

## ANALYZING VOICE OF BACEPROT'S COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES WITH THE ROCK MUSIC COMMUNITY

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### ABSTRACT

*There has been interest in the Voice of Baceprot phenomenon. They received invitations to play at rock music festivals, and foreign media also wrote about them. This study aims to investigate the factors contributing to this band's appeal and acceptance among domestic and international rock music audiences, consisting of three young Muslim women wearing hijabs. The case study approach is used in this qualitative research technique. This study concludes that the identity of the Voice of Baceprot plays a significant role in boosting their acceptance and popularity in the rock music scene. In addition to their identity, evidence was found that the media and the larger global context influenced their rising popularity.*

**Keywords:** *identity, media, voice of baceprot, rock music*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has given birth to many rock or metal music groups, but most are only domestically successful as homegrown champions. They may have performed abroad several times, but only occasionally and not continuously. There indeed are some who appear at foreign music festivals, but many of them only appear at events with a small audience. Even more rarely, they are covered by media such as foreign magazines or newspapers, both online and in print. A new phenomenon was born when the Voice of Baceprot appeared in the world of Indonesian rock music.

This research mainly aims to determine what factors make VOB's name big. Researchers suspect that there is an identity role that makes their names famous. This identity was born from a communication activity between VOB and the local and international rock music fan community.

In symbolic interaction theory, it is stated that identity is born from a communication process that occurs continuously<sup>11</sup>. It can also occur between VOB and music communities. The interaction between the two will later birth a new construction of symbols, namely *hijabers* playing rock music, usually symbolized by rock music as long-haired men and unkempt.

Every human must grow by interacting with his or her social environment to form his identity. Communication activities occur, such as interpreting something we understand as we grow up and looking for identity. Likewise, the three VOB personnel who grew up in an area in Garut, West Java, interact continuously with the rock music community, both through the medium and directly when they appear on stage. Thus, VOB's identity was formed as a hijab-wearing rock music group and succeeded at home and abroad.

So, in the end, a new meaning was created: rock musicians could identify as women wearing the hijab. It is what makes VOB popular. There are also factors other than identity that can make VOB popular.

Even though they are popular, there are still negative comments about the identity - gender and religion - of this band, both at the beginning of their appearance until today, coupled with the rejection of parents and local community at the beginning of the formation of VOB.

There are several studies relating communication activities to identity formation. Handaningtias and Agustina (2017) describe how anime otaku build their identity in a society with a culture founded on religious values and norms, as customary in Indonesia. The findings from Handaningtias and Agustina's research are that self-experience encourages subjects to look for a community that will help them identify themselves in the established society to guarantee their freedom to imagine and interact with their favorite anime characters.

Other research from Pradhuka et al. (2020) discusses how Instagram celebrities convey their gender communication identity via Instagram. The findings of this research are that in revealing their identity, program celebrities must go through several stages, which are communicated at four levels: personal, enactment, relational, and communal. By negotiating in the form of innovation and creativity, we are slowly realizing the digital queer phenomenon in the Instagram cyber society. Bramantyo and Fitriani (2019) discover how forming self-esteem and self-identity begins with self-disclosure.

This research will try to answer the following questions: first, how can the VOB band, which consists of three Muslim women wearing hijabs, be accepted in the metal music community which is considered masculine? Second, what communication activities occur that make them acceptable? Third, is there a role for VOB's identity in making them popular and accepted? Finally, are there other factors besides identity?

## 2. METHOD

The type of research is qualitative research. Researchers state the problem formulation in qualitative research, not research targets or hypotheses (Creswell, 2013, p. 191).

Researchers will use a case study approach. A case study is an approach that aims to maintain the object's integrity. Data is collected and studied as an integrated whole (Vredendregt, 1978). A case study is a research strategy in which the researcher closely investigates a program, event, activity, process, or group of individuals. Cases are limited by time and activities, and researchers collect complete information using various data collection procedures based on predetermined times (Stake, 1995).

This case study will be an Intrinsic Case Study to understand a particular case better. So, this case study is because the researcher wants to know intrinsically about a case's phenomenon, regularity, and specificity, not for other external reasons. This research will focus on what makes VOB acceptable and popular among rock music fans at home and abroad.

For data collection techniques, researchers will conduct unstructured interview techniques. The data will be primary data taken from interviews. Researchers will position themselves as observers. Data will also be collected by conducting library and literature studies from various open sources. Researchers will conduct unstructured interview techniques with music fans, journalists, arts and culture researchers, and music industry players.

According to Miles & Huberman (in Haryono, 2020), data analysis activities in qualitative research will be carried out through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### a. Identity with Symbolic Interactionism.

One of the essentials of the symbolic interaction theory is the idea of the Self—who we are as a person. Manford Kuhn places the Self at the center of social life. Communication is essential from the start because children are socialized through interactions with other people in the society in which they live. Negotiating the world also occurs through communication: a person understands and deals with objects in his environment through social interactions. Objects can be any aspect of a person's reality: things, qualities, events, or states. The only requirement for something to be an object is that the person must name or represent it symbolically. Objects are more than objective things; they are social objects, and reality is the totality of one's social objects. For Kuhn, naming an object is essential because naming is a way to convey the meaning of the object.

VOB understands their identity as young women wearing hijabs from a village in the Garut area. One of the critical things in forming their identity is their interaction with their mentor, Abah Ezra. He was their teacher and mentor, who taught them how to play instruments, and even made drums for practice, as well as the person who first introduced VOB to rock music. He was also the one who initially helped with the band's songwriting process. Abah Ezra, as a mentor, believes that VOB's identity will be the key to success, at least at the beginning of their emergence. An assumption that was finally proven.

Another premise in symbolic interactionism is that meaning emerges from the social interactions that people have with each other. In other words, meaning is not inherent in objects; it did not exist before in the natural state. Meaning is negotiated through the use of language as a symbolic representation. Symbols are "stimuli that have meaning and value that humans learn together." Symbols convey how we feel about and respond to objects, events, or people. Without symbolic interaction, there is no shared meaning.

In the case of VOB, this shared meaning is broken down. VOB's identity constructs a new meaning that helps accelerate the band's name at home and abroad. Domestically, the shared meaning of the identity of young Muslim women wearing the hijab will be related to the perception of patriarchal culture that women immediately get married after graduating from school, that women stay at home, that women are not appropriate to play rock music, that music is haram. All of these are things that we hear very often in this nation's culture. So when VOB appeared with an identity like that, it broke the meaning of 'young woman wearing the hijab.' With this breakthrough, it became interesting for many Indonesians who still live under a culture of restraint on women in expressing themselves and living their lives.

For overseas contexts, VOB identity is closely related to conditions and events abroad. The increase in immigrants in Europe and the United States due to the war in Syria has increased Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment. There have been social conflicts in European countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, France, and even the United States between anti-immigrant, Islamophobic nationalist masses and supporters of immigrants and immigrants themselves. So, the presence of VOB creates a new discourse about Islam. As a Muslim often interpreted literally and tends to be rigid and harsh, suddenly, there is an entity contrary to the angry and rigid Islamic discourse.

This new meaning occurs from continuous communication activities through media that convey messages through the VOB identity. More about this will be discussed in the next section.

In this section, the findings should be separated by discussion. Findings or research results are not raw data but data processed/analyzed by specific methods. The discussion results from the interpretation of data analysis, if necessary, linked to relevant scientific theories/concepts in the literature review. Findings and discussions must answer the formulation of the problem and have the impact of new knowledge. The contents of the findings and discussion can be interpreted as an interpretation of the discussion results.

#### b. VOB Identity in Social Construction

The meaning of something is determined by the language used to describe the concept, the way society orients and talks about objects or experiences, and the social reality resulting from a shared construction process. Meaning is not found in the things of the world or within each individual; instead, meaning develops in coordination with others. Language is imperative because it is the system through which reality is constructed.

Language is also a symbol. So, as a symbol, it is possible to build reality to create a new meaning of something. If the symbol, in this case, is VOB's visual identity, namely their figure as a Muslim woman wearing a hijab and playing rock music, it can prove that a new reality has emerged. In addition, the VOB symbol is well communicated through the media so that the message inherent in the VOB symbol is manifested well. Audiences who receive messages through the media feel enlightened by jointly constructing a new reality brought by VOB, thus positively responding by watching and interacting with VOB content on social media or attending concerts. However, it must be investigated whether VOB deliberately carries this message (by design) or not (coincidence).

The meaning of this new reality born from the VOB identity invalidates the old reality. The reality is that after graduating Madrasah Aliyah, young Muslim women from villages in Garut will immediately be married off to reduce the family's living costs. The reality is that women do not need to dream big because, in the end, they will get married after graduating from school. Alternatively, Muslim women are not appropriate to play music; they should stay home and care for the household. Moreover, the reality is that rock music is only appropriate for men to play.

#### c. Media and VOB

All informants said the media is essential in accepting VOB in rock or metal circles. Informant 1 (music journalist) stated that he first saw VOB via Facebook, even though, at that time, they were still performing other band's songs. From the Facebook broadcast, Informant 1 observed that positive responses were starting to be received, both from Indonesians and abroad.

Informant 2 (VOB fan) also said he first watched VOB on YouTube. After that, he found out the stories behind this group. Finally, he went to Solo to watch VOB's performance on stage.

Meanwhile, Informant 3 (arts and culture researcher) believes that media has a role, even though there are now fewer and fewer media specifically for music. Social media has a more significant role. Meanwhile, many people on social media or netizens are trying to be more 'woke' (enlightened) on various issues and more progressive. It will positively impact the increasing popularity of VOB because netizens trying to be 'enlightened' will sympathize with the identity, including the stories promoted by VOB.

Informant 4 (a music industry player) stated openly that the media is VOB's primary weapon. He considers VOB to be a media sensation. VOB was packaged well, causing a stir in the media. Packaging with a different and previously unknown identity made the band's name stand out. He saw nothing other than that the packaging favored by this media made VOB's name known, at least at the beginning of their appearance.

The agenda-setting for VOB reporting in the media also actually occurred. Agenda-setting theory explains briefly that the media shapes the public agenda. The media does not tell us what to think, only what we should think. Why do the media, especially foreign rock music media, enthusiastically cover VOB? What makes them different from other bands? What is the music? Or the appearance? Musically, Informant 4 said there was nothing special about VOB

music besides standard rock music. It means that VOB music is not necessarily the media's primary concern. Informant 1 stated that, in his opinion, if music were the only reason, it would not be a strong enough reason for media editors to highlight VOB as the main feature.

The issue of VOB with an appearance like that at a time when the situation in Europe is hot with issues of Islamophobia and immigrants makes the media interested. The media deliberately chose VOB to indirectly participate in the wave of narratives about Islam and Muslim women in Western society.

#### d. VOB with Global Context

Apart from media factors, another finding is the global political context that occurred when VOB became popular. Informant 1 explained that when the issue of Islamophobia in the last ten years was extreme, VOB became a different face of Islam. International media saw it. In Indonesia, Muslim women wearing headscarves and playing music is nothing new, for example, Nasida Ria or other kasidahan groups. However, for people abroad, VOB is an anomaly. Many Westerners, non-Muslims, think that Muslim women live under restraint, as happened in Afghanistan under the Taliban government, in many countries in the Arabian Peninsula, and also in Iran. It is hard even to leave the house, let alone do music.

Informant 3 looked at it historically, especially after the #MeToo movement in 2018. At that time, the art scene was highlighted as a very masculine scene that significantly repressed women and many victims of violence. The first involved is in the film community, and the second is music. The movement highlighted that the figures appointed have always been men and that many women have received unfair treatment, including sexual violence. However, it continues to be normalized or tolerated. Along with this movement, VOB appeared. So that opens the way to go international.

#### e. VOB and popular culture

Fiske explains that popular culture is created by various formations of subordinated or powerless people from discursive (not connected) and material resources provided by the social system that weakens them. He added that subordinate people create popular culture for their interests from resources that also, contradictory, serve dominant economic interests.

VOB's experience in deciding to pursue music did not just happen. They went through a long process until they finally entered the world of rock music. The rock music played and written is a cultural product born from the position of VOB personnel in the society where they come from. With their identity as young Muslim women living in an area with a patriarchal culture, Marsya and her friends are subordinated or powerless. The opinion that young women, who after graduating from madrasah aaliyah (high school level), must immediately marry so as not to cause trouble to their families and the position of women as housekeepers are facts about the position of VOB personnel in their village community. This position as the 'weak' makes VOB - consciously or unconsciously - create works of popular culture in the form of rock songs.

Fiske (1991b) says that popular culture always contains traces of power relations and forces of domination and subordination but simultaneously "shows signs of rejection or avoidance of these forces." Therefore, he underscores the contradictions embedded in popular culture because it "can contain expressions of both domination and subordination, both power and resistance."

Judging from the lyrics of VOB songs, for example, from their first single entitled School Revolution, there are parts:

*Behind the wall, the contents of the head seem to be locked  
Thousands of dogmas are overwritten until they bend.  
If you shout independence, be prepared to be beaten or cursed at*

Then, in the song (Not) Public Property they wrote:

*(Because) Our bodies are not public property. We have no place for the dirty mind.  
Our bodies are not public property. We have no place for the sexist mind.*

From the examples of these two VOB songs, denotatively, the meaning of resistance to power relations that occurs in the lives of VOB personnel is clearly captured. The song School Revolution describes resistance to school power represented by the madrasah school teacher where VOB attends. There were teachers in madrasahs who thought

that students were obliged to record lessons. Meanwhile, he rarely came to class, and the students felt they needed an explanation first. Then, students, including VOB personnel, protested by creating content on wall magazines. The content did not last long on the wall magazine. It was torn down in the afternoon.

The song (Not) Public Property was also born from resistance to power relations that have existed for a long time and are resurrecting now, namely regarding the issue of women's bodies or the nature of women in general. In this issue, VOB also experienced firsthand what life is like as a Muslim woman who loves music and lives in the Singajaya village, Garut area, West Java.

In the Singajaya village community, there is an opinion that women should not travel too far, especially for playing music. Music is not for women. Women are not considered human beings with the right to dream and fight for their dreams.

Village people also still think that a girl does not need to attend high school or have a career. After graduating, young women are expected to marry immediately, not to burden their parents anymore—the burden of life shifts to the husband. Teenage girls usually have no choice but to agree to their family's or closest community's wishes.

The ability to produce meaning outside the control of dominant groups explains why popular culture is a form of resistance. The dominant groups in the VOB case are the school environment, family, and the Singajaya village community in general. Then, VOB produced music, especially rock music, to fight against this dominant group.

Individuals continually scan the resources the culture industry produces to find resources for their purposes. Fiske (1991b) argued that the powerless subject of an irresistible ideology considered popular culture to be potentially and genuinely progressive, or even radical because it found the strength and vitality of society to be evidence of the possibility of social change and the motivation to drive it.

VOB's resistance factor, expressed in songs with rock music and lyrics with themes of social issues, makes VOB relevant to most people today, both at home and abroad. Its popularity increased since its appearance in 2014.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The identity factor is vital in bringing VOB's popularity to what it is now and being accepted by the local and overseas rock music community. VOB's identity breaks the shared meaning that previously assumed that young women wearing the hijab would usually stay at home and marry at a young age. However, in the case of VOB, this shared meaning is broken. VOB's identity constructs a new meaning conveyed through continuous communication activities via the media, thereby helping to accelerate the band's name at home and abroad.

Another finding from this research is that other factors bring VOB's popularity abroad, namely the role of the media. The media helps increase awareness of VOB. Even from its inception, the role of the media has been visible. VOB became a media sensation that attracted the attention of many people, both from within and outside the country. Social media, whether intentional or not, helps spread VOB music content to all corners of the world. Media is also a means of distributing a message inherent in the identity of these young Muslim women from Singajaya Village, Garut.

The following finding is that the global context factor that occurred when VOB appeared played a role in raising the band's name. Global society's geopolitical and social situation played a role in raising the awareness of VOB. Issues such as Islamophobia, the arrival of immigrants to mainland Europe, the United States, and even Australia as a result of the war in Syria, Iraq, and around the Middle East in 2014 have made the global community, including global netizens, look for counter-narratives to try to balance the narratives caused by the war. Although not an icon, VOB is a new entity with a unique identity to bring that balance. If we look at prevalent cultural factors, the VOB resistance factor, expressed in songs with rock music and lyrics with themes of social issues, makes VOB relevant to most people today, both at home and abroad.

This research only wants to find the factors that cause VOB to become famous and accepted by the rock music community at home and abroad. The finding is that identity is an essential factor. Then, it was also found that there were media factors and global context. Future research can look for whether there are other factors besides these three factors in the increasing popularity of VOB. Further research can also measure how big a role identity plays compared to other factors. Try to find which factor is the most dominant. The more factors that increase the popularity of a band artist or other popular cultural product are discovered, the hope is that a model can be created to make a popular cultural product known at home and abroad.

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