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THE CONCEPT OF ISLAMIC MODERATION IN MUSIC ART: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SONG OF NASYEED

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ABSTRACT

The music art is not strange in Islam. It has been given serious attention by Muslim scholars from time to time. Hence, many speculation among the Muslim and non-Muslim about the actual status of music in Islam. It happened because of the emergence of various patterns of music in the culture of society in the modern world today. Therefore, this discussion tries to explain the concept of moderation and enjoyment of music as guided by Islam in order to fulfil the needs of human nature. In this case, nasyeed song is believe to achieve these objectives. Therefore, to determine the effect on the listener nasyid, the samples taken from the listener nasyid songs aired by Radio IKIM.fm. Radio IKIM.fm is the first radio channel based on Islam in Malaysia. A total of 707 respondents were given questionnaires. The results showed that nasyeed songs aired in Radio IKIM.fm give many positive effects, especially in the self-development of the listener.

Keywords: Music Art, Muslim, Moderation, Enjoyment, Nasyid.

The Concept of Islamic Moderation in Music Art: Special Reference to the Song of Nasyeed

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Abstract

The music art is not strange in Islam. It has been given serious attention by muslim scholars from time to time. Hence, many speculation among the muslim and non-muslim about the actual status of music in Islam. It happened because of the emergence of various patterns of music in the culture of society in the modern world today. Therefore, this discussion tries to explain the concept of moderation and enjoyment of music as guided by Islam in order to fulfill the needs of human nature. In this case, nasyeed song is believe to achieve these objectives. Therefore, to determine the effect on the listener nasyid, the samples taken from the listener nasyid songs aired by Radio IKIM.fm. Radio IKIM.fm is the first radio channel based on Islam in Malaysia. A total of 707 respondents were given questionnaires. The results showed that nasyeed songs aired in Radio IKIM.fm give many positive effects, especially in the self-development of the listener.

Introduction

Basically, Muslims are not deterred from playing music or getting seriously involved in the arena of music. Music is not merely for entertainment but also for other purposes such as to foster better relationship with the Creator, to impart messages for the benefit of humanity, to advice; to promote self confidence, patriotism, better family relationship and also to cultivate awareness of the current issues.

However, with the emergence of new forms of music especially those promoted by particular cultures the Muslims become confused of which type of music that can be accepted as the Islamic art of music. Added to this confusion is the lack of knowledge of what the Islamic is and what the status of music in Islam is. Taking that as the premise we consider that the discussion

on the art of music in Islam is something serious especially to resolve the issue of the misconception of music in Islam.

The definition of *wasatiyyah* (moderate) in Islam

The Muslims are the *Ummah* (people) who practices moderateness. The Quran mentions

‘Thus have We made of you an *umamah* justly balanced that ye might be witnesses over the nation’¹

Wasatiyyah, or moderate or balanced, is an essential attitude in a person’s every move. Being moderate is to be in the middle position and balanced means to have a firm mind uninfluenced by the either extremes such as to be too strict (*ifrat*) or too loose (*tafrit*)².

According to Yusof al-Qaradawi³, *wasatiyyah* is a special characteristic of Islam. It means to be in the middle position or balanced, neither influenced by the opposing sides. Balanced means to be just neither too extreme nor too lenient. By practicing *wasatiyyah* a person will be safe from *ifrat* and *tafrit*⁴, the two attitudes that should be hindered by Muslims⁵.

From the about discussion, we could gather that *wassatiyyah* refers to a just and balanced attitude. It is a positive attitude that places the person practicing it within the safe limits stated by Islam.

¹ Surah al-Baqarah 2: 143

² Wan Hussein Azmi (1987), “Kesederhanaan Dalam Islam Dalam Konteks Malaysia”, (Paper presented at the Seminar Antarabangsa Mengenai Perpaduan Ummah, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Muktamar, Pusat Islam Malaysia), p. 1.

³ Yusof al-Qaradawi (1981), *al-khasais al-'ammah li al-Islam*, 2 Print. Kaherah: Makatabah Wahbah, p. 114. See also Yusof al-Qaradawi (1996), *Madkhal li Ma 'rifat al-Islam*, Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, p. 163

⁴ *Op cit.* p 117

⁵ Muhammad al- Razi Fakhr al-Din (1995), *Tafsir al-Fakhr al-Razi*, Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, p. 108.

***Wassatiyyah* in Music**

Islam is a natural religion and every aspect of its teachings is in line with the natural needs of man. The need for entertainment is natural to man and music is part of the entertainment. Therefore the music that is permitted in Islam as it is the natural need of man must be moderate or *Wassatiyyah*.

To say that music is forbidden in Islam is extreme and to say that any music is permissible in Islam is another extreme. In the first instance the Muslim society is pictured as serious, all the time doing *ibadah* (in the limited sense), and entertainment including music and songs are not in their vocabulary. Laugh is rarely heard and to be happy is not an ingredient of their life⁶.

To those who adopt the second extreme, that is any music is permissible in Islam, they are overwhelmingly enthusiastic in music and entertainment that the Islamic social rules of *wajib* (obligatory), *sunat* (optional), *halal* (permissible) and *haram* (forbidden) are disregarded or having no significance in their lives at all.

The question that arises is to what extent is music allowable in Islam. The answer is in the concept of *wassatiyyah* as mentioned above. To elaborate *wassatiyyah* in music we have to survey the opinion of Muslim authoritative scholars. Hopefully we would be able to give some insight or probably some guidance in appreciating music in the Islamic way.

Music in Muslim Scholars Perspectives

Al-Imam al-Ghazali (450-505H)

Al-Imam al-Ghazali introduced a set of guidance for the Muslims to establish the legitimacy of music, musician and instruments used in terms of Islamic law (*hukm*). They are *zaman* (time), *makan* (place), and *ikhwan* (activity). By *zaman*, al-Ghazali refers to whether the music deviate

⁶ Yusof al-Qaradawi (1996), *al-Islam wa al-Fann*, Amman: Dar al-Furqan, h. 11. Lihat juga Dr. Yusof Al-Qardhawi (2002), *Seni Dan Hiburan Dalam Islam*, Muhammad Baihaqi (terj.). Kuala Lumpur: Al-Hidayah Publishers, p. 22

one from performing the jihad and ibadah. If the music shows the negative effect then it is considered *haram* (forbidden) and if otherwise it is *harus* (permissible). In terms of *makan* or place, al-Ghazali refers to the situation, environment and the manner the music is performed. They should be in accordance with Islamic values, if so, then music is permissible. If the music activities (*ikhwan*) do not contribute to crime and immorality, it is acceptable⁷.

Listening to songs can also be *harus* (permissible), *sunnat* (encouraged), *wajib* (obligatory), *makruh* (detestable) and *haram* (forbidden)⁸. A song can be forbidden because of the singer, musical instruments, lyrics, the perception of the singer and the audience of the song⁹.

Singer

The appearance of a female singer in front of the audience /show and her tempting voice is forbidden if such as act can cause calumny or slander (*fitnah*). The forbidden rests on the cause of calumny or slander not on the appearance or voice.

Musical instrument

A musical instrument is considered *haram* if it is or can be associated with vice or alcoholism.

Lyric

The lyric of a song is considered *haram* if it contained the sense of abuse and vilify especially of the Prophets, Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. It is also *haram* if the lyric attempts to over praising the beauty a woman or someone.

⁷ Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazali (1998) *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Juz. 3, Qahirah: Maktabah Misr. p. 376. See also Abdullah Yusof (2000), "Industri Hiburan Dalam Islam: Analisis Dari Sudut Persejarahan Awal Dan Penilaian Hukum", *Jurnal Syariah*, jil. 8, Bil 1, Januari 2000, pp. 35-36. See also Abdullah Yusof (1999), 'Kegiatan Seni Hiburan Dalam Islam Serta Hukumnya, dalam *Kumpulan Esei: Seni & Hiburan Dalam Perspektif Islam*, c. 1. Kuala Lumpur: Kor Agama Angkatan Tentera (Kagat) in collaboration with Jabatan Pengajian Media UM, p. 41.

⁸ Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazali (1998), *op.cit.*, p. 381

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 352-354. See also Prof Madya Dato' Dr Abdullah Muhammad Zin (1999), "Seni Suara (Bunyi-bunyian, Muzik, Nyanyian): Manifestasi Dendangan Syaitan?", (Paper presented at the national seminar on 'Islam dan Rekreasi', Dewan Besar IKIM, 23-24 September 1999), pp. 7-8.

Audience's perception

The song will be considered *haram* if it can stimulate sensuous untoward desires and also if it can be the cause of or delay someone from doing good deeds.

Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi

Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi has analyzed and elaborated the issues pertaining to the art of music based on textual (*naqli*) evidences and intellectual (*aqli*) merits and also on the opinion of other Muslim scholars. Al-Qaradawi has produced a number of publication which partly deals with the issues: *Al-Islam wa al-Fann*, *Malamih al-Mujtama' al-Muslim al-Ladhi Nanshuduh*, *Aal-Halal wa al-Haram fi al-Islam* and *Min Huda al-Islam Fatawa Mu'asirah*. Al-Qaradawi is in the opinion that, basically, music is permissible in Islam. However the *hukm* can change to forbidden (*haram*), encouraged (*sunat*), etc. depending on these conditions:

1. Not all lyrics are permissible. Its must be within the Islamic values and ethic. The lyric such as of Abu Nuwas is not permissible: *Let me vilify, Indeed my vilify, Is a request ,It is a cure, For my pain*. Songs that praise tyrants and despots are against the Islamic teaching. Islam curses tyrants and despots and those who support and are sympathy with them.
2. The consideration is also on the manner the song is presented. For instance its melody and the act of the singer incite certain undesirable desires, encourage free love, intoxicate audience's mind, etc. All these will cause the audience to be out of their mind and which may lead them to all sorts of vices or even criminal acts.
3. The show should not be accompanied by any other agenda which contravene Islamic values and ethic such as alcoholic drink and uncontrolled mix of male and female audience.

Nasyeed

The Arrival of Islam has brought together the art of singing and music. Many of singing and art Malay music has been influenced by Arabic and Persian art islamic.

This study found that nasyeed is:

1. It is one of form of art that has Islamic elements.
2. There are two forms of nasyeed rhythm in Malaysia which are rhythm of the desert and contemporary rhythms.
3. Nasyeed can be sung either by using musical instruments or not.
4. The main purpose of nasyeed song is to da'wah. This includes delivering positive messages and gives reminders to the listener.
5. Nasyeed sing a verse of poetry or presented bytes of poems that have compiled and manipulated in the form of singing or song.
6. The lyrics of nasyeed song have elements of great value such as the remembrance of Allah SWT and Prophet Muhammad, improving public awareness on the teachings of Islam, respect for the parents and those who are older, persistence in the pursuit of knowledge, grateful to Allah and other themes mostly positive.
7. Nasyeed not just a song but it combines the elements of lyric and individual styles or groups singer.
8. Nasyeed not just give out messages of lessons, but it still has the nature of entertainment.

Radio IKIM.fm

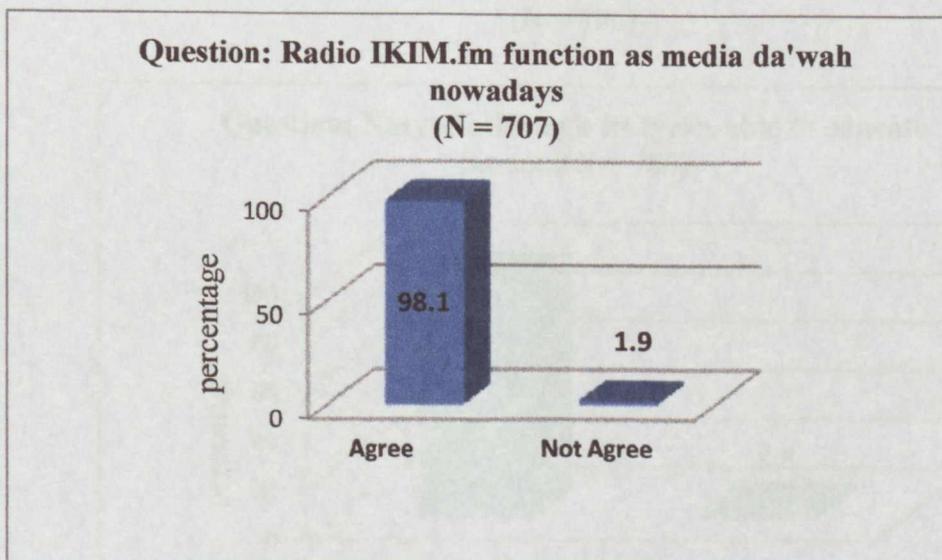
Radio IKIM.fm is the first Islamic radio in Malaysia. It's objectives to continuous effort in producing quality audio programs to promote Islamic understanding to society.

Sample Distribution Study by Gender of Respondents (N=707)

Variables	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	258	36.5
	Female	449	63.5
	Total	707	100.0

Radio IKIM.fm Functon as Media Da'wah Nowadays

(N = 707)



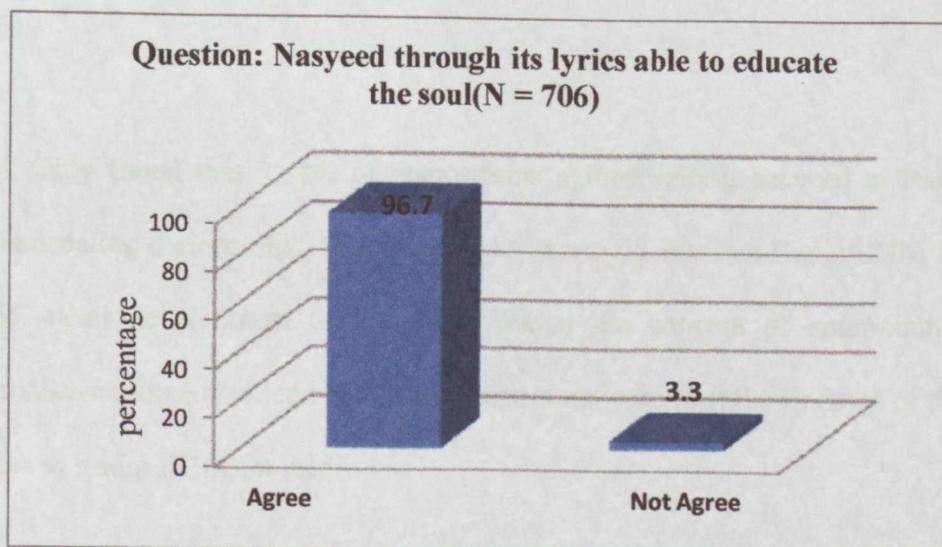
This study found that the majority (98.1%) of the 707 respondents thought that Radio IKIM.fm work as media da'wah at the present. This illustrates that it is consistent with the objectives of Radio IKIM.fm of trying to publish and broadcast-quality audio program to provide an understanding of Islam to all levels of society.

Relationship Between Nasyeed on Radio IKIM.fm and The Listener

The study found that lyrics of nasyeed at Radio IKIM.fm able to educate the soul with majority of respondents 96.7% agreed. It shows that the message of nasyeed aired via radio IKIM.fm successfully practiced by most listeners. It also shown that tagline of Radio IKIM.fm adopted at this time "entertainment to educate the soul" is consistent with this finding.

Lyrics of Nasyeed at Radio IKIM.fm Affordable Educating the Soul

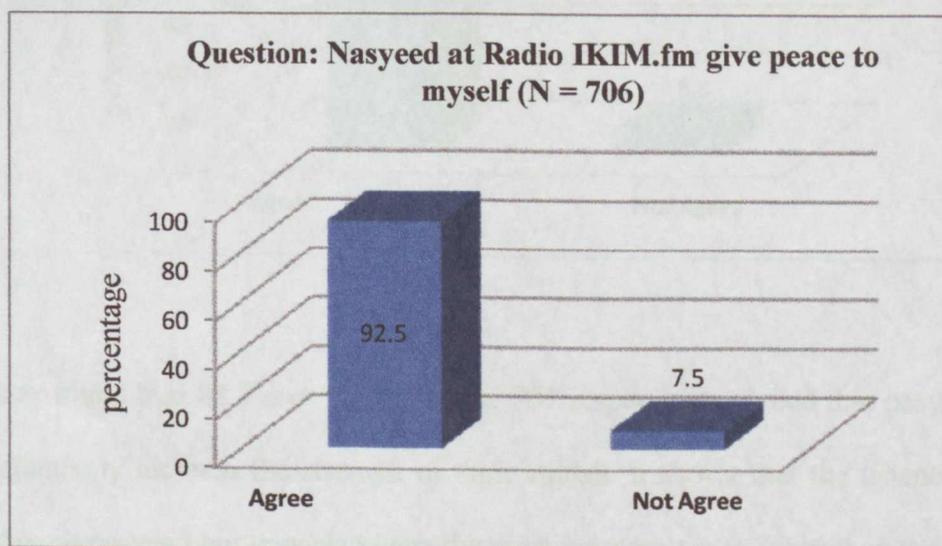
(N = 706)



This study found that 92.5% indicated nasyeed at Radio IKIM.fm give peace to themselves. This proves that nasyeed can give the real peace to the listener as well as the song has a message of its own.

Nasyeed at Radio IKIM.fm Giving Peace

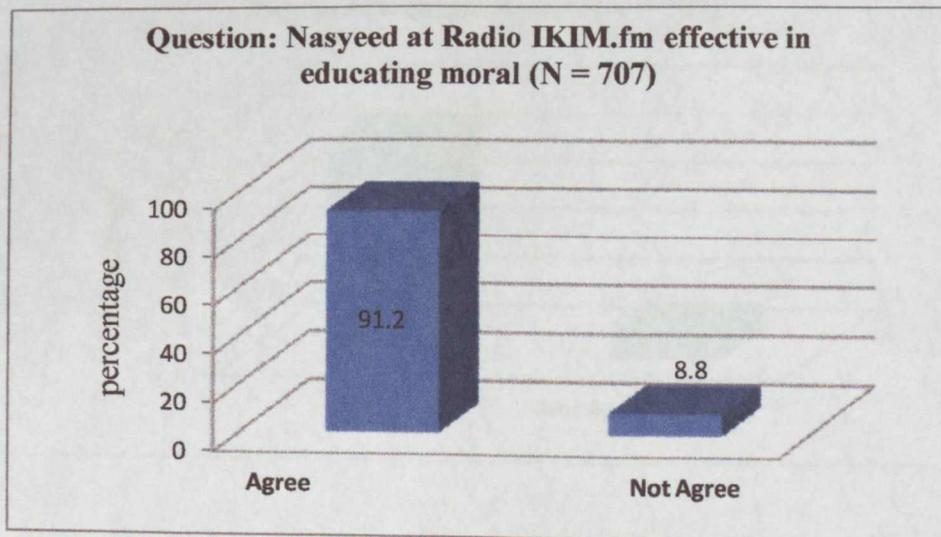
(N = 706)



This study found that 91.2% of respondents agreed stating nasyeed at Radio IKIM.fm effective in educating their morals. This indicates that nasyid aired on Radio IKIM.fm can act as an agent of social development to audience. Whilst the concept of entertainment in radio IKIM.fm broadcasts songs that lead good values are consistent with the findings of this study and it is a success to Radio IKIM.fm itself.

Nasyeed at Radio IKIM.fm Educating Moral

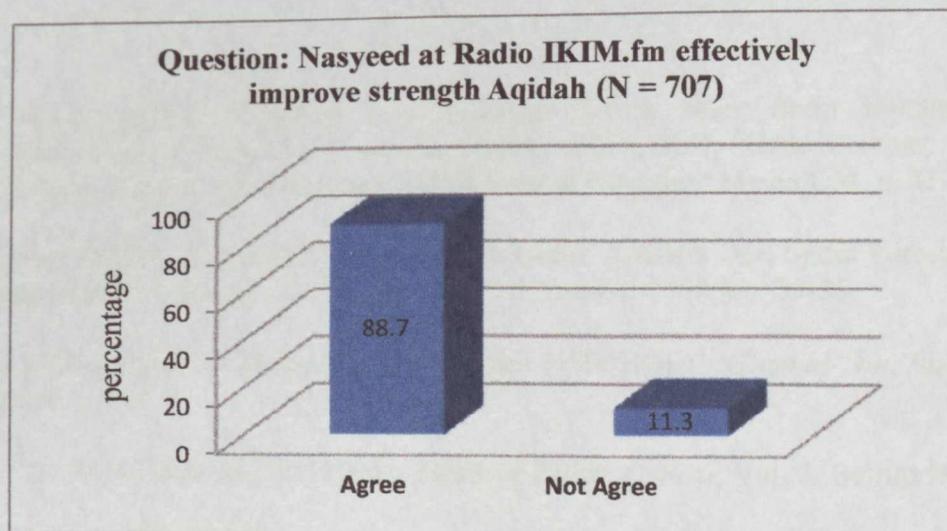
(N = 707)



This study found that 88.7% or 627 out of the 707 respondents agreed that nasyeed at Radio IKIM.fm effectively increase the strength of their aqidah. It shows that the listener is not only entertain through nasyeed but they also have the most important is to strengthen the aqidah. This is evidenced by a nasyeed itself contains the elements of a basic aqidah that is easily understood by the audience, including children, teens and adults.

Nasyeed at Radio IKIM.fm Strengthen Aqidah

(N = 707)



Conclusion

Basically, the art of music is not too foreign in Islam and there were already many Muslim scholars who were seriously involved in it. The concept of *wasatiyyah* or moderateness in music is to entertain man's natural need for entertainment besides being the evidence of Islam as a realistic religion that has never forbid man's natural need and emotion. In conclusion, nasyeed broadcast by Radio IKIM.fm have a direct relationship with the majority of respondents. It's a lot of positive impact on the respondents, including educating their souls, give peace, morals educate and increase their aqidah.

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