

Exploring the Impact of Anime on Muslim Teenagers' Moral Behaviour

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Abstract

This research investigates the impact of anime on the four domains of Muslim morality among teenagers in Selangor, Malaysia. The study explores how anime consumption affects religious observance, life choices, reasoning, and property respect. Using a quantitative approach, 85 Muslim teenagers aged 13-16 were surveyed on their anime viewing habits and moral behaviour. The study utilized a Likert 5-scale questionnaire with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89 for reliability. Findings indicate that the majority of respondents are drawn to anime for its magical characters, attractive graphics, and engaging storylines. However, the frequency of anime viewing among respondents is generally low, with most watching 1-3 hours per week. Correlation analysis revealed a weak negative relationship between anime viewing and moral misconduct, specifically in the religious domain (fasting and parental obedience) and property domain (wastage). Contrary to prevalent perceptions, the study concludes that anime consumption does not contribute to moral degradation among teenagers. Instead, certain positive influences were observed, suggesting that low-level exposure to anime, particularly 'Kodomo' and 'Shounen' genres, can have beneficial effects. These results challenge the notion that anime exacerbates social issues among youth, highlighting the need for parents to monitor and guide anime content consumption. Further research with larger sample sizes is recommended to fully understand the influence of anime on adolescent behaviour and morality.

Keywords: Anime, Teenagers, Moral Behaviour, Muslim Morality, Social Impact

Introduction

The moral degradation exacerbated by the pervasive influence of borderless mass media has become a pressing social concern. Daily news reports in newspapers and on television continually highlight various social issues, particularly affecting teenagers who represent the future human capital of our nation. The unrestricted exposure of today's youth to diverse

external information and cultures through mass media significantly impacts their attitudes and behaviours. This exposure has contributed to alarming levels of social problems including indiscriminate social connections, illegal racing, substance abuse, abortion, gambling, bullying, and gangsterism.

According to recent statistics, social problems among teenagers in Malaysia have shown various trends and impacts. Mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, have been particularly concerning. In 2022, mental health screenings by the Ministry of Health found high rates of depression and anxiety, especially in the Federal Territories, due to factors like the high cost of living and interpersonal problems (CodeBlue, 2023; The Star, 2023).

Juvenile delinquency also remains a significant issue. While there was a decline in juvenile offenders from 2014 to 2015, more recent data indicates fluctuations. For example, according to the Malaysia Youth Data Bank, juvenile cases saw a slight increase in 2022 compared to 2021, with property crimes constituting 65% and violent crimes 35%. Male juveniles made up 95% of offenders (Ova, 2023).

Additionally, domestic violence cases have increased significantly during the pandemic, with a 42% rise. The government has implemented several initiatives to address this, including hotlines and shelter services (Ova, 2023). These statistics highlight the ongoing challenges and efforts needed to address social problems among Malaysian teenagers.

According to statistics from the Malaysia Youth Data Bank (IYRES) 2023, juvenile cases in 2022 saw a slight increase of 203 cases compared to 2021. The report indicates that property crime cases were high, accounting for 65%, compared to violent crimes at 35%. Additionally, the majority of juvenile offenders were male, comprising 95%, compared to females.

The emergence and exacerbation of these social problems are subjects of numerous scientific studies aimed at understanding their roots. Broadly speaking, these social disorders can be defined as behaviours or lifestyles within a society that contradict its cultural and religious values. They represent deviations from accepted norms and boundaries. The erosion of traditional standards contributes to these social ills, affecting not only teenagers and teenagers but also adults. In the realm of higher education, several studies highlight the significant influence of negative content found primarily in magazines and television as significant contributors to these issues among teenagers (Tamuri & Zarin, 2005)

Anime, a style of Japanese film and television animation, has gained a global following, including in Malaysia. Its introduction to Malaysia began in the 1980s through RTM with series like Doraemon, sparking a phenomenon among fans of animated series, especially children and teenagers. This growing demand led to the broadcast of many more Japanese animated series on Malaysian television networks. Anime's appeal lies in its diverse superhero characters, action-packed scenes, vibrant graphics, and unpredictable storylines. According to Novianti (2007), while many embrace anime for its potential to deepen understanding of Japanese language and culture, its emergence also raises concerns about its influence on social disorders.

The emergence of anime, characterized by both negative elements and a foreign culture divergent from local norms, has raised concerns not only in Malaysian society but globally. In early 2008, in Semarang, Indonesia, a 10-year-old child named Revino Siahaya died allegedly while imitating actions from his favorite anime hero, Naruto. Similarly, in Russia, a 14-year-old teenager jumped from his apartment in Chaikovsky after his idol anime hero, Itachi Uchiha, was killed in the storyline (Noviarina, 2014). Various studies have examined anime, yielding both negative and positive findings.

Despite these concerns, there are positive aspects associated with anime. Research by Ahsan (2014) suggests that anime can enhance social interaction and foster interests in art and language among teenagers. However, excessive exposure to anime can lead to addictive viewing habits, potentially restricting other activities and influencing attitudes and behaviors negatively. Eng (2001) found that teens who watch anime can increase their social interactions, while Gaylican (2014) discovered that it can help shy teenagers become more outgoing. These studies underline the importance of detailed research specific to the subject and location to understand whether anime contributes to social issues or if concerns are primarily based on perception and bias.

This study aims to explore the nuanced relationship between anime consumption and social behaviors among Malaysian teenagers. By examining both the positive and negative impacts of anime, we aim to provide insights that can inform educational strategies, media literacy programs, and policy interventions. Understanding how anime influences attitudes and behaviors is crucial for developing targeted interventions that promote healthy media consumption habits and mitigate potential negative social consequences.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to guide policymakers, educators, parents, and researchers in fostering a balanced media environment for Malaysian youth. By emphasizing the importance of understanding anime's role in shaping adolescent behavior, this research contributes to broader discussions on media influence, cultural adaptation, and societal well-being in a globalized context. Ultimately, this study seeks to underscore the relevance and urgency of addressing media-related social issues to ensure the holistic development and welfare of future generations in Malaysia.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the factors influencing teenagers' preference for anime.
2. To determine the frequency of anime consumption among teenagers.
3. To explore the relationship between the effects of watching anime on the four domains of Muslim morality among teenagers.

Literature Review

Anime, derived from the English acronym 'animation' and shortened to three syllables in Japanese, refers to animated content originating from comics or manga in Japanese culture. According to Gravett, manga is a form of comic created in Japan or by Japanese creators, characterized by adherence to stylistic developments originating in Japan in the late 19th century. In Japan, manga covers a wide range of genres including adventure, romance, sports, drama, history, comedy, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, horror, and more (Gravett, 2004).

Since the 1950s, manga has grown into one of Japan's leading publishing industries and has gained immense popularity worldwide. Gaylican (2014) reports substantial profits from manga markets in Europe and the Middle East, reaching up to \$250 million, with the American market recording \$120 million in sales by 2012. This widespread popularity underscores manga's global appeal. Anime, on the other hand, emerges from the success of Japanese manga. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, anime refers to Japanese animation developed from popular manga stories and presented in animated form. While manga exists in printed form, anime is broadcast as animated content on television. These forms of creative expression, manga and anime, are deeply intertwined in Japanese culture.

Anime has emerged as a favourite entertainment choice for children and teenagers worldwide, including in our country. Broadcasting anime series introduces foreign cultures, notably Japanese, to the minds of teenagers. The adoption of foreign cultures that diverge from local cultural and religious values can potentially impart negative values to exposed teenagers (Hashim, 2012). Anime's appeal is bolstered by its iconic characters like Naruto, Goku, Doraemon, and Shin Chan, coupled with visually striking graphics, making it highly attractive.

However, concerns arise due to the widespread availability of anime through unlimited internet technology, allowing teenagers unrestricted access to varied stories, narratives, and characters with unfiltered content. There is apprehension that this exposure could include elements detrimental to morality and behavior, potentially leading youngsters towards negative activities and contributing to a rise in troubling social disorders. This uncontrolled exposure and consumption of anime poses a risk to teenagers' moral perceptions and values, as highlighted in a study titled "Why are Asians so responsive and available to enjoy Japanese Anime series?" This trend is reinforced by local television channels that prominently feature Japanese animated series during children and teenagers' viewing hours.

Chambers (2012) argues against anime containing harmful elements such as violence, deeming it inappropriate for teenagers. Studies by Sallehuddin (2011) indicate that children and teenagers are drawn to anime for its visually appealing graphics, humor, and sometimes embedded violence in storytelling. However, anime featuring extreme violence can also foster aggressive attitudes and behaviours. On the contrary, some studies suggest positive impacts of anime exposure. For instance, Jesus (2014) asserts that teenagers exposed to anime may develop a heightened aesthetic appreciation for art in adulthood. This viewpoint is echoed by Gaylican (2013), who posits that anime viewers tend to show greater interest in artistic fields. Eng (2001) suggests that anime can enhance social interactions among teenagers and cultivate their interest in Japanese language and culture. Ahsan's research (2014) indicates that anime not only nurtures artistic appreciation but also indirectly enhances creativity and moral understanding among teenagers, fostering traits like responsibility, honesty, generosity, and respect for others.

Despite these positive aspects, excessive anime consumption can lead to addiction and hinder academic focus, potentially influencing negative attitudes and behaviours due to depicted violence. Extensive exposure may also prompt teenagers to excessively emulate their anime idols, as evidenced by cases such as Amirul Rizwan Musa (Miyyo Rizone), who underwent facial surgery to resemble a character from Final Fantasy.

Teenagers, defined by the United Nations as the period from ages 15 to 24 [Unesco.org], or by Ahsan (2014) as ages 11 to 21, marks a critical phase characterized by biological, psychological, social, and economic changes, transitioning individuals from immaturity to maturity. Psychologists emphasize that adolescence is pivotal for self-development, presenting challenges and stress that can sometimes provoke social and antisocial behaviours (Rastati, 2015). Hashim (2012) views teenagers as individuals entering maturity, having undergone puberty, developed sexual awareness, and moved beyond childhood, thus distinguishing themselves from children and adults. Psychologists advocate for providing teenagers with opportunities to explore and develop appropriate life experiences for their personal growth (Jesus, 2014).

Social disorder refers to behaviours harmful to societal functioning and individual economic stability (Sharif & Roslan, 2011). Various factors drive teenagers to engage in unhealthy social behaviours today. Hutabalian (2017) attributes adolescent involvement in

social disorders to internal factors such as personality development, breakdowns in family institutions, and peer influences. Zainal & Salleh (2012) argues that school environments also contribute to social disorders among teenagers. Additionally, inadequate religious education, as noted by Idris et al (2012), and lack of parental supervision, as emphasized by Azmi et al (2013), further exacerbate social disorders by exposing teenagers to external influences.

Tengku Muda et al (2015) highlights that internal factors and personality development among teenagers play crucial roles in precipitating social disorders if not properly guided through the challenges of adolescence. Ab Halim & Zarin (2005) further asserts that negative content in mass media contributes significantly to contemporary adolescent social ills, a view supported by (Abdul Hamid, 2016; Sulong, 2010). Negative elements in mass media content can exacerbate social problems among teenagers in today's digitally interconnected era.

In conclusion, the role of anime in contemporary adolescent culture demands careful consideration, given its potential influences—both positive and negative—on morality, behaviour, and societal norms.

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach utilizing a set of Likert 5-scale questionnaires that have been developed by researchers, demonstrating reliability and validity with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89 for the Moral Misconduct instrument. These questionnaires are designed to assess the correlation between anime consumption and moral degradation, which contributes to social issues among teenagers in Selangor.

The questionnaire set investigates the extent of anime exposure among teenagers and its association with moral misconduct across four domains: religion, life, reason, and property, comprising a total of 26 items. Data collected will be analysed using SPSS software, treating it as primary data for this research study.

Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in this study aligns with its objectives. It comprises a total of 26 selected items from a broader set of 49 items categorized into four domains: religion, life, reason, and property. This questionnaire is structured into two parts: Part A focuses on demographic information of the respondents, while Part B assesses moral misconduct (social ills).

An initial survey was conducted at Secondary School at Bandar Baru Salak Tinggi, Sepang, Selangor to determine the most-watched anime among teenagers. The survey involved 100 respondents, split evenly between 14-year-olds and 17-year-olds, totaling 50 respondents in each age group. From this survey, 20 anime series were identified, from which the top 5 most-watched anime series by teenagers were determined. Below is the survey schedule:

Table 1

Results of Anime Popularity Census

Anime	Percentage
Kiteretsu	5.6
Detective Conan	8.0
Chibi Maruko	3.2
Ninja Boy	2.0
Doraemon	10.2
Ninja Hatori	2.0
Inazuma Eleven	3.2
Full Metal Alchemist	2.4
Dragon Ball	5.8
Dr. Slump Arale	1.0
Stitch	1.2
Digimon Fusion	1.0
Naruto	12.6
Hunter X Hunter	1.2
Keroro Season	2.2
Ryukendo	1.4
Hagemaru	6.4
One Piece	12.0
Crayon Shin Chan	6.4
Fairy Tail	5.4

Respondents were requested to list their top 10 most popular anime series. Based on the census, the top 5 anime series that received the highest rankings are as follows: 1. Naruto, 2. One Piece, 3. Doraemon, 4. Detective Conan, and 5. Crayon Shin Chan. Consequently, this study focuses exclusively on these 5 series for assessing anime exposure and does not include any other anime series.

Scoring

The Likert scale model was selected for its proven reliability in generating easily interpretable and accurate data, minimizing errors in data processing. This study employs a five-point Likert scale, depicted in Table 2 below, to assess responses:

Table 2

Likert Scale Degree of Consent System

Degree of Consent	Score
Never	1
Rarely	2
Occasionally	3
Frequently	4
Constantly	5

Respondents

This study was carried out among Muslim teenagers attending Bandar Baru Salak Tinggi Secondary School in Sepang, Selangor. The respondents were specifically students aged between 14 and 17 years old, encompassing both Form 1 and Form 4, including both male

and female students who regularly watch anime. Following initial screening, a total of 90 respondents participated in this questionnaire study. Precautions were taken to exclude students who were not exposed to anime from participating in the study.

Research Findings

Demographics

The table below presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents:

Table 3

Demographics of Respondents

Demographic Item	Percentage
Gender	Male: 45 (52.3%) Female: 41 (47.7%)
Age	14 years old: 38 (42.2%) 17 years old: 52 (57.8%)
Race	Malay: 90 (100%)
Family Income	B40 - Below RM4,849 (43.5%) M40 - RM4,850 to RM10,959 (30.6%) T20 - RM10,960 above (12.9%)

Demographic findings from the study indicate a higher number of male respondents compared to female respondents, reflecting a greater interest among males in watching anime, as per the study's inclusion criteria focusing on anime viewers. The data also reveals a higher representation of 17-year-old respondents compared to those aged 14, aligning with the educational levels observed in the study. The vast majority of respondents, 100%, identify as Malay. Regarding family income, the majority of households earn below RM4,849 per month (in B40 category)

Respondents

The overall reliability of the Moral Misconduct instrument, consisting of 26 items, is indicated by a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.89, confirming its reliability. Table 4 presents the mean distribution of anime watching frequency and moral misconduct, revealing that both variables show data at a relatively low level.

Table 4

Item Reliability

	Alfa Cronbach	Number of items
Moral misconduct	0.89	26

Table 4

Mean Values and Standard Deviations

	Min	SP	Level
Anime Viewing Frequency	1.79	0.736	Low
Moral misconduct	2.01	0.421	Low

Teen Factors for Interest in Anime

Table 5 presents the findings on three main factors why teenagers enjoy anime. The majority of respondents, 69.3%, are drawn to anime due to its characters, who are often portrayed as having magical powers, being funny, or cute. Another 18.7% appreciate anime for its beautiful and attractive graphic visuals, while only 12.0% are captivated by its interesting and fascinating storylines. This finding aligns with Mamat et al (2014); Yusof (2019), who noted that teenagers are attracted to anime because of the characters' traits, such as courage, hard work, humour, appreciation for relationships, and special abilities. The study also indicates that the majority of teenagers are interested in anime due to the moral values depicted, while other factors include engaging storylines, stunning visuals, and the personas of the anime characters.

Table 5

Factors Attracting Teenagers to Anime.

Factors	Percentage
Anime characters possessing magical powers, humor, cuteness, and other appealing traits	69.3
Beautiful and attractive visual graphics	18.7
Interesting and fascinating storyline	12.0

Identifying the Frequency Level of Anime Viewing

Table 6 below presents the weekly anime viewing frequency for the 90 respondents in this study. The majority, 56.7%, watch anime for 1-3 hours per week, while 50% watch for 3-5 hours per week. Only a small percentage, 6.7%, watch anime for more than 5 hours per week. These findings suggest that the frequency of anime viewing among the respondents is generally low, as evidenced by the majority of respondents falling into the lower viewing categories in Table 6 and a mean value of 1.79 in Table 4.

Table 6

Frequency of Watching Anime in a Week

Viewing Hours	Numbers	Percentage
1-3 hours	51	56.7
3-5 hours	45	50.0
5 hours and above	6	6.7
Total	90	100

Table 8 illustrates the relationship between anime and 26 items of moral misconduct, which indicate moral deterioration in this study. Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to assess the relationship or influence of anime viewing frequency on these 26 items of moral misconduct. To better understand this relationship, the following correlation criteria established by Guilford (1959) were used below:

Table 7

Guilford Criteria (1959)

Correlation Coefficient	Indicator
=0.20	Extremely weak relationship
>0.20-0.40	Weak relationship
>0.40-0.70	Plain relationship
>0.70-0.90	Strong relationship
>0.90	Extremely strong relationship

Table 8

The Relationship between Anime and Social Issues in Teenagers

No.	Moral Misconduct	Correlation coefficient	P value
Religious Domain			
1	Deliberately omitting the 5 prayer times	-0.152	0.160
2	Deliberately not fasting in the month of Ramadan	-0.384	0.009
3	Disobedience towards parents	-0.215	0.036
4	Speaking harshly to elderly people	-0.131	0.239
5	Estrangement from family/relatives	-0.172	0.134
6	Creating conflict (causing disagreement that results in the separation of friendships, etc.)	-0.170	0.150
7	Shirk (associating partners with Allah s.w.t.)	-0.041	0.701
8	Not performing the full ablution (full body purification after impurities)	-0.039	0.775
9	Gossiping/Talking maliciously about someone	-0.053	0.559
10	Fault finding	-0.190	0.083
Life Domain			
11	Smoking	0.084	0.579
12	Illegal racing	-0.160	0.120
13	Physical fight (hitting, kicking, etc.)	-0.077	0.521
14	Gambling with led to a fight	-0.002	0.998
15	Self-inflicted injury	-0.041	0.776
Reason Domain			
16	Glue sniffing	-0.087	0.421
17	Extravagant spending	0.085	0.501
18	Being neglectful while listening to music	-0.146	0.261
19	Acquiring esoteric knowledge but hiding it	-0.072	0.554
Property Domain			
20	Stealing valuables from others	-0.059	0.618
21	Breaking and entering someone's home	-0.001	0.990
22	Vandalizing self or family's property	0.050	0.675
23	Stealing from family	0.045	0.772
24	Cheating people out of their money	-0.023	0.818
25	Wasting resources (food, electricity, etc.)	-0.292	0.005
26	Vandalizing public property	-0.087	0.423

The data presented in Table 8 elucidates Pearson's correlations between religion, life, reason, and property, categorized into four principal domains. Notably, two items exhibit significant relationships within the religious domain, whereas other items in this sector are statistically insignificant. Specifically, "Deliberately not fasting during the month of Ramadan" and "disobedience towards parents" demonstrate a negative correlation with the frequency of anime viewing. This suggests that increased anime consumption among teenagers correlates with a lower likelihood of intentionally neglecting fasting during Ramadan and disobeying parents. However, according to Guilford's (1959) guidelines, this association is weak. Nonetheless, this indicates a significant negative relationship for respondents who watch anime, implying that anime consumption does not contribute to moral decline in the religious domain.

In the analysis of the life domain, no significant relationships were found, as indicated by alpha values exceeding the $p > 0.05$ threshold. Similarly, the reason domain showed no significant correlations across all four items. In contrast, within the property domain, only one item exhibited a significant relationship with the frequency of anime viewing, while the remaining six items did not show significant correlations. The item "Wastage (food/electricity, etc.)" displayed a significant negative correlation coefficient. This suggests that higher frequencies of anime viewing are associated with reduced wastage. Consequently, the data indicates that anime consumption does not negatively impact wasteful behaviour.

Overall, the study rejects the hypothesis that anime viewing contributes to moral degradation among teenagers, thereby refuting the notion that it exacerbates contemporary social issues.

Discussion

The study's findings reveal that anime exhibits a weak correlation with only three items: 'deliberately not fasting during the month of Ramadan,' 'disobedience towards parents,' and 'wastage.' These correlations are negative, indicating that anime has a beneficial influence on these specific negative behaviours. Conversely, the majority of the 23 negative items related to moral misconduct and social disorders show no significant relationship with anime consumption.

This outcome is surprising, especially given the prevalent negative perception of anime among the local community, who often view it as harmful to children and teenagers. Previous studies have highlighted the negative impacts of excessive anime viewing. However, other research has identified positive effects of anime in certain contexts. For instance, studies by Purbani (2021) reported negative impacts, whereas research by Mamat et al (2014); Arieska (2016); Yusof et al (2021) highlighted positive influences.

Two factors may explain the positive relationship found in this study and the rejection of the hypothesis that anime contributes to social ills. First, the anime series watched by the respondents were primarily from the 'Kodomo' and 'Shounen' genres, which are not excessive in negative content and contain positive elements that can serve as moral lessons. Second, the frequency of anime viewing among respondents was relatively low. The study recorded that 56.7% of respondents watched anime for 1 to 3 hours per week, 50% watched for 3 to 5 hours, and only 6.7% watched more than 5 hours per week. Thus, the limited exposure to negative elements in the anime did not significantly affect the teenagers, while the positive elements had a modest beneficial impact.

The results might differ if the anime viewed contained a higher frequency of negative elements, as increased exposure could lead to the imitation of such behaviours. This aligns

with Zudin's (2016) findings, which suggest that the greater the exposure to negative elements, the stronger the influence on teenagers. Therefore, watching anime from inappropriate genres can have detrimental effects on young viewers.

Conclusion

These findings offer preliminary insights into the relationship between anime exposure and its impact on adolescent behaviour. The data suggests that low levels of anime exposure do not significantly influence the behaviour of teenagers. This may be attributed to the fact that the anime content consumed by the respondents falls within the 'Kodomo' and 'Shounen' genres (including titles such as Detective Conan, Doraemon, Naruto, Crayon Shin Chan, and One Piece), which generally contain minimal negative content.

In summary, this initial research challenges previous studies that reported negative impacts of anime on teenagers and refutes the notion that anime contributes to the moral decline and social issues among youth. However, it is important to note that this study is based on a limited sample size from a pilot study. Results may vary with larger sample sizes and a broader geographic scope.

Anime should not be viewed solely from a negative perspective. It is crucial for parents and guardians to monitor and guide the anime content consumed by teenagers, providing context and advice regarding the messages and lessons conveyed in anime series. Therefore, further research is necessary to explore the influence of anime on attitudes, personalities, behaviours, and social changes in teenagers, considering their role as the future human capital of the nation.

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