
RECEPTION ANALYSIS OF GEN Z TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN DARA SETARA FSTVLST CONCERT

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze how Generation Z interpreted the gender equality message constructed in the Dara Setara concert by FSTVLST music group. This concert not only functions as entertainment, but also as a medium of social communication that carries a message of gender equality through visual elements, song lyrics, stage narration, and inclusive concert space arrangement. Using a qualitative approach with Stuart Hall's reception analysis method, this research dissects the encoding process of how the message of gender equality is formed by concert organizers and decoding, namely how Gen Z audiences interpret the message based on social background, personal values, and exposure to gender issues. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: belong to generation Z, live in Surakarta, have attended concerts live or through digital media, and have an interest in gender equality issues. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and documentary observations, and analyzed using Stuart Hall's reading position model, namely dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional. The results showed that most informants were in a dominant reading position, which fully accepted the gender equality message conveyed by the concert, while others were in a negotiated position, which accepted the message with adjustments to their personal backgrounds and experiences. No informants were found who directly rejected the message of gender equality conveyed by the concert. This variation in meaning is influenced by individual experience, social environment, and the level of gender literacy of each informant. This research confirms that music concerts can be analyzed as popular culture products that have a symbolic communication structure, and therefore can be the object of reception studies. The conclusion of this study is that the Dara Setara concert succeeded in shaping a gender equality narrative that could be accepted by young audiences, and showed that Generation Z has a critical awareness in interpreting social issues communicated through entertainment media. The findings contribute to the study of cultural communication and gender communication, and provide recommendations to creative industry players and social activists to optimize concert media as an inclusive and participatory advocacy space.

Keywords: Dara Setara, Generation Z, Music concert, Popular culture, Reception analysis

INTRODUCTION

Background

Music serves not only as entertainment, but also as a medium of communication that conveys various social and cultural messages. Music can be a means of expressing feelings, social criticism, and collective aspirations within society (Rusnianto, 2016). Music concerts, as a form of popular cultural communication, have evolved into a space for expression that can voice important issues, including gender equality. One concert that carries this message is Dara Setara by FSTVLST. This concert is a form of gender equality movement that aims to create a safe and

comfortable space for women to enjoy music performances (Febriyanto, 2024). This initiative has received special attention from Gen Z because it raises the theme of women's empowerment and equal representation in the music industry.

Gender equality itself remains an important issue in the entertainment industry. A study by (Smith et al., 2019) shows that women have significantly lower representation than men, both in leading roles, speaking characters, and access to career opportunities. Media often perpetuates stereotypes that discriminate against women. In this context, music not only represents popular culture but also shapes the social and political identities of its listeners (Negus, 1999). Therefore, the Dara Setara concert can be understood as a form of advocacy to create space for women's representation and participation in the independent music scene.

As a medium of communication, concerts have the potential to convey social messages effectively because they combine visual elements, music, and emotional experiences. The Dara Setara campaign demonstrates how concerts can be used as a means of building collective awareness of social issues. In the context of Stuart Hall's reception theory, audiences do not simply receive messages but interpret them based on their experiences, social backgrounds, and values. The audience's decoding position can be dominant, negotiated, or oppositionally rejecting (Hall, 1980). Therefore, a reception approach is relevant for analyzing how this concert is understood in diverse ways by Gen Z audiences (Frith, 1996).

In line with this, previous studies have shown that Gen Z is an active and critical audience in interpreting media. (Fikri & Kusuma, 2024) found diverse interpretations of power representation in the film *Fantastic Beasts*. (Lina & Comm, 2025) noted that the interpretation of social equality campaigns on TikTok is greatly influenced by individual values. (Tanjung & Kusuma, 2024) in their study of the documentary film *Dirty Vote* also found that Gen Z audiences showed significant variations in reception based on their social experiences. These findings confirm that this generation is not passive in receiving messages but actively interprets them based on personal and cultural contexts.

The research question to be examined in this study is "How does Gen Z interpret the messages conveyed in the Dara Setara concert based on Stuart Hall's interpretation model?" This study aims to contribute to mass communication research and reception studies related to music concerts as a medium of social communication. Additionally, this research is also expected to provide an analysis of Gen Z's reception of gender equality issues in the Dara Setara concert by FSTVLST.

Stuart Hall's Reception Theory in the Context of Music Concerts

Stuart Hall's reception theory (1980) provides an important framework for understanding how messages in music performances are interpreted in different ways by audiences. In the context of the Dara Setara concert by FSTVLST, this theory is used to examine how Gen Z receives messages of gender equality conveyed through artistic elements such as stage narratives, visuals, and song lyrics. (Hall, 1980) emphasizes that audiences are active in interpreting messages, influenced by their social, cultural, and personal backgrounds. Although concerts are not traditional mass media, music performances still function as popular cultural communication rich in ideological meaning. In line with this perspective, (Barker, 2008) states that popular culture such as music has the power to shape the audience's perspective on social issues.

In Hall's communication model, the encoding and decoding processes are central aspects. Encoding is the process of conveying messages by organizers based on a specific ideological framework, while decoding is the process of interpretation by the audience, which can result in

dominant-hegemonic (full acceptance), negotiated (acceptance with adjustments), or oppositional (rejection) meanings. Three factors influence the decoding process: frameworks of knowledge, relations of production, and technical infrastructure. In this study, the Dara Setara concert was used as a case study to explore how the social position, gender literacy, and personal experiences of Gen Z audiences shape their interpretation of gender equality messages. (Frith, 1996) also emphasizes that concerts are not merely entertainment but spaces for communication that enable the creation of diverse meanings in the minds of audiences.

Fourth Wave Feminism

The Dara Setara concert by FSTVLST explicitly addresses gender equality issues through women's empowerment and criticism of discrimination in the music industry. This concert represents a liberal feminist perspective that demands equal rights for all genders in terms of expression and participation in the arts, as well as incorporating elements of radical feminism that reject patriarchal structures in the entertainment industry. By creating a safe and collective space for women, the concert serves as a cultural medium advocating for social change and supporting inclusive representation in performing arts (Febriyanto, 2024). This practice is in line with the spirit of fourth-wave feminism that emerged in the early 2010s, marked by the use of digital technology and social media to build solidarity, educate the public, and combat gender-based violence (Munro, 2013). Popular culture, including music concerts, is utilized as a medium for conveying messages of gender equality that are close to the lives of young audiences.

In Indonesia, fourth-wave feminism is reflected in movements such as the Women's March (2017–2021), which demonstrates the interconnectedness between global and local feminist movements (Meivio Bahari et al., 2022). Social media plays a central role in expanding the reach of issues and shaping public awareness, as seen in the Dara Setara concert, which actively engages Gen Z as its primary audience. The intersectional and inclusive approach in this concert highlights the interconnection between gender, economic, and cultural issues, and strengthens digital feminist practices that expand public participation through technology (Shabira, 2022). In addition, social media also influences public perceptions of gender inequality, especially in the context of sexual violence in Indonesia (Mohammad Efendi Yusuf, 2025). By combining performing arts, digital distribution, and social activism, Dara Setara reflects a contemporary feminist vision that fights for equality through relevant and progressive cultural expression (Bendar, 2019).

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a reception analysis method to understand how Gen Z interprets messages of gender equality in the Dara Setara concert by FSTVLST. This approach was chosen because it focuses on the subjective experiences and meanings of the audience towards the concert as a form of cultural communication (Hall, 1980). The research was conducted in Surakarta with subjects aged 18–25 who were interested in social issues, particularly gender equality, and were aware of the Dara Setara concert, either directly or through digital media.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria to ensure data relevance: belonging to Generation Z, residing in Surakarta, having watched or followed the concert documentation, and having an interest in gender equality or independent music. The informants were willing to participate in in-depth interviews to reveal their views, experiences,

and interpretations of the concert. Information about the informants involved in the study is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Research Informant Criteria

Informant Code	Initials	Age (Years)	Gender	Residence
Informant A	NVR	22	Female	Surakarta City
Informant B	BH	24	Male	Surakarta City
Informant C	AHNA	22	Female	Surakarta City
Informant D	BD	23	Male	Surakarta City

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, observation of concert documentation, and analysis of audience interactions on social media. Data analysis utilized (Hall, 1980) reception theory with three categories of interpretation: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional reading. The analysis process followed (Miles & Huberman, 1994) model: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation (Sugiyono, 2014), member checking (Mekarisce, 2020), and researcher reflexivity. This study is expected to contribute to the understanding of Gen Z's reception of gender equality messages in the context of popular culture.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

This study aims to determine how Generation Z interprets the message of gender equality conveyed in the Dara Setara concert by FSTVLST. Based on in-depth interviews with four informants, it was found that this concert was able to effectively convey social messages through various mediums such as song lyrics, stage visuals, narratives, and the atmosphere of the concert. Informants who attended the concert in person or via digital media indicated that the event was not merely ordinary entertainment but also served as a space for advocacy and reflection on the role and rights of women in the music industry. The messages of gender equality were received quite strongly by the informants, although there were differences in perspective and levels of acceptance depending on their backgrounds and experiences.

Reception Analysis Based on Stuart Hall Theory

Stuart Hall (1980) divides the audience's reception of media messages into three categories: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional. In this study, no informants were found to occupy the oppositional position. The informants' reception was divided into two main positions, namely dominant-hegemonic and negotiated, depending on their level of acceptance and interpretation of the Dara Setara concert message by FSTVLST.

a. Dominant-Hegemonic Position

In this position, the audience receives the message in its entirety and in line with the sender's intention. Informant C, for example, assessed that the concert clearly and deeply addressed the issue of gender equality. She felt that the concert was not just a musical performance, but also a form of social communication that made the audience aware of the importance of safe spaces and equal rights for women in the music industry. She expressed that she fully embraced the messages conveyed by the concert, particularly regarding equal opportunities and safety for women to express themselves.

Informant A also took this position. She stated that the values conveyed by the concert were very much in line with the principles she believed in. According to her, the concert created a safe and empowering space for women to express themselves. In the interview, she stated, *“Aku merasa ada di posisi pertama (dominant), karena menurutku mereka menyampaikannya udah sangat pas dan sesuai sama nilai-nilai yang aku percaya.”* (Thursday, May 15, 2025).

Meanwhile, Informant B, although not present in person, also showed full acceptance of the concert’s message. She captured the values of equality through visual symbols, the selection of performers, the stage narrative, and the digital campaign conducted before the event. She noted that the concert successfully addressed women’s issues thematically from various aspects, from the audience to promotional elements. He stated, *“Saya setuju sekali kalau konser ini dibilang menyuarkan isu-isu perempuan... dari audiens yang datang, media promosinya, sampai dresscode-nya.”* (Sunday, May 4, 2025).

b. Negotiated Position

In a negotiated position, the audience accepts most of the message, but still reinterprets it based on their personal perspectives and life experiences. Informant D falls into this category. He stated that he agreed with most of the messages conveyed, but did not accept them entirely. He said,

“Aku setuju sama pesan-pesan yang disampaikan tapi tetap mikir pakai kaca mata aku sendiri... nggak semua kutelan mentah, tapi aku ambil dan cocokkan sama pendapat pribadi.” (Thursday, May 29, 2025).

He also reflects on a shift in perspective through social reflection. In previous experiences, he had observed how women’s opinions were disregarded in his environment. The concert prompted him to reconsider the importance of equal representation and recognition of women’s roles. He assessed that the concert’s warm and supportive atmosphere toward women effectively conveyed the message through various means, such as the selection of musicians, song lyrics, and visual narratives on stage.

Discussion and Evaluation of Results

Based on reception analysis, FSTVLST's Dara Setara concert proved effective as a medium of popular culture communication in conveying messages of gender equality to Gen Z. This is in line with (Hall, 1980) view that audiences have an active capacity to interpret media messages, and reinforced by (Barker, 2008) who states that popular culture is an important arena in the formation of ideological meaning. Beyond being entertainment, the concert opened up space for reflection through a relaxed and symbolic narrative approach. Informants A, B, and C occupied dominant-hegemonic positions, indicating full acceptance of the concert's message, while Informant D was in a negotiated position, adapting the message to their personal perspective, as explained by (Hall, 1980) in his categorization of message decoding.

The aspect of safe space is the most prominent reception point. The concert is seen as creating a comfortable atmosphere for women to express themselves without fear, in line with feminist values that demand equal representation and participation in public spaces (Febriyanto, 2024). This is also relevant to the concept of intersectionality introduced by (Crenshaw, 2013) which highlights the importance of understanding women's experiences based on various intersecting social factors.

The delivery of messages that are not patronizing but impactful makes this concert relevant to the younger generation. The communication strategy used by FSTVLST shows that

music and popular culture can be powerful tools for social advocacy in promoting contemporary feminist values. (Munro, 2013) emphasizes the importance of digital media in fourth-wave feminism, while (Bendar, 2019) views popular culture as a channel for expression and resistance. In the Indonesian context, (Shabira, 2022) adds that social media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of gender equality issues among young people.

Analysis of Decoding in Dara Setara Concert

In the process of decoding or interpreting messages by the audience, variations in reception were found based on Stuart Hall's theory. (Hall, 1980) explains that audiences can be in dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, or oppositional positions when interpreting media messages. Informants A and C were in dominant-hegemonic positions, fully accepting and agreeing with the message of gender equality conveyed through the concert. They felt represented as women in public spaces and encouraged to be more confident. Informant C stated that the concert encouraged women to be more courageous in speaking up and expressing themselves, while informant A expressed that she felt she had a safe space to express herself without fear (Febriyanto, 2024).

In contrast, informant D occupies a negotiated reading position. He agrees with most of the messages conveyed but still interprets them based on his personal perspective. Although he supports gender equality, he acknowledges that his understanding of this issue is shaped by his experience as a man who has begun to realize the importance of listening to women's voices in social life. This is in line with (Barker, 2008) findings, which emphasize that meaning in popular culture communication is formed contextually based on individual life experiences.

Meanwhile, informant B tends to be in a dominant-hegemonic position, with critical notes. He appreciates the efforts of the equality campaign carried out through concerts and considers it an important first step. However, he also notes that these messages still have room for expansion, especially in the context of gender equality that encompasses broader aspects such as work, education, and economic access. This opinion reinforces the idea that the reception of messages in popular culture is not singular but is continuously negotiated within specific social and ideological frameworks (John Storey, 2015).

Social Background and Audience Perceptions of the Function of Music Concerts

Social background and life experiences play an important role in shaping how Gen Z interprets the Dara Setara concert. Informants A and C, as women, feel that the message of equality is highly relevant to their experiences in public spaces, which often restrict freedom of expression. Meanwhile, informants B and D demonstrated openness to equality issues due to the influence of patriarchal family and societal environments, although their interpretation of the message unfolded gradually. This aligns with (Hall, 1980) perspective, which states that audiences interpret media messages through their personal experiences, social contexts, and ideological frameworks.

All informants agreed that this concert was not merely entertainment but also an effective medium for social advocacy. Music was used as a means to convey messages of gender equality in a subtle and non-preachy manner, making the concert easily accepted by the younger generation. According to (Frith, 1996) popular music has the power to convey ideology implicitly through lyrics, performance, and the collective experience of the audience. (Bendar, 2019) emphasizes that performing arts can be a vehicle for the struggle against gender inequality. (Shabira, 2022) also notes the important role of digital media and popular culture in voicing social

justice. Meanwhile, (Mohammad Efendi Yusuf, 2025) highlights the role of social media in shaping public awareness of gender inequality issues in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, Generation Z interprets the message of gender equality in FSTVLST's Dara Setara concert through diverse reception positions in accordance with Stuart Hall's theory. Three out of four informants occupy dominant-hegemonic positions, indicating full acceptance of the message of equality conveyed through music, visuals, stage interactions, and non-preachy social media campaigns. Meanwhile, one informant was in a negotiated position, accepting some of the messages but adapting them to his personal experience as a man. The concert was not only seen as entertainment but also as a space for social advocacy, creating a safe space, encouraging reflection, and amplifying women's representation in public spaces.

This study has several limitations, including the small number of informants (only four, all residing in Surakarta) and the methodological focus on analyzing the audience's decoding process without examining the message production (encoding) side. Data collection was conducted over a one-month period, with a limited thematic focus on gender equality issues in the concert. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve more informants from more diverse backgrounds. Concert organizers and music industry practitioners are also encouraged to continue developing creative and participatory approaches in conveying socially relevant messages to the younger generation.

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