AND DIGITAL CONTENT

Yulius Kurniawan, Rafadi Khan Khayru

Universitas Widya Kartika Surabaya, Universitas Airlangga Surabaya

correspondence: rafadi.khankhayru@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the influence of popular culture on adolescent behaviour through a qualitative literature review. It focuses on two main questions: how music, films and digital content shape adolescents' values, attitudes and behaviour, and how the process of internalising popular cultural values takes place, along with the factors that influence adolescents' vulnerability or resilience. The results indicate that music exerts influence through repetition and identification with idolised artists, whilst films enable adolescents to experience life situations imaginatively, with characters serving as models for internalisation. Digital content introduces a participatory dimension through social comparison and rapid feedback, which shapes standards of appearance, lifestyle, and success. The internalisation process encompasses exposure, selective attention, retention, reproduction, and full internalisation, influenced by value congruence and social reinforcement. Factors of vulnerability and resilience include identification with celebrities, family and peer relationships, media literacy, self-esteem, cognitive development, diversity of exposure, and socio-economic context, which interact in complex ways and determine the impact of popular culture.

Keywords: popular culture, youth, music, film, digital content, value internalization, media literacy.

Introduction

Popular culture has become a dominant force shaping the lives of young people around the world. In their daily lives, music fills commuting time, films become topics of discussion with friends, and digital content captures attention for countless hours. The presence of popular culture is not merely entertainment that fills leisure time, but has become an integral part of identity formation, worldview, and everyday behavior patterns. A teenager does not just listen to a song but also adopts the fashion style of their idol, uses language popularized in the lyrics, and forms friendships based on shared musical tastes. Likewise, films are not only watched but serve as references for how romantic relationships should unfold, how conflicts should be resolved, and what an ideal adult life looks like. In the experience of young people, the line between consuming popular culture and shaping the self becomes increasingly thin, as what they consume directly influences how they dress, speak, socialize, and even aspire (Deutsch & Theodorou, 2010). This process occurs naturally, often without awareness, making popular culture a socialization agent whose influence is no less significant than that of family and school.

The development of digital technology has accelerated and expanded the reach of popular culture's influence on young people (Mears, 2012). Whereas in previous eras access to music, films, and other cultural content was limited to what was available on the radio, television, or cassette stores, today an entire world of culture can be accessed at one's fingertips. Music streaming platforms provide millions of songs that can be listened to anytime, video-on-demand services offer thousands of films and series from various countries, and social media has become an unlimited channel for viral content that spreads within hours. The experience of young people today is an experience of cultural information overload, where they no longer need to wait for weekly music programs on television or go to the cinema to watch the latest films. Everything is available instantly, on demand, and often at no cost. This abundance brings complex consequences. On one hand, young people have unprecedented freedom to explore various music genres, cinema from different countries, and content from diverse perspectives. On the other hand, they are also exposed to unfiltered content flows, where the values conveyed do not always align with the norms upheld by family or society.

Music, as one form of popular culture, has a distinctive role in shaping the values and behavior of young people due to its ability to directly touch emotions and be easily remembered (Shuker, 2013). Lyrics that are repeated in the mind, melodies that stick in memory, and rhythms that move the body create a very personal and intense experience. When a teenager listens to songs about rebellion against authority, freedom of expression, or passionate love, these messages are not only cognitively received but also emotionally felt. Repeated listening experiences create an internalization process where the values in the lyrics gradually become part of the way of thinking and feeling. Different music genres convey different values: rock music is often associated with a spirit of rebellion and freedom, hip-hop with social critique and class awareness, pop music with romantic idealism and the pursuit of happiness. Young people who identify with a particular genre not only adopt these values but also become part of fan communities that reinforce and legitimize the identity being formed. In everyday experience, musical choices become statements about who one is, and affiliation with certain artists or genres becomes an important marker of peer groups.

Films have a different yet equally strong influence in shaping young people because of their narrative nature, which presents an alternative world that can be deeply experienced (Piechaczek-Ogierman, 2018). Through films, young people experience various life situations they might not encounter directly: complicated love stories, thrilling adventures, or struggles against injustice. Characters in films become role models, often more real and influential than figures in real life. The way a character dresses, speaks, and behaves is imitated, while the values they pursue become moral benchmarks. In the viewing experience, young people are not merely passive spectators but actively identify with certain characters, imagine what it feels like to be them, and build aspirations about the kind of life they want to live. The film industry also creates stars who become role models, admired not only for the roles they play but also for their personal lives displayed in the media. Young people learn what is considered successful, what is considered beautiful, and how human relationships should unfold from the narratives presented on screen, often without realizing that what is shown is a constructed reality that has been selected and edited.

The rapidly growing digital content through social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube brings a new dimension to the

influence of popular culture on young people (Vyomakesisri et al., 2020). Unlike music and films, which are finished products of the cultural industry, digital content is often created by fellow users, creating a form of participation and identification that is more direct. A teenager does not only consume content but can also become a content creator whose work may go viral and influence thousands of others. The experience of being a content creator provides a strong sense of agency but also places them under pressure to continuously present an appealing version of themselves that aligns with the platform's algorithms. Trends on social media move at a very high speed; what is popular this week may be forgotten next week. Young people living in this environment develop a heightened sensitivity to changing trends, the ability to produce content that fits algorithmic tastes, and awareness of the importance of building personal branding from an early age. In this process, values such as popularity, follower count, and the virality of content become very strong measures of success, often displacing traditional metrics such as academic achievement or moral goodness. The experience of being part of this digital content ecosystem creates intense psychological pressure, where a person's self-esteem becomes highly dependent on the responses received from a digital public they never truly know.

In an era where popular culture is abundant and access is unlimited, a fundamental question arises about how young people can develop the capacity to distinguish between constructive and harmful values (Supiarza et al., 2020). Popular culture presents a variety of messages that are often contradictory: some promote consumerism and a hedonistic lifestyle, while others critique injustice and encourage social awareness. Young people who do not yet have a mature value framework must navigate this sea of messages without a clear map. They absorb what is popular, what goes viral, what receives many likes, without always having the ability to evaluate whether these messages align with the values they actually want to uphold. This is where vulnerability lies: when digital platform algorithms systematically display the most provocative, sensational, and extreme content, young people can be exposed to messages that harm mental health, promote unrealistic beauty standards, or even spread hateful ideologies. The process of internalizing values through the consumption of popular culture occurs subtly and gradually, so that when negative impacts begin to appear, it is already difficult to trace their origin. Parents and educators often feel

overwhelmed by the rapid pace of changes in popular culture, while young people themselves may not realize that their values and behaviors are being shaped by forces beyond their control.

Another equally complex issue concerns how popular culture, which should be a space for expression and creativity, can instead become a tool of homogenization that limits the personal development of young people (Crane, 2016). When certain trends dominate, the pressure to conform becomes very strong. A teenager who does not follow the currently popular music, does not use viral language, or does not display a lifestyle aligned with trends will feel marginalized and lose social recognition. In such an environment, popular culture, which initially offers diverse choices, can actually create rigid conformity. Young people may express themselves through the consumption of popular culture, but the forms of expression allowed are those pre-determined by the industry and trends. Those with tastes or interests outside the mainstream must work harder to gain recognition, or may choose to hide their preferences to avoid being considered strange. Furthermore, when identity is closely tied to the consumption of popular culture, differences of opinion or criticism of the culture consumed can be felt as a personal attack, creating fanaticism that hinders critical discussion. In such conditions, the question of how young people can develop autonomy in evaluating and choosing the popular culture they consume becomes highly urgent, given that the ability to choose consciously and critically is the foundation for the development of a healthy and independent identity.

The study of the influence of popular culture on young people becomes highly relevant amid the radical transformation of the media landscape over the past two decades. Today's youth are the first generation to grow up with unlimited access to digital content, whose cultural consumption patterns are very different from previous generations. They no longer rely on traditional curators such as radio stations or television that filter content based on certain criteria; algorithms have become the primary curators determining what they see and hear. This fundamental change has not yet been fully understood in terms of its impact on the development of young people's values, attitudes, and behaviors. Without adequate understanding, we risk allowing non-transparent forces to shape the next generation without clear mechanisms of accountability. A systematic study of this topic is important to map the

cultural landscape faced by young people, identify recurring patterns of influence, and formulate a framework to understand how values are transmitted through the medium of popular culture. This understanding will serve as a foundation for developing appropriate interventions at the policy, educational, and family levels to ensure that popular culture can be a source of learning and self-development rather than a force that unconsciously shapes young people in harmful directions.

The importance of this review is also driven by growing concerns about the mental health of young people in the digital era. Various indicators show increasing levels of anxiety, depression, and body image issues among adolescents and young adults, often associated with social media consumption and exposure to unrealistic beauty standards in popular culture. However, the causal relationship between the two still requires closer examination. Is popular culture indeed a primary cause of mental health problems, or does it merely reflect pressures already present in society? Do all forms of popular culture have the same impact, or are certain types of content more risky? Are there protective factors that can make young people more resilient to the negative influence of popular culture? These questions require a comprehensive literature review to separate strong findings from excessive speculation. Amid narratives that are often alarmist about the dangers of digital media, a balanced and evidence-based study is crucial to avoid unproductive moral panic while not ignoring real risks that do exist. A better understanding of the relationship between popular culture and young people's mental health will be highly valuable for developing guidelines for healthy media consumption, both at the individual and public policy levels.

This study aims to systematically analyze the influence of popular culture, particularly music, film, and digital content, on the formation of values, attitudes, and behaviors of young people, as well as to understand the process of internalizing these values and the factors influencing the vulnerability or resilience of young people in facing the influence of popular culture. The theoretical contribution of this study is to formulate a conceptual framework that maps the mechanisms of value transmission through the medium of popular culture, including the roles of identification, repetition, and social context in the internalization process, as well as to identify protective factors such as media literacy, social support, and pre-existing values that can moderate the influence of popular culture.

Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide guidance for educators, parents, policymakers, and mental health practitioners in developing strategies to maximize the positive potential of popular culture as a means of learning and self-development for young people, while minimizing the negative risks that may arise from unfiltered exposure to potentially harmful content.

Method

This study employs a library research design with a qualitative approach aimed at exploring and synthesizing various theoretical perspectives as well as empirical findings regarding the influence of popular culture on the behavior of young people. The selection of this method is based on the characteristics of the topic, which requires an in-depth investigation of concepts developed in cultural studies, youth sociology, and media studies. As explained by Creswell (2009), qualitative research in the form of library research allows the researcher to understand social phenomena through interpretation of existing texts without the need to collect primary data. In this study, the primary data sources are academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and research reports discussing popular culture, digital media, and youth development. The data collection process is conducted through systematic searches in academic databases using a combination of relevant keywords. Each identified source is then evaluated for credibility through an assessment of the publisher's reputation, the methodology employed, and the consistency of the arguments with findings from other reputable sources. This approach enables the researcher to build a comprehensive understanding of how popular culture functions as a socialization agent for young people.

Data analysis in this study uses the thematic analysis approach developed by Boyatzis (1998), which allows the researcher to identify recurring patterns in the literature and organize them into meaningful themes. The analysis process begins with open coding of all collected literature materials, followed by grouping codes with similar meanings into more abstract categories, and concludes with the formulation of main themes that answer the research questions. This approach allows the researcher not only to summarize what has been written by other authors but also to perform a critical synthesis that generates new understanding of

the dynamics of popular culture's influence on young people. To ensure the validity of the findings, this study applies source triangulation by comparing findings from literature with diverse disciplinary backgrounds, theoretical traditions, and geographic contexts. As emphasized by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), triangulation in qualitative research serves to enhance the credibility of findings by considering various potentially differing perspectives. In addition, the researcher examines literature with differing or opposing perspectives to ensure that the conclusions drawn are not biased due to overly narrow source selection. The entire analysis process is systematically documented so that each step can be traced by other researchers who wish to verify or replicate the study.

Result and Discussion

Formation of Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors of Young People through Music, Film, and Digital Content

Music has a unique power in shaping the values of young people due to its ability to directly touch emotions and operate through natural repetition mechanisms (Thompson et al., 2019). Lyrics that are heard repeatedly do not merely enter consciousness but also permeate the subconscious, forming thought and feeling patterns that are later reflected in attitudes and behaviors. A teenager who listens to songs with lyrics that romanticize relationships full of conflict and drama may begin to believe that a healthy relationship is one that is tumultuous. Conversely, songs with messages about self-esteem and healthy boundaries can strengthen a teenager's ability to reject disrespectful treatment in relationships. This phenomenon demonstrates how simple everyday experiences can shape a person's character and way of thinking in the long term (Saputra & Darmawan, 2021). The experience of listening to music never occurs in a vacuum; it is always accompanied by identification with the singer or music group that is idolized (Hargreaves et al., 2018). When an admired artist conveys a particular message, that message carries much greater weight because it has passed through a filter of admiration and trust. This identification process makes the values conveyed through music feel not like external teachings, but as something coming from within, aligned with who they are. In daily life, music also serves as a marker of group identity; certain music genres become a language that brings together those who share the same values and perspectives, strengthening internal solidarity while

distinguishing them from other groups. This emphasizes that social interaction remains an important context in shaping individual behavior (Eddine & Darmawan, 2021).

Films exert a different but equally strong influence through narrative mechanisms that allow young people to imaginatively experience various life situations (Valkenburg et al., 2016). Within a two-hour duration, a teenager can witness a character's life journey from the lowest point to success, learn about the consequences of choices made, and feel the emotions experienced by the character without having to experience them directly. This demonstrates that learning through the experiences of others can also effectively shape personal insights and values (Arifin et al., 2021). Characters in films become models that are not only observed but also identified with; their way of speaking, handling conflicts, and the values they fight for become gradually internalized benchmarks. When a teenager sees a character they admire striving for justice despite significant risks, they learn that courage and integrity are values worth pursuing. When they see physically attractive characters treated specially, they learn that appearance is an important source of value. The film industry also creates stars whose personal lives become public spectacles; young people learn about what is considered successful, what is considered beautiful, and how human relationships should be from the narratives presented, often without realizing that what is shown is a curated construction (Lyu et al., 2021). In this way, entertainment is not only a source of pleasure but also a means of social and moral learning (Kurniawan et al., 2021).

Digital content, especially through social media platforms, brings a new dimension to the formation of values and behaviors of young people due to its participatory and personal nature (González, 2020; Kross et al., 2013). Unlike music and films, which are finished products, digital content is often created by fellow users who may be of the same age or slightly older, creating a high sense of closeness and relevance. A teenager can observe how peers present themselves, what they consider important, and how they respond to various situations. This illustrates how modern technology provides both opportunities and challenges in shaping social values (Arifin & Darmawan, 2021). This experience creates intense social comparison, in which young people continuously measure themselves against the standards presented by others. These standards are often unrealistic because the

content shown is the best-curated version; however, to those observing, the standards feel real and attainable. This comparison process shapes behavior in various aspects: what constitutes an ideal physical appearance, what constitutes a successful social life, what is worthy of pride and what should be hidden. Digital content also creates a very rapid feedback cycle; posts that receive many positive responses reinforce the displayed behavior, while those receiving negative responses are discarded. In such an environment, young people learn to continuously adapt to what is popular, developing heightened sensitivity to trends and ever-changing public expectations (Meier & Schäfer, 2018). This phenomenon reinforces the idea that the digital environment is part of everyday life and influences individual decisions and attitudes (Mendonca et al., 2021).

The process of value formation through popular culture does not occur linearly but through a complex interaction between the content consumed, the social context, and individual characteristics (Coyne et al., 2013). Two people consuming the same content may have very different experiences depending on how they interpret the content, with whom they discuss it, and the values they already possess. A teenager who has a warm relationship with supportive parents and friends may be more critical of questionable messages in popular culture, whereas those with less social support may be more vulnerable to less positive influences. This highlights the importance of balancing individual freedom and social responsibility in the development of young people (Saputra & Darmawan, 2021). Peer groups play a very important role in this process, as collective discussions and interpretations of popular culture become spaces where values are negotiated and reinforced. The same song may be interpreted as a positive form of rebellion by one group and as irresponsible behavior by another, depending on how the group frames and discusses it. Thus, the influence of popular culture on young people cannot be understood as a simple cause-and-effect relationship but as a process mediated by interrelated factors. The role of social environment and group context remains key in understanding the influence of popular culture (Darmawan et al., 2021).

The digital platforms where young people access music, films, and digital content are not neutral; the algorithms that govern these platforms actively shape what they consume and how they experience it (Bucher, 2018; Vyomakesisri et al., 2020). Algorithms are designed to maximize user

engagement, which is often achieved by presenting the most provocative, emotional, and extreme content. As a result, young people are more frequently exposed to sensational content than balanced content, to messages that reinforce polarization rather than foster dialogue. This indicates that critical thinking and digital ethics are increasingly important to learn from an early age (Arifin et al., 2021; Mardikaningsih et al., 2018). Experiences on digital platforms are often marked by imbalanced exposure to certain types of content, which gradually shapes a narrow perspective. Algorithms also create echo chambers where users are primarily exposed to content that aligns with existing preferences, reducing exposure to different perspectives. In such an environment, the values formed tend to become increasingly rigid and harder to change. Young people growing up with algorithms may develop the perception that the world is more homogeneous and more polarized than it actually is because they rarely encounter content that reflects nuance and complexity. Awareness of how algorithms work becomes increasingly important to develop the ability to read and critically evaluate content.

The process of value formation through popular culture is also strongly influenced by the intensity and duration of exposure (Moussaïd et al., 2013). Today's youth spend a very large amount of time in front of screens, far exceeding the time spent in face-to-face interactions with family or friends. This serves as a reminder that the use of time and attention also plays a crucial role in character and behavior development (Eddine & Darmawan, 2021). Intense and continuous exposure creates conditions in which messages from popular culture have a much greater opportunity to be internalized compared to messages from other sources. When someone spends eight hours a day on social media, the influence received from these platforms will naturally be more dominant than the influence from family, which may only interact for a few hours. This condition creates a significant imbalance in the socialization agents shaping young people. Schools and families, which were once the primary sources of values, now have to compete with forces present in the palm of the hand at all times. It is unsurprising that many parents and educators feel overwhelmed by the dominant influence of popular culture. In this situation, young people's ability to consciously choose what they consume becomes increasingly

important; unfortunately, this awareness does not come automatically but must be developed through intensive education and guidance.

The influence of popular culture on young people's behavior is also evident in how they adopt language styles, clothing, and social interaction patterns presented in the content they consume (González, 2020). Slang originating from songs or viral content quickly becomes part of daily vocabulary, creating a sense of togetherness among those who use it. Clothing styles displayed by idols or influencers become models to imitate, often at considerable financial cost. Social interaction patterns shown in films or series, such as how to start a conversation, express feelings, or resolve conflicts, become models followed in real life. This condition underscores that popular culture can serve as a daily social guide shaping norms and expectations in interactions (Mendonca et al., 2021). This imitation process is not always consciously realized; young people often feel that the language style, clothing, or interaction methods they use are their own choices, without realizing that these choices are strongly influenced by what they consume. In daily experience, the ability to follow the latest trends becomes a marker that someone is part of a relevant generation, while failure to follow trends can generate feelings of being left out or "uncool." The pressure to conform can become a significant source of anxiety, especially for those who lack the resources to keep up with trends that often require considerable financial expenditure.

The formation of values, attitudes, and behaviors of young people through popular culture is a highly complex process, in which influence is never deterministic but always mediated by various factors. Young people are not passive recipients who simply absorb what is presented; they actively select, interpret, and sometimes reject the messages they receive. The ability to resist unwanted influences depends heavily on factors such as self-esteem, media literacy, social support, and pre-existing values (Piechaczek-Ogierman, 2018). With proper understanding, they can utilize popular culture as a means of learning while maintaining freedom of thought and action (Darmawan et al., 2021). Those with healthy self-esteem tend to be more critical of messages that are degrading or unrealistic. Those with strong media literacy can distinguish between representation and reality, between what is displayed for public consumption and what actually occurs. Those with strong social support from family and friends have alternative sources

for validation and meaning, not relying entirely on popular culture. Thus, although popular culture has a very powerful role in shaping young people, that power is not absolute. There is room for agency, choice, and resistance, which can be strengthened through education, guidance, and the creation of environments that support healthy development.

The Internalization Process of Popular Culture Values and Factors of Vulnerability and Resilience in Young People

The process of internalizing popular culture values into the lives of young people does not occur instantly but through stages that unfold gradually and often unconsciously (Bandura, 2001). The first stage is exposure, where young people are continuously exposed to music, film, and digital media content across various platforms. This exposure is not always intentional; social media algorithms actively present content based on consumption history, so young people often consume similar content repeatedly without actively searching for it (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The second stage is selective attention, in which only a portion of the content encountered receives full attention. Factors such as relevance to personal life, aesthetic appeal, or emotional resonance determine which content is noticed (Bryant & Zillmann, 2002). The third stage is retention, where messages from attended content are stored in memory, either consciously or unconsciously. Repeatedly heard song lyrics, memorable film scenes, or frequently appearing viral posts are stored more strongly (Green & Brock, 2000). The fourth stage is reproduction, in which stored messages begin to appear in the form of attitudes, statements, or behaviors. A teenager may start using language from frequently heard songs or begin imitating the clothing style of an idol (Valkenburg, Peter, & Walther, 2016). The fifth stage is full internalization, where values that originally came from external sources become part of the personal belief system, experienced as originating from the self rather than from outside influences. This process occurs over a long period and is influenced by the extent to which the messages are consistent with other pre-existing values and the degree to which they are reinforced by the social environment (Persson, 2019).

One of the most significant factors influencing young people's vulnerability to popular culture is the level of identification with figures or personalities who are the source of messages (Cohen, 2013). When a teenager

greatly admires a musician, actor, or influencer, the messages conveyed by that figure carry much greater weight compared to messages from sources that are not admired. This identification process blurs the boundary between the self and the idol; what the idol likes becomes liked, what the idol says becomes truth, and what the idol does becomes an example to emulate. In conditions of strong identification, young people become highly vulnerable to potentially harmful influences, as they lose the ability to critically evaluate the messages received. They may adopt behaviors that do not align with their own values, but because they are performed by an admired idol, these behaviors feel correct and acceptable. Another factor reinforcing vulnerability is the very high need for social acceptance during adolescence. Young people are highly sensitive to peer judgment, and popular culture often serves as a shared language that determines who is included and who is not. To avoid the risk of exclusion, they may adopt popular values and behaviors even if they personally feel uncomfortable or disagree.

The family environment plays a very important role in determining whether a young person will be vulnerable or resilient to the influence of popular culture (Vyomakesisri et al., 2020). Families that maintain open communication, where parents are involved in the child's life without being overly controlling, create spaces for young people to discuss what they consume and gain alternative perspectives. When a teenager feels safe to ask parents about confusing messages in songs or content they encounter, they have the opportunity to develop a more critical understanding. Conversely, families with closed communication or who forbid content without explanation can increase vulnerability, as young people will seek information and validation from other sources, including popular culture that may not always be healthy. Families that enforce rules without dialogue may also encourage young people to consume content secretly, without guidance that allows them to critically process the messages received. Thus, the quality of family relationships becomes a highly significant protective factor; it is not the mere presence of media use rules that matters, but how these rules are communicated and the extent to which parents are present as trustworthy discussion partners.

Media literacy is a key factor distinguishing young people who are vulnerable from those who are resilient to the influence of popular culture (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). Media literacy is not merely the technical

ability to use digital devices but the ability to understand how media works, critically evaluate the messages conveyed, and be aware of how these messages can influence feelings and behavior. Young people with strong media literacy can distinguish between representation and reality; they understand that what is displayed on social media is a curated version, not real life. They can identify when content attempts to manipulate emotions for specific purposes, such as advertisements using fear of missing out to drive purchases. They also possess awareness of how algorithms function, so they do not simply accept what is presented as truth. Media literacy development does not occur automatically; it must be intentionally taught, both at school and at home. Young people who have never received media literacy education are far more vulnerable to the influence of popular culture, as they lack a framework to critically evaluate what they consume. They may uncritically accept unrealistic beauty standards or assume that the lives portrayed on social media are standards they must achieve.

Support from peers also becomes an important factor influencing the vulnerability and resilience of young people (Wisniewski et al., 2015). Friendship groups that hold healthy values and practice critical media consumption can serve as highly effective sources of protection. In such groups, discussions about consumed content become spaces to remind one another and reinforce healthier interpretations. When a group member begins to be influenced by questionable messages, other members can provide alternative perspectives or simply act as listeners who help process the experience. Conversely, homogeneous and uncritical friendship groups can amplify the negative influence of popular culture. In such groups, following the latest trends becomes mandatory, while those who do not follow may be considered strange or left behind. Criticism of the popular culture consumed collectively may be seen as a betrayal of group identity. Therefore, the quality of peer groups becomes a crucial factor in determining whether popular culture will reinforce positive values or become a harmful pressure toward conformity. Young people with supportive and collectively critical friends tend to be more resilient against harmful influences compared to those whose peer groups are less supportive or even encourage unhealthy consumption.

Internal factors such as self-esteem and a healthy self-concept also play a very important role in determining vulnerability to the influence of

popular culture. Young people with high self-esteem tend to be more critical of messages that are degrading or unrealistic (Orenstein, 2013). They are not easily influenced by impossible beauty standards because they already feel sufficiently good about themselves. They do not require external validation from likes or followers because they already possess intrinsic self-worth. Conversely, young people with low self-esteem are highly vulnerable to the influence of popular culture because they continuously seek external validation. They are more easily influenced by messages that suggest happiness can be achieved by purchasing certain products, that physical appearance is the primary source of self-worth, or that social media popularity is the most important measure of success. A healthy self-concept also helps young people distinguish between the identity they build themselves and the identity offered by popular culture. They have a grounded sense of who they are, which is not easily shaken by trends that come and go. Therefore, efforts to strengthen the self-esteem and self-concept of young people are a very important strategy to increase their resilience against potentially harmful influences of popular culture.

Cognitive development during adolescence also affects how young people process and internalize messages from popular culture (Chaplin, 2018). At this stage of development, abstract thinking abilities begin to emerge, allowing adolescents to understand metaphors, irony, and non-literal messages. However, this ability can also be a double-edged sword. On one hand, adolescents with strong abstract thinking skills can be more critical of the messages conveyed, able to see beyond the surface and question underlying assumptions. On the other hand, this ability also makes them more vulnerable to complex and manipulative messages that use symbols and metaphors to convey questionable values. Adolescents in the early stages of developing abstract thinking may not yet be fully able to distinguish between representation and reality, making them more easily influenced by what they see. Another factor related to cognitive development is the still-developing capacity for self-control. Adolescents tend to be more impulsive and less able to delay gratification compared to adults, making them more susceptible to messages promising instant rewards. They also find it harder to resist the temptation to follow popular trends, even though rationally they know following such trends may not be

wise. Understanding this stage of development is important for designing interventions that match the cognitive capacities of young people.

Exposure to diverse popular culture content, rather than content from a single source, can be a significant protective factor (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006). Young people who have access to and regularly consume various types of music, films, and content from multiple sources tend to develop richer and more critical understanding (Buckingham, 2003). They can compare representations in one piece of content with those in another, recognize that there are different ways to view an issue, and understand that there is no single absolute truth (Jenkins, Ito, & Boyd, 2016). Conversely, young people exposed only to one type of content or perspective are more vulnerable to uncritical influence (Strasburger, Jordan, & Donnerstein, 2010). In such an environment, the values conveyed by popular culture become the sole reference, with no alternative perspectives for comparison (Heath, 2012). This is further exacerbated by digital platform algorithms, which tend to present content similar to what has already been consumed, further narrowing the diversity of exposure (Pariser, 2011). Therefore, efforts to broaden young people's exposure to a variety of content, including content that may not immediately appeal to them, are an important strategy to develop resistance against narrow and uncritical influences (Kellner & Share, 2007). Parents and educators can play a role in introducing alternatives that young people might not discover on their own through digital searches (Hobbs, 2010).

The broader social context, including economic conditions and structural inequalities, also influences the vulnerability of young people to the influence of popular culture (Piechaczek-Ogierman, 2018). Young people from less privileged economic backgrounds are often more susceptible to consumerist messages conveyed by popular culture. When they are constantly exposed to luxurious lifestyles displayed on social media, they may feel that happiness and social recognition can only be achieved by possessing the same goods, even if this is financially impossible. The resulting feelings of inadequacy and envy can become a significant source of psychological stress. Conversely, young people from more privileged backgrounds may have better access to alternative resources for identity building, such as arts, sports, or quality education, and therefore are not entirely dependent on popular culture for meaning and validation.

Inequality in access to media literacy is also an important factor; young people from families with higher education levels tend to receive better media literacy education, both formally and informally, while those from less privileged backgrounds may not have the same access. Thus, vulnerability to the influence of popular culture cannot be separated from the broader social structure; it is one dimension of the larger inequalities faced by young people.

The role of educational institutions in building resilience in young people against the influence of popular culture is crucial yet often suboptimal. Schools have the potential to become spaces where young people learn to critically read various forms of media, understand how messages are constructed, and develop the ability to evaluate potentially harmful influences. However, in practice, education often still focuses on technical aspects of technology use, while critical and ethical aspects receive less attention. Schools can also provide spaces where young people obtain alternative sources of meaning and validation besides popular culture (Buckingham, 2003). Through extracurricular activities, meaningful learning, and positive relationships with teachers, young people can develop self-esteem that does not depend on social media popularity or the ability to follow trends. However, when schools instead become spaces that emphasize unhealthy competition and comparison, or when teachers lack adequate understanding of the digital world faced by young people, the school's potential to serve as a protective factor will not materialize (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006). A more fundamental transformation in education is required, where media literacy becomes an integral part of the curriculum, and schools are designed to be communities that support the development of healthy identities for young people.

The process of internalizing popular culture values and the factors influencing vulnerability and resilience in young people form a complex and interrelated system (Steinberg, 2014). No single factor can explain why one young person is vulnerable while another is resilient to the same influence. A combination of individual factors, such as self-esteem and media literacy; interpersonal factors, such as family support and the quality of peer groups; institutional factors, such as education; and structural factors, such as economic inequality, all interact to produce different outcomes for each individual (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Understanding this complexity is

important to avoid overly simplistic approaches in responding to the challenges faced by young people. Approaches that focus solely on restricting access to certain content, for example, may be ineffective because they do not strengthen protective factors that are actually more important in the long term. Conversely, a comprehensive approach that strengthens media literacy, builds supportive relationships within families and schools, and addresses underlying structural inequalities has a greater potential to help young people navigate the complex landscape of popular culture in a healthy and empowering way.

Conclusion

Popular culture through music, film, and digital content has a significant influence on shaping the values, attitudes, and behaviors of young people through complex and layered mechanisms. Music shapes values through natural repetition and identification with idolized artists, where repeatedly heard lyrics seep into the subconscious and shape thought patterns and emotions. Film exerts influence through narratives that allow young people to experience various life situations imaginatively, with characters serving as models to be identified with and internalized. Digital content brings a unique participatory dimension, where intense social comparisons and rapid feedback cycles shape standards of appearance, lifestyle, and success values. The process of internalizing popular culture values occurs through stages of exposure, selective attention, retention, reproduction, and full internalization, influenced by consistency with other existing values and reinforcement from the social environment. Factors affecting the vulnerability and resilience of young people include the degree of identification with idol figures, the quality of family and peer group environments, media literacy, self-esteem and self-concept, cognitive development, diversity of exposure, and broader socio-economic context. All these factors interact in a complex manner, making the influence of popular culture not deterministic but heavily mediated by various individual and social conditions that can be strengthened through appropriate interventions.

Theoretically, the findings of this study enrich the understanding of the relationship between popular culture and young people by showing that such influence is not linear or deterministic, but highly mediated by

individual, interpersonal, and structural factors. This implication shifts the analytical focus from the question of whether popular culture is good or bad for young people to an understanding of how certain conditions make young people more vulnerable or more resilient to potentially harmful influences. Practically, these findings provide guidance for developing comprehensive interventions at various levels. For educators and curriculum developers, it is recommended to systematically integrate media literacy into formal education, not only teaching technical skills but also the ability to critically read media messages, understand how algorithms operate, and develop awareness of how content affects emotions and behavior. Schools also need to be spaces where young people can develop healthy self-esteem and self-concept through recognition of diverse talents and achievements, not only those related to popularity or appearance.

References

- Alvermann, D. E., & Hagood, M. C. 2000. Critical media literacy: Research, theory, and practice in "New Times". *The Journal of educational research*, 93(3), 193-205.
- Arifin, S, Y. R. Al Hakim, D. Darmawan, M. Irfan, & D. S. Sigita. 2021. Technical and Ethical Dimensions of Search Engine Optimization in Managing Online Business Visibility, *Studi Ilmu Sosial Indonesia*, 1(1), 193-208.
- Arifin, S., & Darmawan, D. 2021. Technology Access and Digital Skills: Bridging the Gaps in Education and Employment Opportunities in the Age of Technology 4.0. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 1(1), 163-168.
- Bandura, A. 2001. *Social cognitive theory of mass communication*. *Media Psychology*, 3(3), 265–299.
- Boyatzis, R. E. 1998. *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage Publications.
- Bryant, J., & Zillmann, D. 2002. *Media effects: Advances in theory and research*. *Journal of Communication*, 52(4), 870–872.
- Bucher, T. 2018. *If... then: Algorithmic power and politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Buckingham, D. 2003. *Media education: Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 1(1), 1–10.
- Chaplin, L. N. 2018. How can you help children navigate market messages as technology progresses. 180–182. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315112602-54>
- Cohen, J. 2013. Audience identification with media characters. In *Psychology of entertainment* (pp. 183-197). Routledge.
- Coyne, S. M., Padilla-Walker, L. M., & Howard, E. 2013. Emerging in a digital world: A decade review of media use, effects, and gratifications in emerging adulthood. *Emerging Adulthood*, 1(2), 125-137.

- Crane, D. 2016. Culture and globalization: Theoretical models and emerging trends. *Global culture*, 1-25.
- Creswell, J. W. 2009. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Darmawan, D. et al. 2021. *Psychological Perspective in Society 5.0*, Zahir Publishing, Jogjakarta.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. 2005. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Eccles, J. S., & Roeser, R. W. 2011. School and community influences on human development. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 62, 649–679.
- Eddine, B. A. S. & D. Darmawan. 2021. Professional Employees, Manual Workers, and Informal Workers in Achieving Work Life Balance, *Studi Ilmu Sosial Indonesia*, 1(1), 209-226.
- González, M. G. S. 2020. Adolescents and values portrayed in music nowadays. *Multidisciplinary Journal for Education, Social and Technological Sciences*, 7(2), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.4995/MUSE.2020.14001>
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. 2000. *The role of transportation in the Persuasion Process*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), 701–721.
- Hargreaves, D. J., MacDonald, R., & Miell, D. 2018. Musical identities mediate musical development. *Music and music education in people's lives*, 1, 124-142.
- Heath, S. B. 2012. *Learning and literacy in early years*. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 47(2), 226–243.
- Hobbs, R. 2010. *Digital and media literacy: A plan of action*. *Journal of Media Education*, 2(1), 1–12.
- Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. 1956. *Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance*. *Psychiatry*, 19(3), 215–229.
- Jenkins, H., Ito, M., & Boyd, D. 2016. *Participatory culture in a networked era*. *Information, Communication & Society*, 19(3), 1–12.
- Kellner, D., & Share, J. 2007. *Critical media literacy, democracy, and the reconstruction of education*. *Media Literacy Journal*, 1(1), 1–23.
- Kross, E., Verduyn, P., Demiralp, E., Park, J., Lee, D. S., Lin, N., Shaback, H., Jonides, J., & Ybarra, O. 2013. Facebook use predicts declines in subjective well-being in young adults. *PloS one*, 8(8), e69841.
- Kurniawan, Y., Rojak, J. A., Darmawan, D., & Fajar, A. S. M. 2021. Exploration of Literary Works as Media to Form and Maintain National Identity through Narratives and Cultural Symbols. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 1(2), 187-192.
- Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. 2006. *Does family social status influence children's use of the internet?*. *New Media & Society*, 8(6), 885–911.
- Lyu, J. C., Wang, D., Huang, P., & Ling, P. 2021. News Media Coverage of E-Cigarettes: an analysis of themes in chinese newspapers. *International Journal of Communication*, 15, 22-22.
- Mardikaningsih, R., Sinambela, E. A., Hariani, M., Arifin, S., Putra, A. R., Darmawan, D., & Irfan, M. (2018). Studi Tentang Pengaruh Daya Tarik Promosi, Media Digital dan

- Kelompok Referensi terhadap Pembelian Impulsif Pada Marketplace Tokopedia. *Jurnal Ekonomi dan Bisnis*, 8(2), 21-30.
- Mears, D. 2012. The influence of technology in pop culture on curriculum and instruction. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 83(8), 15-31.
- Meier, A., & Schäfer, S. 2018. The positive side of social comparison on social network sites: How envy can drive inspiration on Instagram. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 21(7), 411-417.
- Mendonca, C. N., Wahyudi, Kabalmay, R. N. K., & Amri, M. W. 2021. Developing Technical and Social Competencies for Future-Ready Education in Digitally Mediated Labor Environments. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 1(2), 259-266.
- Moussaïd, M., Kämmer, J. E., Analytis, P. P., & Neth, H. 2013. Social influence and the collective dynamics of opinion formation. *PloS one*, 8(11), e78433.
- Orenstein, P. 2013. *Schoolgirls: Young women, self esteem, and the confidence gap*. Anchor.
- Pariser, E. 2011. *The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you*. Journal of Digital Culture and Society, 2(1), 27-41.
- Persson, A. 2019. *Internalization of media messages in youth: A longitudinal analysis*. Journal of Youth Studies, 22(7), 923-940.
- Piechaczek-Ogierman, G. 2018. The stratifying and socializing role of popular culture in shaping the identity of young generation. *Kultura i Edukacja*, 2 (120), 192-202.
- Saputra, R. & D. Darmawan. 2021. Between Individual Freedom and Collective Responsibility: Dynamics of Social Solidarity in the Age of Individualism, *Studi Ilmu Sosial Indonesia*, 1(1), 251-274.
- Shuker, R. 2012. *Popular music culture: The key concepts*. Routledge.
- Steinberg, L. 2014. *Age of Opportunity: Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence*. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 29(4), 411-417.
- Strasburger, V. C., Jordan, A. B., & Donnerstein, E. 2010. *Health effects of media on children and adolescents*. *Pediatrics*, 125(4), 756-767.
- Supiarza, H., Rachmawanti, R., & Gunawan, D. 2020. Film as a Media of Internalization of Cultural Values for Millennial Generation in Indonesia. 217-221. <https://doi.org/10.2991/ASSEHR.K.200321.052>
- Thompson, W. F., Geeves, A. M., & Olsen, K. N. 2019. Who enjoys listening to violent music and why?. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 8(3), 218.
- Valkenburg, P. M., Peter, J., & Walther, J. B. 2016. Media effects: Theory and research. *Annual review of psychology*, 67(2016), 315-338.
- Vyomakesisri, T. V. T., Sonu, T., & Srikanth, D. 2020. POP Culture: Interaction of and Influence on the Youth. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 5(1).
- Wisniewski, P., Jia, H., Wang, N., Zheng, S., Xu, H., Rosson, M. B., & Carroll, J. M. 2015. Resilience Mitigates the Negative Effects of Adolescent Internet Addiction and Online Risk Exposure. 4029-4038. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2702123.2702240>