EDUCATION THROUGH ART IN VIRTUAL COMMUNITY: STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS VALUES THROUGH ILLUSTRATION ARTWORKS

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Abstract

Purpose: The article analyzes the illustration artworks produced by Virtual Community Hijabographic as a media to disseminate religious values. Hijabographic as one of the Muslim women's communities in Indonesia is one of the pioneer virtual communities that creates various illustration artworks aimed to perform *da'wah* on social media Instagram, also as a media to ingrain Islamic values.

Methodology: The primary method is virtual ethnography; we use it to uncover social interactions between members of the Hijabographic community that creates a natural response and a stimulus for community members to express it in the form of illustration artworks published through social media.

Result: The results showed that the illustration artworks by Hijabographic are medium to achieve educational goals, in this case, is religious education. Illustration artwork is not merely created to fulfill the purpose of art, but also as a tool to find the self-fulfillment of illustrators in performing *da'wah* (proselytization), transmitting Islamic values and to foster awareness of other Muslim females to become pious individuals.

Applications: This research can be used by virtual communities, scholars and visual arts learners.

Novelty/Originality: Building on the insight that illustration artworks by virtual community Hijabographic become a new model to perform *da'wah* on social media. These illustration artworks influence a member's aesthetic experience and personal's understanding of strengthening Islamic values.

Keywords: *Virtual Community, Illustration, Islamic Values, Religious Community, Virtual Ethnography.*

INTRODUCTION

In the past 10 years, religious practices initiated by young people, including Muslims, through internet intermediaries have opened space for anyone to be able to convey ideas through social media (Slama & Barendregt, 2018). Muslim women around the world who want to participate in *da'wah* use various methods that are more relevant to the characteristics of social media users to represent themselves as more modern and open-minded citizens. The active involvement of Muslim women in various organizations and communities is an effort so that they get equal rights and recognition in the community. Muslim women actively took part in various *da'wah* (proselytization) activities that in the previous decades were carried out by ulama and preachers who had backgrounds in Islamic educational institutions (Burhanudin, 2004).

The terminology of *da'wah* then develops not only to the extent of oratory and recitation conducted in mosques or other Islamic institutions. The internet was first introduced in Indonesia in the 1990s (Hill, David T. & Sen, 2005) which was followed by the rapid increase of smartphones and various social media platforms (Barendregt, 2011). Muslim youth actively involved in various *da'wah* activities by optimizing their expertise in the field of technology. They use social media to reach a wider target audience.

In Indonesia, many emerging Muslim women's communities were initiated through social media Instagram, or also referred to as virtual communities. These communities are not only intended to support religious activities such as *da'wah* to spread Islamic values but also to support and build economic power (Baulch & Pramiyanti, 2018). Various campaigns and discussions in online forums are organized by virtual communities to promote women's empowerment. This is an actualization of the belief that every Muslim should do *da'wah*.

Lengauer in his research stated that religious community terminology in Indonesia is a social formation that emerges at the crossroads of higher education, religious and social care, and technological development (2018). In Indonesia, religious groups that actively use the internet are religious groups in urban areas. These groups acknowledge that internet use is a part of daily life (Humeira & Sarwono, 2019). This is the factor that drives the emergence of virtual communities in Indonesia, which is intended to support religious practices (*da'wah*). One of the religious groups in Indonesia who decides to use Instagram as part of their religious practice is Hijabographic.

Hijabographic is a Muslim female community in Indonesia that has a mission to perform *da'wah* and to disseminate Islamic values through visual communication media published in social media (Nugrahani, et al, 2018). Since 2013, this virtual community has created more than 2,000 illustration artworks published on Instagram. All of the illustration

artworks produced by members contain religious values and messages. This article will reveal how the illustration artworks by Hijabographic community can be a media to ingrain Islamic values for Muslim women.

EDUCATION THROUGH ART in VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

The basic concept of art education is divided into two categories, art in education and education through art. The first concept of art in education was originally put forward by the essentialist group who considered that essential art material was given to each individual. According to this concept, artistic expertise such as painting, singing, dancing and so on need to be taught to individuals in the context of the development and preservation of art. This means that educational institutions and educators have a role to pass down, develop, and preserve various types of arts to their students. The second concept is the concept of education through art. Based on this concept, art is seen as a means or tool to achieve educational goals and not for art itself. Art is used in formal and non-formal learning to encourage the development of students optimally, creating a rational and emotional balance. Art education is essentially a process of human formation through art. Art education, in general, serves to develop the ability of each individual to find fulfillment in life, to transmit cultural heritage, expand social awareness and as a way to increase knowledge (UNESCO, 2006; Triyanto, 2017).

Naturally, art is intended to stimulate the emergence of aesthetic experiences. Education through the arts will strengthen personal aesthetic sensitivity. To realize a more cooperative, inclusive and intelligent world, aesthetic experience as an infusion of humanity advances other critical values that tend to open up to the world in other ways. Herbert Read in Keel (1969)claims that education through art can make quite a positive difference in the way humans are connected to the world. Therefore, the educational process should develop the potential of learners to create something beautiful and give satisfaction. Something that is created can be tangible ideas or works that can be theoretical or practical. Art is seen as a media for the development of creativity (Salam, 2014; Sugiarto, 2019). Rohidi (2014) said that as a model of knowledge, visual art is a model of knowledge with art as the most important element. Functionally, art is related to other cultural elements, especially to meet human needs for the beauty that can be enjoyed visually.

Education through art is not only applied in educational institutions, but also through informal institutions and communities. Community-based art is any art created to involve certain communities in greater dialogue to produce positive change (Cohen-Cruz, 2005). Community-based arts can be categorized into informal learning. Sharma & Raghuvanshi (2019) claim that informal learning is a developing and innovative tool in education. Some informal learning methods that include independent learning approaches, practical sessions, and interactive communication through the creation of informal spaces are needed to develop the capacity of learning knowledge and skills. This is in line with the development of internet technology, which facilitates the presence of the art community through virtual spaces. The world of virtual reality has changed human understanding of reality itself, especially social reality. Social reality is an expression of what is called social action, social interaction, social communication. The presence of a social world facilitated by internet technology that produces a virtual interaction creates what is called a virtual community (Piliang, 2017).

Virtual communities are defined as a collection of individuals or business partners who interact around shared interests, where interactions are at least partially supported and/or mediated by technology and guided by several protocols or norms (Porter, 2006). Porter said that there is no single typology of a virtual community which is then widely supported. Researchers tend to categorize virtual communities based on one variable that is very important for their discipline or based on the study being done. This is in line with what was stated by Komito that the term community means many things to many people, and it will be difficult to find a definition of community that will be widely accepted (Komito, 1998). According to Wachter et al., successful virtual communities encourage, seek, and support member-generated content so that there is a personal interest in the discussions. They also use networking technology to provide many ways of communication so that members can discuss content and exchange ideas. The communities can take a role as an organizing agent by increasing the quality of information, products, or services provided to the members. In virtual communities, individuals are the participation of knowledge sharing activities (Wachter, Gupta, & Quaddus, 2000; Wegener & Leimeister, 2012; Jinyang, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

The primary method is virtual ethnography (Hine, 1994; Boellstorff et al, 2012), we use it to uncover social interactions between members of the Hijabographic community that generate a natural response and creates a stimulus for community members to express it in the form of illustration artworks published through social media. The technique used is participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document tracking (Rohidi, 2012; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Participatory observations were made by researchers directly involved and conducted direct observations as participants of activities held online and offline by the Hijabographic community. The in-depth interview involved the founder and members of the Hijabographic community, which aimed to explore experiences and uncover aesthetic responses resulting from interactions between members of the Hijabograhic community. The document data collection technique is done by tracing the posting of illustration artworks and activities recorded in electronic newspapers, blogs, Instagram and YouTube.

RELIGIOUS VALUES IN ILLUSTRATION ARTWORKS OF HIJABOGRAPHIC

Illustration artworks produced by Hijabographic members are content that is published through the official Hijabographic account on Instagram. Determination of illustration artworks as a medium for ingraining Islamic values is motivated by the belief that this method is suitable with the character of the primary target audience that comes from young Muslim generations, who are more familiar with creating content that not only relies on aesthetic aspects but also the quality of the message delivered. Riza Savianti (31) as the founder of the community said that Hijabographic members have the same motivations, the desire to be able to contribute to visual *da'wah-*. Visual *da'wah* is a term used by Muslim youth who use Instagram social media as the main platform to perform *da'wah*. Adjusting to Instagram's characteristics that rely on visual appearance to be able to attract the attention of the audience, special treatment and consideration are needed to develop creative content. Nisa (2018) calls this as creative *da'wah*. This is in line with the proselytizing methods taught by The Prophet Muhammad, always prioritized on communicating with the language and style that was easier to comprehend (Usman, Sailin, & Mutalib, 2019).

Figure 1: Some illustration artworks published by Hijabographic community

Source: www.instagram/hijabographic

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hijabographic periodically arranges to publish illustration artwork produced by members through its official account on Instagram. Hijabographic determines a different theme or issues each week. Therefore, illustration artworks published should pass the selection process. so that the work can be following the specific theme and issue carried by Hijabograhic. Based on the results of interviews with illustrators in the Hijabographic community, it is known that the illustration artwork produced by fellow community members is both an inspiration and a trigger for being more productive. Each new illustration artworks that are published provide new knowledge for members regarding the techniques and media used to work. As for the audience who enjoys illustration artworks through the Hijabographic Instagram post, appreciates their artworks as modern and intelligent visual expressions. The resulting illustration artworks are dominated by digital techniques, which require special skills and mastery in the field of graphic design. This shows that along with technology development, more Muslim women can optimize technology such as graphics applications to create high-quality artworks.

If analysed based on the aesthetic form theory, illustration artworks by Hijabographic community have a distinctive style. Every professional illustrator has a style that is specific to each work produced. Style is a unique visual language that identifies the distinguishing characteristics of each illustrator. Style can also be defined as certain features or qualities that determine the relevance of the type of illustration created. Style ultimately determines one's placement in the genre of visual illustration (Witabora, 2012; Male, 2007; Salam, 2017). From the structural aspects of the illustration, lines, colours, and features used to have a distinctive character, which makes the illustration artworks by Hijaboraphic are easy to recognize. The structure of illustration artworks consists of the main drawing elements that feature female figures wear hijab, a background that displays a certain environmental atmosphere with decorative elements, a text that complements the illustration artwork with a choice of handwriting typography. The lines used are dominated by curved lines, organic expressions, bright colours with soft tones. The texture that appears is light texture, which makes these works of illustration simple, but rich in the use of color and expression simultaneously. The subject activity described is not far from daily activities such as reading, worshipping, and learning.
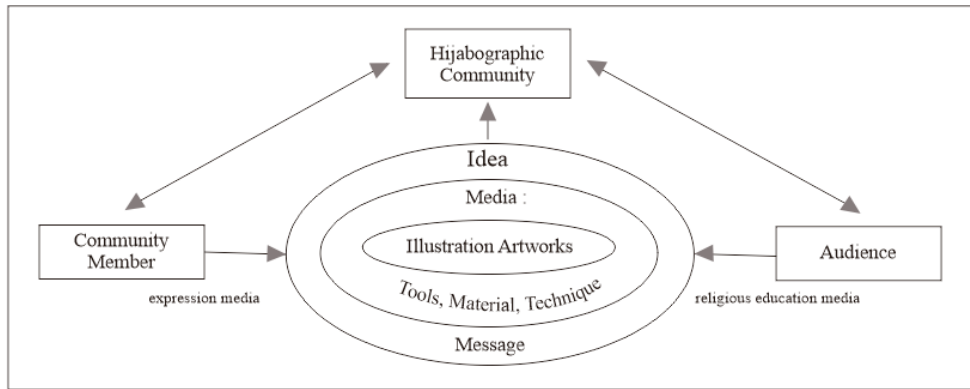
Figure 2: Illustration artworks by Hijabographic as a media of expression and religious education

Based on two empirical facts related to the use of Instagram social media and mastery of graphic software, it shows that Hijabographic as a virtual community can spread religious values with a future orientation. They master the online spheres of new information and communication technologies, encourage the reinterpretation of Islamic practices in the light of digital media, and attract other social media users who are eager to share, participate, and invest in the production of mutual spaces of dialogue (Lengauer, 2018). Hijabographic facilitates community members to be involved in creating illustration artworks. Members respond to every issue, discourse and invitation from Hijabographic as a form of visual expression, which allows members to be able to improve their skills and techniques in producing new illustration artworks that contain religious messages. When Hijabographic published member's illustration artworks, it was not only the media of expression for Hijabographic members but also as a media of religious education for Hijabographic's target audience which reached 39,600 followers on Instagram. This fact confirms that education through art is an idea that fits the characteristics of the younger generation, who are more familiar with visual-based content. Through illustration artworks, religious values can be conveyed very well by the Hijabographic community.

CONCLUSIONS

Muslim women in the Hijabographic community believe that motivating each other through their Instagram posts is a way to perform *da'wah*. The creators of illustration artworks in this community believe that being active on Instagram to perform *daʿwah* is an actualization of their commitment to follow God's commands in upholding and spreading the principles of goodness and prohibiting evil, as mentioned in the Qur'an.

The *da'wah* method carried out by the Hijabographic community is in line with the argument said by Nisa (2018), the Instagram content that carries attractive visual illustrations and quotations, is one of the efforts to avoid controversial issues. During the widespread issue of religious intolerance in Indonesia, Illustration artwork was chosen by the Hijabographic community because it can gently convey *da'wah* messages and is easily accepted by audiences with diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

Cyberspace has created a community model (Rheingold, 2008). When 39,000 people join the Hijabographic community and interact on the internet, this community offers a place that provides a broad opportunity for everyone to practice expressing ideas democratically and openly. In-network communities, illustration artworks can function as a language in the workings of networks (Piliang, 2017). Within the Hijabographic community, the process of finding ideas and ideas no longer takes place in an isolated space, but rather becomes an intersubjective process of extracting ideas, which involves community members in the network; follower, friend or group. The process of target audience appreciation of illustration artworks by the Hijabographic community is an actualization of education through art. Illustration artworks by the Hijabographic community is a means or tool to achieve the goal of religious education, which serves to develop the ability of each individual to find fulfillment in life, increase social awareness to advise one another in goodness and as a way to increase religious knowledge to become pious Muslims.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This research is limited by the perspective of education through art which is applied to support the interests of *da'wah* through social media. This article reveals that the illustrated work produced by the Hijabographic community is a form of creativity of young Muslim women in using technology to perform modern *da'wah* in the digital age. Future research is needed to find out more about how the process of creating illustration artwork in this community becomes a model of knowledge transfer in virtual space.

IMPLICATION

This article contributes to the cyber-based visual arts learning in virtual space that is used as a medium for the development of non-formal art education studies in the information technology era.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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