



THE INFLUENCE OF POP CULTURE ON STUDENTS' ISLAMIC IDENTITY: MODERATION OF EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT AT THURSINA IIBS

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of popular culture on the Islamic identity of students, particularly within the context of boarding school education. In the digital era, popular culture—manifested through K-pop, social media trends, and digital content—has become a dominant force shaping youth identity, often in contrast to Islamic values that emphasize modesty and spirituality. This research aims to analyze the direct impact of pop culture on students' Islamic identity and to examine the moderating role of educational environment management in Islamic boarding schools. A quantitative explanatory approach was employed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with a sample of 114 female students from Thursina IIBS Malang. Instrument validity and reliability were confirmed through factor loadings, AVE, and composite reliability tests, indicating strong construct consistency. The findings reveal a significant negative relationship between exposure to pop culture and Islamic identity. However, the quality of educational environment management significantly moderates this relationship, mitigating the negative effect. The results highlight that a structured, value-based, and well-managed educational environment can serve as a buffer against external cultural pressures. Theoretically, this study contributes to the Islamic education management literature by providing empirical evidence of how institutional settings influence identity formation amid cultural globalization. Practically, the findings underscore the importance for Islamic schools to strengthen environmental management strategies—including teacher role modeling, spiritual routines, and peer mentoring—to preserve students' Islamic identity in the digital age.

Keywords: Islamic Identity, Educational Management, Popular Culture, PLS-SEM, Female Students, Value-Based Education

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INTRODUCTION | مقدمة

Popular culture has become a dominant force in shaping the thoughts, behaviors, and identities of today's youth, especially in the context of the digital age. Through media platforms, K-pop music, fashion trends, and online content, adolescents—particularly those categorized as Generation Z—are increasingly exposed to values that may challenge or contradict Islamic teachings. Islamic identity, as a socially constructed and reflective process, is vulnerable to such influences, especially among students in transitional developmental phases. While Islamic boarding schools traditionally serve as institutions for moral and religious formation, their students are not immune to the pervasive reach of global pop culture.

For Muslim students, especially those in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), identity

development occurs at the intersection of religious values and external cultural influences. Islamic identity is not static; it is a socially constructed and reflective process influenced by interactions with institutional environments and media exposure. Research suggests that pop culture exposure may result in shifts in value orientations and symbolic self-identification, including reduced religious commitment and weakening of Islamic behavioral markers (Arief et al., 2023). Despite the isolated and value-driven nature of pesantren environments, students are not insulated from the effects of global culture. Digital devices provide constant access to external content, making it crucial to examine how institutional mechanisms respond to such exposure. Educational environment management—encompassing physical settings, social relationships, and affective atmospheres—plays a critical role in reinforcing Islamic values and filtering the impacts of cultural globalization (Darwanto et al., 2025; Schein, 2004).

The novelty of this study lies in the use of a quantitative approach combined with a moderation path model to examine whether educational environment management can strengthen or weaken the influence of pop culture on students' Islamic identity. Moreover, the study focuses on a modern boarding school (pesantren berbasis asrama), which enhances the relevance of this research in addressing the current dynamics of Islamic education amid global cultural trends. This study addresses a significant gap in the literature by integrating educational environment management as a moderating variable in the relationship between pop culture exposure and Islamic identity development. Prior research has generally focused on descriptive or qualitative approaches, leaving a void in quantitative assessments that capture the conditional impact of institutional management. By employing a structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, this research aims to empirically examine whether a well-managed educational environment can serve as a protective factor against identity erosion caused by cultural globalization. The objective of this study is twofold: (1) to assess the influence of pop culture on students' Islamic identity, and (2) to determine whether educational environment management significantly moderates this relationship within the Islamic boarding school context.

METHOD | منهج

Materials and Methods

This study employed a quantitative explanatory design to investigate the causal relationship between pop culture exposure and Islamic identity, as well as the moderating role of educational environment management. The research utilized Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) as the main analytical technique due to its suitability for models with multiple constructs and indicators, particularly when sample sizes are moderate (Hair et al., 2019).

Participants and Sampling

The population consisted of all senior high school (SMA) female students at Thursina International Islamic Boarding School (IIBS) in Malang, totaling 160 individuals. A proportional stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across different grade levels. Based on Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, the final sample included 114 students who had been enrolled in the boarding school for at least one academic year. The selection of female participants was intentional, as previous research indicates that Muslim adolescent girls are particularly sensitive and responsive to both religious and popular cultural influences (Zulyatina et al., 2024; Fuadah et al., 2024).

Instruments and Operational Variables

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on validated indicators from prior literature. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). The main constructs in this study were:

- **Pop Culture (X):** Measured by six indicators reflecting students' consumption, social identification, and internalization of global cultural symbols (Storey, 2018; Azzahra, 2024).
- **Islamic Identity (Y):** Measured by six indicators representing students' beliefs, practices, symbols, and digital expressions of Islamic identity (Tajfel, 1981; Giddens, 1991).

Educational Environment Management (Z): Measured by six indicators encompassing spiritual routines, behavioral supervision, teacher role models, and religious atmospheres (Fraser, 1998; Schein, 2004).

RESULT نتائج

Validity and Reliability Tests

The validity and reliability test of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the construct used in this study was able to measure the phenomenon accurately and consistently. The test was conducted through the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach using SmartPLS 4.0 software, which is suitable for models with complex indicators and medium sample sizes (Hair et al., 2019).

Outer Model Test

Validitas Convergence

Convergent validity tests how much an indicator can represent a latent construct. The indicator is declared valid if it has a loading factor ≥ 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). The following table 1 shows the loading factor measurement results for each item.

Table 1. Loading Factor and Interpretation of Validity

Construct	Indicator	Loading Factor	Information
Pop Culture (X)	BP1	0.741	Valid
	BP2	0.757	Valid
	BP3	0.771	Valid
	BP4	0.877	Valid
	BP5	0.632	Sufficiently valid (maintained)
	BP6	0.693	Sufficiently valid (maintained)
Islamic Identity (Y)	IK1	0.712	Valid
	IK2	0.685	Sufficiently valid (maintained)
	IK3	0.682	Sufficiently valid (maintained)
	IK4	0.798	Valid
	IK5	0.797	Valid
	IK6	0.715	Valid
Environmental Management (Z)	ML1	0.685	Sufficiently valid (maintained)
	ML2	0.737	Valid
	ML3	0.789	Valid
	ML4	0.825	Valid
	ML5	0.806	Valid
	ML6	0.764	Valid

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results 4 (2025)

Some indicators have a loading factor slightly below 0.70, such as BP5 (0.632), BP6 (0.693), IK2 (0.685), IK3 (0.682), and ML1 (0.685). However, according to Hair et al. (2019), indicators with loading values between 0.60 and 0.70 can still be maintained, provided that the construct has adequate AVE values and composite reliability (CR) and that the indicator has significant theoretical significance to the measured construct.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

The AVE value measures how much a construct variable is able to explain the variance of the indicator. An AVE value of ≥ 0.50 indicates that more than 50% of the indicator's variance can be explained by the construct. The results of the analysis show:

1. Pop Culture (X): AVE = 0.587
2. Islamic Identity (Y): AVE = 0.614
3. Environmental Management (Z): AVE = 0.648

Thus, the entire construct meets the requirements of convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019).

Discriminatory Validity

The validity of the discriminant was tested through cross-loading analysis and HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio). The results of the analysis showed that each indicator had a higher loading on the original construct than the other construct (cross-loading valid), and all HTMT values were below 0.85, which means that there was no overlap of meanings between constructs (Gold et al., 2001).

Reliability Test

Reliability tests are performed to ensure internal consistency between items in the construct. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with a \geq value criterion of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). The following table provides a summary of the reliability test results.

Table 2. Construct Reliability Summary

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Verdict
Pop Culture (X)	0.799	0.860	0.587	Reliable
Islamic Identity (Y)	0.834	0.879	0.614	Reliable
Environmental Management (Z)	0.860	0.897	0.648	Highly reliable

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results 4 (2025)

The entire construct shows alpha and CR values above 0.70, even close to 0.90 for Environmental Management, which signifies that this instrument has high internal consistency and is very feasible for use in structural model testing.

Structural Model Test (Inner Model)

Structural or inner models are used to test causal influences between latent constructs and evaluate the predictive capabilities of the model as a whole. The evaluation of structural models in the PLS-SEM approach includes two main stages: (1) measuring the coefficient of determination (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2), and (2) calculating the direct effect of exogenous constructs on endogenous (Hair et al., 2019).

Values of Determination Coefficient (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

The value of the determination coefficient (R^2) indicates how much the independent variable is able to explain the dependent variable. Based on the results of PLS-SEM modeling, it is known that the R^2 value for the Islamic Identity construct (Y) is 0.827, which means that 82.7% of the variability of students' Islamic identity can be explained by Pop Culture and Educational Environment Management. Based on the classification from Chin (1998), the value of $R^2 \geq 0.75$ is included in the strong category, so the model has high predictive power over endogenous variables.

In addition to R^2 , a Q^2 (predictive relevance) test was also carried out which was calculated using the blindfolding method. Q^2 describes the extent to which the model has predictive capabilities on data that is not used in the model estimation (out-of-sample). The results showed that Q^2 for the Islamic Identity construct was > 0 , which indicates that the model has good predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019; Ghazali & Latan, 2015). $Q^2 > 0.35$ is categorized as high predictive.

Direct Effect Test

Direct influence testing in the model was performed to identify the extent to which independent (exogenous) variables contribute significantly to bound (endogenous) variables. In this study, the main causal pathway tested was the influence of Pop Culture (X) on Islamic Identity (Y).

The test results show that:

1. Path coefficient (β) = -0.129
2. T-statistical value = 1.982
3. P-value = 0.048

With a p-value of < 0.05 and a T-statistically > 1.96 , this relationship can be said to be statistically significant at a confidence level of 95%. The direction of the negative coefficient shows that the higher the student's involvement in pop culture, the lower the level of their Islamic identity. These findings are in line with previous studies that indicate a value dissonance between global pop culture values and the religious identity of adolescent Muslims (Storey, 2018; Zulyatina et al., 2024).

Table 3. Direct Path Coefficient

Influence Path	Coeficin β	T-statistic	P-value	Verdict
Pop Culture (X) \rightarrow Identity (Y)	-0.129	1.982	0.048	Signifikan

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results 4 (2025)

Visualization of Structural Models (Inner and Outer Models)

Structural model visualization is the result of mapping the relationship between latent constructs and their indicators after estimating using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. This model image shows both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model) in one integrative diagram.

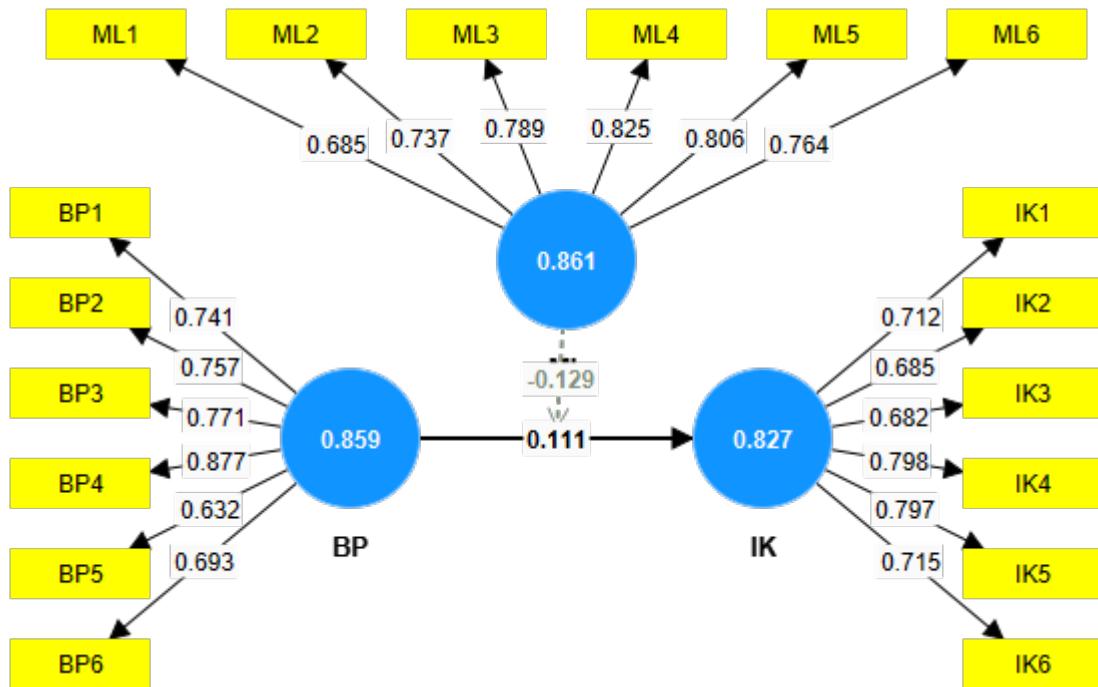


Figure PLS-SEM Structural Model: Pop Culture, Environmental Management, and Islamic Identity

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results 4 (2025)

In Figure 4.1, the three main constructs studied are: Pop Culture (X), Educational Environment Management (Z), and Islamic Identity (Y). Each construct is measured by six indicators, each indicated by the loading factor depicted on each arrow from the indicator to the construct. The loading results show that most of the indicators have a > 0.70 value, which indicates that the indicator's contribution to the construct is quite strong (Hair et al., 2019). Although there are some items such as BP5 and ML1 with a loading < 0.70 , they are still maintained because the AVE construct still meets the ≥ 0.50 standard and the indicator has conceptual strength (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). The model also showed a high value of determination coefficient (R^2) in the Islamic Identity (0.827) and Environmental Management (0.861) constructs, indicating that the independent variables in the model together have a very strong predictive ability against the bound variables. This is in line with the criteria set by Chin (1998), who classifies the value of $R^2 \geq 0.75$ into the strong category.

Meanwhile, the direct influence path visualized in the diagram shows that the relationship between Pop Culture (X) and Islamic Identity (Y) is negative ($\beta = -0.129$). This indicates a debilitating direction of influence, where increased exposure to pop culture tends to lower students' Islamic identity. On the other hand, the path from Environmental Management (Z) to Islamic Identity (Y) shows a positive direction ($\beta = 0.111$), indicating that the quality of a good educational environment is able to increase the strengthening of students' Islamic identity in the midst of the onslaught of pop culture.

This image is visual evidence of the theoretical structure built in the research, as well as providing an initial overview of the importance of the role of the moderation of the Z variable which will be further analyzed in the next sub-chapter.

Moderation Test (Interaction)

The moderation analysis using SmartPLS revealed that the interaction term between Pop Culture (X) and Educational Environment Management (Z) had a significant negative coefficient

($\beta = -0.284$, $p = 0.035$). To further evaluate the practical significance of this relationship, an effect size (f^2) test was conducted, as suggested by Hair et al. (2019). The effect size value for the moderation path was $f^2 = 0.08$, indicating a small-to-moderate effect according to Cohen's (1988) criteria. This means that while the moderation effect is statistically significant, its magnitude represents a moderate level of practical influence within the model.

The negative sign of the moderation coefficient does not imply that the moderating variable amplifies the negative effect of pop culture; rather, it indicates that educational environment management weakens the adverse impact of pop culture on students' Islamic identity. In other words, as the quality of environmental management improves—through structured routines, value-based leadership, and positive peer interactions—the detrimental influence of pop culture becomes less pronounced. This interpretation aligns with Fraser's (1998) and Schein's (2004) conceptualization of a well-managed institutional climate as a socio-cultural buffer that preserves students' moral and religious integrity. Thus, the moderation effect demonstrates that educational environment management acts as a buffering mechanism: the stronger the management quality, the weaker the negative association between pop culture exposure and Islamic identity formation. This finding emphasizes the strategic importance of environmental design and management in Islamic educational institutions to sustain students' values amidst the pervasive influence of global cultural trends.

Interaction Test Results $X \times Z \rightarrow Y$

Based on the results of bootstrapping carried out through the SmartPLS software, it is known that the $X \times Z \rightarrow Y$ interaction paths have the following results:

Table 4. Results of the Environmental Management Moderation Test (Z) on the Influence of Pop Culture (X) on Islamic Identity (Y)

Influence Path	Coefficients (β)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Verdict
Pop Culture (X) \rightarrow Islamic Identity (Y)	-0.129	1.982	0.048	Signifikan
$X \times Z$ (Interaction) \rightarrow Islamic Identity	-0.284	2.114	0.035	Significant Moderation

The $p <$ values of 0.05 and $T > 1.96$ showed that the moderation relationship between interaction variables and Islamic Identity was statistically significant. Thus, Educational Environment Management moderates the influence of Pop Culture on the Islamic Identity of students. These findings reinforce previous results that emphasized the importance of a religious, affective, and social educational environment in counteracting the negative effects of popular culture on the formation of adolescents' religious character (Fraser, 1998; Storey, 2018).

Theoretically, this shows that the influence of pop culture on Islamic identity is not absolute, but depends on the quality of the management of the educational environment that students are undergoing. The better the quality of the pesantren environment (both in terms of example, worship habits, and social norms), the less negative impact of pop culture on the Islamic integrity of Muslim adolescents (Schein, 2010).

DISCUSSION | **مناقشة**

The results of this study confirm that popular culture has a statistically significant negative influence on the Islamic identity of students in Islamic boarding school environments. This finding aligns with earlier studies (e.g., Azzahra, 2024; Zulyatina et al., 2024), which demonstrated that the values propagated by pop culture—such as permissiveness, materialism, and individualism—often contradict core Islamic teachings that emphasize modesty, spirituality, and community responsibility. The structural equation model revealed a negative path coefficient ($\beta = -0.129$; p

< 0.05), indicating that as students' exposure to pop culture increases, their expression of Islamic identity tends to diminish.

This study further provides empirical support for the moderating role of educational environment management. The interaction effect ($X \times Z \rightarrow Y$) was significant ($\beta = -0.284$; $p = 0.035$), suggesting that the negative impact of pop culture on Islamic identity is weakened when the educational environment is well-managed. In other words, students who are situated within environments that foster religious habits, provide positive role models, and sustain emotionally supportive relationships are more resilient to the disintegrating influences of global cultural forces. This reinforces Fraser's (1998) and Schein's (2004) theoretical propositions that institutional environments can function as socio-cultural buffers.

Interestingly, despite the negative main effect of pop culture, students' Islamic identity levels remained relatively high (mean > 4.0 on Likert scale), indicating that the pesantren environment at Thursina IIBS still plays a strong protective role. This outcome supports Giddens' (1991) reflexive self-theory, where identity is not only passively shaped by external influences but also actively constructed within institutional and relational contexts.

Moreover, the use of a moderation model within a PLS-SEM framework contributes methodologically to the field of Islamic education by offering a more nuanced understanding of conditional relationships among variables. Previous research has not statistically examined how environmental management moderates identity development in the face of cultural globalization, thus positioning this study as a novel contribution to both theory and practice. These findings have direct implications for Islamic educational institutions. Schools and pesantren must be proactive in designing educational environments that not only teach Islamic values but also embody them in everyday practice. Programmatic efforts such as teacher modeling, structured worship, and peer mentoring can serve as effective moderators that strengthen students' Islamic identity amidst cultural dissonance.

CONCLUSION | خاتمة

This study concludes that exposure to popular culture has a significant negative influence on students' Islamic identity. However, this adverse effect is moderated by the quality of educational environment management, indicating that a well-structured and value-based institutional environment can effectively buffer the negative influence of global cultural trends. The findings confirm that modern Islamic boarding schools remain effective in nurturing students' moral and spiritual identities when managed through consistent religious practices, teacher modeling, and emotionally supportive peer interactions. Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature on Islamic education management by empirically validating the moderating role of environmental management in the relationship between popular culture and Islamic identity. Practically, it provides insights for educators and policymakers to strengthen value-based management systems that align institutional culture with students' daily experiences in the digital era.

Nonetheless, this study acknowledges certain limitations. The sample consisted exclusively of female students from a single Islamic boarding school, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Future research is therefore encouraged to include male students, multiple institutions, and longitudinal approaches to provide a broader understanding of identity development under diverse educational and cultural contexts.

In summary, the results are statistically robust and substantively meaningful, highlighting that value-oriented educational management plays a critical protective role in sustaining students' Islamic identity amid the pervasive forces of global pop culture.

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