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Cultural Identity of Ska-Punk Music among Malaysian Gigs from the Perspective of DAKEN 2021

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ABSTRACT

This research will examine the cultural identity of ska-punk music in Malaysia while referencing the perspective of *Dasar Kebudayaan Negara* 2021 (DAKEN 2021). Ska-punk is a hybrid genre that combines the Jamaican rhythms of ska with the rebellious spirit of punk rock, and as such represents a space for alternative cultural expression, acts of resistance, and forming a community. This research will focus on how artists, organizers, and audience define identity through the production of gigs and how they navigate this space of subcultures with the national cultural policy framework. This research argues that national cultural policies overlook subcultural forms of creativity, even though these scenes embody the principles of inclusivity and empowerment that the policy promotes. This paper uses cultural identity theory by Stuart Hall and DAKEN 2021 policy framework to help the researcher to address the disconnect between cultural-subcultural frameworks and categories of cultural participation while enhancing our understanding of music scenes, socio-cultural negotiation, and how inclusive Malaysia's national cultural policy is. The results

Keywords: Cultural, Expression, Subculture, Music, Gigs, Local, DAKEN 2021

INTRODUCTION

Ska-punk is a hybrid music genre that merges the syncopated rhythms of Jamaican ska with the rebellious ethos of punk rock. In Malaysia, it has evolved into a vibrant grassroots scene that provides a meaningful platform for youth to articulate alternative forms of identity, belonging, and resistance. While national cultural narratives often prioritize traditional, heritage-based, or state-endorsed creative industries, independent music cultures continue to flourish in peripheral spaces such as underground gigs. This tension raises important questions about how cultural identity is produced and negotiated within subcultural environments, particularly in relation to Malaysia's national cultural policy, Dasar Kebudayaan Negara 2021 (DAKEN 2021).

This research examines how artists, organizers, and audiences within the Malaysian ska-punk community define and perform cultural identity through gig participation. It explores the extent to which these practices align with or counter the values promoted in DAKEN 2021, namely inclusivity, cultural empowerment, and unity within diversity. Interviews, participant observations at gigs, and interpretive analysis of policy documents are used to gain insight into how these communities understand their role within the broader national cultural ecosystem.

The study is grounded in Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory, which views identity as fluid, hybrid, and continuously shaped through socio-cultural interactions. The DAKEN 2021 policy framework provides an additional analytical framework to evaluate whether Malaysia's cultural governance adequately recognizes and supports subcultural creative expression.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The anticipated findings suggest that ska-punk gigs function as important cultural spaces that challenge dominant identity narratives and provide alternative pathways to social cohesion. Despite their marginal status, these communities demonstrate the very principles of participation, diversity, and creativity that DAKEN 2021 aspires to cultivate. The results are expected to highlight gaps in cultural policy, particularly in acknowledging the legitimacy and contributions of grassroots music cultures to Malaysia's evolving national identity. Ultimately, this research advocates for more inclusive cultural policymaking that better reflects the lived realities of youth creative practices.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to broader discussions on the role of alternative music spaces in shaping cultural citizenship and representation in Malaysia. By revealing the contradictions between policy aspirations and actual support for subcultural creativity, the research emphasizes the need for more inclusive and adaptive cultural policymaking. Ultimately, recognizing the cultural significance of ska-punk communities not only strengthens Malaysia's creative ecosystem but also reinforces a more diverse, empowered, and participatory vision of national identity.

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