

# Hybridity in Constructing Indonesian Muslimah's Identity in Digital Space

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## ABSTRACT

Hijab nowadays has functioned more than just a religious practice but also as a fashion statement. As the globalization grows, the spread of western culture is also unavoidable. The growth of hijab as religious practice and as a fashion statement has combined both cultural and religious value. This study aims to analyze hybridity as represented in several Indonesian Muslim fashion designers' photos in the digital space. This study, thus, employs a descriptive qualitative research design. Data of the study are collected purposively by comprising pictures, captions, and comments on their Instagram accounts. Then, the data are analyzed using qualitative content analysis methodology by utilizing appraisal theory. The study results reveal that hybridity exists between Islamic culture and other cultures in wearing hijab and clothes on Indonesian Muslim fashion designers' Instagram. Moreover, the cultural hybridity dominated by western culture is highly appraised by the designers' followers. The reflection of cultural hybridity and its appraisal show that Indonesian young Muslim women also negotiate several religious identities. The negotiation affirms their identity as a religious and modest urban Muslim at the same time.

**Keywords:** *Hybridity, Identity, Hijab, Muslimah, Instagram*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As the world's Muslim population is getting bigger, the number of women wearing hijab has also been continuously on the increase. Wearing hijab has for long been hotly debated among both Muslim and non-Muslim: which then in some other countries, it remains a choice as the use of hijab is not compulsory. For some Muslim women, wearing hijab is a symbol of piety to their religion, Islam. On the other hand, for some other women, it might come from their families' and relatives' pressures. However, it becomes routine cultural practices embodied in everyday life of Muslim women and a part of habits that they wear on regular daily bases [1].

As more Muslim women wear hijab, more styles of hijab are found. The styles vary in terms of design, colors, additional accessories and the way they are worn. It can be argued that wearing hijab has become identical with creativity and fashion. Even many non - Muslims are starting to see and wear the hijab as a fashion garment. There are many international brands of hijab, both by Muslim designers and non - Muslim designers, who include the hijab as a fashionable accessory in their

latest collections. Consequently, it is no longer only a garment that covers head and neck anymore, but also as a modification of fashion statements. In other words, the meaning of hijab seems to be shifting from religious faiths into life styles.

The above sketched modification of the hijab from a purely religious garment into a fashion item can be put into a global perspective as the hijab wearers are negotiating the global influences - western and/or Islamic eastern- with their own local cultural background. The process of mixing two or more cultures here is commonly known as hybridity. In this case, the hybridity is understood as the process of mixing western, Islamic eastern, and local culture in wearing hijab. Moreover, each culture has its own identity and there is a close connection between appearance and identity [2]. The appearance of Muslim is by wearing hijab and it is worn as a means to identify and differentiate them to others in a society [3]. It can be said that hijab is seen as the identity of Muslim since each of them has their own style in wearing the hijab which also differentiate them from others, both with other Muslim and non - Muslim.

Furthermore, in the context of hybridity, wearing hijab fashionably is not only about representing the identity as a Muslim but also adapting the identity of Western and local identities. In this process, they also need to bring out the identities of each culture which sometimes causes a conflict on the level of identity. The possibility of conflict might happen in the contrast differences of Western identity and Muslim identity. The western identities are identic with openness, glamour, and up-to-date. Their fashions are absolutely eager to attract other people's attention. These are against what are clearly stated in Islam, in which Muslim women should wear their clothes and hijabs based on Syariah as stated in The Holy Quran and interpreted by some mullahs: 1) the functions of veil are for covering all of women's body (aurat) except face and hand as well as protecting women from men's sight except his husband (An - Nur: 31), 2) Do not attract attention: cautioning Muslim women not to wear transparent clothes as it would reveal what is underneath and not to wear thin cloth as it would show body shape (Al - Ahzab: 59) and 3) Simple and not overspending consumption: "O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but do not be excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess" (Al A'raf: 31).

Then, how do Muslim women deal with the contradictory aspects of identities from each culture? Which identity is more dominant? In order to investigate these and related questions, the researcher will look at the case of hijabers in Indonesia. 87.2% of 274 million Indonesian populations are Muslim [4]. Lately, the trend in wearing fashionable hijab in Indonesia grows unstopably. The hybridity of hijab in Indonesia has been initiated by several young Islamic fashion designers creating a community named Hijabers Community in 2010. They sell and/or promote their products at Hijabers Community events and especially online in their Instagram accounts. Those designers are Dian Pelangi @dianpelangi, Ria Miranda @riamiranda, and JenaharaNasution @jenaharanasution.

Beside as the founders of Hijabers Community, those three Instagram accounts are unique and favored by Muslim women. They are able to show the creative images by creating and mix matching some different cultural aspects, especially Islamic aspects and other non - Islamic cultural aspects. The exclusiveness of the events, promotions and brands that these designers endorse through the images on their Instagram accounts sets them apart from ordinary Muslim fashionista. By creating and wearing such fashionable hijabs, these fashion designers are also like representing new descriptions of Muslim identity, contrasting from what it

has been prescribed in the Holy Quran. As designers, they somehow need to manage it so that their products could be accepted both in the marketing world – by being fashionable – and in Islam – by not breaking its rules.

These fashion designers' Instagram are being followed by many young Indonesian Muslim women. They do not just follow those designers' Instagram, but also follow the styles of their hijabs. When a new trend is being promoted, Indonesian Muslim designers do not only represent their fashion style, but also reflecting their cultural hybridity which later creates their identity. To ensure that these designer's products are well-suited with the fashion taste of the society, these kinds of new trend and identity need to be accepted at the very first place. However, accepting new identity through particular cultural hybridity is quite complicated. Following the styles means that they also apply the hybridity style created by the fashion designers which then they try to hybridize again with their own culture, such as wearing batik, songket, sarong and tenun. These traditional garments are usually very colorful, which is also in contrast with syariah in which they are suggested to wear something black and not colorful. During these cultural hybridity, these young Muslim women might meet some difficulties in negotiating the one culture and other cultures; in this case hybridity of the fashion designers as their inspiration, the Islamic culture, and their own culture.

Thus, examining hijab fashion, especially the hijab fashion of Indonesian Muslim fashion designers and Indonesian young Muslim women, is intriguing because its undergoes transformation and hybridization worth to be explored further. Holistically, this study wants to analyze hybridity in constructing Muslimah identity in Indonesia as represented in the photos of several Indonesian Muslim fashion designers and other young Muslim women's Instagram. Therefore, the analysis would be done in two layers. The first is analyzing identity represented in the photos. At this point of analysis, the analysis would be done both visually and linguistically. Visually, the analysis is done by describing the style represented in the photos. Later, the analysis is drawn linguistically by examining the language used by the stakeholder in appraising this new identity. These two steps of analysis are done because Instagram is a social media platform which enables people to interact not only through photos but also through the caption and comments. The second layer, the analysis would be extended into the discourse of Indonesian young Muslim women.

More specifically, the present study is projected to answer the following questions:

- 1) How is the representation of Indonesian Muslim fashion designers' Instagram?
- 2) How is the implication of Indonesian Muslim fashion designers' Instagram toward Indonesian young Muslim women's identity?

### **1.1. Related Work**

Hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority (western culture, in this case) accomplishes to translate the identity of the colonized (the other culture, eastern, for instance) within a singular universal framework, but then fails producing something familiar; instead, it creates something new because both parties make a negotiation [5]. In its simplistic notion, cultural hybridity means mixing of two or more cultures, and they can be local and global. It is a process of interaction between center and periphery, or between peripheries [6]. These definitions of hybridity imply that during the process of westernization, people try to negotiate or hybrid the two cultures by selecting the positive aspects of the western modernization, marginalizing culturally the negative ones, and blend it with their own (eastern) culture so it would suit them.

As the basic concept of culture which always changes, cultural hybridity also changes in a certain period of time. Nowadays, as the numbers of Muslim are increasing significantly, it is found a process of cultural hybridity between western – style popular culture and Islam and the third space formed might be known as Islamic popular culture. The term of Islamic popular culture shows that a form of Islam has developed that it does not stand in opposition anymore, neither to Islamic rules nor to the past culture, the West or the Islamic influences from the Middle East. Everything seems to be able to negotiate and combine with anything. As Islam has become part of an extensive consumer culture emerging in the world, a form of Islamic popular culture has developed, with the veil as one of its most conspicuous symbols. The term hijab was initially only known in the Middle East, but today the term hijab in Southeast Asia and especially in Indonesia is becoming more famous or more commercial than the other terms [7]. Perhaps this is caused by the use of the word “hijab” is more global.

In this Islamic popular culture, hijab transforms from time to time and is undergone hybridization which is indicated by Muslim women who wear very modest hijab nowadays. In line with this statement, hijab gains dual meanings: it does not consist of the practice of Islamic faith only, but also enlarge the function as indicator of social class, lifestyle, and status [8]. In other words, hijab has become a part of fashion and style. It is

not recognized as conservative look anymore but more as modern style affected by western fashion style. In conclusion, hijab has been considerably transformed to be the trend fashion among Muslim women which has indicated a significant change of the meaning of covering aurat. Through this kind of hijab styles, they can cover their aurat as part of Islamic taught but still able to show how to be fashionable with the latest trends.

Since fashion articulates one's cultural skin and is always socially constructed in its production of meaning, hijab hybridization happens between religiosity and fashion which classifies what it means to be modern Muslim women and it encourages them to be both covered and fashionable, modest and beautiful. As there is no ‘authentic way of doing’ Islamic fashion for Muslim women [9], they are constantly creating new, hybridized and fragmented ways of third - space formation [10]. especially in wearing hijab. The hijab hybridity should be able to show the identity of hijabistas by blending taste and style to create name for themselves, branding hijab in a way that seems ‘natural’ to Islamic lifestyle. Accordingly, the level of hybridity within hijabista culture can be seen as being met through taste and style, but most importantly, through fashion accessibility which is popularly known as brand [9]. These three notions are interrelated each other. By “defining” their views on Islamic fashion, they define their tastes. If taste arises through social and cultural discrepancies, then it also functions as the underlying socio-cultural assumptions that shape how brands are presented ‘authentically’ to specific audiences.

Recently, as Instagram usage grows drastically, hijab cultural hybridity is represented by Indonesian Muslim fashion designers on their Instagram accounts. Through the photos and captions they upload, they incorporate a variety of styles, tastes, brands and subjects which they share with their followers and peers. The incorporation of those three notions could be seen from the images of: full-body shot, selfie, outfit emphasis, presence of others in the photo, advertising/endorsement, lifestyle or tips (food, health, fitness, etc.), and video posts [9]. These images are able to create a visual discourse determining whether a certain style of Islamic fashion is being promoted.

As a social media platform, Instagram has been the place for the followers and peers give their responses toward certain style that is being promoted by the Indonesian Muslim designers. These kinds of responses reflect society's appraisal toward the current fashion trend. Specifically, appraisal theory provides a system of analysis which enables us to identify the speaker's or writer's evaluation toward several phenomena through

their language used. It deals with the way writer or speaker approve and disapprove, enthuse and abhor, applaud and criticize, and with how they position their readers/listeners to do likewise [11].

Three categories are classified into an appraisal system, they are: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Those three categories have their own subsystems. Attitude is expressed through affect, judgment, and appreciation. Affect deals with emotional evaluation drawn in the text, judgment concerns with attitudinal evaluation related to particular behavior, and appreciation is an appreciative evaluation related to several characters. Engagement is conveyed through the subsystems of monogloss and heterogloss. Monogloss shuts down all the negotiations while heterogloss creates a wide range of possible coexistence in space. Graduation refers to the scaling values through force and focus. Force operates in raising or lowering the intensity while focus deals with the sharpness or softness of values. To be certain, the present study focuses on the content and context within the visual discourse of the photos as a whole; the messages both within the photo and outside of it (captions and comments) creating its meaning.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design as it intends to examine cultural phenomenon, which is the hijab cultural hybridity on Indonesian Muslim fashion designers' Instagram, through non-numerical data but accumulation of information which is analyzed descriptively. Data of the study comprise of the photos in the form of images, and captions and comments in the form of words, clause, phrase, or sentences obtained from the Instagram accounts of @dianpelangi, @riamiranda, @jenaharanasution.

To collect the data, purposive sampling will be used in this study in which to entail deliberate selection of particular criteria to determine the suitable data. There are two steps in collecting the data. First, the data are collected through selecting some consecutive photos (along with captions and relevant comments) in 2019 - 2020. Those photos, captions, and relevant comments are captured or screenshotted and saved. Next, those saved photos along with its caption and relevant comments are coded.

For data analysis, there are several steps drawn to answer the research questions. First, to gain the result of the first question, the photos are described visually by examining each fashion items worn and to which culture the fashion items belong to. Later, the captions and relevant comments are analyzed textually by using

appraisal theory. Secondly, the result of visual and textual analysis is discussed based on the discourse of Indonesian young Muslim women in order to answer the second research question.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *3.1. Representation of Hijab Cultural Hybridity on Indonesian Muslim Fashion Designers' Instagram*

Seven photos have been purposively chosen as the data of the study. Three of them are Dian Pelangi's, the other two are Jenahara's, and the last two are Ria Miranda's. Three Dian Pelangi's photos are #OOTD photos when Dian was in New York for her work. Jenahara's photos when she was on holiday in Japan are taken as the data. The last is Ria Miranda's fashion style when she performs her collections are also discussed.

The first Dian Pelangi's picture was taken in New York when she collaborated her work with Wardah for New York Fashion Week. Wrapped up in a broken white blazer, she wore a ¾ broken white tight skirt contrasted by a grey legging to cover her legs. To beautify her look, she wore a peach glasses and brought a mini pink hand bag. She also wore broken white pointed boots to match with her clothes set. In this picture she represents a successful career woman. This representation is supported by the motivational caption "Stand tall here in the wilderness, and take bold, courageous steps. Don't let the unknown intimidate you. Embrace the journey, The process, The depth. Shooting day in New York for @instaperfectbywardah @wardahbeauty". By mentioning New York as the background photo and stating that the photo was taken for the sake of her work, Dian motivational caption represents positive affect of satisfaction because it represents her success in career.

In this photo, Dian's fashion style mirrors the western style of career woman. Blazer with tight skirt indicate a common fashion look for career woman who works in office. Dian offers a modern look in her photos and she combines them with her hijab as her identity as a Muslimah. This photo takes much attention from Dian's follower and fans. It has 72,351 likes and 504 comments. All the likes and the positive comments implies positive feedback of Dian's representation. Several comments are praising her style such as "keren" (cool), "like it", "stunning", "keceabis" (impressing) and "jaman now" (it's so nowadays).

The second picture, Dian took a different color for her fashion. Posing in the street of Brooklyn, she chose

a fuchsia long coat and fuchsia trouser with a grey inner and scarf. As an accessory, she wore a mini pink bag. As any other New Yorker enjoying the afternoon, Dian choose the common outfit of New York people; long coat to cover her from the cold weather and a simple long trouser with the matching color. In this photo, Dian surely adopt the fashion style of the New Yorker without leaving her identity as a Muslimah. She performs a fashion look of typical Moslem New Yorker with a simple hijab.

Through the caption, she told that she was enjoying the afternoon in New York. As in the first photo, Dian also wrote motivational quotes as the caption of this photo, “Most people mess up something good, by looking for something better, just to end up with something worse. A fine afternoon in Brooklyn, last day of shooting before heading back to Jakarta, and then London @wardahbeauty @instaperfectbywardah”. This photo has 12,082 likes and 45 comments. Though in her comment section most commentators criticize her body for looking too all yet too thin and bony, the style of her outfit is still positively appraised. Two comments praising her style are written by “selalu wow deh, stylenya” and “amazing”. This positive appraisal indicates that in spite of how her body looks, her style is still awed by her fans.

The third picture, Dian stroke a pose a moment before her show in New York Fashion Week. Wearing all black from head to toe, she looked calm yet so firm at the moment. In the photo, she wore a black trouser paired with a black blazer which had an abstract pattern. This picture exposed a masculine style through her fashion. As any other designer, in this photo, she chose a style based on her collections for New York Fashion Week. The selection of this outfit is to highlights her collection’s style.

The caption written represents more of her feelings and thought before the show. She retells her mom’s support for the show. This photo gets 23,648 likes and 141 comments. Though her caption does not describe the photo, her comments section is full of positive appraisal toward her outfit. Some of the comments are “modis banget ya” (so fashionable), “fashionable”, and “pingin jilbab kaya itu” (wanting that kind of hijab). Those imply how her fans notice more of her looks visually instead of the caption she wrote.

The second designer is Jenahara. Both of the photos were taken when she was in Japan for holiday. Her OOTD style for holiday in each picture was quite similar. The only difference in her photo is her top. While in the first photo she was wrapped in long black coat, in another photo, she wore golden brown loose

top. Since she was in holiday, she does not wear much of accessories. Not to mention, black legging and a fitted hijab represent her casualty in enjoying the holiday vibes. Surely, the fashion statements represented in this photo is more of western rather than eastern.

The likes and comment of both photos are not much different. The photo with the golden-brown top got 1,379 likes and 10 comments while another got 1,742 likes and 34 comments. The photo with bigger likes has long motivational caption of happiness and being happy while another caption is merely an expression of good morning. In both of her photos, none of the comments are appraising her style and her looks in those outfits. The comments on the motivational post are mostly dominated by thank-you notes because her captions inspired the netizen to be more grateful in life. While in the good morning post, none of the comments highlights her fashion outfit.

The third designer is Ria Miranda. Both photos of Ria Miranda are taken in the matter of her work. In both of her photos, she posed with the models of her collections. The only difference is the situations of the photo. One of her photos was taken at the photography studio while another is taken when she was on stage. Different from Dian Pelangi and Jenahara, Ria Miranda wore more colourful and patterned abaya and tunic. She wore a dusty pink abaya with a flowery pattern and a patterned loose tunic in another photo. The patterned loose tunic is combined with an orange trouser and hijab while a dusty pink abaya is combined with the same matching color hijab. The hijab style in both photos are also different. While wearing an abaya, her hijab is covering her chest and, in another photo, her hijab is neck fitted.

The photo exposing Ria Miranda and her abaya got 12,187 likes and 202 comments. The caption of the photo is about the reason behind her collections named Mahata. Most of the comments reflect positive appraisal towards her collections. The comments such as “mau dong, cekharga” (wanting them please info the price), “mau yg pink” (wanting the pink one), and “brapambk” (how much sis?) indicate that her collection is well-accepted by the society. The same positive acceptance is also found in another Ria Miranda’s photo. With 6,650 likes and 62 comments, most of society’s commentaries are about how beautiful her collections and how to get them in hand. The comments such as “cakep cakep koleksinya uni” (the collections are beautiful sis) and “bagus bagus gamisnya” (the abaya are beautiful) are the examples of how society adores her collections. Though Ria Miranda’s collections are less hybridized because most

of her collections are abaya and loose tunic which are identic with moslem fashion style, she adopts several western fashion icons for her collections. This can be seen through the colorful pattern she used and the mix-match of blouse and trouser. Since the common standard of Muslimah fashion are identic with Arab people, being colorful and wearing trouser are surely less Arabian.

### ***3.2. The Implication of Indonesian Muslim Fashion Designers' Instagram toward Indonesian Young Muslim Women's Identity***

It is important to notice that all Indonesian designers mentioned above have done cultural hybridity reflected in their fashion style. Positive admirations drawn through the comments of the followers indicate that Indonesian young women also give positive responses toward the designer's cultural hybridity. Among all the designers, Dian Pelangi outfit reflects more cultural hybridity than any other designers. The way she chose her outfit and its accessories, such as; tight skirt, legging, and glasses, adopts the clothes and the style of western people. Jenahara, though she wore legging which is commonly used by western, done cultural hybridity to adjust with the condition and situation she was in. Since she was on holiday, her outfit is picked as any other tourist choose an outfit for comfortability. Meanwhile, Ria Miranda shows the least hybridity because her outfit is loose and it is identic with muslimah clothes. Her performance shows a very simple collaboration of two different cultures, they are Islamic culture and the western. The taste of western culture is merely reflected on the way she chooses the color of her outfits.

Specifically, the photo which Dian mirrors the western style of career woman with  $\frac{3}{4}$  tight skirt got more attention than any other photos. It indicates that the cultural hybridity dominated by western culture is highly appraised by Indonesian young women rather than fashion style dominated by eastern culture. The comparison of society's appraisal toward Dian's and Ria's styles implies that Indonesian young women still emphasize on western culture as their style preference. Thus, instead of devoting themselves to be more eastern and Islamic, they do cultural hybridity reflected in their fashion.

Fashion is a "definition" tool that marks personal and social identities, the cultural hybridity performed by those designers reflects how those designers try to define themselves as western/global women which belong to western's community [12]. Besides, the hijab, which becomes the main symbol of a Muslim women,

has undergone shifting in function. It is not just worn as symbol of piety which should be worn properly, but also as a fashion statement which is modified in modern ways. Despite covering the body in Muslimah way, they choose to wear hijab by exploring more modern hijab fashion. Furthermore, they are also fashion designers, who are demanded to produce and perform the stylish and modern ones. The concept and rules of Syariah are hardly seen from most of their styles. Their performance tends to experiment with other elements, which make it more stylish and up to date, or so called contemporary. Moreover, the additional outfits or accessories are totally not Islamic identity, so that their performance in those photos are as the special mixing of two different cultures, western and Islamic cultures. These mix and match processes portray how these young Indonesian Muslim fashion designers try to observe the Islamic religion and make it balance with their professions as fashion designer, which is fashionable and in-style.

However, experiencing more hijab styles might not mean that they do not fulfill the rules of syariah. They still conceal their aurat but in more modest way. Moreover, they also want to be recognized as well - known fashion designers, who always engage in many activities and events all over the world, and it somehow reflects their identity formations, not just as Muslims but also as fashion designers as well. Their choices to wear many fashionable products mark their states of being up to date and stylish. Furthermore, those mixes-and-matches also show the way how they try to negotiate the influence of Islamic culture and other global culture. It explains that their negotiations in mixing these three or more cultures leading to a cultural hybridity which is then able to create a new culture, that is a new hijab style among Indonesian Muslim women.

Since all style and fashion products offered by the designer's above are positively appraised, Indonesian young Muslim women show a tendency of negotiating several religious identities. They negotiate three points of muslimah clothes; the way hijab should be used, the way they cover their body and the way fashion garment should not attract any attention. In other words, they try to negotiate several basic rules of syariah in wearing any hijab. By negotiating religious identities, young Muslim women in Indonesia try to bring the modern people characteristics in their fashion. They seem to build their personal identity as modern young Muslim women and classify themselves into the categories of modern Muslim women society. However, adding modernity characteristics into their social label does not make them less Muslim, because the hijab is still worn. Therefore, they try to show their piety to the religious

conventions and being modern at the same time, not substituting one another.

The urge of being modest and religious at the same time can't be separated from the fact that Islamic popular culture has been widely accepted by the society. Islam is no longer merely a religion, it transforms into several popular brands for media and cultural products [13]. Not to mention, media has played significant role in negotiating western culture and particular religious practices [14]. Media has become the place for hijab fashion inspiration by promoting hijab style adapted to modern fashion [15]. Furthermore, media has also been the network for young Moslem communities to affirm their identity as Muslim urban [7].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The research shows that there is a cultural hybridity between Islamic culture and western culture in Indonesian designer's style. Among those fashion designers, Dian Pelangi has the most creative hybridity in mixing the cultures with the highest possibility in shifting the function of hijab. Meanwhile, Ria Miranda is the one with the lowest level of hybridity by reflecting the western culture in her choice of color in her style. Though, all of the designer's styles have been positively appraised, Dian's style which is dominated by western culture more than eastern got more positive comments and society's appraisal rather than other designers'. This means that even though those fashion designers successfully meet these two cultures, but there is a dominant ideology over another. Specifically, being modern is the ideology and identity that is highly appraised by the netizen. This means that western popular culture successfully influences the way the Indonesian Muslim fashion designers design their products and express their hijab styles.

As the effects, cultural hybridity done by the fashion designer may lead Indonesian young Muslim women to negotiate not only the culture of western-eastern-Indonesian but also negotiating several religious identities. This third space generation has also shifted the function of hijab, from the symbol of piety to Islam to the characteristics of trendy accessory. Therefore, they do not only reflect their identity as a Muslim but also as modern young women.

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