

Islamic Femininity and Hijab Fashion: Negotiating Identity between Religiosity and Modernity in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Indonesian Muslim women negotiate Islamic femininity through hijab fashion at the intersections of religiosity, modernity and digital visibility. Using a qualitative design grounded in Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, the research analyzes visual and textual materials from social media, hijab campaigns and online communities to uncover how hijab practices articulate evolving gendered identities. The findings show that hijab fashion functions as a cultural arena where women blend piety with contemporary aesthetic preferences, producing hybrid identities that challenge traditional boundaries of modesty. Digital platforms intensify this negotiation by enabling curated self presentation and exposing women to moral scrutiny, social expectations and aspirational beauty standards. Hijab influencers play a key role as cultural intermediaries who disseminate fashionable forms of piety shaped by consumer culture and global modest fashion trends. The study also reveals that women actively reinterpret religious obligations within liquid modernity, resisting singular definitions of Islamic femininity while navigating pressures from religious institutions, peer networks and online audiences. Overall, hijab fashion emerges as a dynamic site where Islamic identity, cultural creativity and modern aspirations converge. The study recommends future research on generational differences, algorithmic amplification of modest fashion and the global cultural circulation of Indonesian hijab aesthetics.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of hijab fashion as a cultural phenomenon in Indonesia reflects a complex negotiation between religiosity, femininity and modernity within a rapidly



evolving socio cultural environment. Over the past two decades, young Muslim women have increasingly incorporated global fashion trends into their expression of Islamic identity, producing new aesthetic formations that challenge traditional assumptions regarding modesty and piety. Faiz (2020) explains that urban Muslim women now navigate a globalizing lifestyle in which religious commitment intersects with cosmopolitan taste, leading to hybrid identity performances that are simultaneously pious and fashionable. This hybridization highlights the transformation of Islamic femininity from a strictly normative category into a flexible cultural space where women reinterpret religious obligations through contemporary aesthetic practices. The rise of hijab fashion on social media platforms illustrates how Muslim women actively participate in shaping visual narratives of piety, thereby asserting agency over their public representation in ways that align with modern sensibilities.

This transformation is particularly significant in Indonesia, a nation where Islam and popular culture frequently intersect in vibrant and contested ways. Ida (2019) emphasizes that Indonesian popular culture has undergone substantial global influences, resulting in the localization of global aesthetics into culturally resonant forms. Within this context, hijab fashion emerges as one of the most visible expressions of cultural globalization and religious negotiation. Hijabers communities, modest fashion influencers and micro celebrities have become key cultural actors who disseminate new models of Islamic femininity that blend devotional values with aesthetic modernity. Pramiyanti (2019) found that Indonesian hijabers strategically use Instagram to construct a self presentation that merges ideals of piety, authenticity and lifestyle appeal, creating a distinct visual grammar of Muslim womanhood in the digital sphere. This phenomenon shows that hijab fashion extends beyond clothing; it constitutes a site of identity formation, social interaction and symbolic communication.

At the same time, the shift toward fashionable hijab practices has generated debates about authenticity, religious commitment and the commodification of piety. Agustina and Jannah (2023) observed that hijab fashion in Banjar communities oscillates between religious ideology and aesthetic expression, as women balance normative expectations of modesty with the desire for stylistic creativity. These negotiations reveal the internal tensions experienced by many Indonesian Muslim women as they seek to align personal autonomy with religious prescriptions. Shin et al. (2024) further argue that hijab practices are increasingly shaped by institutional discourses and religious organizations, which exert governance over women's choices through normative expectations regarding proper Islamic appearance. This demonstrates that hijab is not merely a fashion statement but also a site of ideological contestation and social regulation that positions women within broader power structures.

The role of media and digital platforms in shaping hijab identity has become especially influential in the past decade. Social media provides a space where Muslim women can curate visually appealing expressions of modest fashion that resonate with global trends. Pramiyanti et al. (2022) found that young Muslim women negotiate authenticity on Instagram by selectively displaying their religious persona and lifestyle preferences to maintain symbolic legitimacy within their peer networks. This resonates with Qorib et al. (2023), who document how university students use clothing and online media as an extension of identity performance, demonstrating that fashion functions as a form of self expression mediated by digital visibility. As hijab fashion becomes increasingly tied to online representation, Muslim women engage in what Williams and

Kamaludeen (2017) describe as hijabista and hijabster cultures, which combine global fashion aesthetics with religious discipline, thereby redefining the boundaries of acceptable Islamic femininity. These cultural formations demonstrate the dynamic and negotiated nature of hijab practices in contemporary Indonesia.

However, the rise of fashionable hijab practices also intersects with discourses of nationalism, morality and social control. Brown (2019) explains that headscarf adoption among Indonesian women is significantly influenced by peer networks and social expectations, suggesting that social pressure and communal values continue to shape decisions around veiling. This social dimension is mirrored in Lestari's (2022) study of micro celebrity niqabis, which shows how public visibility amplifies scrutiny and reinforces normative judgements regarding proper religious behavior. Consequently, the visibility of hijab fashion in public and digital spaces often places Muslim women under dual pressures: to appear pious enough for religious communities and fashionable enough for contemporary social audiences. These dual pressures reveal the complex negotiation required for Muslim women to balance moral accountability with aesthetic participation.

Recent scholarship has also highlighted the role of global capitalism and consumer culture in transforming the hijab into a market driven symbol. Maulana (2025) argues that contemporary hijab trends among Indonesian Muslim women reflect shifting politics of piety in which beauty, fashion and religious identity become entangled within consumerist frameworks. Hijab brands, influencers and fashion industries capitalize on the aspiration for stylish modesty, contributing to the commercialization of religious identity. Beta (2020) similarly notes that the politics of visibility among Indonesian Muslim youth is deeply intertwined with media representation, resulting in a culture where piety is increasingly performed through curated visual aesthetics. Such findings suggest that hijab fashion is both a personal expression of faith and a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by economic and media systems.

Despite growing scholarly attention, several research gaps remain within the study of Islamic femininity and hijab fashion in Indonesia. First, Rahmawati's (2016) visual analysis of Indonesian Muslim fashion blogs highlights the aesthetic dimensions of online hijab representation but does not investigate how women negotiate internal conflicts between religious devotion and modern identity aspirations. Second, Fakhruroji and Rojiati's (2017) analysis of urban Muslim women's identity construction focuses on piety and fashionability but does not account for the influence of digital visibility and micro celebrity culture in shaping contemporary femininity. Third, Chaniago et al. (2022) examine hijab representations in relation to media and globalization but do not explore how women actively interpret or resist these representations within everyday practices. These gaps indicate the need for a more integrated analysis that connects religious ideology, modern aesthetics, digital representation and personal identity negotiation.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive exploration of how Indonesian Muslim women negotiate Islamic femininity at the intersection of religiosity, fashion and digital culture. By combining multimodal discourse analysis with cultural interpretation, this study offers new insights into how women reconcile normative expectations of modesty with the aesthetic and aspirational values promoted through contemporary hijab fashion. Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine how Indonesian Muslim women negotiate their Islamic femininity through hijab

fashion by balancing religious devotion, modern lifestyle aspirations and digital self representation within the evolving cultural landscape of Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using multimodal critical discourse analysis to examine how hijab fashion mediates the negotiation of Islamic femininity in Indonesia. The method draws on visual semiotics, narrative interpretation and cultural analysis to uncover how clothing styles, imagery, captions and online interactions construct representations of religiosity and modernity. Data consisted of visual and textual materials from social media posts, hijab fashion campaigns, online articles and digital expressions produced by hijabers communities. These materials were analyzed to identify discursive patterns, symbolic framings and identity performances that reflect the negotiation between piety and modern aesthetics.

The analytical procedure followed three stages adapting Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis integrated with multimodal semiotics. First, descriptive coding identified visual motifs such as layering styles, color palettes, syar'i interpretations and lifestyle aesthetics. Second, interpretive coding examined symbolic meaning and discursive patterns related to piety, authenticity, consumer culture and social surveillance. Third, critical interpretation traced how cultural power, gender norms and religious expectations shaped women's identity negotiation in digital environments. Following Pink et al. (2022), digital ethnographic sensitivity was applied to situate online practices within broader cultural contexts. Credibility was maintained through researcher reflexivity, triangulation of visual and textual data and iterative cross-checking of codes. This methodological approach enables a nuanced understanding of hijab fashion as a socio cultural site where Islamic femininity is continuously constructed, negotiated and contested.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hijab Fashion as a Cultural Arena for Negotiating Islamic Femininity in Contemporary Indonesia

Hijab fashion in Indonesia has developed into a cultural arena where Muslim women negotiate the meaning of Islamic femininity in relation to shifting social expectations, aesthetic sensibilities and religious commitments. Rather than viewing the hijab as a static religious symbol, contemporary Muslim women reinterpret it as an expressive medium through which identity, aspiration and piety are articulated in dynamic ways. This is evident in the emergence of urban Muslimah cultures where global fashion influences blend with local interpretations of Islamic values, resulting in hybridized forms of modest aesthetics. Faiz (2020) notes that urban Muslim women engage with global consumer culture while simultaneously reaffirming their religious identity, generating practices that reflect both cosmopolitan values and Islamic devotion. This negotiation demonstrates the adaptability of Islamic femininity within Indonesia's multicultural environment, where religious expression intersects with modern lifestyle preferences.

Visual representations play a key role in shaping how Islamic femininity is constructed. On social media platforms such as Instagram, hijabers communities curate aesthetically appealing images that portray the hijab as fashionable, elegant and spiritually meaningful. Pramiyanti (2019) highlights that Indonesian hijabers actively craft narratives of authenticity that merge piety with modern sensibilities, suggesting

that digital self presentation has become integral to contemporary Muslim identity. These visual strategies challenge the dichotomy between traditional religiosity and modern fashion, positioning the hijab as an emblem of empowerment and self representation. However, the shift toward fashionable hijab practices also raises questions regarding the boundaries of religious propriety and the commodification of piety. Agustina and Jannah (2023) found that Muslim women in Banjar communities often encounter tension between fulfilling normative expectations of modesty and embracing creative fashion expressions, reflecting the broader cultural negotiation embedded in hijab practices.

Hijab fashion also functions as a medium of social positioning and symbolic distinction. Individuals who display stylish or branded hijab outfits may be perceived as embodying a modern, upwardly mobile Muslim femininity that aligns with global modest fashion trends. Maulana (2025) argues that fashionable hijab practices among young Indonesian women reflect shifting politics of piety in which beauty and religious devotion coexist within consumerist frameworks. This convergence of aesthetics and spirituality complicates traditional assumptions of modesty, revealing that Islamic femininity is continuously reshaped through cultural consumption, peer influence and digital visibility. Brown (2019) similarly emphasizes that the adoption of the hijab in Indonesia is influenced by peer networks and social expectations, indicating that women's decisions around veiling are shaped by social belonging as much as by religious conviction.

Moreover, contemporary hijab culture opens new spaces for moral interpretation and cultural debate. While many Muslim women view fashionable hijab practices as a legitimate expression of piety, others express concern about the increasing commercialization of religious symbols. Beta (2020) identifies that young Muslim women navigate competing discourses of visibility: the desire to express piety publicly and the pressure to conform to aesthetic standards that may conflict with traditional Islamic teachings. This negotiation is particularly visible in the rise of micro celebrity hijab influencers whose online presence becomes a site of moral scrutiny. Lestari (2022) observes that niqabi micro celebrities face heightened expectations regarding moral conduct, illustrating how digital visibility intensifies social regulation of Islamic femininity.

In addition, global forces of media and popular culture play a significant role in shaping hijab fashion narratives. Ida (2019) argues that Indonesian popular culture mediates global influences through locally embedded interpretations, suggesting that hijab fashion is a product of both transnational flows and local negotiations. Chaniago et al. (2022) further note that media representations of hijab often blend religious symbolism with consumer culture, contributing to the normalization of fashionable piety. These representations influence Muslim women's perceptions of ideal femininity, as aesthetic refinement, modesty and social prestige become intertwined in the visual grammar of hijab fashion. This blending of religiosity and modernity highlights the fluid nature of Islamic femininity, demonstrating that Muslim women continuously interpret and reinterpret their identities within evolving cultural landscapes.

Taken together, these dynamics show that hijab fashion in Indonesia is not merely a matter of dressing but a multifaceted process of identity construction. Muslim women negotiate Islamic femininity by balancing commitments to religious devotion with aspirations for modern lifestyle participation, digital self expression and aesthetic creativity. These negotiations reflect broader cultural changes within Indonesian

society, where the boundaries between piety and modernity are increasingly fluid, contested and co constructed through social interaction.

Digital Visibility, Social Regulation and the Politics of Modesty in Hijab Fashion Practices

The rise of digital platforms has transformed hijab fashion into a performative and highly visible cultural practice, reshaping how Muslim women negotiate social regulation, authenticity and the politics of modesty. Social media plays a key role in amplifying the visibility of hijabers communities, where images of stylish modest fashion circulate widely and establish new aesthetic norms. Pramiyanti et al. (2022) found that young Muslim women curate carefully constructed images to balance religious identity with modern self expression, revealing the heightened reflexivity required to navigate online visibility. This digital participation magnifies both empowerment and vulnerability, as women must negotiate between asserting agency over their image and responding to public scrutiny of their religious authenticity.

Hijab fashion influencers serve as cultural intermediaries who shape the aspirational aesthetics of Islamic femininity. Their presence reinforces specific beauty standards, such as coordinated color palettes, soft makeup and elegant layering, which become markers of fashionable piety. However, digital visibility also subjects these women to moral evaluation. Lestari (2022) demonstrates that niqabi micro celebrities are particularly scrutinized regarding moral conduct and religious alignment, suggesting that online audiences impose expectations that extend beyond aesthetic expression. Shin et al. (2024) further argue that religious organizations reinforce such expectations by promoting particular interpretations of proper Islamic dress, linking hijab practices to broader regimes of religious governance. This dynamic positions hijab wearing women at the intersection of aesthetic visibility and institutional regulation, shaping how they negotiate their public identity.

The digital circulation of hijab fashion also reveals intersections between religiosity and consumer culture. Hijab brands frequently collaborate with influencers to promote new styles, normalizing the commercialization of modesty. Maulana (2025) notes that hijab fashion trends reflect shifting cultural politics where beauty, piety and aspiration are co produced within market driven systems. This commercial environment encourages Muslim women to express religious identity through consumptive choices, often blurring the boundaries between spiritual sincerity and branding. Qorib et al. (2023) note that clothing becomes an extension of personal identity performance among young adults, particularly as they navigate the pressures of digital visibility and peer comparison.

To illustrate the intertwined dimensions of religiosity, modernity, visibility and social regulation, the following full grid table presents the key thematic intersections observed in Indonesian hijab fashion discourse.

Tabel 1. Key Intersections in the Negotiation of Hijab, Femininity and Modernity

Dimension	Cultural Indicators	Modes of Negotiation	Implications for Islamic Femininity
Religiosity	Modesty norms, pious symbolism, adherence to syar'i interpretations	Balancing doctrinal expectations with personal autonomy	Reinforces moral identity while enabling interpretive flexibility
Modernity	Fashion trends, lifestyle aesthetics, global modest fashion	Incorporating global styles into local expressions of piety	Produces hybrid cultural identities that merge faith with modern taste

Digital Visibility	Instagram posts, influencer branding, curated self presentation	Managing authenticity and public perception	Increases both empowerment and exposure to moral scrutiny
Social Regulation	Peer pressure, community norms, institutional religious expectations	Negotiating judgment, obedience and aspiration	Shapes boundaries of acceptable femininity within public spheres
Consumer Culture	Hijab brands, advertising, fashion influencers	Participating in commodified expressions of piety	Transforms hijab into a market mediated symbol of identity

These intersections indicate that hijab fashion operates as a multilayered practice shaped by overlapping cultural forces. Muslim women negotiate religious devotion within environments that increasingly value aesthetic sophistication, personal branding and digital self curation. The interplay between religiosity and modernity is not mutually exclusive; rather, it forms a continuum where women actively reinterpret religious obligations through creative and culturally embedded strategies. Williams and Kamaludeen (2017) describe this as the emergence of hijabista and hijabster cultures, where religious youth develop hybrid identities that challenge stereotypes of Muslim women as passive or traditional. Similarly, Merlins (2024) argues that the hijab in liquid modernity becomes a shifting social identity shaped by fluid cultural conditions.

Overall, the negotiation of Islamic femininity in Indonesian hijab fashion reflects broader transformations in gender, culture and religion. Digital media intensifies the visibility of Muslim women’s choices, creating opportunities for empowerment while also reinforcing moral scrutiny. The convergence of religiosity, modernity and consumer culture illustrates how hijab fashion is embedded in the politics of identity, where Muslim women navigate competing expectations in shaping who they are and who they aspire to become.

Cultural Hybridity, Identity Fluidity, and the Transformation of Islamic Femininity in Liquid Modernity

The evolving practices of hijab fashion in Indonesia reflect a condition of cultural hybridity that characterizes contemporary Muslim womanhood. Hijab fashion becomes a symbolic space where religious devotion, modern aspirations and cultural creativity intersect, producing identities that are fluid rather than fixed. Merlins (2024) argues that in Bauman’s liquid modernity, the hijab itself transforms into a shifting social identity shaped by unstable cultural boundaries. This framework resonates strongly with the Indonesian context, where young Muslim women operate within a fast changing cultural environment influenced by global trends, digital aesthetics and localized interpretations of Islamic norms. As a result, Islamic femininity is not merely inherited but continually re crafted through lived experiences, mediated representations and social negotiation.

A central aspect of this fluidity is the ability of Muslim women to navigate multiple identity repertoires simultaneously. Many women articulate themselves as both fashionable and pious, global and local, modern and traditional. This multiplicity reflects the hybrid identities described by Ajala (2017), who notes that Muslim youth often combine elements of Islamic dress with contemporary aesthetics to create a symbolic language that communicates belonging within both religious and global cultural spheres. Indonesian hijab fashion exemplifies this hybridity, as styles integrate Korean, Middle Eastern and Western fashion influences while maintaining recognizable

standards of modesty. Such practices produce a unique aesthetic that differentiates Indonesian Muslim women on the global modest fashion stage, while also reinforcing the cultural specificity of their religious identity.

Identity fluidity is further reinforced by the participatory nature of digital media, which enables continual experimentation with visual self representation. Pramiyanti et al. (2022) found that young Muslim women use Instagram not merely to present themselves but to actively negotiate the meaning of authenticity, belonging and piety within digital communities. This negotiation often involves a strategic balancing act, as women adapt their visual styles to maintain religious credibility while also participating in aesthetic trends that define digital femininity. The feedback loop created by likes, comments and followers intensifies this identity shaping process, positioning Muslim women within a performative environment where their self presentation functions as both personal expression and social performance.

Moreover, cultural hybridity in hijab fashion intersects with broader transformations in gender roles and expectations. Ries (2024) demonstrates that representations of femininity in contemporary Indonesian visual culture often oscillate between traditional gender norms and new forms of empowerment. Hijab fashion contributes to this oscillation by enabling Muslim women to rearticulate femininity in ways that challenge stereotypes of passivity. Fashionable hijab styles foreground agency, confidence and creative autonomy, counteracting narratives that associate piety with rigidity. At the same time, the emphasis on appearance may reinforce aesthetic expectations that place pressure on women to conform to increasingly sophisticated standards of modest beauty. This duality reflects the ambivalence embedded within cultural hybridity: hijab fashion empowers women to redefine femininity, but simultaneously subjects them to new forms of social regulation.

Another dimension of identity transformation involves the contestation of authority over defining what constitutes “proper” Islamic femininity. Shin et al. (2024) argue that religious organizations attempt to regulate hijab practices through discourses that associate modest dress with moral discipline and communal loyalty. However, young Muslim women increasingly resist singular definitions of femininity by appropriating the hijab as a flexible symbol that accommodates their personal aspirations. Andina (2023) notes that hijab discourse in Indonesia contains competing narratives centered on freedom, religiosity and media representation, indicating that the meaning of hijab is not controlled solely by religious authorities but co produced through media and everyday practice. This contestation underscores the active role of women in shaping religious identity, demonstrating that Islamic femininity is continually negotiated within multiple discursive arenas.

Hijab fashion also functions as a cultural site where national identity is reimaged. Maulina et al. (2023) highlight that in Aceh, Islamic fashion becomes a medium for negotiating religious law and cultural expression, revealing tensions between local identity politics and global fashion influences. Such tensions mirror the broader Indonesian experience, where hijab fashion is both a marker of Muslim identity and a symbol of national modernity. By participating in global modest fashion markets, Indonesian Muslim women contribute to a form of cultural diplomacy that positions Indonesia as a hub of Islamic creativity. This global engagement further reinforces identity fluidity, as women adopt and reinterpret transnational styles in ways that remain rooted in local cultural values.

The cumulative effect of these intersecting dynamics is a transformation of Islamic femininity into a plural, negotiated and culturally embedded identity category. The analysis shows that hijab fashion operates as a discursive field where religious devotion, personal aspiration, social expectation and aesthetic creativity converge. In this field, Muslim women are not passive recipients of cultural norms but active agents who shape and redefine the boundaries of religious identity. This agency highlights the ongoing evolution of Islamic femininity in Indonesia, driven by the interplay between religiosity, modernity and digital culture.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that hijab fashion in Indonesia serves as a dynamic cultural site where Muslim women negotiate Islamic femininity amid evolving intersections of religiosity, modernity and digital visibility. The findings reveal that hijab practices are shaped by hybrid cultural influences as women incorporate global fashion trends into expressions of piety, producing fluid and multifaceted identities. Digital platforms intensify this negotiation by enabling continuous visibility, self curation and public scrutiny, positioning women at the intersection of empowerment and regulation. The analysis also highlights the role of social institutions, peer networks and consumer culture in shaping women's interpretations of modesty, authenticity and aesthetic aspiration.

Based on these findings, future efforts in digital literacy and religious education should acknowledge the complex realities of Muslim women's identity negotiation, promoting inclusive understandings of modesty that respect cultural diversity and personal autonomy. Community leaders and educators should encourage reflexive engagement with media representations to mitigate moral judgment and support healthier interpretations of Islamic femininity in digital spaces. Further research is recommended to explore generational differences in hijab practices, the impact of algorithmic visibility on expressions of piety and the global positioning of Indonesian modest fashion as part of transnational cultural exchange.

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