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Nurul Hidayawatie Mustaffa, Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir

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Music as a Factor in Spiritual Happiness: A Case Study on Senior Citizen in Darul Hanan Elderly Care Centre, Penang

Nurul Hidayawatie Mustaffa, Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir

Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Kemanusiaan, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.

Email: shakirah@usm.my

Abstract

Music is a universal element unanimously deemed as entertainment in human life and received differently in communities. Music is identical to young people but not exclusive to them per se. The senior citizens too are not immune from listening to music for their pleasure past times. The effectiveness of music for the elderly as a factor of spiritual happiness is however uncertain and it leaves room for research. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of music as a factor of spiritual happiness for the senior citizen. In this research, its qualitative study attempts to identify the happiness factor for the elderly stemming from music, using data collected from field study that which involves questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with ten senior citizens selected for the purpose who reside in an elderly care centre named Pusat Jagaan Warga Emas Darul Hanan Pulau Pinang in the state of Penang. The study finds that all ten senior citizen surveyed, agree that music is a factor that can raise spiritual happiness in them. This alone is evident that music is indeed able to yield spiritual happiness to the elderly in this care center and fit for use as entertainment so long as it is not contrary to the context allowed in Islam. Music genre such as *marhaban*, *qasidah*, *nashid* are often the music of choice for this group of age.

Keywords: Music, Factors, Happiness, Spirituality, Senior Citizen.

Introduction

Music is an arrangement of sounds that produces beautiful and pleasant shapes and rhythm like melody, songs, tune and hum (Dewan, 2017). Music is a universal element deemed as entertainment in human's life and accepted in communities in its variant forms and genres traversing societies such as lullabies, healing songs, dance songs and love songs (Gottlieb, 2019; Mehr et al. 2019; Asprou, 2020; Brown and Jordania, 2011; Johnson, 2002; Letts, 1997; Ahmad, 2004).

Happiness means contentedness, pleasure in life, fortunateness and luckiness (Dewan, 2017). Happiness is *sa'adah* in Arabic. The root word for *sa'adah*, spelled with characters *sin 'ayn dal* (س ع د) appears twice in the *Qur'an*, among which with the pronunciation *su 'idū* which means "in happiness" (*Hūd: 108*; The Quranic Arabic Corpus, 2017). *Sa'adah* also means well-being, comfort and

ultimate happiness (Al-Mawrid, 1995; Akhir, 2008). Spiritual means interior/inward and is relevant to soul (Kamus Dewan, 2017). Spiritual in Arabic is known as *rūhani*. The root word for *rūhani*, i.e. *ra waw ha* (روح) appears 57 times in the *Qur'an*, among which is the pronunciation of *birūhin* which means “with spirit” (*al-Mujadilah*: 22; The Quranic Arabic Corpus 2017). *Rūhani* also means soul, intangible, invisible and abstract (Al-Mawrid, 1995; Sa’ari, 1997).

Music plays an important role in lives of human. Among others music can be a factor for reducing stress and anxiety based on the effect of music on the human body. Among the musical elements involved are rhythm/beat (tempo), harmony and melody. The element of harmony is the key to stimulating the feelings of positivity. Music has also a role in decreasing the symptoms of psychological stress such as adrenalin, heart rate, as well as blood pressure through listening to music, singing or playing music (Clark and Tamplin, 2016). Moreover, music also helps in the learning process and it is found that students who listen to the genre of classical music often obtain better results compared to students who listen to the genre of hip-hop and rap music (Kent, 2006).

Based on the discussions, it is observed that music does give a positive effect in human’s life. However, it is unclear as to the role of music in spiritual happiness to human beings, including the elderly. Therefore, this research was conducted to study music as a factor of spiritual happiness upon senior citizen in Darul Hanan, Penang.

Music in Islam

In general, playing music and the term music itself are non-existent in the *Qur’an* (Yusof and Bidin, 2008; Ab. Majid and Yusof, 2008). However, the scholars of the past, al-Ghazali (d. 505H / 1111 AD) discusses the acceptable music and dance in Islam, in his work entitled *Kimiya ‘al-Sa’adah (the Alchemy of Happiness)*. Similarly, contemporary scholar, al-Qaradhawi (1997) also discusses music in his work entitled *Al-Halal Wal-Haram Fil Islam (The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam)*.

According to al-Ghazali (2004), beside obedience and worship to Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta’ala* (SWT), music and dances may be made mediums in religious worship. This privilege is accorded to the people who have immense reverence and love towards Allah (SWT). Through music, they manifest their longing and yearning for Allah SWT through self-composed poems as found in genres the likes of *marhaban*, *qasidah* and *nashid*. Listening to music as a form self-entertainment is also not forbidden; for example, listening to the sound of birds chirping or listening to the sound of trickling water. In addition, music which arouses the spirit within oneself such as songs commonly sung to cheer Muslims performing Hajj as well as those that evoke fighting spirit to battle against the infidels are also allowed. Similarly, melancholy songs that mellow the soul to induce one’s remorse for the sins committed or the failure in performing religious duties. Music is likewise accepted in weddings, thanksgiving and homecoming of those who travelled (al-Ghazali, 2004), such as the song of *Tala ‘al-Badru’ Alayna*. Along with *marhaban*, *qasidah* and *nashid*, the practice of *barzanji* is also included in the context of permissible music. In fact, this practice is well received in the local community as they are often performed in wedding ceremony and celebrating the birth of Prophet Muhammad Solla'Llahu 'alayhi wa sallam (SAW) (Samat et al., 2014).

Among the characteristics of music that are allowed as a past-times activity are encrusted in the following hadith which reads:

From A’ishah raḍiy Allah’ anha (RA) she says: “Abū Bakr raḍiy Allah’ anhu (RA) came to my house while the two Ansar girls were singing beside me about the story of the Ansar people and the day of Bu’ats. And both of them are not singers. Abū Bakr protested saying: “musical instrument of

Satan in the house of Rasulullah SAW!" This happened during the 'eid celebration Rasulullah SAW said: "O' Abū Bakr, each race has their respective celebration and today is our celebration." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 13, Hadith 4; Sahih al-Bukhari, v. 1, p. 278; Al-Ghazali, 2004).

From 'A'ishah RA she says: "Rasulullah SAW came to my house when two Ansar girls near me were singing the story of Ansar people regarding the day of Bu'ats. Rasulullah SAW lied down and turned his face in the other direction. Then, Abū Bakr RA came and spoke to me harshly, "musical instrument of Satan near Rasulullah SAW?" Rasulullah SAW turned towards Abū Bakr and said: "leave them". At that time Abū Bakr did not heed so I gestured to the girls to leave and they left. The day was Eid celebration and Sudanese were playing swords and shields. Either I requested or Rasulullah SAW asked me, saying: "do you want to go see the display?" I replied: "Yes". Then Rasulullah made me stand behind him and my cheek was touching his cheek and he was saying: "Carry on! O' Bani Arfida" until I got tired. Rasulullah SAW asked me, "Are you satisfied?" I replied "Yes" and he asked me to leave." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 13, Hadith 2; Sahih al-Bukhari, v. 1, p. 277; Al-Ghazali, 2004).

Based on the hadith, it is clear that music is allowed in certain context such as during Eid celebration. According to al-Qaradhawi (1997), singing is one of entertainment forms which can calm the soul, delight the heart and refresh hearing as long as the song does not impair the morals of Muslims. He also quotes the above hadith in concert with al-Ghazali that singing is permitted in celebrations such as Eid, wedding feasts, birth ceremonies and 'aqiqah feasts as well as welcoming the return of travellers. Al-Qaradhawi views that music is not haram and everything depends on intention as Rasulullah SAW says:

"Every action must be accompanied by intention. The reward for every human deeds, is the reward for what he intends." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 1, Hadith 1; Sahih al-Bukhari, v. 1, p. 1)

According to al-Qaradhawi (1997), one who listens to music for the purpose of uplifting his spirit to acquire strength to worship Allah, do good deeds in order to become a good and obedient servant of Allah, thus, his action of listening to music is justified. The same can be said of other entertaining activities which are not harmful such as taking a walk in parks, standing by the window appreciating the sky, wearing a blue attire and so much more are all allowed. Al-Qaradhawi however cautions on the limitations pertaining to the permissibility of singing and music in which, the singing should be performed in a modest and non-sensual manner, not excessive to the extent of neglecting other responsibilities and music must be avoided in the event of the presence of harms and danger and should be prohibited in total if the musical engagements were associated with forbidden activities or matters such as drinking alcohol (al-Qaradhawi, 1997; Che Seman, Awang Kechik & Ahmad, 2014; Frishkopf, 2008).

The above discussions clearly indicate that music is allowed in the context concurred by Islam examples of which can be illustrated by music which reminds the listener to Allah SWT when listening to it and gives rise to other actions of piety such as improving the practice of worship, inspiring the desire to perform Hajj, instigating fighting spirit against the infidels and increasing love for Allah. Music is even allowed if it is simply for the sake of entertainment as is during weddings as long as it is not tainted with non-sharia compliant activities. Music which develops deep sense of love for Allah is highly encouraged so as to purify the hearts from matters of immorality and neglect from remembrance of Allah (Parman, Shahri & Marni, 2017).

Music and the Elderly

Music typically is the domain of young people (Ulfa, 2017; Papinczack et al. 2015; Beckmann, 2013; Dearn, 2013). The elderly is no exception though when it comes to listening to music for the pleasure of their hearing. In a study on senior citizen who resided in religious-based elderly care centre, it was found that the activities carried out in the centre were the determining factors on whether or not the elderly would want to take residence at such centre. Among the activities carried out were *qasidah* session and talks. Participation in these activities filled up their free time positively when they chose religious-style elderly home care (Abu Bakar et al., 2016).

Music also serves as a medium of *da'wah* to the elderly. Among the genres of music utilized as *da'wah* to them is *zikr* therapy. It is a technique to sooth the souls of the elderly because it is replete with the melodious recitations and excerpts from the holy scriptures which glorify Allah SWT and is able to induce repentance and mellow the hearts of anyone who listens. This *zikr* therapy method is done by way of loud speaker each morning from 8.00am – 9.30am for the residents of Rumah Ehsan elderly home care. Among the *zikr* played over the loud speaker are *zikr munajat* of 'Astaghfirullah', 'Subhanallah', healing verses and also Ma'thurat in the morning and evening. Studies have shown that this technique is very effective because it touches the souls of the elderly and makes them remorseful (Abd. Rahman et al., 2018).

If on the local front, music genres such as *zikr* therapy is used as a means of *da'wah* for the elderly, the situation is quite on the contrary abroad; where music therapy is used to reduce the symptoms of illness in senior citizen. To illustrate, music therapy is able to influence the behaviour of the elderlies who suffer from dementia in a positive way; i.e by reducing anxiety in dementia patients. In addition, positive effects can also be seen on the mood swings and social ability of seniors undergoing music therapy (Wall and Duffy, 2010). Moreover, music also plays a role in reducing depression and pressure off the elderlies as well as improves their quality sleep through soothing music, apart from helping to reduce pain and insomnia of the elderlies in palliative care (Hanser and Thompson, 1994; Lai and Good, 2005; Botek, 2020).

It is obvious from the discussion that the role of music for senior citizen exists in a variety of forms. Evidently music brings out positive effects on senior citizen. However, the role of music as a factor in thorough spiritual happiness for the elderlies is still vague and leaves a big room for research. Thus this paper attempts to study music as a factor of spiritual happiness for the senior citizen at the Elderly Care Center, Darul Hanan, Penang, in four aspects.

Research Methodology

This is a case study research involving qualitative methods by way of data collection gained from field research. Field research is data collection method pertaining to man and his natural surroundings, warranting the researcher to embark into field study to conduct physical research (Ahmad, 2017). This field study involves questionnaire method and semi-structured interview with ten senior citizens selected by sampling at Pusat Jagaan Warga Emas Darul Hanan, Penang. The small number of respondents is relevant based on the interview method conducted to obtain in-depth information and answer the questions in this study (Puvnesvary et al., 2008). The research tools used were interview protocols and questionnaires. The technical tools used was an audio recorder. The four aspects studied on the ten senior citizens pertaining to music as a factor for spiritual happiness were the level of knowledge of senior citizen about permissible music in religion, the feelings experienced after listening to music, the practice of listening to music in daily life and the

preferred genre of music by the elderlies. Interview data were analysed qualitatively through the process of transcription, reduction, coding and data display. Meanwhile, data from the questionnaire was analysed descriptively and the data display is presented in the form of diagrams and tables (Puvesvary et al., 2008). Questionnaires data were analysed qualitatively due to the relatively small size of sample of only ten respondents and SPSS method which usually uses relatively large sample size was not employed (Howell, 2008).

Analysis of Study Findings and Factors of Elderly Spiritual Happiness

A) Background Analysis of Respondents

The background analysis of the respondents was made from the data acquired via questionnaire method. Through intentional sampling, a group of ten residents of Pusat Jagaan Warga Emas Darul Hanan, Penang were selected as respondents. To maintain the confidentiality of the respondents, they are identified with pseudonyms. For example, respondent A is referred to as RA, respondent B as RB and so on namely RC, RD, RE, RF, RG, RH, RI and RJ. The list and the background of respondents are tabled as follows:

Table 1: List and Background of Respondent

Respondent	Age	Questionnaire and Interview date
1. RA	77 years	22 September 2019
2. RB	77 years	20 October 2019
3. RC	83 years	20 October 2019
4. RD	64 years	26 October 2019
5. RE	77 years	25 November 2019
6. RF	59 years	28 November 2019
7. RG	71 years	3 December 2019
8. RH	80 years	3 December 2019
9. RI	74 years	12 December 2019
10. RJ	69 years	19 December 2019

Source: Questionnaire Form

The above Table 1 exhibits a number of six respondents whom are RA, RB, RE, RG, RH and RI in the age range of 71 to 80 and are the most respondents involved in this study. Followed by two respondents, RD and RJ aged between 61 and 70 years old while the fewest respondents are those aged between 51 and 60 years old, known as RF and RC aged between 81 years and above.

B) Analysis of Music as a factor of Spiritual Happiness of Senior Citizen

This analysis involves four research aspects namely the level of knowledge of respondents on the permissible music in religion, the feelings they experienced after listening to music, the practise of listening to music in their daily lives and the genre of music of their choice.

i) The Level of Respondent's knowledge on Acceptable Music to Religion

Based on the data from the questionnaire, all respondents admit that they have knowledge of which type of music is allowed by religion i.e. *marhaban*, *qasidah* and *nashid*. The findings for this questionnaire in the form of checklists are tabled as follows:

Table 2: The Level of Knowledge of Music Permissible in Religion

Respondent	Knowledge of music allowed in religion
1. RA	√
2. RB	√
3. RC	√
4. RD	√
5. RE	√
6. RF	√
7. RG	√
8. RH	√
9. RI	√
10. RJ	√

Source: Questionnaire Form

Table 2 shows the vast knowledge of the respondents in the types music which are permitted in religion is satisfactory.

ii) Respondents' Feelings after Listening to Allowed Music in Religion

Based on the questionnaire, all respondents admit that they are happy when listening to music allowed by religion. The findings deduced from the questionnaire in list form is summarised as follows.

Table 3: The Feelings of the Respondents after Listening to Music Allowed in Religion

Respondent	Feeling happy after listening to music
1. RA	√
2. RB	√
3. RC	√
4. RD	√
5. RE	√
6. RF	√
7. RG	√
8. RH	√
9. RI	√
10. RJ	√

Source: Questionnaire Form

Based on the Table 3, it is apparent that music is a factor in raising spiritual happiness to the respondents.

iii) The Practise of Listening to Music in Everyday Life

The data collected for the interview exhibits all the respondents admit that they made the practise of listening to religion approved music as their daily routine. The following table concludes the

answers of the respondents when asked whether they listen to music acceptable to religion in their daily lives.

Table 4: The Practice of Listening to Music in Daily Lives

Respondent	Respondent's answer to question on listening to music allowed in religion
1. RA	"yea, nashid, yea, yes..."
2. RB	"Well, we also want fun, yea, entertainment ..."
3. RC	"no music. Laila ha ilallah only."
4. RD	"Yes, sometimes nashid, a, if songs like <i>Selimut Putih</i> .."
5. RE	"Yes, I do.."
6. RF	"Nashid..yes, I do.."
7. RG	"yea, marhaban, yea, partly.."
8. RH	"Yes, yes.."
9. RI	"yea, those which appeal to us we listen to the songs, there are religious advices in there, yea..."
10. RJ	"yea, nashid, that's it, that suffices, it does become practice, it is enough .."

Source: Interview Transcript of the Respondents

The Table 4 illustrates that all respondents listen to music allowed by religion as a daily routine in their lives.

iv) The Musical Genre that Appeals to the Respondents

The interview conducted with the respondent reveals their musical genre of choice as follows:

i. Nashid: A number of five respondents choose this genre of music. This is particularly so, given the fact that *nashid* contains religious advices and immensely interested in by a respondent (RI, 12th December, 2019). The song enjoyed by the respondent is the likes of *Selimut Putih* (white shroud) sung by a *nashid* group by the name *El Suraya* (RD, 26th October, 2019). *Nashid* too has been a routine in the daily activity of respondent (RJ, 19th December, 2019). RA and RF too mention *nashid* as their preferred genre of music when asked on the practice of listening to music in their daily lives (RA, 22nd September 2019; RF, 28th November 2019).

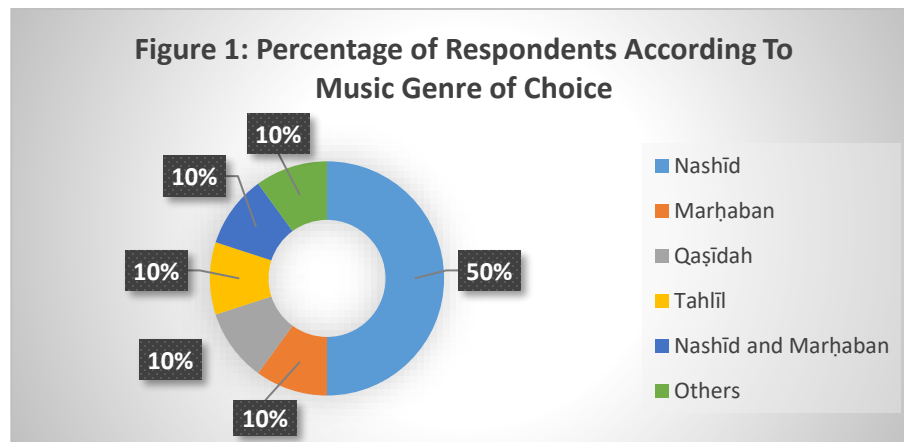
ii. Marhaban and qasidah: One respondent, RG chooses *marhaban* as his favourite music genre and makes listening to music as part of his daily practice. (RG, 3rd December, 2019). RE and RH agree with the genre of music suggested when interviewed. RE agrees with music genre the likes of *nashid* and *marhaban* (RE, 25th November 2019) while RH agrees with *qasidah* being his preferred genre of music (RH, 3rd December, 2019).

iii. Tahlil: One respondent, RC specifies *tahlil* as his favoured music genre, which he describes as *zikr Laila ha ilallah*. He also refuses to listen to general music; where she answers: "No music. *Laila ha ilallah* only." (RC, 20th October, 2019).

iv. Others: One respondent, RB admits to listening to music permissible in religion but does not mention any genre of choice. Instead she concludes that music is fun and entertaining. When

asked about music, RB answers: “Well, we also want fun, yea, entertainment...” (RB, 20th October, 2019).

Based on the discussion, *nashid* becomes the music genre most favoured by with a total of five respondents, specifically RA, RD, RF, RI and RJ. This is followed by *marhaban* opted by RG, *qasidah* chosen by RH and *tahlil* by RC as respective genre of choice. While RE is interested in two genres of music, namely *nashid* and *marhaban*. One respondent, RB does not indicate any specific genre that interests her but admits that music is something fun and entertaining. The Figure 1 below summarizes these findings.



Source: Interview Transcript of the Respondents

Based on the Figure 1 above, a total of five respondents which constitutes 50% from the total sample studied prefer *nashid* as their main music genre of choice. Meanwhile, each of the rest of the respondents at 10% chooses *marhaban*, *qasidah* and *tahlil* as their respective preferred music genre making the whole of their collective percentage at 30%. One respondent is interested in two genres of music that is *marhaban* and *nashid* constituting another 10% while another respondent at the percentage of 10% does not mention any genre of music of her choice, therefore she is placed under the category of others in the above figure.

Discussions

Key Findings

Based on the findings of the research, it is evident that music is a factor of spiritual happiness for senior citizen at this elderly care centre. The finding is derived from the four aspects of study conducted; that is firstly from the respondents' level of knowledge of the acceptable genre of music in religion which is satisfactory. Secondly, all respondents unanimously agree that they are happy when they listen to permitted music in religion. Thirdly, all respondents admit that listening to allowed music in religion are routine in their daily lives and finally, save for one, all respondents specify genre of music of respective choice, indicating that they truly have knowledge and fully understand the music genre such as *nashid*, *marhaban* and *qasidah* are the genres of choice of the respondents while *tahlil* and entertaining music are also the genre of choice for certain quarter of this age-group of people.

Recommendations for Further Study

This paper suggests a further research as this research only discusses the role of music as a factor of spiritual happiness of selected senior citizen in Darul Hanan Elderly care centre, Penang. The future research can focus on the role of music in other elderly home care as well as exploring other functions of music, not only upon senior citizen but all walks of life.

Conclusion

The study finds that music is allowed so long as it is in the context permitted by Islam. The role of music is not only to entertain, but far reaching as a means to invoke remorse and repentance upon the listeners through lyrics that bring them to the remembrance of Allah SWT.

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Corresponding Author

Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir
School of Humanities
Universiti Sains Malaysia 11800,
Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.
Email: shakirah@usm.my

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