Jurnal Sosiologi Agama
ISSN > 1978-4457 (print) | 2548-477X (online)

Hijrah Aesthetic as a Form of Popular Culture Mimicry in the Contemporary *Hijrah* Movement in Kudus

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Abstract
The phenomenon of *hijrah* among Indonesian Muslim women has shifted from personal spiritual transformation to a social identity increasingly shaped by popular culture and digital spaces. This study analyzes *hijrah* aesthetics as a form of popular-culture mimicry within the contemporary *hijrah* movement among Muslim women who visit cafés in Kudus Regency. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach involving interviewees selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The findings reveal that *hijrah* is not expressed through rejecting popular culture but through adapting fashion, social media, and café culture, which are then imbued with religious meanings. The study further indicates that the *hijrah* aesthetic represents the aestheticization of piety, in which religious identity is constructed through visual symbols and self-representation in public spaces. This research contributes to the growing literature on contemporary *hijrah* by showing that popular culture has become an important medium for shaping Muslim women's identities in the digital era.

Keywords: *Hijrah Aesthetic, Popular Culture Mimicry, Contemporary Hijrah, Muslimah Women*

Introduction

Hijrah has become a prominent development in recent years, particularly in the lives of Indonesian Muslim women. Initially understood as a process of spiritual transformation toward a more religious way of life, *hijrah* has developed into a social phenomenon that influences various aspects of everyday life (Hakim, 2024). This transformation is reflected not only in increased religious practices but also in dress, social interactions, consumption choices, and social media activity. Advancing digital technology has further accelerated the spread of *hijrah* narratives through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (Hidayat, 2026). Consequently, *hijrah* is no longer positioned merely as a personal spiritual experience but has also become a social identity that can be displayed, shared, and recognized by surrounding communities

This development has given rise to what is known as the *hijrah* aesthetic, referring to the tendency to express Islamic identity through aesthetic visual representations closely connected to popular culture (Azhari et al., 2025). This phenomenon appears in specific hijab styles, visually appealing religious-themed social media content, and lifestyle practices that blend Islamic values with contemporary trends. In this context, religiosity is expressed not only through religious practices but also through visual symbols that construct images of piety in public spaces. The

emergence of the *hijrah* aesthetic shows that *hijrah* unfolds alongside the development of digital culture, which increasingly emphasizes visuality, aesthetics, and self-representation.

This phenomenon illustrates an intense encounter between Islamic values and popular culture. Various trends, particularly among younger generations, such as modern fashion styles, café culture, social media use as a means of self-expression, and personal branding practices, are not entirely abandoned by individuals undergoing the process of *hijrah* (Zahara et al., 2020). Instead, individuals adopt and adjust these trends to fit the Islamic identity they seek to present. This suggests that contemporary *hijrah* does not always emerge through rejection of popular culture but often unfolds through adaptation and negotiation that produce new forms of religious expression. Research on young Muslim *hijrah* movements shows that *hijrah* involves not only individual spiritual transformation but also social identity formation through symbols, lifestyles, and everyday practices (Putri, 2021a).

In this context, contemporary Muslim generations does not entirely abandon popular culture but instead select, reinterpret, and create new meanings for various cultural elements in accordance with the Islamic values they uphold. Contemporary Muslim piety is increasingly constructed through symbols, self-representation, and social practices observable in both public and digital spaces (Rofidah & Muhid, n.d.). Therefore, popular culture can become a space for producing new religious identities that blend religious values with modern lifestyles.

This phenomenon can also be observed in the development of the *hijrah* movement in Indonesia, which increasingly interacts with popular cultural spaces, particularly through social media, Muslim fashion, digital communities, and more modern forms of religious communication. Research on *hijrah* phenomena in Indonesia indicates that contemporary *hijrah* has developed as a form of cultural religiosity that is not only oriented toward individual spiritual transformation but also contributes to the formation of social identities through various symbols and popular practices. Thus, *hijrah* can be understood as a process of negotiation between Islamic values, local culture, and the dynamics of modernity, rather than merely as a form of rejection toward popular culture (Zahara et al., 2020).

The development of modern social spaces such as cafés also demonstrates changes in how young Muslim women construct and display their religious identities. Cafés, once often understood as part of consumer culture and urban lifestyles, have increasingly become social spaces that enable activities such as discussion, productivity, and social networking. Research on urban Muslim women shows that young Muslim women does not always separate religious practices from modern spaces; instead, they negotiate their identities by incorporating Islamic symbols into everyday life (Ramidi et al., 2025). In addition, the development of social media and visual culture has strengthened the tendency of Muslim women to present religious identities through various forms of self-representation, including clothing styles, digital content, and lifestyle choices (Rofidah & Muhid, n.d.). These conditions indicate that modern social spaces can serve as arenas where religious values and popular culture meet in the formation of contemporary Muslim women's identities.

This phenomenon is significant to examine because it shows a process of imitation and adaptation, where elements of popular culture are integrated into religious expressions. Fashion styles influenced by global trends, the use of social media with aesthetic visual concepts, and activities of spending time in modern public spaces illustrate the close relationship between religiosity and popular culture (Izzah, 2025). In practice, people does not accept elements of popular culture entirely; instead, they modify them and give them new meanings according to the

Islamic values embraced by individuals undergoing *hijrah*. This creates a distinctive form of identity by combining religious piety with modern lifestyles that have developed among younger generations.

Previous studies have examined *hijrah* extensively. Research indicates that *hijrah* has evolved from an individual spiritual transformation into a social movement that influences Muslim women's lifestyles (Zahara et al., 2020). Other studies show that social media plays an important role in shaping religious identities, expanding digital preaching practices, and creating new spaces for interaction within *hijrah* communities (Firdaus et al., 2025). Additional studies show that symbols of piety are increasingly displayed through attractive visual representations that the public can easily consume (Takhim & Maksum, 2025). However, these studies have mainly focused on the motivations behind *hijrah*, digital preaching activities, and the dynamics of religious communities. Existing studies have not examined *hijrah* aesthetics as a form of popular culture mimicry emerging in the everyday lives of Muslim women in social spaces such as cafés. These spaces demonstrate a tangible encounter between religious identity, popular culture, and urban lifestyles among contemporary Muslim women. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by examining how religious identity is negotiated through interactions with popular culture in everyday social environments.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the *hijrah aesthetic* as a form of popular culture mimicry within contemporary *hijrah* movements among Muslim women visiting cafés in Kudus. This study is important because it helps explain how Muslim women interpret *hijrah* and display their religious identities amid the strong influence of popular culture and digital media. Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute to contemporary *hijrah* studies by presenting empirical data based on Muslim women's experiences in everyday social spaces. This research explains the relationship between religiosity, popular culture, and the formation of contemporary Muslim women's identities. This area has received relatively limited attention in Indonesian *hijrah* studies.

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to understand the phenomenon of *hijrah* aesthetic as a form of popular culture mimicry within contemporary *hijrah* movements (Sugiyono, 2016; Bhabha, 1994). This study selected a qualitative approach because it focuses on the experiences, meanings, and social practices of Muslim women undergoing *hijrah* in their everyday lives. Through this approach, the study seeks to understand how individuals construct, present, and negotiate religious identities amid the development of popular culture.

This research was conducted in three cafés in Kudus Regency: Kedung Caffe Kudus, In.di Caffe Kudus, and Ranu Caffe Kudus. The selection of these research locations was based on the view that cafés have become public spaces frequently used by younger generations for various social activities, such as gathering, discussion, working, and creative activities. In contemporary society, cafés no longer function merely as places of consumption but also as spaces for social interaction and identity formation through lifestyles, consumption choices, and self-representation practices in public spaces. Therefore, we selected cafés as research locations because they represent spaces where popular culture, youth social life, and contemporary Muslim women's religious expressions intersect.

The observation process took place during April–May 2026. Observations focused on Muslim women's social activities in café spaces, particularly regarding clothing styles, interaction patterns, social media activities, and forms of religious identity representation that emerged in

everyday life. This observation aimed to understand how elements of popular culture appear and are negotiated within *hijrah* aesthetic practices.

Interviews were conducted with interviewees selected through purposive sampling, based on specific considerations relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2016) . In qualitative research, the number of interviewee is not determined by statistical representation requirements but by their ability to provide in-depth information about the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2018). Therefore, the interviewees in this study are not intended to represent all Muslim women who visit cafés in Kudus Regency but were selected because they have relevant experiences related to constructing *hijrah* aesthetic identities.

This study used the interactive model developed by Miles & Huberman (1992) consisting of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data collection involved interviews and field observations. The researchers then reduced the data by selecting information relevant to the research focus. Next, we presented the data in descriptive narrative form to identify patterns and relationships among findings. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and continuously verifying interpretations to ensure consistency. This process helped us understand how Muslim women visiting cafés in Kudus Regency interpret and practice *hijrah* aesthetics.

Literatur review

Hijrah Aesthetic in Comtemporary *Hijrah* Movements

Initially, *hijrah* referred to the migration of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE. This event was not merely a geographical migration; it also marked an important phase in the formation of an Islamic society with its own social, political, and religious systems (Watt, 1956). In the development of Islamic thought, the concept of *hijrah* later expanded in meaning. *Hijrah* is no longer understood solely as a physical relocation but also as a process of self-transformation toward a life that is more aligned with Islamic values (Al-Qaradawi, 1995). In this sense, *hijrah* relates to personal change, namely an individual effort to abandon behaviors considered inconsistent with religious teachings and move toward a better form of religious commitment.

The meaning of *hijrah* as a process of personal transformation has further developed within contemporary Muslim societies, particularly among younger generations, who perceive *hijrah* as part of identity seeking, lifestyle choices, and religious expression. Along with social changes among Muslim women, the meaning of *hijrah* has expanded. *Hijrah* is no longer understood merely as an individual spiritual experience but has developed into a social movement involving various actors and communities in collectively constructing religious identities. In Indonesia, contemporary *hijrah* movements have become increasingly visible through the emergence of young Muslim women's study communities, community-based preaching movements, and the use of digital media to disseminate religious values. These movements not only encourage changes in religious practices but also shape lifestyles, consumption preferences, clothing styles, social interactions, and how individuals present Muslim women's identities in public spaces (Hakim, 2024).

Unlike earlier understandings of *hijrah*, which emphasized personal spiritual transformation, contemporary *hijrah* is more collective because it involves social actors who construct specific religious narratives, practices, and symbols. *Hijrah* communities, digital preachers, and social media users help form new social spaces where Islamic values are produced

and disseminated. Through this process, *hijrah* becomes part of the dynamics of modern Muslim women's identities, which interact with technological developments, popular culture, and changing urban lifestyles (Putri, 2021a)

One development within contemporary *hijrah* movements is the emergence of the *hijrah aesthetic* phenomenon. This phenomenon refers to how individuals and Muslim women's communities present Islamic identities through visual symbols, clothing styles, digital activities, and self-representations closely connected to popular culture. The *hijrah* aesthetic shows that contemporary Muslim women's religious expressions are constructed not only through ritual practices but also through aesthetic elements used to communicate piety in public spaces (Hannan, 2022).

In the digital era, *hijrah* is no longer merely an individual experience but has also become an identity that can be displayed, shared, and socially recognized through public spaces (Hilalludin, 2025). This suggests that contemporary religious practices are increasingly intertwined with cultural and technological developments that shape modern social life.

The rise of social media has significantly reshaped how young Muslim women understand *hijrah*. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube enable individuals to share spiritual experiences, religious activities, and lifestyle transformations with broader audiences. Through social media, *hijrah* narratives can spread rapidly and reach social groups beyond geographical boundaries (Lini et al., 2025). *Hijrah*-related content has also encouraged the emergence of virtual communities that strengthen religious identity formation. In this context, social media functions not only as a communication medium but also as a space for meaning production, allowing individuals to construct self-images as religious Muslim women while remaining relevant to contemporary developments.

These dynamics have generated a phenomenon known as *hijrah* aesthetic. The term refers to presenting Islamic identity through aesthetic, modern, popular-culture-oriented visual representations (Hannan, 2022). This phenomenon appears in particular hijab styles, minimalist religious-themed content designs, attractive religious quotations shared online, and high-quality documentation of religious activities. Within the *hijrah* aesthetic, Islamic symbols does not merely mark religiosity but also become part of self-representation strategies in digital spaces. Consequently, religious expressions are evaluated not only by the religious practices performed but also by how these identities are presented and accepted within social environments.

The emergence of the *hijrah* aesthetic suggests that contemporary religiosity increasingly interacts with the visual logic of the digital era. Individuals undergoing *hijrah* tend to use popular aesthetic elements to communicate religious messages to the public. Neutral color palettes, minimalist photography concepts, well-organized content layouts, and the selection of aesthetically appealing locations have become part of strategies for constructing attractive religious images. This development demonstrates that religious symbols are no longer present solely through ritual practices but are also reproduced through various visual forms that correspond with the communication characteristics of young Muslim women. Hannan (2022) explains that contemporary Muslim women's religiosity is increasingly associated with processes of self-representation through symbols, lifestyles, and digital media. In line with this perspective, research on *hijrah* expressions on social media demonstrates that *hijrah* identities are constructed through various visual signs, including clothing styles, the use of religious symbols, and digital content production that shapes images of piety in public spaces (Daherman et al., 2022). Therefore,

aesthetics have become an important element in communicating and representing religious identities among contemporary Muslim women.

On the other hand, *hijrah* aesthetic is also associated with lifestyle changes that accompany the process of *hijrah*. Individuals who undergo *hijrah* not only seek to improve their religious practices but also adjust various aspects of everyday life. These changes can be observed in clothing preferences, consumption patterns, social circles, and the selection of spaces for daily activities. The emergence of modest fashion trends, growing interest in halal products, and the growth of religious-oriented social spaces show that *hijrah* has become increasingly connected to cultural practices and lifestyles (Rahmayanti, 2024). Under these conditions, religious identity is shaped not only by beliefs and rituals but also by social choices that reflect the values individuals embrace.

The phenomenon of *hijrah* aesthetic also illustrates that the boundaries between religiosity and popular culture have become increasingly fluid. Various trends among younger generations, such as café culture, using social media for personal branding, and interest in modern fashion, are not necessarily abandoned when individuals decide to undergo *hijrah*. Instead, people often adapt these elements and assign them new meanings in line with the Islamic values they embrace. As a result, various forms of religious expression emerge that combine religious piety with modern lifestyles. This shows that contemporary *hijrah* is complex because it occurs at the intersection of religion, popular culture, and digital technological development.

Based on the discussion above, *hijrah* aesthetic can be understood as a form of religious expression that places Islamic symbols within the framework of contemporary visual culture and lifestyle practices. This phenomenon not only reflects changes in how individuals present their religious identities but also shows how religion continues to adapt to social and cultural developments. Therefore, the *hijrah* aesthetic becomes an important concept for understanding the dynamics of contemporary *hijrah* movements, particularly in examining how Muslim women's identities are constructed, negotiated, and represented amid the strong influence of popular culture in the digital era.

Popular Culture Mimicry

Mimicry refers to the process of imitating values, practices, symbols, or lifestyles from particular groups or cultures. In social and cultural studies, mimicry is understood as a phenomenon in which individuals or groups adopt elements of other cultures and incorporate them into their everyday lives (Taula'bi et al., 2021). This process does not always produce identical copies but often involves adjustments based on the needs, identities, and social contexts of the actors involved. Therefore, mimicry cannot be understood merely as complete replication but as a creative process that enables the emergence of new cultural forms.

The concept of mimicry has been widely discussed within postcolonial studies. Bhabha (1994) explains that mimicry is a process of imitation that produces a condition of "almost the same, but not quite." From this perspective, the party engaging in imitation never produces a completely identical reproduction of the object being imitated because the process always involves elements of modification and adjustment. Meanwhile, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin view mimicry as a cultural adaptation strategy that allows certain groups to adopt elements of dominant cultures without losing their existing identities. Thus, mimicry reflects a dynamic relationship between processes of imitation and efforts to maintain identity.

In modern society, mimicry appears in many practices of popular culture. Popular culture refers to various cultural forms that develop, are produced, and are widely consumed by society

through mass media and digital media. Storey (2018) explains that popular culture is closely related to cultural practices associated with mass consumption, media, and everyday social life. The development of information technology has accelerated the spread of popular culture through digital platforms, allowing different social groups to access trends in fashion, lifestyles, communication patterns, and consumption preferences. In this context, digital media functions not only as a medium for spreading popular culture but also as a space where individuals construct and present their identities (Campbell, 2010). Consequently, individuals do not merely consume elements of popular culture passively; they also select, adapt, and reinterpret them to construct social identities and gain acceptance within particular social environments.

Mimicry in popular culture appears in many aspects of life, including adopting global fashion trends, using social media for personal branding, and adopting café culture among younger generations (Pakusodewo, 2017). However, these cultural elements are not always accepted entirely. In many cases, individuals make adjustments according to their own values, norms, and beliefs. This process shows that people do not simply receive popular culture passively; they also rework it into forms of expression that differ from their sources.

In contemporary *hijrah* movements, mimicry appears in how individuals adopt elements of popular culture to present their religious identities. Modern fashion styles, aesthetic photography concepts, social media practices, and café culture persist even as individuals undergo *hijrah* (Putri, 2021a). These elements are subsequently combined with Islamic symbols, producing distinctive forms of religious expression. This process shows that *hijrah* is not always expressed through rejection of popular culture but often occurs through adaptation and negotiation that allow both elements to coexist.

Based on the discussion above, popular culture mimicry can be understood as a process of adopting and adjusting cultural elements that develop within society into individuals' identities and everyday practices. In this study, the concept of mimicry is used to understand how Muslim women visiting cafés in Kudus adopt various elements of popular culture, such as fashion, social media practices, and urban lifestyles, and subsequently integrate them with Islamic values within the *hijrah* process they experience.

Results and Discussion

Hijrah Aesthetic in the Lives Women Visiting Cafés Kudus

a. Adaptation of *Hijrah* to Contemporary Trends: Fashion and Lifestyle

The *hijrah* process experienced by the Muslim women in this study does not demonstrate a complete separation from popular culture. Instead, the findings indicate that the interviewees continue to engage with various contemporary trends, particularly in fashion and lifestyle, while adjusting them to the Islamic values they uphold. This suggests that *hijrah* is not always understood as abandoning all modern practices, but as negotiating which elements of popular culture can be accepted and adapted to their religious identities.

In terms of fashion, the changes experienced by the interviewees are not manifested through rejection of modern clothing trends but through a selection process toward styles considered compatible with Islamic principles. Interviewee RF explained that she still follows fashion developments on social media but prefers styles considered modest and comfortable. She stated: "*I still follow fashion trends on Instagram, but now I choose styles that are more modest and comfortable to wear. In my opinion, it is still possible to look attractive without abandoning the principles I believe in*." This

statement shows that *hijrah* does not eliminate the desire to present oneself attractively; it changes how individuals assign meaning to their appearance.

These findings illustrate the process of adaptation toward popular culture. Fashion, once understood as a symbol of modern lifestyle, is not entirely rejected but reconstructed through a framework of religious values. In this context, the use of hijab, loose-fitting clothing, and more modest styles does not merely function as a symbol of religious obedience but also becomes part of contemporary Muslim women's identity representation. This phenomenon aligns with Hannan's (2022) perspective, which argues that contemporary Muslim women increasingly express piety through visible symbols and social practices. Thus, fashion becomes a space where religious identity and popular culture interact.

This process can be understood through the concept of mimicry (Bhabha, 1994), namely a process in which a group adopts elements of a particular culture without producing an entirely identical form. Mimicry produces a condition of "almost the same, but not quite." In this study, the Muslim women interviewees does not completely reject popular fashion; instead, they adopt certain elements and modify them according to the religious identities they construct. They continue to follow clothing trends while setting boundaries based on Islamic modesty and appropriateness.

Negotiation with popular culture is also evident in lifestyle. The interviewees does not perceive *hijrah* as an obligation to distance themselves from all activities that were previously part of their lives. Activities such as visiting cafés, spending time with friends, and engaging in productive activities in public spaces continue, but with different meanings. For the interviewees, the main change in the *hijrah* process does not lie in abandoning modern social spaces but in how they use these spaces according to the values they embrace.

This condition shows that the *hijrah* aesthetics develop through an encounter between religiosity and popular culture. As Putri (2021b) explains, *hijrah* among urban Muslim women is not only related to spiritual transformation but also involves changes in lifestyle and the ways individuals construct social identities. Therefore, *hijrah* practices in this study cannot be understood as resistance to modernity but as a negotiation process that allows religious values to exist within popular cultural spaces.

Thus, the adaptation of modern fashion trends and lifestyles shows that the *hijrah* aesthetic is a dynamic form of religious expression. The Muslim women in this study are positioned neither as rejecting popular culture nor as passively accepting all elements of such culture. Instead, they engage in selection, adjustment, and the creation of new meanings, resulting in forms of religious identity that align with contemporary social contexts.

b. Social Media as Medium for the Encounter between Hijrah and Popular Culture

The development of social media has transformed how young Muslim women understand, practice, and present their religious identities. In this study, social media is not only understood as a medium for disseminating religious information but also as a social space where the process of *hijrah* takes place. Through platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, the interviewees gain religious knowledge, engage with *hijrah* narratives, and construct self-representations as Muslim women undergoing spiritual transformation.

The findings demonstrate that social media plays an important role in the *hijrah* journeys of the interviewees. SA explained that she gained much of her religious knowledge through Instagram and TikTok. She stated: "*I learned a lot from Instagram and TikTok. Sometimes I became*

interested in joining religious study sessions because I had previously seen excerpts of the content on social media." This statement indicates that the *hijrah* process among younger generations is not formed solely through direct interaction with religious institutions but also through digital spaces that provide various forms of religious content.

This phenomenon shows a shift in how people acquire religious knowledge. Previously, religious learning primarily took place through formal institutions such as Islamic study groups (*majelis taklim*) or educational institutions. However, the development of digital media has created new spaces where individuals can access and understand Islamic values. Social media enables religious messages to be presented in shorter, visual, and more accessible formats for younger generations. This condition indicates that digital culture has become an important element in the development of contemporary *hijrah* movements.

However, within the context of *hijrah*, social media does not only function as a space for consuming religious information. It also serves as a space for self-representation, where individuals present their religious identities to the public. Interviewee NA explained that she preferred places with aesthetic atmospheres for documentation and content creation. She stated: "*When a place has an aesthetic atmosphere, I feel more comfortable taking photos or creating content. Sometimes the message I want to convey can also be more easily accepted when the visual presentation is attractive.*" This statement shows that visual elements have become an important part of communicating religious messages.

This condition illustrates that *hijrah* aesthetics develop through the visual logic of popular culture. Religious symbols such as Muslim women's clothing, religious study activities, Islamic quotations, and particular lifestyles are packaged through digital aesthetics to make them more accessible and appealing to social media users. In this context, piety is not only a personal experience but also something that can be communicated through visual representation.

This phenomenon can be understood through the concept of popular culture mimicry. Individuals undergoing *hijrah* do not create forms of communication that are entirely different from popular digital culture. Instead, they adopt existing patterns, such as creating attractive content, utilizing aesthetic visuals, and developing self-images through social media. The difference lies in the meanings attached to these practices. While appearance in popular culture often constructs personal existence and social visibility, *hijrah* aesthetics use appearance to communicate religious identity.

This perspective aligns with Hannan (2022), who explains that contemporary Muslim women increasingly express piety through symbols, lifestyles, and digital spaces. Furthermore, Rofidah & Muhid (n.d.), show that digital media has become a space for forming new religious identities because it enables individuals to present religious expressions through various forms of digital communication.

Therefore, social media has become a meeting space between *hijrah* and popular culture. Social media not only accelerates the dissemination of religious values but also shapes new ways of presenting piety. Through adaptation and negotiation, the Muslim women in this study use the logic of digital popular culture to construct religious identities that fit contemporary life.

c. Café as a Space for Negotiating Contemporary Muslim Women's Identity

In this study, cafés are understood not only as spaces of consumption but also as social spaces where individuals build relationships, present identities, and engage in everyday activities. The development of café culture among younger generations indicates a transformation in the function of modern public spaces. Cafés are no longer merely places to consume food and

beverages; they have become spaces for social interaction, productive activities, and the representation of particular lifestyles. Within contemporary society, spaces such as cafés have become part of popular culture because they are closely associated with consumption practices, visual aesthetics, and the construction of self-image.

The findings demonstrate that the *hijrah* process experienced by the interviewees does not lead them to distance themselves from modern social spaces such as cafés. Instead, cafés remain part of their everyday activities, including gathering, discussing, working, and engaging in other social activities. RF explained that she still visits cafés to meet friends and conduct various productive activities. She stated: "*I often work or meet friends at cafés. Sometimes we also discuss religious topics there.*" This statement indicates that cafés are not always perceived as spaces that contradict religious values; they can also serve as spaces for activities that hold positive meaning for individuals.

This condition demonstrates a process of negotiation between religious identity and popular culture. Before the development of contemporary *hijrah* movements, spaces such as cafés were often associated with modern lifestyles related to consumption and entertainment. However, the interviewees' experiences in this study show that such spaces can take on new meanings when used by individuals with particular religious identities. Cafés are no longer merely symbols of urban lifestyles; they also become spaces where Muslim women build social relationships and maintain their presence in modern environments.

This phenomenon illustrates that contemporary *hijrah* does not always occur through separation from social spaces considered modern. Instead, individuals undergoing the *hijrah* process adapt to environments that have already become part of their lives. From the perspective of mimicry (Bhabha, 1994), this process shows that individuals do not completely reject dominant culture but instead adopt certain elements of it and assign new meanings according to their identities. Cafés remain popular social spaces, but the practices within them shift based on the values and needs of their users.

Beyond serving as spaces for social interaction, cafés are also connected with *hijrah* aesthetic practices because of the visual characteristics attached to these spaces. Café interior designs, atmospheres, and aesthetic concepts often become part of visual experiences that social media users then use to construct self-representations. In this study, preference for spaces considered comfortable and visually appealing relates to how interviewees present their identities in digital spaces. Thus, cafés become spaces that connect offline experiences and online representations in forming contemporary Muslim women's identities.

These findings demonstrate that Muslim women's religious identities are not constructed through a separation between religious spaces and popular spaces but through an encounter between both domains. As Ramidi et al. (2025) explain, young urban Muslim women increasingly negotiate their identities across various modern social spaces. They not only practice religiosity within spaces specifically regarded as religious but also bring Islamic symbols into broader public spaces.

Therefore, cafés within the phenomenon of *hijrah* aesthetic can be understood as spaces for identity negotiation. These spaces show how contemporary Muslim women integrate religious values with modern lifestyle practices without abandoning all elements of popular culture. Through adaptation and the creation of new meanings, cafés become spaces where religious identity, modern lifestyles, and popular culture interact.

Popular Mimicry in Contemporary *Hijrah* Movements

Hijrah is often promoted as a path back to more authentic Islamic values and a way to distance oneself from popular culture. However, this study's findings reveal a different reality. Muslim women who identify as undergoing *hijrah* remain actively engaged with fashion trends, build their presence on social media, and incorporate cafés into their everyday lives. This shows that contemporary *hijrah* does not occur through complete separation from popular culture but through intensive engagement with it. In other words, the process does not represent an attempt to purify religion from elements of modernity. Instead, it reflects an adaptation process that allows religious symbols to exist and develop through popular cultural mediums. This situation indicates that religion and popular culture are no longer positioned as opposing forces but mutually contribute to the formation of contemporary Muslim women's identities.

This process demonstrates popular culture mimicry within contemporary *hijrah* movements. The mimicry identified in this study does not refer to complete imitation of popular culture but rather to the absorption of various popular cultural elements that are subsequently assigned religious meanings. As demonstrated in studies on young generations' religious identities, popular culture is not always perceived as a threat to religion but can also become a new medium for expressing religiosity. In this study, interviewees do not abandon popular culture during *hijrah*. Instead, they use popular culture to present religious identities. Consequently, *hijrah* is not only a spiritual process but also a cultural practice that operates through recognizable symbols, visual representations, and lifestyles.

Table 1. Forms of Popular Culture Mimicry in Hijrah Practices Based on Research Findings

Aspect of Popular Culture	Forms of Popular Culture Adopted	Forms of Adaptation in Hijrah Practices
Fashion	Modern clothing trends and *modest fashion*	Choosing clothing styles that follow current trends while adjusting them to Islamic values of modesty and the principle of covering the *'awrah*
Social Media	Visual content, Instagram, TikTok, and *personal branding*	Utilizing social media to gain religious knowledge, build self-representation, and disseminate religious messages
Café	Café culture and urban lifestyle	Using cafés as spaces for social interaction, productive activities, and positive discussions in a comfortable atmosphere
Self-Representation	Digital existence and visual culture	Using religious symbols and visual aesthetics to present the identity of a Muslim woman undergoing *hijrah*

Source: Results of interview and observation data analysis (2026).

Based on Table 1, popular culture mimicry in *hijrah* practices occurs through the adoption, selection, and modification of cultural elements that develop in younger generations' lives. The table presents results from interview and observation analyses, showing that interviewees does not passively accept popular culture but instead adapt it to their religious values and identities.

Interestingly, these elements of popular culture do not lose their fundamental functions as means of identity construction and self-representation. The main transformation lies in the meanings attached to these practices. Fashion remains a medium for self-presentation, social media remains a space for communication and digital existence, while cafés remain spaces for social interaction. However, interviewees reinterpret these practices through the framework of religious identity they construct. Therefore, the *hijrah* aesthetic demonstrates that popular culture is not eliminated from the lives of contemporary Muslim women but is instead negotiated and given new meanings according to the Islamic values they embrace.

This study demonstrates popular culture mimicry through various forms of adaptation carried out by Muslim women during the process of *hijrah*. Elements of popular culture, such as fashion, social media, and café spaces, are not entirely rejected but instead undergo processes of selection, adjustment, and the creation of new meanings according to the religious identities they seek to construct. In this context, mimicry is not complete imitation of popular culture but a negotiation process that produces new forms of expression through adaptation and transformation of meaning.

The concept of mimicry in this study refers to Bhabha's (1994) view of it as an ambivalent process in which a group adopts elements of a dominant culture but never becomes completely identical to that culture. This condition produces a form of "almost the same, but not quite." Although Bhabha's concept of mimicry was initially developed to explain colonial relations, its principles concerning adoption, difference, and the formation of new identities can be applied to understand various processes of cultural negotiation within contemporary context (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, 2002).

In this study, popular culture refers to cultural practices that spread widely through media, consumption, and everyday social life (Storey, 2018). Popular cultural elements such as fashion trends, social media use, and café culture are not viewed as entirely incompatible with religious values. Instead, these elements become spaces where Muslim women select and assign new meanings according to the religious identities they seek to present.

Popular culture mimicry is clearly visible in fashion. Changes in how interviewees dress cannot be understood as a rejection of fashion developments. Instead, fashion remains an important element in constructing self-identity, but its meaning shifts after interviewees experience *hijrah*. The change does not lie in the disappearance of the desire to appear attractive but in how individuals select, use, and assign meaning to the clothing they wear. In cultural studies, clothing functions as a practical necessity but also serves as a symbol of identity and values, and how individuals present themselves to the public (Diana Crane, 2012).

RF explained that *hijrah* did not lead her to abandon modern fashion developments. She still follows clothing trends on social media but adjusts them based on her values. She stated: "*I still follow fashion trends on Instagram, but now I choose styles that are more modest and comfortable to wear. In my opinion, it is still possible to look attractive without abandoning the principles I believe in.*"

This statement shows that *hijrah* does not always mean separating from popular culture. The interviewee continues to adopt elements of modern fashion but modifies them according to the Muslim woman's identity she seeks to present. In this context, fashionable clothing that simultaneously considers modesty values cannot be understood as the sole indicator of an individual's level of piety. In this study, visual piety is understood as a process of representing religious identity through religious symbols displayed in public spaces rather than as an assessment of an individual's religiosity based solely on physical appearance (Hannan, 2022).



Figure 1. Representation of Hijrah *Aesthetic* through Muslim Women's Fashion in Café Spaces
Source: Informant documentation (processed, 2026).

Figure 1 illustrates how contemporary fashion elements appear within *hijrah* aesthetic practices through color choices, clothing styles, hijab styles, and the utilization of public spaces such as cafés. This visual representation shows how interviewees combine modern aesthetics with Islamic symbols to construct their self-images. Therefore, fashion within *hijrah* aesthetic practices does not merely express aesthetics but also serves as a medium for communicating religious identity.

This phenomenon demonstrates popular culture mimicry as explained by Bhabha (1994). Elements of popular culture are not entirely rejected but are adopted and their meanings transformed. Within *hijrah* aesthetic practices, modern fashion continues to be utilized but is given new boundaries and meanings through the Islamic values embraced by the interviewees.

Popular culture mimicry is also evident in social media use. The interviewees continue to use digital communication patterns common among social media users, such as creating visual content, managing account appearances, and building personal presence. However, differences appear in the messages and symbols presented. The content produced is not solely oriented toward entertainment or popularity but also incorporates *hijrah* experiences and religious messages.

SA explained that social media plays an important role in her *hijrah* process. She stated: "*I learned a lot from Instagram and TikTok. Sometimes I became interested in joining religious study sessions because I had previously seen excerpts of the content on social media.*"

This statement demonstrates that social media has become a new space for acquiring religious knowledge. The *hijrah* process among younger generations occurs not only through formal religious institutions but also through digital content that is visually presented and easily accessible. The development of new media has transformed the ways individuals acquire, understand, and present religious experiences in everyday life (Campbell, 2010).

In this context, social media not only functions as a medium for disseminating religious messages but also as a space for producing religious identities. Individuals utilize the logic of digital culture, such as visual aesthetics, content creativity, and personal branding, to communicate their religious experiences. These findings align with the study by Rofidah & Muhid (n.d.), which shows that digital media has become an important space in forming contemporary Muslim women's religious identities.

The most interesting finding appears in the use of cafés as social spaces. In general, cafés are often associated with consumer culture, urban lifestyles, and recreational activities that are sometimes considered distant from religious images. However, the interviewees in this study utilize cafés as spaces for learning, working, discussing, and building social networks that they consider meaningful. This condition demonstrates a transformation in the meaning of modern social spaces. Cafés are no longer perceived solely as symbols of urban lifestyles but are redefined as spaces that can support personal development and social interaction among contemporary Muslim women (Oldenburg, 1999). F explained: "*I often work or meet friends at cafés. Sometimes we also discuss religious topics there.*"

The observation results also demonstrate that the interviewees' activities in café spaces are not limited to food and beverage consumption. These spaces are also used for social interaction, discussions, work-related activities, and learning activities. This finding indicates that cafés function as social spaces where contemporary Muslim women negotiate their identities within modern environments.

This condition reflects a shift in how people understand modern social spaces. Cafés are not necessarily seen as spaces that contradict religious values; they can also accommodate activities aligned with their users' identities and needs. From the perspective of mimicry, this situation demonstrates that popular cultural spaces are not abandoned but are negotiated and assigned new functions according to contemporary Muslim women's religious contexts.

Furthermore, cafés are closely connected with *hijrah* aesthetic practices because of their visual characteristics. Interior design, atmosphere, and aesthetic concepts within café spaces often become important elements in digital self-representation. Interviewees' preferences for comfortable, visually appealing places relate to how they construct and present their identities through social media. Thus, cafés become spaces that connect offline experiences with online representations in forming contemporary Muslim women's identities.

This phenomenon demonstrates that religious identity among contemporary Muslim women is not constructed through a complete separation between religious spaces and popular cultural spaces. Instead, it emerges through interaction and negotiation between both domains. Religious symbols, modern lifestyles, and popular cultural practices are combined within everyday social experiences. In this context, the *hijrah* aesthetic does not represent religion's dominance over popular culture or popular culture's disappearance from religious life. Rather, it demonstrates how religious identity is continuously reconstructed through interaction with contemporary cultural practices. Therefore, popular culture mimicry within contemporary *hijrah* movements illustrates adaptation, negotiation, and reinterpretation. Muslim women involved in this study do not completely reject popular culture, nor do they accept it without modification. Instead, they selectively adopt elements of popular culture, including fashion, social media practices, and café culture, and integrate them with Islamic values. Through this process, the *hijrah* aesthetic emerges as a form of contemporary religious expression that reflects the interaction between religiosity, visual culture, and modern lifestyles.

Conclusion

This study shows that *hijrah* aesthetic is a form of religious expression that develops through close interaction between Islamic values and popular culture. The findings reveal that Muslim women visiting cafés in Kudus do not experience *hijrah* by distancing themselves from fashion, social media, or modern social spaces. Instead, they continue to use these elements and

assign them new meanings according to the religious identities they construct. This suggests that contemporary *hijrah* does not occur through a purification process that separates religion from popular culture, but through mimicry that adapts popular cultural practices into a religious framework. Consequently, piety is expressed not only through religious practices but also through visual representations, clothing styles, digital activities, and the use of social spaces that shape contemporary Muslim women's identities.

This study contributes to contemporary *hijrah* studies by showing that popular culture is not merely a social backdrop for *hijrah* practices but also a primary medium for forming and expressing religious identities. These findings further expand the understanding of popular culture mimicry within the context of Muslim women's religiosity in modern public spaces. However, this study has limitations due to the relatively small number of interviewees and its focus on Muslim women visiting cafés in Kudus Regency. Therefore, future research should involve more diverse interviewees, expand research locations, and examine the phenomenon of *hijrah* aesthetics across different digital platforms or *hijrah* communities to understand better the dynamics of young Muslim women's religiosity in the digital era.

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