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Coffee Shop Alternative Space for Expression Through Popular Culture Among Teenagers on the Outskirts of Cirebon

Devy Purwanti Darmawan, Faiz Yassar Hakim, Khaerudin Imawan
Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Indonesia
Email: devidarmawan05@gmail.com, faizyassar1@gmail.com, khaerudin.imawan@ugj.ac.id

ABSTRACT (10 PT)

Coffee Shops have evolved into social spaces that allow suburban teens to express themselves through popular culture. Coffee Shegia is a place that offers more than just drinks, but also a place for social interaction and cultural expression. Where suburban teenagers often face limited social space, the existence of a Coffee Shop provides a convenient alternative and supports their creativity. This study aims to analyze how Coffee Shegia functions as a social space that supports individual expression, social interaction, and engagement in popular cultural activities among adolescents. The space that must be mastered is; spatial space, spatial representation, and representation space. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative research method. The informants in this study were adolescents aged 17-30 years who had visited the Coffee Shop. Techniques used in data collection from primary and secondary sources through interviews and documentation. The results of the study show that Coffee Shegia is not only a place to enjoy coffee, but also a social space that allows teenagers to express themselves, create, and strengthen social relationships through various activities such as cake decoration, live music, and watching together. The design of the space that creates indoor and outdoor areas with supporting facilities such as Instagramable photo areas and billiards creates a friendly and comfortable togetherness, which supports positive interaction between individuals of different age groups. With a cozy atmosphere, Coffee Shegia not only increases social relationships, but can also form a deep social identity for its visitors.

Keywords:
Coffee Shop, self-expression, teenagers, social interactions, popular culture

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INTRODUCTION

In the 20th century, coffee shops that used to be called coffee shops continued to evolve into a more modern term, namely Coffee Shop. This term continues to grow from year to year. In the book The Great Good Place According to Oldenburg, "The absence of a place to gather or simply relax outside the home or workplace can cause a person to feel isolated and bored." (Dewi & Gandha, 2020). Meanwhile, Coffee Shops can be the main option because they can be found in every part of the world. Coffee Shop is a place that offers a wide variety of drinks such as coffee, tea, snacks, and other dishes (Setiawan, 2017). Usually, Coffee provides a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere so that it can be used as a space of expression to gather, work, relax, or express oneself through popular culture at the event. (Michael, 2022).

Coffee Shops are now increasingly important for all people, especially teenagers where they need social space (Widiyaningsih, 2022; Wijayanti, 2022). Social space is an environment that conducts direct or virtual interaction that functions as a means of social interaction and is created by social actions, which are based on individuals and groups, one of which is adolescents. (Rohmah, 2020). Where suburban teenagers can express themselves through popular culture such as events, watching movies together, live music, and flower bouquet decoration events. The Coffee Shop also offers a relaxed atmosphere, making it a comfortable place for teens to express themselves freely (Wildani, 2024).

However, although Adolescents in suburban areas often face limitations regarding social space to express themselves, mainly due to the lack of entertainment facilities or social environments that meet their needs. Astuti & Handarsari E. (2010) said that a suburb is a place that is on the border between the city center and the district. In response to this, many young individuals are looking for alternative places that not only function as a gathering location, one of which is Coffee Shegia which is located at Ruko, Jl. Puri Tamansari R No.9 Blok A No.7.

Coffee Shop often holds various events that involve visitors, especially teenagers, to make Coffee Shegia different from other Coffee, to express itself with the development of popular culture. but also as a forum for expressing popular culture. Popular culture is a collection of cultural ideas, activities and products that are accepted and disseminated by most people in certain activities (Savitri & Riska A. S., 2021). Generally, popular culture has a function as an activity that entertains and expresses the activity because trends, music, movies, cake decorations, flowers, continue to be popular with teenagers who affect their lifestyle and mindset (Indainanto & Nasution F. A., 2020). From time to time it is very popular with teenagers, with the holding of popular culture to improve relationships with customers, create a lively atmosphere and provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy their time in a more exciting and comfortable way (Damajani, 2018).

Suburban teenagers often face limitations in accessing safe and expressive social spaces, leading to restricted opportunities for self-expression, identity building, and social interaction. In particular, the absence of inclusive public spaces where they can engage with popular culture has resulted in the marginalization of their creative and emotional development (Bahmayani, 2020). This study addresses how coffee shops, specifically Coffee Shegia in Cirebon, function as alternative spaces for expression for adolescents navigating these spatial limitations (Azzahra Abdurahman A. I. & Alamsyah A., 2023).

Understanding the role of alternative spaces such as coffee shops is crucial, especially in suburban contexts where teenagers often lack platforms for creativity and interaction. Coffee Shegia represents an emerging cultural node that not only facilitates entertainment but also strengthens youth identity and social cohesion (Dewi & Gandha M. V., 2020).

As the influence of popular culture continues to grow, teenagers need physical environments that support their dynamic social lives. This study becomes urgent in contributing to youth development through spatial design, cultural accessibility, and emotional well-being (Djami, 2020).

This study has a formula that must be done, namely 1) Identify the Role of Coffee Shop in Becoming a Space of Expression, 2) To analyze the role of Coffee Shop as a place to

express itself in the form of popular culture for suburban teenagers (Mutaqin, 2022). The GAP Research that has been summarized from previously is from research Anrical (2018) with the title "Coffee Shops and Public Spaces (Sudi Shift in Leisure Time Expression Space to Popular Cultural Entity Space) Coffee Shop And Publlic Space." Using different theories and indicators and different research locations, where the location of our research was conducted in Cirebon City at Coffee Shegia while the previous research was conducted at Coffee in Makassar City.

Prior studies have examined coffee shops as urban public spaces and symbols of lifestyle and identity among youth. Research by Anrical (2018) focused on the transformation of coffee shops into cultural entities in Makassar, while other scholars have explored coffee shops as venues for creative expression, socialization, and leisure among Gen Z (Constancia Indrani, 2023).

Further research highlighted that popular cultural activities—such as music, art, and fashion—are integral to teenagers' identity formation and self-expression, particularly in metropolitan settings.

However, most of these studies remain urban-centric and overlook the specific needs and behaviors of suburban youth in semi-urban environments, where spatial dynamics and access to cultural infrastructure differ significantly (Zein & Rachim A. A., 2018).

There is a lack of empirical research exploring the function of suburban coffee shops as socio-cultural spaces for teenagers, especially those incorporating popular culture as a mechanism of self-expression and identity formation. Few studies consider how spatial elements and cultural events interact to form meaningful environments in suburban contexts.

This research uniquely combines Henri Lefebvre's social space theory with real-time observations of Coffee Shegia's spatial dynamics and popular cultural events. It integrates spatial, representational, and experiential dimensions to highlight how a suburban coffee shop becomes a creative hub for teenagers, beyond its commercial purpose (Ghazali, 2024).

The study aims to identify and analyze the role of Coffee Shegia as a space for expression among suburban teenagers in Cirebon by exploring its engagement with popular culture, spatial layout, and community-oriented events.

This research contributes to the field of urban sociology, youth studies, and cultural geography by offering insights into how informal spaces like coffee shops serve critical social functions. It provides a model for designing inclusive environments that empower adolescents to express themselves, build identity, and foster social bonds in suburban settings

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method, which when referring to the elaboration of Moeloeng, aims to collect field data that functions as information about a certain subject. Qualitative research is expressed through language and grammar (Moeloeng, 2007:6). aims to study the phenomenon that occurs that Coffee Shop as an alternative cultural expression space that is popular among suburban teenagers. In this research, a qualitative approach proved effective in explaining the context in which Coffee serves as an alternative for the remamja to explore their ways of expression in the form of popular culture.

The researcher applied several techniques for data collection, including interviews and documentation. As a way to validate materials, concepts, and conduct literature studies. The study will involve teenagers aged 17-30 who often visit the café. The selection of this age group was made because this group is actively looking for a place to socially interact and express themselves through their lifestyle and proximity to popular culture. In addition, Coffee owners and employees will gain an understanding of Coffee's role in shaping the social and cultural identity of adolescents.

This qualitative method research uses Lefebvre's theory of social space, where social space can be seen from three indicators, namely, spatial space, spatial representation, and representation space. These three indicators can help our research process related to problem formulation, namely, 1) To identify the role of the Coffee Shop in becoming a space of expression, 2) To analyze the role of the Coffee Shop as a place to express itself in the form of popular culture for suburban teenagers (Hendra, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Coffee is no longer just a place to enjoy Coffee and Non-Coffee, but they have transformed into a place where every space, from the décor to the scent, is designed to create a cozy and relaxing atmosphere. (Naufal Vito Ridho M. Lava Daenova H. Dewa C. & Pembangunan Jaya U., 2024). Coffee Shegia often hosts events that appeal to teenagers, such as cake decorating, mini-concerts, and popular cultural activities. Located in the suburbs, this Coffee is the main place for teenagers to express themselves through live music performances and watching together, creating a dynamic and fun atmosphere (Ayu Annisa N. & Lestari K. K., 2021). At an affordable price, this Coffee supports a wide range of individual and group activities, as well as keeping up with the latest trends in design, menu, and atmosphere. Coffee Shegia provides a space for adolescents to feel accepted regardless of economic background, allowing them to share their experiences and express themselves without fear of being judged (Olifia, S., Rajagukguk, S., & Ananda, A., 2022)

Coffee Shegia also has an interior design that is divided into two, there are outdoor and indoor, with large tables that allow groups to gather and very supportive to interact socially to show their expression. In addition, Coffee Shegia has many Instagrammable photo areas on each floor (Oktavia et al., 2018) Drinking coffee at Coffee has become a trend among young Indonesians. There is a relationship that exists between teenagers and Coffee. It is not uncommon to see a group of young people spending time at Coffee for hours after school or on campus in between lectures (Hasibuan Harahap R. H. & Purwoko A., 2021).

According to Lefebvre (Ensering, 2017). Social space theory is formed through social interactions that take place in individual or group contexts. These social interactions are actions that improve people's views of a particular space and how they use it. Social space is similar to the perception of the environment (environment) which is developed through the interweaving of social activities, which includes work, personal life, and leisure. The results of the research we conducted using spatial space indicators, spatial representation, and spatial representation from social space theory are:

1. Spatial space

Refers to aspects related to the use, regulation and perception of physical space in the communication process (Lefebvre, 2017). Based on research that has been carried out, it shows that the Shegia Coffee room makes popular culture such as cake decorations and live music so that teenagers are free to show their expressions without feeling oppressed. This shows that spatial space is in accordance with this study.

Based on the data collection stage which was carried out through the stage of direct interviews among teenagers who attended Coffee Shegia with the aim of providing a forum for them to express themselves through popular culture organized by Coffee Shegia. This coffee place provides various facilities that support this activity, such as flower bouquet decorations and cake decorations, which are part of the popular culture that is held. With an affordable cost, which is IDR 50,000, participants can take part in cake decorating activities and enjoy various Coffee variant drinks, both Coffee and Non-Coffee.



Figure 1. Activities to channel expression.
Source: Coffee shegia documentation, (November 6, 2024)

Based on key informants (teenagers) the physical space that brings together teenagers, young children, and mothers shows that the cake decoration event at coffe shegia makes a social space for meetings and introductions. Through these meetings, communication can occur. This activity plays an important role for teenagers to channel their self-expression in a comfortable, fun, and relaxed atmosphere. To develop skills and abilities, as well as combine colors, textures, and shapes to improve concentration, build social interaction and communication with other participants (Kusumawardhani, 2020).

In addition, Coffee Shegia also holds live music every weekend as well as daily music rounds during operating hours, which can be enjoyed at no additional charge. The existence of this music event provides an opportunity for teenagers in the suburbs to channel their expressions in a comfortable and relaxed way, without feeling intimidated by any group, to improve mood and happiness, channel talent, and develop creativity (Rizani Gani & Mahdia Fadhila, 2022). Where Coffee Shegia is the right place for teenagers to gather, enjoy music, and create.



Figure 2. channeling the expression of feelings
Source: dok. Devy Purwanti Darmawan and Faiz Yassar Hakim (December 22, 2024)

Based on the key informants (teenagers) of the occurrence of physical space that functions in communication through live music, that is, a live music performance, the arrangement of this physical space has a crucial role to ensure the best experience for the audience. The stage placement, the direction of the sound, and the distance between the musicians and the audience all contribute to the way the music message is conveyed. In addition, the acoustics of the location also have a great influence on the quality of the sound received.

The space allocated for live music performances often serves as a gathering place for the community. The arrangement of seating, bar, and standing areas within the venue can have a big impact on audience interaction during the event. An open and spacious design can increase viewer participation in the experience, while a more intimate layout can result in a more intimate atmosphere.

2. Representation of Space

The representation of space describes the mechanism by which a space can arise and form. This mechanism involves a series of concepts about space that function within the domain of the human imagination (Lefebvre, 2017).

Coffee Shegia also provides billiards game facilities at an affordable cost, which is IDR 30,000. This billiards facility is presented because many teenagers in the suburbs like the game. Coffee Shegia is an ideal place for them to channel their self-expression through a game of billiards, while enjoying a comfortable atmosphere and free from uncomfortable views. With this facility, teenagers can gather, socialize, and play pool casually in a friendly and inclusive environment.



Figure 3. channeling expressions to their hobbies, as well as building communication.
Source: Dok, Devy Purwanti Darmawan and Faiz Yassar Hakim (December 23, 2024)

Based on key informants (teenagers) it is shown that the representation of space in the space of the human imagination Both in billiards and ball games, In billiards games, the pool table functions as the center of activity, which determines the movement space of the players. Around the table, there is an interaction area where players engage in discussions, formulate strategies, and demonstrate their skills. The environment also has a competitive feel. In addition, the audience gathered around the table sets the mood through comments, expressions, and support to certain players. Thus, a pool room is more than just a playground; It becomes a social arena that brings together individuals from different backgrounds and playing styles.

This space is understood not only in a physical context but also through imagination and perception. In billiards, players imagine the path of the ball, the angle of the bounce, and the strategy of their shots before making a shot. This imaginative process adds an additional dimension to the game area, allowing players to identify possibilities that have not yet materialized in their minds.



Figure 4. improve communication.
Source: Dok, Devy Purwanti Darmawan and Faiz Yassar Hakim, (December 12, 2024)

This also makes teenagers feel the same way that coffee shegia visitors feel a space that functions as a social space where teenagers who initially imagined that Coffee Shegia could not hold a nobar, it turned out that the imagination of teenagers was realized to feel a more comfortable and enthusiastic atmosphere when the broadcast took place.

Billiards and watching football matches collectively have become important elements in the culture in various regions. These activities create a social atmosphere where individuals gather, share experiences, and build new social relationships. At the pool venue, players often exchange techniques, discuss strategies, or engage in casual conversations during game breaks. Meanwhile, watching football together reinforces a sense of solidarity among fans, which is shown through social interactions such as cheering together, celebrating goals, or mourning the defeat of their favorite team. In addition, this environment is governed by certain norms and ethics. For example, in a game of billiards, there are rules that prohibit interference with the concentration of other players and the obligation to touch the ball only with permission. In the context of watching football, such norms include seat sharing, respecting opposing fans, and minimizing excessive noise.

3. Representation Room

Refers to the space of interaction experienced and daily life by individuals and groups (Lefebvre, 2017).

Based on key informants (adolescents) The interaction between visitors through meetings and conversations has a very significant meaning. Based on previous research, Coffee Shegia often serves as a gathering place where friends exchange ideas, share stories, enjoy time together, or celebrate achievements. The social aspect is very noticeable in this friendly relationship, especially when they gather at a place like Coffee Shegia. Not only does this coffe offer a fun atmosphere to enjoy a drink, but it also serves as a space where individuals can share experiences, discuss ideas, or simply enjoy uninterrupted company. In this context, the coffe is seen not only as a place for consumption, but also as a meeting point that strengthens social relationships among individuals (Lukitaningsih & Juliani D., 2021).



Figure 5. Interaction of creativity and confidence.
Source: Instagram @Shegiacoffee, (December 31, 2024)

This form of social interaction in a friendship network combines physical and social elements to create an atmosphere that supports togetherness. Where in the increasingly advanced digital era, face-to-face meetings at locations such as coffee provide added value in deepening and strengthening more sincere relationships.

The social values and significance of friendship at Coffee Shegia have a crucial role in strengthening bonds between individuals, building group identity, and improving the quality of social life. Intimacy established in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere facilitates deeper

communication, strengthens social connections, and increases emotional support among friends. Coffee Shegia serves not only as a place to enjoy food and drink, but also as a social space that enriches interpersonal relationships and strengthens community in the context of friendship.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion presented, it can be concluded that Coffee Shegia has successfully established itself as a vibrant social space that fosters self-expression, social interaction, and engagement with popular culture, particularly among suburban teenagers. Through its spatial configuration, both physical (Spatial Space) and symbolic (Representation Space), Coffee Shegia offers an environment designed to support communication, creativity, and communal activities. The spatial layout includes interactive elements such as indoor-outdoor seating, aesthetically pleasing photo spots, billiard tables, and communal screens that encourage participation across age groups. More than a café, Coffee Shegia acts as a cultural and emotional hub where teenagers can construct social identities, express their individuality, and build meaningful social bonds. Its use of popular culture—seen in elements like cake decoration, live music, and recreational amenities—creates an inclusive and relaxed atmosphere, positioning it as a vital third place for youth development in suburban contexts. As such, Coffee Shegia enriches both personal and collective experiences, contributing to the emotional and social well-being of its visitors. For future researchers, it is suggested to expand the scope to compare multiple suburban coffee shops in various regions to identify patterns and variations in their function as youth social spaces. Moreover, employing longitudinal studies would help to observe the long-term social impact of such places on adolescent identity development. Researchers could also integrate psychological perspectives to understand how the design and atmosphere of third places like Coffee Shegia influence mental health, creativity, and self-esteem among youth. Additionally, future studies might explore the role of digital interaction within these spaces, examining how social media engagement intersects with physical space to enhance or disrupt social dynamics.

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