Shalawat Albanjari: a Musical Uniqueness for Psychological Well-Being Improvement among Higher Education Students

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Abstract

Levels of stress and mental health disorders of adulthood increased five times higher than the conditions experienced in the era of the great depression in 1938 ago. The triggers came from school and popular culture in everyday life. The symptoms of burnout were also found in some college students, for example at the University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. This problem greatly affects their psychological well-being (PWB) which can make other continuity psychological problems. Shalawat Albanjari activities which have been found in Ma’had Sunan Ampel al-Aly (MSAA) UIN Malang as an old tradition has some certain values that can be expressed in terms of PWB. This study is ethnographic qualitative research. Subjects in this study are some students who become the active players of Shalawat Albanjari. The results showed that Shalawat Albanjari contains some values: psychological values, education values, social values, and spiritual values. Moreover, PWB can be conceptualized as a state of “being calm and peaceful because of the remembrance of God”. Doing Shalawat Albanjari as a routine activity can indirectly improve the PWB of the players.

Keywords: Shalawat Albanjari, Shalawat, Psychological Well-Being, Music, Higher Education Students.

Abstrak


Kata Kunci: Shalawat Albanjari, Shalawat, Kesejahteraan Psikologis, Musik, Pelajar Perguruan Tinggi.

Introduction

The stress level and mental health disorders among higher education students nowadays rise significantly. Higher Education Statistic Agency reported the eloquent number of higher students who faced psychological problems and mental health from 1,8% to 3,3% in the year 1999-2000.1 Twenge’s team study from Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) showed that popular culture and external factors such as family status, financial, and performances can influence the mental health and psychological well being of the students.2 The data shows that at least 32% of HE students experienced anxiety disorders, followed by behavioral

1 Teresa Tinklin, Sheila Riddell, and Alastair Wilson, “Support for students with mental health difficulties in higher education: The students’ perspective”, in British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, Vol. 33, No. 4, (Taylor & Francis Online, 2005), 495.
disorders as much as 19%, mood disorders 14%, drug use disorders 11%, and 40% experience multiple disorders in their lives.\(^3\) Regarding to mental health and psychological well being problems, burnout cases are also found in some college students. Dyrbye and friends stated that 45% out of 545 nursing students experienced burnout.\(^4\)

These problems are possible to happen in the State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Based on the interviews and observations carried out in 2011-2012, there were more than 300 new students reported to have experienced stress and more than 100 of them decided to stay outside of Ma’had before the time was over.\(^5\) Ordinarily, new students are required to stay in Ma’had for a full year. Within a year, more than 4 people also reported premarital sex. Two students tried to commit suicide. Family problems, the high demands from parents and supervisors, heartbroken, friendship problems, and other stressors can be the factors influencing them while they were in the college.\(^6\)

One of the informants said that there were around 30 students who had served as administrators and experienced stress, anxiety, mood, and psychosomatic disorders while living in Ma’had Sunan Ampel al-Ali. These symptoms are very detrimental because they will reduce work effectiveness and psychological abilities to finish their work. Burnout can reduce individual cognitive functions, such as concentration and problem-solving abilities.\(^7\)

WHO explained that mental health problems not only represent psychological, social, and economic conditions that disturb the wider community but also will increase the possibility of the risk of physical illness. The only balanced effort to reduce mental health disorders and behavior is through prevention.\(^8\)

Nowadays, Shalawat Albanjari becomes Islamic popular music that spreads among students and societies. Ma’had Sunan Ampel Al-Aly has *Shalawat Albanjari* activity, which is unique to study because

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\(^3\) Ibid., 150.


\(^5\) Interview, Nurul & Muhammad Faruq, in Studio JDFI MSAA UIN Malang, 3\(^{rd}\) of May 2014.

\(^6\) Interview, Muhammad Faruq, in Studio JDFI MSAA UIN Malang, 3\(^{rd}\) May 2014.


it is believed for some people to be an interesting activity to overcome these psychological problems. Shalawat Albanjari, in its social reality, is full of phenomena that are sacred as religious rituals.

Shalawat means the prayers and praise to Allah and His Messenger which is one of the religious rituals that has become a tradition that has been mushrooming in the community and society in recent years. It is considered to have an important role in improving our mental health. It is found that Shalawat Albanjari player felt a peaceful feeling when singing the prayer songs. It expresses the existence of happy feelings through the simple tones and rhythms of the song and the dynamics of the tempo played. It makes the players and the listeners get closer to God.

The tradition of Shalawat Albanjari cannot be separated from the music. On its implementation, the prayers and the praises were performed with the distinctive music, accompanied by a musical instrument called the rebana or terbang, or albanjari. The term Albanjari comes from one of the areas in Kalimantan, namely Banjar. There are not many people understand the history of this art, however mostly believed that this type of art comes from that area and the spread is inseparable from the services of Wali Songo.

Shalawat Albanjari art has a unique, ambiguous and varied rhythm. This type of art can also be called the best asset or extracurricular in Salafiyah Islamic boarding schools. This originating art from the city of Banjar is arguable as the most consistent and the most sought after by santri, even now on some campuses began to participate in enlivening this type of music.

Regarding music literacy, music can influence one’s emotions strongly. It became a wonderful mystery for experts and non-experts in the music field. Besides, music can be a tool to stimulate psychological function. Juslin and Vatsfjall concluded that music can stimulate a person towards relaxation, towards his subconscious, to

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9 Interview, Fahri Ahmad Safar, in Studio JDFI MSAA UIN Maliki Malang, 7th of May 2014.
sleep peacefully.\textsuperscript{13} For such purposes, it is avoided to use the music with a loud tempo and sound. Furthermore, music is very useful as a healing therapy for students suffering from depression.\textsuperscript{14}

Music has a unique capacity that strongly influences the part of human consciousness that opens access to the spiritual dimension.\textsuperscript{15} Many medical practitioners in various hospitals and health clinics use music therapy as an alternative treatment as well as a spiritual-based healing program.\textsuperscript{16} Music also leaves an important part in the practice of worship both historically and across cultures, as well as songs and ceremonies with sacred lyrics in several Islamic Sufi traditions.\textsuperscript{17} In this religious tradition, music is used as a step to deepen the understanding of divinity and spiritual foundations.

The tradition of shalawat as a sacred phenomenon in social reality becomes a medium of remembrance for God and His Messenger. Praying regularly can also be religious stress coping that is possible to relieve human stress for improving his psychological well-being, as being taught in Islam.

This study aims to find out and describe the values which are consisted of the Shalawat Albanjari cultural dimension. Moreover, this study investigates the conception of psychological well being, and to analyze the model of the PWB achievement of the players. This study used a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach which is also supported by a phenomenological approach.

\section*{Ryff’s Psychological Well Being}

Well-being is a complex construct that involves experience and individual optimal functioning which is focused on positive functioning, Ryff (1989) tried to investigate the changes in a macro-level social environment which result from a significant influence on “people’s life situation”; this term refers to their psychological

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{13} Patrik N. Juslin, and Daniel Västfjäll, “Emotional responses...,” 571.
\bibitem{17} \textit{Ibid.}, 222.
\end{thebibliography}
well-being.\(^{18}\) Her discovery has consistently accentuated the general concept that to be psychologically healthy is more than to be free of illness, disease, pressures or other psychological problems. The World Health Organization emphasized it as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”\(^ {19}\) Consequently, health incorporates combination functioning between psychological, social, and physical facets.

Ryff states that psychological well-being is a term used to describe the psychological health of individuals based on fulfilling the criteria of positive psychological functioning. Furthermore, it is a psychological condition characterized by healthy individual aspects of the functioning of positive psychology in the process of self-actualization.\(^ {20}\)

Individuals who have high psychological well-being characterized as below; first, the persons who are satisfied with their life. Second, have a positive emotional state. Third, capable to overcome bad experiences that can produce a negative emotional state. Fourth, have positive relationship with others. Fifth, able to determine their own destiny without relying to others. Sixth, can control the environmental conditions around them. Seventh, have a clear purpose in life, and able to develop themselves.

Ryff explained that six dimensions are formatting the psychological well-being. Such as self-acceptance, positive relationship, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Furthermore, some factors influence an individual’s psychological well-being. These factors are age, sex, socioeconomic status, education, and culture.\(^ {21}\)

The Values Contained in Shalawat Albanjari

Basically, humans always look for the meaning of life to achieve psychological well being. In this case, religious activities can be interpreted as a mean that helps people to feel happy. One of the things we have as Muslims is the “Shalawat Albanjari”.


\(^{19}\) World Health Organization, *The World Health...*, 16.

\(^{20}\) Carol D. Ryff, “Happiness is everything...”, 1069.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 1072.
Moreover, the link between religion and health cannot be denied. From the scope of health based on existing and comprehensive definitions, it has been seen that Islam requires the people to be strong and not weak physically, mentally, socially and economically. Guidelines in many Islamic teachings reflect the health values, including a healthy way of life. Likewise, health in the mental and spiritual aspects is an important and main part of the religious domain.

Every culture consists of values that can be applied in daily life. Based on the findings of the researchers, many values that can be extracted from the Shalawat Albanjari culture, some of which are primary values which are then developed into secondary values, including:

First, psychological value. One of the psychological values contained in Shalawat Albanjari includes character values. The value of characters is translated into several other values such as ethics, simplicity, creativity, leadership, responsibility, and discipline.

Character values such as learning to form good morals. Through the gentle rhythms that are heard, it can be internalized and infused, indirectly teaches us to be gentle, not to be a rude person, and to be a simple person through the dressing. This supports the findings of Chong & Kim in his research on music therapy programs in students who have behavioral and emotional problems in schools, where music can have a positive impact on these problems.

Based on interviews and surveys, participants concluded that playing and listening to Shalawat Albanjari were able to divert negative emotions and create positive emotions through the tone and rhythm that was delivered. This positive emotion is symbolized by a feeling of pleasure which then makes oneself feels calm. In a psychological term, this has become a form of catharsis to change negative feelings such as anxiety, stress, and sadness into feelings of pleasure and calm.

When playing Shalawat Albanjari, there is a role for emotional control in it. The faster rhythm of the beat of Albanjari can affect emotions. Therefore, between one player and another player must have the same beat to make it harmonious. This activity will have an

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22 Interview, Nur Fatih Ahmad, in studio JDFI Ma’had Sunan Ampel Al-Aly UIN Maliki Malang, 5th of September 2014.
impact on the patient in daily behavior.\textsuperscript{24}

The history of music development shows in the past music had a connection with two functions, namely the nemesis function which came from the Greece that meant the transformation and imitation from the outside in human beings and also the catharsis function which meant soul purification through the emotional experience of music that is listened.\textsuperscript{25} Music is recognized as having the power to deliver and arouse emotions.

Emotional control is applied by being patient in carrying out some significant responsibilities as the administrator in Ma’had. Emotional control is also interrelated with responsibility. According to participants, this increases awareness to be sensitive to the environment. When there were awkward friends, they were willing to help and entertain, and when there were happy friends, they were also feeling grateful. When some friends were afflicted with sadness, they supported and helped to distress them.\textsuperscript{26} This is one concern from the form of psychological values.

This value can support the increase of psychological well being. Good emotional control can stimulate the growth of patience. This trait can then be the ability of individuals to be able to regulate their own behavior, be resistant to social pressure or problems in their lives, and be able to evaluate themselves. Ryff explained these indicators in the autonomy dimension.\textsuperscript{27}

\textit{Second}, education value. The Shalawat Albanjari is inseparable from the value of education. Participants explained that among the values of education contained in Shalawat Albanjari are religious education and music education. Religious education is derived from interpreting and experiencing to the full of the lyrics that are sung. The lyrics contain prayers to Allah and praise to the Prophet Muhammad. Furthermore, Shalawat Albanjari has elements of music education, such as the lesson about sound, rhythm, and tempo harmonization, how to play Albanjari music correctly.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} Interview, Andi Hasyim & Nur Fatih Ahmad, in Studio JDFI Ma’had Sunan Ampel Al-Aly UIN Maliki Malang, 13\textsuperscript{th} of September 2014.

\textsuperscript{25} Djohan Salim, \textit{Terapi Musik}, (Yogyakarta: Galangpress, 2006), 74.

\textsuperscript{26} Interview, Nur Fatih Ahmad, in Ma’had Sunan Ampel al-Aly UIN Maliki Malang, 13\textsuperscript{th} of September 2014.

\textsuperscript{27} Carol D. Ryff, “Happiness is everything...”, 1071.

\textsuperscript{28} Interview, Andi Hasyim, Nur Fatih Ahmad, in Ma’had Sunan Ampel al-Aly UIN Maliki Malang, 15\textsuperscript{th} of September 2014.
Quoting the opinion of former US president, Ronald Reagan said that the young generation must be taught not only about reality and computers, but also must be taught about cultural heritage and appreciation of how music can enrich the younger generation and the people who produce it.²⁹ This emphasizes that music and art education is very important to maintain humanity and urge all of us to realize that instilling the value of music education is far more important than other educations.

According to Ryff (1990), educational factors can influence the psychological well being of individuals. This means that the education value from Shalawat Albanjari which applied in everyday life can increase the psychological well being of a person.³⁰

Third, social value. Participants stated that playing Shalawat Albanjari can wreath the *ukhuwah* or brotherhood. Shalawat Albanjari is increasingly believed as a venue for gathering Muslims to pray together. This fosters mutual respect and acceptance between the good and the bad and also fosters tolerance. This attitude is a reflection of social values in Shalawat Albanjari.

Whenever they gathered in a shalawat assembly, this can foster a sense of curiosity, a sense of participation, and a sense of brotherhood. So that they can have a friendly, good behavior to the others, and love each other because they feel in the same intention and motivation. The emergence of a sense of brotherhood is a value manifestation of a good social character.

It can be concluded that music can increase group effectiveness concerning social activities. If this value is applied in everyday life, it will certainly be able to increase the dimensions of a positive relationship with others. According to Ryff, individuals who have high values in this dimension are individuals who can foster good relationships and have a concern for the welfare of others, show empathy, affection, and understand the principle of giving and receiving in interpersonal relationships.

In connection with this, music can shape prosocial behavior in 4-year-olds as evidenced by spontaneous cooperative characteristics and helping people.³¹ In addition, Kennedy’s research supports that

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³¹ Sebastian Kirschner, and Michael Tomasello, “Joint music making promotes
prosocial music can create social cooperative scenarios.\textsuperscript{32}

Fourth, spiritual value. This value becomes the most important part of Shalawat Albanjari which can maximize the emergence of feelings of calm and solemnity. Shalawat Albanjari encourages to remember God. Thus, when the heart is motivated to remember God, a feeling of calm arises. This reason can have implications for daily life.

Spiritual value is closely related to understanding that our lives have a Creator. This value is always applied in Ma’had. Such as all activities that invite to be closer to Allah. The participants explained that everything they did must be with the intention of worship.

In Islam, spiritual is also related to \textit{ihsân}. According to the words of the Prophet Muhammad, \textit{ihsân} is worshiping Allah as if you see Him. This means discussing how to present someone’s “intention” to be “in harmony” with his actions, or how to present one’s eternal motivation in harmony with his actions and understanding. Simply put, how to harmonize the dimensions of rationality (IQ), mentality (EQ), and spirituality (SQ).\textsuperscript{33}

Unfortunately, Ryff does not explain the relevance of this value to the dimensions that have been explained to achieve psychological well being. If this value can be applied in daily life, it is not impossible to affect the other dimensions directly.

\textbf{Psychological Well-Being Attainment of the Shalawat Albanjari Players}

The Shalawat Albanjari players mean the condition of psychological well being is a condition of comfortable self, a condition where the heart is always calm when facing problems, a calm and peaceful feeling because of hanging everything on to the God. When the heart is calm, it will be easy to face any problem. When the heart is calm, it will also be able to find the right idea or choice to solve the problem. The Shalawat Albanjari players feel his life is meaningful when they can be beneficial for others.\textsuperscript{34}


\textsuperscript{33} Ary Ginanjar Agustian, \textit{Rahasia Sukses...}, 53.

\textsuperscript{34} Interview, Andi Hasyim, Nur Fatih Ahmad, Budi Prasetyo, Fahri Ahmad Safar,
The process of achieving psychological well being delivered by the Shalawat Albanjari players at MSAA UIN Malang was carried out with activities such as: \(^{35}\)

First, experiencing to the full the musical rhythm of Shalawat Albanjari which means to feel each level of the music dynamics. Second, doing regular practice, this makes the player can play the music properly and optimally. By practicing regularly, they can also feel the softness of the musical instruments. They can finally appreciate the dynamics of the music and be able to evaluate its appearance. Third, experiencing to the full the tone of the song which each can affect emotions. Fourth, vivifying the meaning of the lyrics itself as the prayer and praise. Fifth, feeling the presence of the Prophet in the heart. Sixth, practicing the values contained in Shalawat Albanjari, this makes in daily behavior remains in the Islamic corridor.

These activities can help many things such as, first, stimulate the mind to keep remembering the God. Second, raise feelings of pleasure, beauty, amazement, and admiration. Third, make us try to get closer to the God. Fourth, stimulate the emergence of feelings of solitude, fear, gratitude, hope, and submission to God. Fifth, stimulate curiosity about the God so that they can know the God through His creation, namely the Messenger of Allah, and one of the others, through the music. Sixth, recharge energy, refresh the body and mind from fatigue. Seventh, reducing stress and symptoms of burnout.

Then the next stage, all these effects cause positive psychological well-being in the form of self-comfort, calmness and feeling happy wherever and whenever. In the end, someone will be able to carry out his responsibilities and face life’s problems calmly. Doing Shalawat Albanjari as a routine activity can indirectly improve the PWB of the players.

Conclusion

Shalawat Albanjari as an activity that mushrooming in society nowadays has some important values such as psychological value, social value, educational value, and spiritual value. The spiritual value becomes the most important part of Shalawat Albanjari which can maximize the emergence of feelings of calm and solemnity, because

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\(^{35}\) Interview, Andi Hasyim, Nur Fatih Ahmad, in Studio JDFI Ma’had Sunan Ampel al-Aly UIN Maliki Malang, 16\(^{th}\) of November 2014.
playing the Shalawat Albanjari means stimulating us to remember the God. Shalawat Albanjari is not only consists some valuable lessons and wisdom within the lyrics that is sung, but also has a calm and unique melodies and rhythms which effect on the human emotions to evoke a pleasure feelings and possible to sooth the hearts. These portions can obliquely influence the player’s well-being who also rules as the higher students in UIN Malang.

However, this study has limited time and data extraction that is not deep enough. There were only two participants in this study who had their uniqueness compared to the other administrators’ fellows of Ma’had Sunan Ampel Al-Aly UIN Malang. This limitation makes the data obtained is still radical. Thus, additional participants will be needed for further research to make the data obtained becomes richer. Moreover, the data collection should be adjusted with a suitable psychological test such as coping stress and well-being test. The experiment for proofing the effect of listening to Shalawat Albanjari is recommended to see the significance level of PWB from both the player or the listener.

Furthermore, the result of this study can be used as a reference for psychological therapy on a macro basis to reduce stress and improve mental health function based on Islamic religious practice. This can complement the other macro clinical psychology therapy methods that have been found such as Panggung Gembira, Sociodrama and Psychodrama. There has been extensive research on Qur’an recitation as an intervention to improve human health to decrease anxiety and stress levels. However, there is still limited research about the effect of shalawat practice on psychological and physiological measurements.

Additionally, music therapy application nowadays has been focused on the indigenous theory which discusses the use of indigenous music for improving mental health, physical well-being, and spirituality. For example, Holyoake’s drumming program which the music is owned by aboriginal people, Australia, seems to be able to release emotions such as belonging, community relations and reducing social isolation.

As the same as the gamelan music which can reduce depression levels on the elderly who work in the UPT Pasuruan social services. This research outcomes offer Shalawat Albanjari as the indigenous music therapy for healing and improving people psychological health in the term of well-being. Nevertheless, every culture has its form of music, and a sociological approach is very instrumental in determining the music that has health benefits for a particular culture.

Bibliography


