



Hijabers and Nightclub Culture: Cultural Adaptation within the Nolja Gang Community in Indonesia

Naufal Ghani, S.I.Kom^a, Idola Perdini Putri^{b*}

^a Telkom University, Indonesia

^b Telkom University, Indonesia

*Corresponding author

Abstract

The study explores the phenomenon of cultural adaptation among hijab-wearing Muslim women (hijabers) within the Nolja Gang community, an Indonesian subculture that embraces K-Pop and K-HipHop fandoms and regularly engages in social activities, such as nightclub events. This context presents a unique cultural contradiction, as nightclubs are often perceived as incompatible with the traditional values upheld by hijabers. Using Kim's Cultural Adaptation Theory (2001), this study examines the adaptation process experienced by hijabers across five stages: pre-contact, culture shock, initial adjustment, acculturation, and internalization. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study gathered data through in-depth interviews and six months of participant observation with four hijaber members of Nolja Gang who come from conservative and religious backgrounds. The analysis revealed that hijabers undergo significant personal negotiation while integrating into the community. They experience initial discomfort and cultural tension, particularly regarding dress norms and nightclub behavior. Over time, however, they adapt through observation, while preserving aspects of their original identity. The findings demonstrate that the adaptation process does not lead to full assimilation but rather the formation of a hybrid identity. Hijabers actively construct their place in the subculture by balancing self-expression and religious values, ultimately reshaping social norms within the group. There are three main negotiation factors, which are cultural negotiation, globalization and space identity. This study contributes to intercultural communication and identity studies by highlighting how individuals navigate globalized subcultures. It also underscores the complexity of identity formation and adaptation in multicultural environments, providing valuable insights for understanding cultural negotiation in youth-driven global communities.

Keywords: Cultural adaptation, hijabers, Nolja Gang, identity negotiation, subculture.

Hijabers dan Budaya Kelab Malam: Penyesuaian Budaya dalam Komuniti Nolja Gang di Indonesia

Abstrak

Kajian ini meneliti fenomena penyesuaian budaya dalam kalangan wanita Muslim berhijab (hijabers) yang tergolong dalam komuniti Nolja Gang, iaitu sebuah subkultur di Indonesia yang menghimpunkan peminat K-Pop dan K-HipHop serta sering terlibat dalam aktiviti sosial seperti menghadiri kelab malam. Dengan menggunakan Teori Penyesuaian Budaya oleh Kim (2001), kajian ini meneliti proses penyesuaian yang dialami oleh hijabers melalui lima peringkat: pra-kontak, kejutan budaya, penyesuaian awal, akulturasi dan internalisasi. Melalui pendekatan fenomenologi kualitatif, data dikumpul menerusi temu bual mendalam dan pemerhatian penyertaan selama enam bulan terhadap empat hijaber Nolja Gang yang berasal daripada latar belakang konservatif dan berorientasikan agama. Analisis mendapati bahawa hijabers melalui proses rundingan diri yang mendalam dalam usaha mereka menyesuaikan diri dengan komuniti tersebut. Mereka mengalami ketidakselesaan awal dan ketegangan budaya, khususnya berkaitan dengan norma pemakaian dan tingkah laku di kelab malam. Namun begitu, dari semasa ke semasa, mereka menyesuaikan diri melalui pemerhatian, sambil mengekalkan elemen identiti asal mereka. Penemuan kajian menunjukkan bahawa proses penyesuaian tidak membawa kepada asimilasi sepenuhnya, sebaliknya menghasilkan pembentukan identiti hibrid. Hijabers secara aktif membina peranan mereka dalam subkultur ini dengan mengimbangi antara ekspresi diri dan nilai keagamaan, sekali gus membentuk semula norma sosial dalam komuniti tersebut. Terdapat tiga faktor utama dalam proses rundingan ini, iaitu rundingan budaya, globalisasidan identiti ruang. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada bidang komunikasi antara budaya dan kajian identiti dengan menonjolkan bagaimana individu mengemudi subkultur global. Ia juga menekankan kerumitan dalam pembentukan identiti dan

penyesuaian dalam persekitaran pelbagai budaya, serta memberikan pandangan penting untuk memahami proses rundingan budaya dalam kalangan komuniti belia bertaraf global.

Kata kunci: *penyesuaian budaya, hijabers, Nolja Gang, rundingan identiti, subkultur.*

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Introduction

K-Pop and K-HipHop, as parts of South Korean pop culture, have grown rapidly around the world and attracted fans from various cultural backgrounds. According to Jin (2016), the globalisation of K-Pop not only influences cultural shifts outside of Korea but also opens up spaces for fans from other countries to express themselves within a more inclusive and freer cultural framework. K-Pop, with its bold visual aesthetics and "idol" concepts prioritising appearance and self-expression, invites fans to adopt a more open lifestyle, despite facing substantial identity challenges for those from more conservative backgrounds (Jin, 2016). Meanwhile, Ko (2019) states that K-HipHop, as part of this global phenomenon, fosters a more expressive and free mode of social interaction. Within the K-HipHop culture, self-expression through music, clothing, and body movements strongly influences its followers, often leading to the formation of new subcultures. Ko also suggests that in K-HipHop communities, there is more freedom in terms of expressing one's identity, allowing fans to express themselves more freely through music and social activities, such as those in nightclubs (Ko, 2019).

According to Hjelm (2015), one crucial aspect of cultural adaptation is how individuals find a balance between retaining their original cultural values and adopting elements from foreign cultures. This is particularly relevant to hijabers (Muslim women who wear the hijab) in the Nolja Gang community, where they strive to maintain traditional values while adapting to the freer modes of expression present in the K-Pop and K-HipHop subcultures. The presence of hijabers in club settings, such as the K-Night Party organised by Nolja Gang, presents an unusual and visually striking contradiction. This contrast —between religious modesty and the permissive, nightlife-oriented environment— raises deep questions about cultural adaptation and identity negotiation.

The social phenomenon occurring within K-Pop and K-HipHop fan communities, such as the Nolja Gang community, provides insight into cultural adaptation dynamics, especially for individuals involved in a community that holds norms and practices significantly different from their cultural backgrounds. One such phenomenon is the involvement of hijabers in a community that frequently participates in activities, including

socialising in nightclubs, which is typically not aligned with the identity of hijabers. Nolja Gang, which gathers various K-Pop and K-HipHop fandoms, provides a space for fans to express themselves through music, dance, and social interaction, often taking place in nightclubs. Cultural adaptation in this community requires individuals to adjust to an environment that often has much freer modes of expression, particularly in terms of attire and social behaviours.

The term hijabers itself refers to a group of young Muslim women, particularly in urban Indonesia, who wear the hijab while actively engaging in fashion, digital media, and public cultural expression. As defined by Ida (2011), hijabers are typically middle-class, social media-savvy women who combine Islamic values with modern aesthetics through modest fashion and online identity construction. Mellyana and Hoon (2020) describe hijabers as agents of hybrid identity, negotiating between religious obligations and contemporary consumer culture, often participating in Instagram-based self-presentation and digital da'wah. Globally, Tarlo (2010) frames this trend as part of a broader "visible Muslim" movement, where young Muslim women redefine religious dress in stylish, culturally relevant ways. Collectively, these definitions position hijabers as a dynamic subcultural group that embodies the intersection of religion, gender, youth, and digital modernity.

Meanwhile, Nolja Gang is a DJ community group founded on 7 July 2019, origin and with its primary activities taking place in Bandung and officially named on 15 September 2019 by two initiators: Poppa and Arthur. The community was established to accommodate fans of both K-Pop and K-HipHop (KHH) who enjoy DJ music and club culture, but within a safe, community-based, and inclusive environment. Nolja Gang serves as a hybrid cultural platform where members of two distinct fandoms K-Pop (structured, idol-centred) and KHH (free, expressive), come together. It allows for cultural adaptation and compromise, breaking down rigid fandom divisions.

They are the first and only consistent organisers of K-Night Party in Indonesia, a club-based event where KHH and K-Pop music are played in a DJ party setting, mimicking Korean club culture. These events include: (1) DJ music performance, (2) Social interaction (open tables, dance, etc.), and (3) Participation from both KHH and K-Pop fandoms. The Nolja Gang events represent a unique form of cultural adaptation and negotiation. KHH fans (who are usually more liberal) and K-Pop fans (often more conservative and structured) find ways to coexist and respect each other's styles — even at parties in clubs where hijabers K-Pop fans are seen engaging actively. Nolja Gang is rooted in K-Pop and K-HipHop fandom, reflecting the influence of global pop culture on Indonesian youth. However, its members actively blend global aesthetics (like fashion, dance, music) with local and religious identities (such as hijab and Indonesian Muslim values). This condition makes Nolja Gang a case of glocalisation, where global and local cultures merge in unique ways.

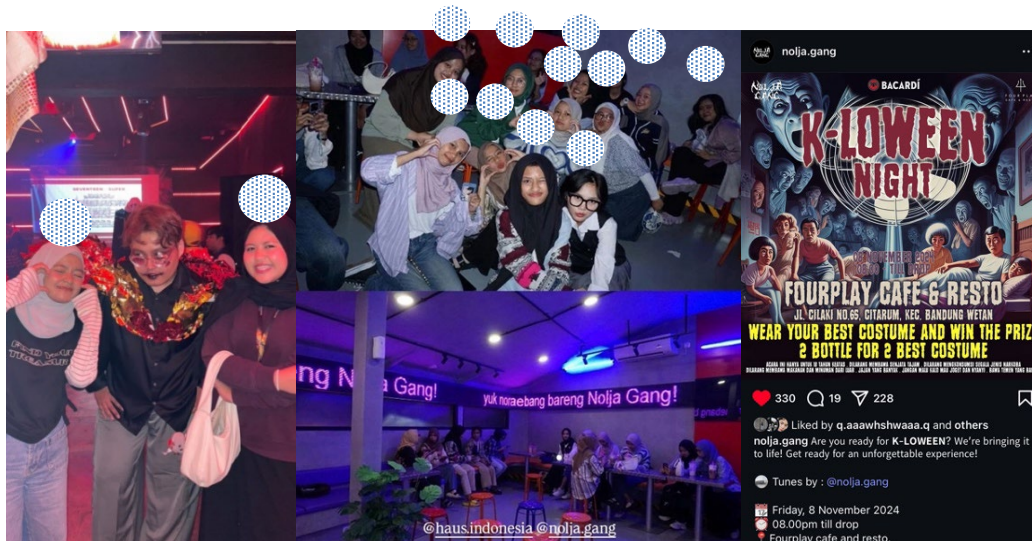


Figure 1 : Hijabers in Nolja Gang Nightclub Event

The phenomenon of cultural adaptation among hijabers in Nolja Gang raises important questions about the challenges and changes they face in communicating, lifestyle, and adjusting to social habits and norms that differ from what they originally knew. Müller (2017) expands on the concept of the hijabers in a global context, highlighting how the hijab functions as a cultural and political marker of identity, especially among young Muslim women in secular societies. While K-Pop and K-HipHop may serve as bridges between their original and new cultures, these subcultures also challenge fans to balance between the cultural values they hold and the freedom of expression found within the community. Thus, the research questions consist of: To analyse the processes of cultural adaptation and value negotiation between fandom communities with different ideologies and lifestyles.

1. To analyse the stages of cultural adaptation experienced by hijabers in Nolja Gang, from pre-contact, culture shock, initial adjustment, acculturation, to internalisation and the formation of a more inclusive hybrid identity.
2. To analyse the factors influencing in the cultural adaptation among hijabers.

This research becomes important to develop the globalisation, particularly in Korean pop culture, such as K-Pop and K-HipHop, has influenced lifestyles and social norms in various countries, including Indonesia. As part of cultural globalisation, this phenomenon creates opportunities for a deeper understanding of how individuals, particularly hijabers, adapt socially to a new culture that is vastly different from their cultural values. This research explores the possibility of cultural contradiction since hijabers represent traditional, religious, and modest identity in Indonesia, where Islam is the majority religion, while nightclubs, on the other hand, are often associated with westernised, liberal, and hedonistic lifestyles. The presence of hijabers within nightclub-based fandom events (like those held by Nolja Gang) creates a striking cultural tension that

challenges societal norms, making it a rich subject for intercultural adaptation and identity negotiation studies.

Thus, this research makes a significant contribution to understanding the impact of global culture on the formation of cultural identity and intercultural communication. As discussed by Berry (1997) in the theory of acculturation, the cultural adaptation process involves interactions between two different cultures, during which individuals experience changes in communication patterns, values, and identity (Berry, 1997). This study enriches the understanding of intercultural communication, especially within the context of evolving and changing social communities. This research also provides valuable insights into how subcultures emerge in communities like Nolja Gang, where elements of Korean culture are adopted by individuals from more conservative cultural backgrounds. Skrbis (2014) argues that such subcultures often serve as social experimentation spaces that allow individuals to explore their identities within the context of globalisation (Skrbis, 2014).

Moreover, in the field of communication studies in Indonesia, this phenomenon is significant as it provides insights into how cultural value differences between original and global cultures influence social interactions within subcultural groups, such as those in Nolja Gang. As Gudykunst (2004) states, effective intercultural communication depends on an individual's ability to navigate social and cultural differences through adaptive and inclusive communication skills (Gudykunst, 2004). This research plays a significant role in the field of Communication Studies, particularly in understanding intercultural communication and social identity. As Gudykunst (2004) emphasises, intercultural communication occurs when individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact, and social adaptation is a critical part of this process. It contributes to understanding how individuals navigate cultural differences, particularly in terms of verbal and non-verbal communication, and how they adapt to new social norms within their community.

The research objects offer a real-world setting to study Kim's Cultural Adaptation Theory, including how individuals face cultural dissonance, adjust to new group norms, and retain parts of their original identity, especially valuable for understanding how young Muslim women assert agency, reinterpret norms, and form hybrid identities. In addition, this study offers new insights into how identity construction occurs in a globally connected society. Schwartz (2010) asserts that cultural identity changes happen through social interactions with other cultures, and this is reflected in communities like Nolja Gang, where fans of K-Pop and K-HipHop from different cultural backgrounds interact and form a shared identity. This research provides a perspective on how hijabers can integrate new cultural elements with their original cultural values during this social adaptation process. Unlike commercial nightclub-goers, Nolja Gang events are often organised by fans, for fans, creating a safe, semi-private environment. This enables hijabers to participate without full exposure to public judgment, making it an ideal space to study negotiated conformity and self-expression. Therefore, studying Nolja Gang helps fill a research gap in Muslim youth culture, gender, and fandom studies in Southeast

Asia, specifically in Indonesia.

Literature Review

In the context of K-Pop, Jin (2016) highlights the global spread of K-Pop as a reflection of cultural hybridisation, where elements from Korean pop culture are reinterpreted and integrated into local cultures. The adaptation process for fans is not merely about assimilation but the reconstruction of identity within a globalised subculture. Ko (2019) further elaborates on this by focusing on K-HipHop, explaining how global fans engage with the genre not just as a musical style, but as a way of expressing resistance, freedom, and identity that transcends national boundaries.

Hjelm (2015) offers valuable insight into how individuals from more conservative cultural backgrounds, like hijabers, navigate the process of adaptation. He argues that cultural adaptation is not a one-way process of assimilation but a dynamic interaction where individuals negotiate their participation within a subculture without fully abandoning their cultural roots. This idea resonates with the experiences of hijabers in the Nolja Gang community, who must balance their traditional cultural values with the norms and expectations of the K-Pop and K-HipHop subcultures.

Moreover, Gudykunst (2004) asserts that successful intercultural communication is pivotal for adaptation. He suggests that cultural adaptation is a continuous and reciprocal process that involves learning, unlearning, and relearning communication patterns in different cultural settings. This theory provides a useful lens for examining how hijabers interact with other members of Nolja Gang, negotiating cultural boundaries while engaging in a global subculture. This view is significant for understanding the identity fluidity experienced by hijabers in Nolja Gang, who reconcile their personal beliefs with the freedoms offered by K-Pop and K-HipHop culture.

Recent scholarship continues to highlight the dynamic negotiation of identity among Indonesian youth engaged in global popular culture, particularly within K-Pop and K-HipHop fandoms. Nasution, Noffiyanti, and Rahmawati (2024) reveal how BTS fandom members in Lampung experience religious acculturation by integrating Korean cultural elements with Islamic values, echoing the hybrid negotiation seen among hijabers in club-based fan events like those of Nolja Gang. Similarly, Putri and Fazli (2023) emphasise the role of social identity in shaping conformity and behavior among Jakarta-based K-Pop fans, suggesting that fandom participation strengthens communal bonds even when external values may conflict. Handoko et al. (2024) further contribute by analyzing personality and idolatry among Indonesian K-Pop fans, showing how psychological traits influence fan engagement, useful for understanding value flexibility between KHH and K-Pop cultures. Muslimah et al. (2023) add that strong fan identity often correlates with prosocial behaviours, such as charitable action, which supports the idea that fandom can be a constructive social force beyond

entertainment. Finally, Khalifah et al. (2024) examine how the K-Pop community XKwavers integrates religious messaging into fan spaces, illustrating a deliberate strategy of reconciling faith and fandom. Together, these studies reinforce the notion that Indonesian youth—particularly female Muslim fans—engage in complex cultural adaptation processes where global fandom, religious practice, and subcultural identity intersect fluidly and strategically.

The study of cultural adaptation in globalised settings, particularly in subcultures like K-Pop and K-HipHop, has been a growing field of interest. Kim (2001) provides a foundational framework for understanding how individuals adapt to new cultural environments. Her theory of cultural adaptation highlights the roles of communication competence, social involvement, environmental conditions, and individual motivation in the adaptation process. Kim's model has been widely applied to explore cultural adaptation in various contexts, including among immigrants, students, and transnational communities.

This study uses Kim's Cultural Adaptation Theory (2001), which discusses the process of cultural adaptation experienced by individuals in a new cultural environment. Kim (2001) explains five stages in the cultural adaptation process:

1. Pre-contact Stage: The stage where individuals prepare for or anticipate the new culture.
2. Culture Shock: Individuals experience confusion, discomfort, or stress due to the pressure and cultural differences.
3. Initial Adjustment: Individuals begin to understand the new culture through observation and firsthand experience.
4. Acculturation and Integration: Individuals start to adopt norms and values from the new culture, integrating them into their daily lives.
5. Internalization and Growth: Individuals feel comfortable interacting in the new environment, developing a hybrid identity that combines elements of both cultures.

In addition to Kim's theory, ideas from other scholars are also relevant to this topic. Gudykunst's (2004) theory of social adaptation explains the psychological and social impacts of cultural adjustment. It shows that successful adaptation depends on an individual's ability to handle cultural differences through effective intercultural communication. Schwartz's (2010) theory on cultural identity change also contributes to this discussion. It highlights how people often experience identity shifts during adaptation. This process can lead to a hybrid identity that combines both original and new cultural elements. Thus, in regard to analysing the cultural adaptation, this research follows the theoretical framework mentioned below in Figure 2.

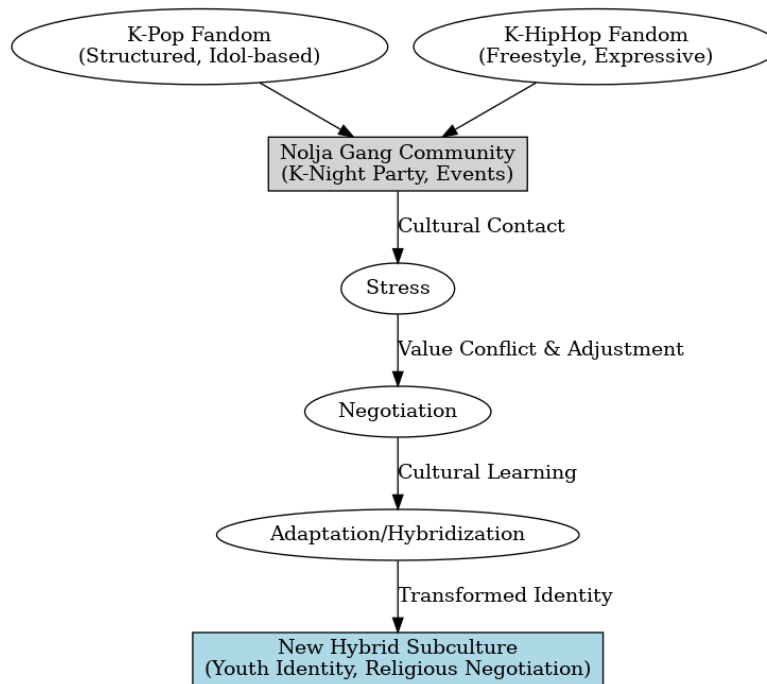


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework

Research Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative phenomenological approach to deeply understand the subjective experiences of hijab-wearing members (hijabers) in the Nolja Gang community as they navigate cultural adaptation within nightlife spaces influenced by K-Pop and K-HipHop cultures. This approach is especially suitable for uncovering the nuanced meanings individuals assign to their adaptation journey. In this study, the researcher employs a constructivist paradigm within a qualitative framework, using a phenomenological approach to explore the adaptation processes between K-Pop and K-HipHop fandoms in the Nolja Gang community in Bandung. The constructivist stance assumes that reality is socially constructed through experience and interaction, aligning with the research objective to interpret the cultural negotiations among youth subcultures. The number of active Nolja Gang members who consistently participate directly in community activities is seven. Among them, four are Muslim women who wear the hijab and meet the criteria as informants. The informant characteristics describe in table 1.

Table 1 Informant Characteristis

No.	Name (Intial)	Profile	Interview Date	Interview Method
1.	R	27 years old, fan of EXO-L (2016–present), joined in 2022. Attended over 10 events.	23 May 2025	Face-to-face interview
2.	S	30 years old, fan of Agashe – GOT7 (2016–2025), Infinite (2012–present), joined in 2022. Attended	24 May 2025	Face-to-face interview

		over 5 events.		
3.	L	27 years old, fan of ARMY (2016–present), Dreamers (2022–present), joined in 2019. Attended over 5 events.	14 Apr 2025 (1st interview), 26 May 2025 (2nd via video call)	Face-to-face and video call
4.	A.	25 years old, fan of EXO-L (2015–present), NCTzen (2017–present), joined in 2023. Attended over 5 events.	7 June 2025	Face-to-face and video call

Source: Researcher Analysis

The main subjects consist of long-time fandom members actively engaged in both fandom culture and Nolja Gang events, selected using purposive sampling to ensure depth and relevance. The informants in this study were targeting individuals who actively participate in the Nolja Gang community and represent both K-Pop and K-HipHop (KHH) fandom cultures. A total of four key informants were chosen based on their relevance to the research focus, including long-term fans, event organizers, and members who play a central role in the cultural interactions at Nolja Gang events. The selected participants are female hijab-wearing fans, which is a significant aspect of the study due to its focus on identity negotiation in club-based fandom environments. The informants were also distinguished by their levels of involvement, with some serving as active contributors in event planning, such as K-Night Party, and others as core members of online and offline fan communities. Their diverse backgrounds enabled the researcher to explore how cultural, religious, and subcultural values are adapted and negotiated within a shared hybrid space. This strategic selection allowed for a rich phenomenological understanding of how youth construct meaning through their participation in global fandoms while navigating local socio-religious expectations.

The data collection used semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation over six months during community events, which allowed the researcher to directly witness social behaviours, adaptation practices, and group dynamics. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, involving: (1) coding: identifying recurring themes related to adaptation stages, (2) categorisation: grouping those themes into broader categories reflecting Kim's (2001) cultural adaptation framework, and (4) interpretation: relating findings to established theoretical models (Kim, Gudykunst, Schwartz). To ensure data credibility, the study employed multiple strategies such as member checking, triangulation, and audit trails. The rigorous methodology allows for a nuanced understanding of how subcultural identities are negotiated within a hybrid fan space influenced by global pop culture and local cultural-religious dynamics.

Results and Discussion

The findings show the study on the social adaptation experiences of hijab-wearing Muslim women (hijabers) within the Nolja Gang community, particularly in the context of participating in nightclub-based fandom

activities. The analysis follows the framework of Kim's (2001) Cultural Adaptation Theory, which outlines five stages of adaptation. The data, drawn from in-depth interviews and extended participant observation, reveal how hijabers navigate cultural contradictions between their religious identity and the liberal values often associated with nightlife and global pop culture. Through a process of negotiation, adjustment, and identity reconstruction, the participants demonstrate both resistance and adaptation, highlighting the complexity of cultural identity in a glocalised youth environment. The discussion further connects these findings to existing literature on cultural hybridity, Muslim youth, and subcultural belonging.

The findings show that cultural identity is fluid, and adaptation is not total assimilation but negotiated hybridisation; the community actively shape their identity, resisting full submission to dominant norms. The findings are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.
Analysis of Result Findings of Cultural Adaptation

Adaption Stage	Description	Key Participant Quotes	Interpretation
1. Pre-contact	Initial anticipation, anxiety about acceptance in a new cultural space (e.g. nightclubs)	"I was worried... would I be judged..." – R "I was anxious about how I would fit in..." – A	Participants hold conservative values and fear judgment; they mentally prepare for cultural dissonance.
2. Culture Shock	Discomfort with unfamiliar norms like dress codes, drinking, and open expression	"I usually wear more covered clothing..." – L "It was overwhelming..." – A	Cultural contrast causes emotional and psychological stress; norms clash with upbringing.
3. Initial Adjustment	Beginning to learn and adapt through observation and participation	"I started to get used to the new terms..." – R "There was no judgment... I felt more relaxed." – L "I feel to belong to the community." – S	Participants start understanding the group dynamics and feel less judged.
4. Acculturation & Integration	Selective adoption of new norms while maintaining core values	"Although I started to take off my hijab... still modest" – L "I stayed true to my roots..." – A	Participants blend cultural elements, showing active negotiation—not blind assimilation.
5. Internalization & Growth	Development of hybrid identity and full participation with a sense of belonging	"I began to consider it as a place to meet friends..." – R "Now I feel like I belong here..." – Ariana "It's become place of comfort" – S	Participants achieve identity fusion: confident in both original and adapted identities.

Source: Researcher Analysis

The table above describes the findings of this study, which reveals a dynamic process of cultural adaptation experienced by hijab-wearing members of the Nolja Gang community as they navigate the nightlife subculture. Through the lens of Kim's Cultural Adaptation Theory, participants were shown to progress through five distinct stages: beginning with pre-contact anxiety and culture shock upon first exposure to nightclub environments, followed by initial adjustment marked by observation and cautious participation. As they grew more comfortable, hijabers selectively adopted new norms while retaining core elements of their religious and cultural identity, a phase identified as acculturation. Eventually, this process led to the internalisation of a hybrid identity in which participants felt a sense of belonging within the community without fully abandoning their values. This journey underscores the agency of the hijabers in actively negotiating identity rather than passively assimilating, illustrating the nuanced ways in which religious expression and global youth culture intersect. The detailed phase is described as follows:

Pre-contact Stage

At this initial stage, individuals have yet to immerse themselves in the new cultural environment and are beginning to shape their assumptions about it. Two of four informants shared feelings of uncertainty regarding their acceptance within the community, particularly due to noticeable cultural contrasts such as clothing styles and social norms typically found in nightclubs. Their preparation was minimal, relying on limited information about what to expect. Among their concerns was the fear of being socially judged, especially their appearance as hijab-wearing women.

R stated, *"I was worried that if I went to a Nolja Gang event with my fashion or with my hijab, would I be judged or seen as strange or out of place?"* (R, 27 y.o, May 23th, 2025). Similarly, A shared, *"I was anxious about how I would fit in because I was used to being in a more conservative environment, and this new world was very different for me"* (A, 25 y.o, June 7th 2025). This indicates the early stage of Kim cultural adaptation phase. This statements show where informants form expectations and concerns about the new cultural environment.

Culture Shock

At this stage, individuals experience confusion, discomfort, or even stress due to cultural differences. Informants revealed initial discomfort, particularly in adapting to nightclub behaviors that involve freedom of expression, alcohol consumption, and much freer dress norms.

L describes, *"I was initially worried because I usually wear more covered clothing, but in the nightclub, people were dressed very freely, even some wore revealing clothes"* (L, 27 y.o, April 14th, 2025). A also expressed discomfort, saying, *"It was overwhelming at first, seeing how freely people were expressing*

themselves. I had never been in a setting like that” (A, 25 y.o, June 7th 2025). This experience shows the shock and discomfort felt by individuals who find themselves in an environment with significantly different cultural norms.

Initial Adjustment

At this point, individuals begin to familiarise themselves with the new culture by observing and engaging directly with it. They start to grasp the community’s routines and social norms, gradually learning how to communicate and interact effectively with other members.

R explained, *“I started to get used to the new terms used in Nolja Gang, such as ‘open table,’ which I learned is the same as making a reservation at a cafe”* (R, 27 y.o, May 23th, 2025). L added, *“I started to notice that there was no judgment about how we dressed. It was refreshing, and I felt more relaxed”* (L, 27 y.o, April 14th, 2025).. This illustrates the early adjustment process. The statement show where individuals begin to align with new cultural symbols and norms.

Acculturation and Integration

At this stage, individuals begin to adopt new norms and values, though they still retain some elements of their original culture. They start to feel comfortable and actively participate in the community while maintaining personal boundaries that align with their identity.

L shared, *“Although I started to take off my hijab, I still maintained my modest dressing style, more closed off compared to others who are freer in their fashion choices”* (L, 27 y.o, April 14th, 2025).. A also commented, *“I realised I could still embrace this new world and stay true to my roots by making small adjustments, like how I dressed and what I chose to engage in”* (A, 25 y.o, June 7th 2025). This shows the integration process, where individuals combine both new and original cultural values

Internalisation and Growth

At this stage, individuals feel more comfortable interacting in the new environment and develop a hybrid identity that integrates elements from both cultures. Informants no longer feel alienated and begin to see the Nolja Gang community as part of their life.

R described, *“I felt more comfortable in Nolja Gang, and I began to consider it as a place where I meet friends who share the same interests”* (R, 27 y.o, May 23th, 2025). Similarly, A explained, *“Now, I feel like I belong*

here. I've learned to blend my values with the values of this community in a way that feels authentic to me" (A, 25 y.o, June 7th 2025). This indicates that the informants have reached a stage where they are fully integrated and accepted in the community.

The results above describes the social adaptation of hijab-wearing Muslim women (hijabers) who participated in nightclub-based K-Pop and K-HipHop fandom activities within the Nolja Gang community. Their lived experiences of entering and adjusting to a space that culturally contrasts with their religious identity align closely with Kim's (2001) Cultural Adaptation Theory. Kim conceptualises adaptation as a continuous, dynamic process involving psychological and social adjustment as individuals interact with a new cultural environment. This theory outlines five stages: pre-contact, culture shock, initial adjustment, acculturation, and internalisation.

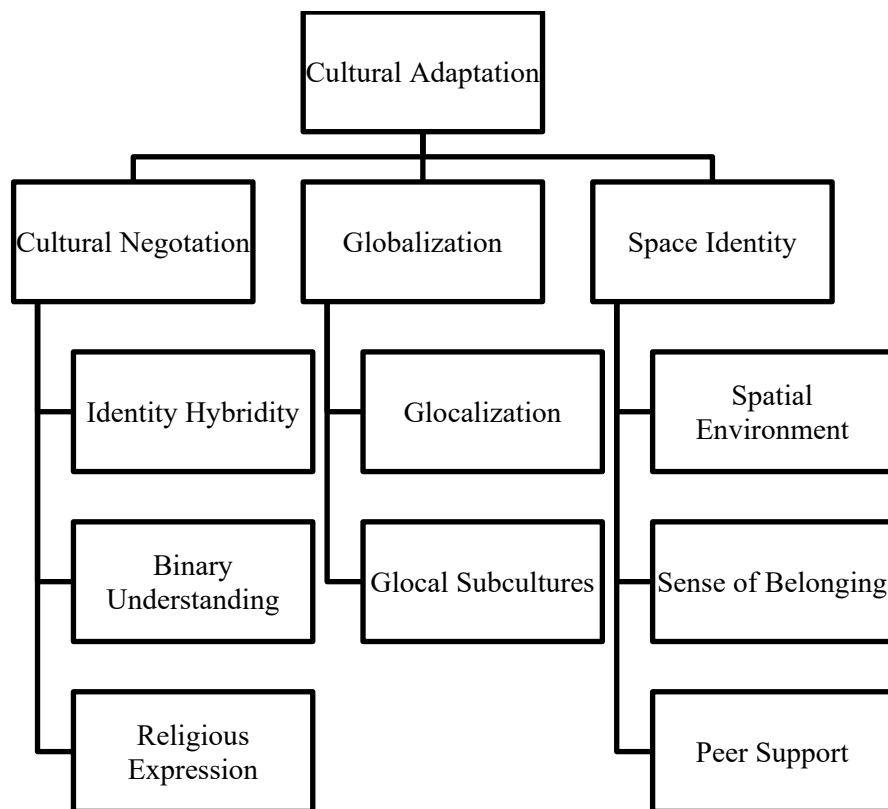
In the pre-contact stage, hijaber participants felt anticipation, anxiety, and uncertainty. They were unsure how they would be perceived in the nightlife environment. These feelings came from their religious upbringing, which views nightclubs as morally inappropriate. This supports Kim's idea that people bring cultural values and expectations into new settings (Kim, 2001). Culture shock became clear when participants entered the nightclub for the first time. They faced unfamiliar behaviors like liberal dress codes, alcohol use, and open physical expression. This discomfort reflects Furnham and Bochner's (1986) view that cultural shock comes from clashes between core values and new social norms. The hijabers reported internal conflict and identity tension. This mirrors the dissonance Kim describes in this stage. In the initial adjustment stage, participants started observing and joining in. They slowly made sense of the group's cultural practices. Some began to change their style or behavior to fit in, while still keeping religious boundaries. This supports Kim's argument that adaptation is an active process of negotiation—not passive absorption (Kim, 2001).

During the acculturation phase, hijabers selectively adopt new behaviours—such as modifying their fashion while retaining modesty—demonstrating a hybrid approach to identity. This stage resonates with Berry's (1997) concept of "integration," where individuals maintain aspects of their original culture while incorporating new elements. Importantly, the participants did not wholly assimilate but engaged in strategic cultural blending, a finding supported by Choi (2017), who observed similar identity negotiations among Muslim women in global youth cultures. Finally, in the internalisation stage, the hijabers reported feeling a sense of belonging and comfort within the Nolja Gang community. They no longer viewed the space as foreign but as an environment where they could express themselves without completely abandoning their core values. This reflects Kim's view that long-term interaction with a host culture can lead to the internalisation of a new, more adaptive identity while maintaining psychological balance.

The results highlight the theory's applicability beyond traditional intercultural migration contexts, extending it to youth-driven subcultures shaped by globalisation, religion, and identity politics. The results support the idea that adaptation is not linear assimilation, but an ongoing, context-sensitive process of identity negotiation. Within the concepts, it's talked about the relations on how the identity is built amongst the religious expression. The hijabers face inner conflict between religious values and the aesthetic/liberal norms of nightlife and fandom culture. However, they do not entirely abandon their beliefs; instead, they negotiate identity by selectively modifying behaviour and dress depending on the space. This confirms earlier findings in identity studies that mentioned young Muslims increasingly form hybrid identities, balancing faith and modernity. The Nolja Gang community becomes a site of cultural negotiation, not rebellion. These arguments explains additional concepts within the cultural adaptation theory described in Figure 3.

Figure 3.

Key Negotiation Factors in Nolja Gang Community Cultural Adaptation



Source: Researcher Analysis

The figure above describes the negotiation factors, illustrating that cultural identity is not static but fluid and situational, particularly when influenced by global pop culture. There are three main negotiation factors, which are cultural negotiation, globalisation and space identity. Each of the negotiation factors consists of specific

characteristics within the community. With regards to the research, the hijab becomes a unique marker for adaptation and negotiation.

Scholars such as Hall (1996) argue that identity is formed through ongoing processes of positioning and re-positioning, especially within changing cultural landscapes. The participants' ability to balance visible markers of faith (such as the hijab) with participation in expressive fandom activities reflects a form of identity hybridity, a concept explored by Bhabha (1994) and later contextualised by Parker & Song (2007), who emphasised how minority youth creatively blend local traditions with global cultural flows. Similarly, Mahmood (2005) and Moors (2007) highlight how Muslim women do not passively conform to religious norms but actively reinterpret them in modern contexts, including fashion and performance.

Their experience challenges binary understandings of religiosity and modernity, aligning with findings by Chittick & Fiala (2016) and Gökarıksel & Secor (2010), which reveal that young Muslim women often reconcile their faith with modern lifestyles, including participation in consumer and media cultures. In the context of K-pop fandoms, Hwang & Song (2019) showed how Indonesian Muslim youth engage in selective cultural adoption while preserving moral and religious boundaries. Thus, the study reveals a complex yet cohesive relationship between cultural identity and religious expression, in which both are continuously reshaped by personal values, social acceptance and community dynamics. As illustrated in previous works (e.g., Siraj, 2011; Jouili & Amir-Moazami, 2006), religious identity can coexist with modern self-expression, particularly when situated within supportive peer environments and subcultures that allow for negotiated belonging.

The research findings also illustrate a strong correlation between the forces of globalization and the emergence of glocal subcultures, as exemplified by the Nolja Gang community. Globalization, particularly through the spread of Korean pop culture (K-Pop and K-HipHop), has significantly influenced youth culture in Indonesia, shaping tastes, aesthetics, and social behaviour. This reflects broader findings by Iwabuchi (2002) and Jin (2016), who highlight how Korean cultural exports have transcended national borders and been localised in different socio-cultural settings. These cultural flows enable young Indonesians, including hijab-wearing Muslim women, to engage with global entertainment trends while still rooted in their local and religious identities. The Nolja Gang thus serves as a site of glocalisation, a concept originally introduced by Robertson (1995), where global cultural elements are not passively consumed but actively reinterpreted in ways that make sense within a specific cultural and religious context.

The hijabers in the study exemplify this glocal dynamic by selectively adopting global fashion and fandom practices while simultaneously negotiating the boundaries imposed by their religious beliefs. This aligns with Heryanto (2008) and Baulch (2007), who found that Indonesian youth often adapt global pop culture in ways

that blend it with local traditions, producing hybrid cultural identities. Their adaptation to nightclub settings—traditionally associated with Western liberalism—demonstrates how global subcultures can be localized through personal and collective meaning-making, rather than through wholesale cultural assimilation. Research by Kraidy (2005) and Siraj (2011) supports this, showing that cultural hybridity emerges through negotiated performances of self within complex identity landscapes.

Rather than rejecting their cultural or religious roots, the participants in this study blend global influences with local values, producing a uniquely Indonesian expression of global youth culture. This dynamic interaction challenges the assumption that globalisation leads to cultural homogenization. Instead, it confirms the perspective advanced by Appadurai (1996) and Tomlinson (1999) that globalisation often leads to the proliferation of new, context-specific cultural forms. The Nolja Gang case, therefore, illustrates how globalisation does not erase local identities but fosters hybrid identities, where young people navigate modernity, faith, and global media through fluid, culturally situated practices.

The findings of this study underscore a strong correlation between spatial environment, a sense of belonging, and peer support in the adaptation process of hijabers within the Nolja Gang community. The nightclub, as an unconventional and often socially contested space for Muslim women, is redefined through the lens of community-based fandom, becoming not a site of cultural conflict but one of identity negotiation and emotional safety. This transformation is enabled by the presence of a supportive peer group, which fosters psychological comfort and reduces the stress typically associated with cultural boundary-crossing. This supports hooks' (1990) conceptualisation of space as more than physical, serving as a platform for resistance, empowerment, and self-expression. Similarly, Tuan's (1977) notion of *topophilia* highlights how emotional and social interactions can attach meaning and comfort to spaces that would otherwise feel alienating.

The study also resonates with Wilkinson (2008), who found that youth subcultures create safe zones of belonging where marginalised individuals can form collective identities through shared cultural participation. This is particularly relevant for hijabers who navigate dual expectations—of religious modesty and fandom expression. In this context, peer support functions as a buffer against external social judgment, enabling participants to negotiate and affirm their identities more freely. Research by McMillan & Chavis (1986) further affirms that a sense of community—including emotional safety, membership, and shared values—plays a vital role in psychological well-being and social integration.

Moreover, Yuval-Davis (2006) emphasises that belonging is not just about physical inclusion, but also about emotional connection and mutual recognition within a social environment. This aligns with the hijabers' experiences in the Nolja Gang, where mutual affirmation and cultural similarity foster a strong sense of community and trust. These interactions echo findings from Miller-Idriss (2009), who documented how

subcultural spaces provide young people the ability to explore complex identities through collective symbolism and safe experimentation.

Therefore, the Nolja Gang community provides more than a site for leisure; it becomes a social space of cultural adaptation, where peer affirmation and communal identity empower hijabers to navigate modern youth culture while retaining their religious and cultural values. This highlights the essential role of emotionally secure, peer-driven environments in shaping adaptive identity processes, particularly for those negotiating cross-cultural or hybrid cultural spaces.

In the end, the adaptation process goes beyond mere assimilation. It involves active resistance, self-redefinition, and identity reformation. Hijabers don't just absorb cultural changes, they actively negotiate their participation in the community, challenging the notion that adaptation leads to conformity. Their journey represents a dynamic negotiation, where they selectively embrace aspects of the subculture while holding onto their original values.

Conclusion

The social adaptation process of hijabers in the Nolja Gang community, explored through Kim's (2001) cultural adaptation theory, illustrates the complex negotiation between maintaining cultural values and adapting to a new social environment. Hijabers in Nolja Gang navigate the tension between their conservative cultural background and the more liberal norms of K-Pop and K-HipHop, forming a hybrid identity that selectively integrates elements from both cultures.

This research emphasises the agency of hijabers in shaping their identity, highlighting the fluidity of identity in multicultural contexts. The adaptation process reveals that cultural changes are not simply imposed but actively shaped by individuals. The findings offer a new perspective on identity formation in globalised subcultures, showing that adaptation is a complex, dialogical process rather than a straightforward assimilation. There are three main negotiation factors, which are cultural negotiation, globalisation and space identity. The cultural negotiation factors consist of identity hybridity, binary understanding and religious expression, the globalisation factors consist of glocalisation and glocal subcultures, while the space identity factors consist of spatial environment, sense of belonging and peer support.

In conclusion, this study highlights the adaptive resilience of hijabers, demonstrating that cultural adaptation is a negotiated, hybridising process that allows individuals to reconcile traditional values with new cultural influences. This work contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural identity formation in an increasingly globalised world, showcasing the diversity and complexity of intercultural adaptation

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Biodata

Naufal Ghani was born and raised in Bandung, Indonesia. He finished his bachelor's degree in Telkom University. As his interest on Korean Wave, social, and entertainment, he expressed it not only by active in various activities in fandom and communities, but also through research in academic. He believed that media, either new, digital, or conventional are the platforms for people to express themselves. He's not only being a fan as a hobby, more further, a way to seek, to search, and to always looking for anything deeper than anyone could. Looking for a different perspective with a different eyes.

Idola Perдини Putri, Ph.D is a lecturer at the School of Communication and Business, Telkom University. Since April 2025, she has held the position of Director of the Postgraduate and Advanced Learning Directorate, where she oversees four units: the Postgraduate School, International Class Program, Center for E-Learning and Open Education, and the Language Center. She began her career at Telkom University in 2011 and has since been actively involved in various community service initiatives. Her projects have emphasised community and village empowerment, including the development of small and medium enterprise (SME) competencies, child sexual abuse prevention, and cultural heritage conservation. Her academic expertise centers on media studies, with a specific focus on film and the creative industries. She is particularly interested in visual innovation, identity development, and the preservation of film heritage.