

Reconstructing Hijab Normativity in Indonesia's Digital Religious Sphere: A Content Analysis of the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook page reconstructs the normative meaning of hijab in contemporary Indonesian digital religion. It focuses on the alternative narratives that challenge dominant understandings of the hijab as a compulsory religious obligation, the communication strategies through which these narratives are disseminated, and the ways in which audiences negotiate and contest such interpretations. **Methodology:** The study employs a qualitative content analysis of posts, captions, visual materials, and publicly available user comments published on the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook page between 2020 and 2024. Lasswell's communication model is used to examine the relationship between communicator, message, medium, audience, and communicative effects, while Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality provides an interpretive framework for understanding how alternative religious meanings are externalized, objectified, and potentially internalized in digital environments. **Findings:** The analysis identifies three dominant forms of narrative reconstruction. First, the page semantically differentiates the Qur'anic terms *hijab*, *jilbab*, and *khimar* in order to challenge their conventional identification with women's head covering. Second, it employs historical-contextual interpretations of QS. Al-Ahzab: 59 and QS. An-Nur: 31 to present prescriptions concerning women's dress as culturally and historically situated rather than universally uniform. Third, it frames hijab primarily as a matter of personal religious awareness and choice rather than coercive obligation. These narratives are communicated through five recurring strategies: counter-narrative, critical-contextual education, emotional and empathic appeal, visual-symbolic communication, and digital advocacy incorporating explicit calls to action. Audience responses reveal a polarized interpretive field in which supportive users employ contextual, cultural, and individual-freedom arguments, whereas opposing users defend textual-normative interpretations grounded in Qur'anic verses and established religious authority. **Implications:** The findings demonstrate that Facebook functions not merely as a channel for disseminating religious information but as a contested space in which Islamic norms, interpretive authority, and Muslim women's religious identities are actively negotiated. The study highlights the growing importance of digital and religious literacy for evaluating competing claims to Islamic authority in platform-based environments. **Originality:** This study contributes to scholarship on digital religion and religious authority by demonstrating how a specific online community constructs and legitimizes alternative interpretations of an established Islamic norm through platform-based communication. It extends social construction theory into the study of digital religious discourse and provides empirical insight into the contestation of hijab normativity, Muslim women's representation, and interpretive authority in contemporary Indonesia.

Keywords: Digital Religion; Facebook; Hijab; Religious Authority; Social Construction; Women in Islam

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, places religious discourse as the mainstream of public discourse that permeates all dimensions of the social, political, and cultural life of its people (Setinawati, Jeniva, Tanyid, & Merilyn, 2025; Utami, Ikhsan, Dartanto, & Mallarangeng, 2024). The central position of this religion is reflected in the state educational institutions that actively discipline the practice of da'wah as part of the formation of national identity (Millie, Syarif, & Fakhruroji,

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2023), to the dynamics of electoral politics that are increasingly colored by religious-based preferences (Utami et al., 2024). Entering the digital era, religious discourse not only survives as a mainstream, but also accelerates through social media which opens up space for the development of religious populism as well as giving rise to new religious authority actors who reconstruct Islamic practices and messages in front of an increasingly wide audience (Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2020; Zaid, Fedtke, Shin, El Kadoussi, & Ibahrine, 2022). However, this transformation has also triggered intense discourse battles between conservative groups that strategically dominate the digital ecosystem (Kirana & Garadian, 2020) and moderate groups that struggle to maintain their relevance and authority in the public space (Akmaliah, 2020; Zamzami, Roisadul Nisok, Muktafi, & Mukaffa, 2023), as well as raising concerns about the spread of pseudo-radicalism among the younger generation who actively consume religious content online (Suyanto, Sirry, & Sugihartati, 2022).

In the context of such transformation, social media serves not only as a medium of dissemination, but also as a new arena in which religious authority, meaning, and practices are negotiated openly and participatively. These developments fundamentally changed the way societies accessed, produced, and negotiated religious understanding. Napoleon Cat data records more than 174.3 million Facebook users in Indonesia, equivalent to 61.8% of the national population, with the dominance of the productive age group of 24–34 years old at 38% (Muhamad, 2024). The composition of female users, which reached 46.4%, further confirms that this platform is a strategic space in the formation of religious perceptions, including the discourse on the obligation to wear the hijab. In the midst of this massive digital penetration, the question of how social media reconstructs religious understanding is becoming increasingly urgent to be studied scientifically. The case of Camillia Laetitia Azzahra, the daughter of Governor Ridwan Kamil, who in early 2023 appeared without a hijab and sparked a wave of debate in the comment columns of da'wah accounts, illustrates concretely how social media has become the main arena for negotiating religious values in contemporary Indonesian society (Nasir, 2019).

The study of the hijab in the scientific literature has developed from diverse and complementary perspectives. In the realm of interpretation, the debate on the legal status of the hijab reflects the hermeneutical tension between classical scholars who tend to obligate it and contemporary scholars who are more inclined towards the position of *maw'izah* or encouragement (Rohim, 2022), including the view of M. Quraish Shihab, who views the hijab as more of an encouragement with a pattern of social protection than an absolute obligation (Tohir, Ghufroon, & Sholeh, 2024). From a socio-cultural perspective, the hijab has undergone a complex transformation of meaning from a mere symbol of piety to an expression of modern identity and lifestyle (Asis, 2017) which is further deepened by the process of commodification in the global Islamic cultural industry (Rahim, 2022) and the influence of hijab influencers who mediate the socialization of Muslim consumers among the poles of fashion and piety (Shin, Lew, & Seo, 2025). Entering the digital era, the discourse on hijab and Muslim women's identities has experienced a dramatic acceleration: digital content has proven to play a significant role in shaping Muslim women's representation and influencing public perception (Aziza et al., 2024), the phenomenon of hijrah is increasingly mediated by digital platforms (Taufiq, Royanulloh, & Komari, 2022), and Muslim preachers actively use social media with certain ideological semantic strategies to influence people's religious knowledge and attitudes (Hamouda, Hashmi, & Omar, 2023).

However, the state of the art of existing studies still leave significant gaps. The study of Muslims on social media is still dominated by macro perspectives on religious representation and authority in general (Hashmi, Rashid, & Ahmad, 2021; Larsson & Willander, 2025), while studies on hijab in the digital space focus more on the dimensions of commodification and lifestyle (Rahim, 2022; Shin et al., 2025) rather than

on the dynamics of normative discourse negotiation in a particular platform-based community. There has been no study that specifically analyzes how a community page on Facebook actively builds an alternative narrative that reconstructs perceptions of the obligation to wear the hijab, along with its communication strategies and audience responses to that narrative. This gap is what confirms the originality of this research: by using a qualitative content analysis approach to the Indonesian Hijrah Facebook Page and using the communication model of Lasswell (1948) as an analytical framework that examines the communication process through five elements of communicators, messages, channels, audiences, and effects, this research seeks to systematically uncover the discursive mechanism of formation of the narrative of hijab obligation, mapping the communication strategy, and understand the audience's response and negotiation to the narrative; An area of study that has never been systematically explored in the existing literature.

This research is based on two complementary conceptual frameworks. First, the Social Construction Theory explains that social reality, including religious understanding, is formed through a dialectical process between individuals and society that takes place in three moments: externalization, objectification, and internalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In the context of social media, this process occurs when users repeatedly consume, discuss, and internalize religious content, thereby allowing the dominant narrative on a platform to reshape beliefs and perceptions. Second, Lasswell's Model of Communication (1948) which offers an analytical framework through the question: who says what, through what channels, to whom, with what effect. This model is relevant for dissecting how the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page designs messages, spreads them through digital media, reaches specific audiences, and affects perceptions. The combination of these two frameworks allows for a comprehensive analysis, ranging from the mechanisms of meaning construction to communication strategies and their impact on audiences (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Based on the description above, this study aims to: (1) analyze the form of narrative built by the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page in voicing the view that hijab is not an obligation for Muslim women; (2) identify the communication strategies used by the page in disseminating such views; and (3) to know the response and perception of the page followers to the narrative presented.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach and content analysis. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of phenomena that cannot be captured through numbers and statistical calculations (Moleong, 2007), particularly in understanding how religious narratives are constructed and disseminated through social media. Content analysis is used to systematically examine textual and visual data on the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page, including posts, captions, images, and user interactions such as comments and likes.

The background of the research is the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page, which actively produces and spreads the narrative that the hijab is not an obligation for Muslim women. The Hijrah Indonesia (HI) Facebook page was established in January 2020 by Sheikh Hefzibah R.A. Gayatri W. Muthari (Hijrah Indonesia, 2020a). As of the observation period, this page has more than 23,000 followers from diverse backgrounds. The main campaign that became the page's identity was the #Dejilbabisasi movement, which criticized the imposition of the hijab as the sole symbol of Muslim women's religiosity (Hijrah Indonesia, 2020b). This page was chosen purposively because it is the

only community page on Facebook that explicitly and consistently campaigns for these views, and it has a significant follower base with the potential to influence public perception at large.

The primary data for this study are sourced directly from content uploaded to the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page, including textual and visual elements of the uploads, post patterns and frequency, and user interactions that reflect the audience's response to the narrative presented. Secondary data were obtained from the scientific literature, including books, journal articles, and prior research reports, on social media, social construction, and hijab discourse in Islam.

Data collection is carried out through two techniques. First, systematic digital observation of the activities of the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page, focusing on content related to the obligation of the hijab and on the pattern of interaction between the page and its followers. Second, literature reviews build theoretical foundations and identify gaps in the literature relevant to the research topic.

Data analysis uses Lasswell's (1948) communication model as the main analytical framework, which examines the communication process through five elements: communicators, messages, channels, audiences, and effects. This framework is combined with the data analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) which includes three stages: (1) data reduction, namely filtering and selecting uploads and comments that specifically contain a narrative about the non-obligation to wear the hijab; (2) the presentation of data in the form of a descriptive narrative that describes the main themes and patterns of interaction that emerge; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, where findings are linked to the research objectives and their validity is checked to minimize analysis bias.

This study did not directly involve human subjects; rather, it analyzed publicly available content on social media platforms and therefore did not require individual informed consent. All data is used solely for academic purposes and is presented without identifying the user's personal identity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative Forms on the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page

Systematic analysis of content published on the Hijrah Indonesia (HI) Facebook page between 2020 and 2024 identified three recurring narrative forms through which the page reconstructs the meaning and normative status of hijab. The first concerns the relationship between hijab and *aurat*, with HI distinguishing the terms *hijab*, *jilbab*, and *khimar* from the broader concept of *aurat* and questioning their automatic association with a specific form of women's head covering. The second narrative centers on the reinterpretation of Qur'anic verses commonly cited in discussions of women's dress, particularly QS. Al-Ahzab: 59 and QS. An-Nur: 31. Through linguistic, historical, and contextual arguments, HI presents these verses as open to interpretation and challenges readings that treat a particular form of hijab as universally binding.

The third narrative frames hijab as a matter of conscious religious choice rather than social or institutional coercion. In this discourse, wearing the hijab is associated with personal awareness, individual agency, and voluntary religious expression, thereby extending the debate beyond scriptural interpretation to questions of women's autonomy and religious freedom. Taken together, these three narrative forms reveal a coherent discursive strategy in which HI reconstructs hijab normativity through

semantic differentiation, contextual reinterpretation of scripture, and an agency-based understanding of religious practice.

Narrative of Hijab and Aurat

The Hijrah Indonesia (HI) Facebook page consistently differentiates the meanings of *hijab*, *jilbab*, and *khimar* from the interpretations commonly associated with women's head covering in contemporary Indonesian Muslim discourse. Rather than treating these terms as interchangeable, HI presents them as conceptually distinct and uses this semantic distinction to question the assumption that the Qur'anic vocabulary of women's dress necessarily refers to a specific form of head covering. This interpretive strategy constitutes one of the principal narrative mechanisms through which the page reconstructs the normative meaning of hijab.

Figure 1 illustrates this strategy through an upload titled "Reminder," which refers to the book *The Beloved and I*. The post states that *hijab* in the Qur'an refers to a veil or barrier, that *jilbab* denotes an outer garment rather than specifically a headscarf, and that *khimar* refers more generally to clothing or cloth used to cover the body. By presenting these semantic distinctions, the post challenges the conventional equation of the three terms with a single contemporary form of Muslim women's dress. The upload received 77 reactions, 11 comments, and 8 shares, indicating a measurable level of audience engagement with this alternative interpretation.

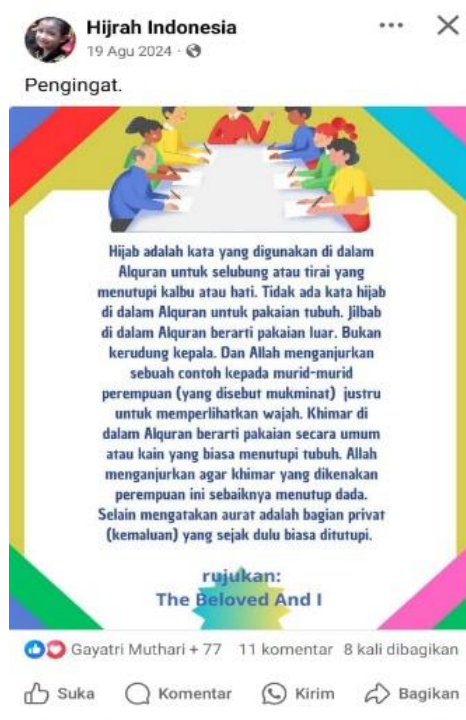


Figure 1. Hijrah Indonesia's upload, August 19, 2024, which deconstructs the meanings of hijab, khimar, and khimar in the Qur'an, based on the book *The Beloved and I*

A similar interpretive position appears in the post shown in Figure 2, which cites teachings attributed to Imam Muhammad Al-Mahdi in *Buyruk Alfurqan*, as transmitted by Sheikh Hefzibah Al-Daudiyah. The infographic defines *jilbab* broadly as outer clothing, including garments such as *kebaya*, *daster*, *abaya*, shirts, skirts, and trousers, while *khimar* is described as clothing or cloth in a more general sense. The post further argues that the Qur'anic recommendation concerns covering the chest and intimate parts of the body rather than prescribing a uniform head-covering practice. This upload generated 195 reactions, 28 comments, and 13 shares, making it one of the most highly engaged posts within this narrative category.



Figure 2. Hijrah Indonesia infographic published on January 4, 2023, presenting definitions of *jilbab* and *khimar* based on teachings attributed to Imam Muhammad Al-Mahdi in *Buyruk Alfurqan*

Figure 2 illustrates how Hijrah Indonesia employs visual religious communication to reinterpret the meanings of *jilbab* and *khimar*. The infographic presents *jilbab* as a general category of outer clothing, including garments such as *kebaya*, *daster*, *abaya*, shirts, skirts, and trousers, while *khimar* is described more broadly as clothing or cloth used to cover the body. It further argues that the Qur'anic recommendation for women concerns covering the chest and intimate parts rather than prescribing a single standardized form of head covering. By attributing this interpretation to Imam Muhammad Al-Mahdi and presenting it through a concise, visually accessible infographic, the post combines alternative religious authority with platform-friendly communication.

The same semantic challenge is reinforced in Figure 3. The post explicitly questions the majority interpretation that *hijab*, *jilbab*, and *khimar* necessarily refer to a veil or head covering. This textual claim is accompanied by the statement, "A lie does not become truth, wrong does not become right, and evil does not become good simply because it is accepted by a majority." The juxtaposition of linguistic reinterpretation and a broader critique of majority opinion strengthens the page's counter-narrative strategy by presenting dominant religious interpretations as contestable rather than self-evident. The post received 23 reactions and one comment.

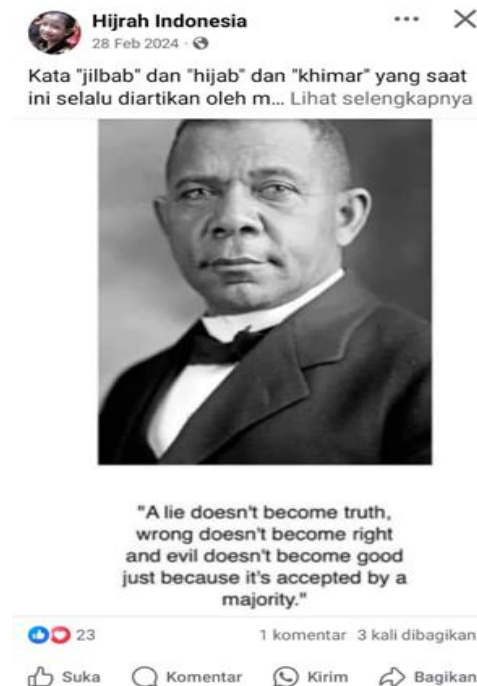


Figure 3. Hijrah Indonesia Facebook post published on February 28, 2024, questioning majority interpretations of *hijab*, *jilbab*, and *khimar* and emphasizing that interpretive validity is not determined solely by majority acceptance.

The semantic reinterpretation is further supported by a historical-cultural narrative. In one post, HI reproduces the writings of anthropologist Sumanto Al Qurtuby, who argues that the contemporary *syar'i* style of *jilbab* became increasingly prominent in Indonesia from the 1980s onward and relates its development to broader transnational Islamic influences following the 1979 Iranian Revolution (Hijrah Indonesia, 2020c). Within the page's broader discourse, this historical framing challenges the perception that contemporary forms of hijab constitute an unchanging and culturally uniform Islamic practice. Instead, HI presents Muslim women's dress as historically contingent and shaped by changing social, cultural, and political contexts.

These posts demonstrate that HI's reconstruction of hijab normativity begins with a semantic and historical reframing of key religious terms. The page does not merely reject the dominant interpretation directly; it seeks to destabilize it by redefining Qur'anic terminology, introducing alternative religious authorities, and situating contemporary dress practices within historical and cultural processes. This narrative strategy shifts the debate from whether Muslim women should

comply with a predetermined dress norm toward the prior question of how the relevant religious terms themselves should be interpreted.

Reinterpretation of Qur'anic Verses and Religious Evidence

Hijrah Indonesia (HI) also constructs its alternative discourse on hijab through reinterpretation of Qur'anic verses commonly cited as the primary textual basis for women's dress obligations. Rather than rejecting the verses themselves, the page reframes their meaning by emphasizing historical, linguistic, and cultural context. This strategy allows HI to challenge the assumption that Qur'anic injunctions prescribe a single and universally standardized form of female dress.

Figure 4 illustrates this interpretive strategy through an infographic displaying different forms of women's clothing from several cultural contexts, including Javanese, Maori, Papuan, African, Arab, and Afghan traditions. The post argues that these diverse forms of dress can fulfill HI's definition of the Qur'anic requirement to cover the chest and intimate parts of the body. It also presents an alternative reading of QS. An-Nur: 31 and distinguishes the concept of *hijab* from contemporary understandings of the headscarf. By juxtaposing Qur'anic interpretation with culturally diverse clothing practices, the post frames Muslim women's dress as contextually variable rather than culturally uniform. This upload generated 700 reactions, 639 comments, and 337 shares, making it one of the most highly engaged posts in the dataset.



Figure 4. Hijrah Indonesia infographic published on March 17, 2020, presenting culturally diverse forms of women's dress alongside an alternative interpretation of QS. An-Nur: 31 and the concept of *aurat*.

A similar argument is developed through a long-form article by Kajitow Elkayeni entitled “*Jilbab, Wajib atau Tidak Wajib?*” (“Is Jilbab Obligatory or Not?”). As shown in Figure 5, the article presents the obligation of *jilbab* as an issue of *khilafiyah*, or legitimate scholarly disagreement, rather than as a matter of unanimous consensus. It further invokes the position of M. Quraish Shihab to support the claim that the legal status of the *jilbab* has been interpreted differently within contemporary Islamic scholarship. In addition to theological argumentation, the article situates the increasing prominence of hijab obligation within broader socio-political changes in Indonesia, particularly the strengthening of conservative Islamic movements in the late twentieth century. In this way, HI combines scriptural reinterpretation with historical contextualization in order to present hijab normativity as a contested and historically situated religious discourse.

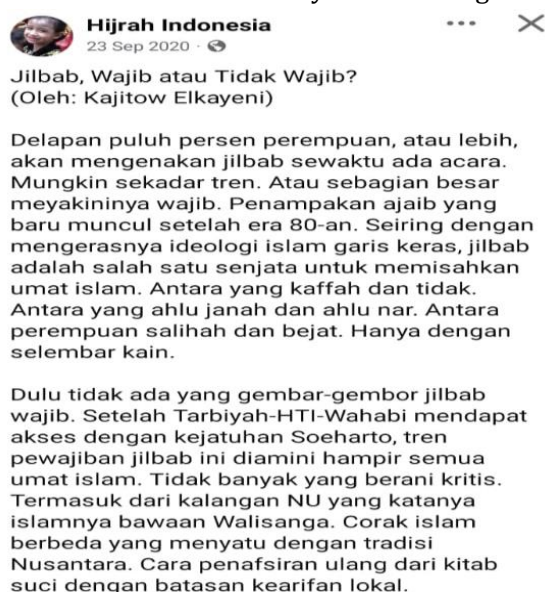


Figure 5. Hijrah Indonesia post published on September 23, 2020, featuring an article by Kajitow Elkayeni that presents the obligation of *jilbab* as a matter of scholarly disagreement and situates contemporary hijab discourse within broader historical and ideological developments in Indonesia.

These posts show that HI's reinterpretation of Qur'anic evidence operates through two complementary mechanisms. First, scriptural verses are re-read through contextual and linguistic arguments that question the universality of a specific dress form. Second, contemporary hijab practices are historicized by relating them to changing cultural and ideological developments. Through this combination, the page shifts the debate from whether the Qur'an regulates women's dress to how such regulation should be interpreted across different historical and cultural settings.

Hijab as a Conscious Religious Choice

A second major narrative frames hijab as a matter of personal religious awareness and individual choice rather than as a practice that should be imposed through institutional or social coercion. In this narrative, HI frequently draws upon concrete public controversies to connect theological interpretation with questions of religious freedom, gender, and personal autonomy.

Figure 6 presents one such example, a screenshot of a Kompas.com news report on the SMKN 2 Padang controversy. The report highlighted calls from members of the Indonesian House of Representatives to revoke mandatory hijab regulations in public schools following allegations that non-Muslim female students had been pressured to wear the head covering. By reproducing this news item, HI relocates the hijab debate from the domain of individual piety to the broader issue of institutional authority and freedom of religious expression. The post received 753 reactions, 226 comments, and 61 shares, making it one of the most highly engaged uploads within this narrative category.



Figure 6. Hijrah Indonesia Facebook post published on January 23, 2021, reproducing a *Kompas.com* report concerning calls to revoke mandatory hijab regulations in public schools following the SMKN 2 Padang controversy

The use of such cases demonstrates that HI's discourse on hijab is not limited to semantic or exegetical reinterpretation. It also extends into advocacy concerning the social consequences of compulsory dress regulations. Through this framing, the page presents the hijab not merely as a theological issue but as one involving individual agency, institutional regulation, and the boundaries of religious freedom in a plural society.

Communication Strategies of the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page

The analysis identifies five recurring communication strategies through which HI disseminates and legitimizes its alternative interpretation of hijab. These strategies combine religious argumentation, educational explanation, emotional appeals, visual communication, and direct digital advocacy.

Table 2. Communication Strategy of Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page

No	Strategy	Embodied in Content
1	Counter-narrative	Presenting interpretations that challenge dominant understandings of hijab and citing scholars or intellectuals with alternative positions
2	Critical-contextual education	Providing linguistic, historical, and contextual explanations of hijab, jilbab, and khimar
3	Emotional and empathic appeal	Highlighting personal experiences and public cases to generate empathy toward women who do not wear hijab
4	Visual-symbolic communication	Using memes, infographics, posters, and satirical visual messages
5	Digital advocacy and call to action	Encouraging users to speak publicly, participate in discussion, and oppose coercion or discrimination associated with religious dress

Source: Observation of the content of the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page, 2020–2024

As shown in Table 2, HI does not rely on a single mode of communication. Its counter-narrative strategy challenges dominant religious interpretations by circulating alternative scholarly and religious authorities, while its critical-contextual educational strategy provides linguistic and historical explanations intended to make these reinterpretations appear intellectually grounded. Emotional and empathic appeals connect abstract religious debates with personal experiences and public controversies, whereas visual-symbolic communication translates complex arguments into easily shareable forms suited to social media. The digital advocacy strategy extends these messages beyond interpretation by explicitly encouraging followers to participate in public debate and social action.

Visual-symbolic communication is particularly evident in the use of memes and satirical content. Figure 7 presents a meme using a popular “The Rock driving” format accompanied by a dialogue in which a woman who does not wear a hijab is warned that “hell is hotter.” HI uses the meme satirically to criticize religious persuasion based on fear and the threat of punishment. By embedding this critique within a familiar and humorous visual format, the page converts a contentious theological issue into accessible digital content that can circulate easily within social-media networks. The post generated 429 reactions, 136 comments, and 74 shares.



Figure 7. Hijrah Indonesia Facebook post published on October 3, 2020, using a popular meme format to satirize the use of threats of hell as a form of pressure to wear the *jilbab*.

The page's digital advocacy strategy is most explicit in its posts concerning the SMKN 2 Padang controversy. In one post, HI urges followers to "speak up," "act," and involve their online and offline communities, even characterizing the smartphone as a potential tool for advocacy (Hijrah Indonesia, 2021). This call illustrates how the page moves beyond the circulation of alternative interpretations toward mobilizing audiences as active participants in the production and dissemination of its religious discourse. Social media, in this context, functions not only as a site of interpretation but also as an infrastructure for religious.

These five strategies demonstrate that HI's reconstruction of hijab normativity is simultaneously interpretive, communicative, and participatory. Alternative religious meanings are produced through contextual reinterpretation, translated into accessible digital forms, emotionally reinforced through public cases, and extended through calls for audience participation. This combination helps explain how a relatively small Facebook community can participate in wider contestations over religious authority and Muslim women's dress in Indonesia's digital public sphere.

Audience Responses to Hijab Narratives

Analysis of the Facebook comment sections reveals two contrasting patterns of audience responses to HI's reconstruction of hijab normativity: supportive and oppositional. Supportive comments generally reproduce contextual, cultural, and individual-choice arguments similar to those advanced by the page, whereas oppositional comments defend the obligation of hijab through Qur'anic references and established religious authority. The comment section, therefore, functions as a site in which competing interpretations of Muslim women's dress are publicly negotiated

rather than merely received passively. Table 3 summarizes the principal argumentative patterns identified in these responses.

Table 3. Categorization of Follower Responses of Indonesian Hijrah Pages

Response Category	Main Argumentative Patterns	Primary Basis of Argument
Supportive	Hijab is not regarded as an absolute religious obligation; women's hair is not necessarily considered aurat; contemporary hijab practices are associated with particular cultural traditions	Contextual interpretation; individual religious choice; cultural and Indonesian-locality arguments
Oppositional	Hijab is regarded as an explicit Qur'anic obligation; HI's reinterpretation is criticized as religious liberalization or an unwarranted departure from established teachings	QS. An-Nur: 31; QS. Al-Ahzab: 59; established religious authority; textual-normative interpretation

Source: Observation of comments on the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page, 2020–2024

The two response patterns demonstrate that HI's posts generate not only engagement but also interpretive contestation. The disagreement concerns more than whether women should wear hijab. It reflects competing sources of religious legitimacy: contextual and cultural reasoning on the one hand, and scriptural-textual authority on the other. The comments thus provide evidence of a digital interpretive arena in which users actively affirm, modify, or reject the religious meanings proposed by the page.

Supportive Response

Supportive responses generally reinforce HI's attempt to challenge the identification of Muslim women's religiosity with a single form of dress. As illustrated in Figure 8, these responses draw primarily on two argumentative registers: skepticism toward popular religious claims surrounding women's hair and the hijab, and the assertion of Indonesian cultural identity in opposition to the perceived Arabization or Middle Easternization of Muslim dress. The quotations below are reproduced verbatim, including the users' original spelling, punctuation, abbreviations, and emojis, followed by English translations.

One commenter questions a popular claim concerning punishment for exposing women's hair and interprets such discourse as commercially motivated:

"saya gk pernah percaya bahwa 1 helai rambut wanita kelihatan maka hukumannya 70.000tahun neraka..bla..bla...paling itu akal akalannya bakul kerudung biar dagangannya laku...yg gk suka dg komentar saya gk usah tersinggung atau ngegas...😂😂😂🙏"

["I have never believed that if one strand of a woman's hair is visible, the punishment is 70,000 years in hell... blah... blah... that is probably just something headscarf sellers made up so their merchandise would sell... those who do not like my comment do not need to be offended or get worked up...😂😂😂🙏"]

The comment received 25 reactions. Rather than engaging directly in scriptural interpretation, the commenter challenges the social production of religious claims by questioning the interests that underlie their circulation. The response therefore shifts the debate from textual

obligation to the credibility and social motivations of those promoting particular understandings of hijab.

A second supportive comment frames the issue through cultural identity:

"Sudah hilang budaya asli Indonesia... Sangat disayangkan. Kenapa harus ikut budaya Timur tengah... Semoga semakin kesini semakin sadar bahwa kita Indonesia...bukan Timur tengah."

[*"Indonesia's original culture has already disappeared... It is very unfortunate. Why must we follow Middle Eastern culture... Hopefully, as time goes on, we become increasingly aware that we are Indonesia... not the Middle East."*]

This response does not directly dispute Qur'anic injunctions but instead questions the cultural association between Islamic religiosity and Middle Eastern forms of dress. The distinction between "Indonesia" and the "Middle East" constructs hijab discourse as part of a broader negotiation over cultural authenticity and the localization of Islam. In this framing, opposition to compulsory or standardized hijab practices is articulated not only as a matter of individual choice but also as a defense of Indonesian cultural identity.

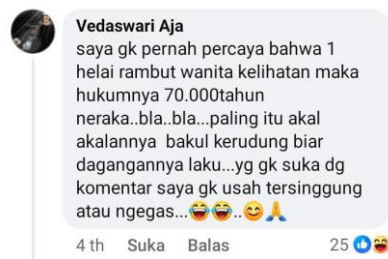


Figure 8. Examples of supportive audience responses to Hijrah Indonesia's hijab narratives, showing skepticism toward popular claims concerning women's hair and emphasizing Indonesian cultural identity in contrast to perceived Middle Eastern cultural influence

These supportive comments demonstrate that audience affirmation of HI's discourse does not depend exclusively on the page's theological or linguistic reinterpretations. Users extend the narrative through everyday reasoning concerning commercial interests, cultural identity, and the relationship between Islam and local Indonesian traditions. The comment section therefore provides a participatory space in which the page's alternative framing of hijab is reproduced and reformulated through audience-generated arguments.

Oppositional Responses

Oppositional responses employ a contrasting repertoire of religious justification. Rather than emphasizing cultural context or individual choice, these commenters tend to foreground Qur'anic textual authority and question the legitimacy of HI's alternative interpretations. Figure 9 illustrates both forms of opposition: direct scriptural rebuttal and criticism of the page's claim to interpretive credibility.

One commenter explicitly invokes QS. An-Nur: 31:

"subhanAllah sungguh kepinteran ibu ini yang sangat menyesatkan 😏.. Jelas jelas Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala berfirman Qs: An-nuur: 31 Dan katakanlah pada para perempuan yang beriman agar mereka menjaga pandangannya, dan memelihara/menjaga kemaluannya dan jangan menampakkan perhiasannya (auratnya) kecuali yang biasa terlihat. Dan hendaklah mereka menutupkan kain kerudung kedadanya"

["SubhanAllah, how clever this woman is, yet very misleading 😏.. It is very clear that Allah, Glorified and Exalted, says in QS. An-Nur: 31: And tell the believing women to guard their gaze, protect their private parts, and not display their adornment (*aurat*) except what ordinarily appears, and let them draw their headscarves over their chests."]

The comment received four reactions. Its argumentative structure differs substantially from the supportive responses because scriptural quotation is treated as sufficient grounds for rejecting HI's reinterpretation. The disagreement, therefore, concerns not only the practice of hijab but also the appropriate method and source of authority for determining its religious status.

A second oppositional comment focuses more explicitly on HI's interpretive legitimacy:

"Yang saya pahami dari kalian adalah merasa semua tulisan yang kalian cantumkan adalah hal sebenar-benar, padahal alibi belaka yang gak mau bertoleransi dan hidup bertameng open minded. Edit (kok pict nya tumben skeleton gak bawa bow)"

["What I understand from you is that you consider everything you post to be completely true, when in fact it is merely an excuse from those who do not want to be tolerant and who live behind the shield of being 'open minded.' Edit: (How come the picture is a skeleton this time and is not carrying a bow?)"]

The comment received two reactions. Although its final edited sentence is unrelated to the substantive hijab debate, it is retained here because the quotation is presented verbatim. Analytically, the relevant portion challenges HI's epistemic position by questioning the page's presentation of alternative interpretations as authoritative and by criticizing its invocation of "open minded" discourse.



Figure 9. Examples of oppositional audience responses to Hijrah Indonesia's hijab narratives, including direct citation of QS. An-Nur: 31 and criticism of the page's interpretive authority and claims to open-mindedness

These oppositional responses indicate that HI's alternative discourse does not replace established interpretations but enters into direct competition with them. The contrast between the two response categories reveals a broader struggle over the basis of legitimate religious knowledge in digital spaces.

Supportive commenters tend to mobilize cultural contextualization, everyday reasoning, and individual autonomy, whereas oppositional commenters foreground Qur'anic textuality and established normative understandings. Facebook thus operates as a participatory arena in which the meaning of hijab and, more fundamentally, the authority to define legitimate Islamic interpretation are publicly negotiated.

DISCUSSION

This study found that the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page systematically builds an alternative narrative that reconstructs the perception of the obligation to wear the hijab through three main paths: semantic deconstruction of the terms *hijab*, *hijab*, and *khimar*; historically-contextual rereading of Qur'anic verses; and advocacy for women's freedom in expressing their religious beliefs. These narratives are disseminated through five complementary communication strategies, and result in a polarized audience response between support and rejecter groups. These findings as a whole confirm that social media has not only served as a distribution channel for religious messages, but has evolved into an arena for the production and negotiation of religious meanings that are participatory and dynamic.

The findings of this research can be analyzed within the framework of the social construction theory of Berger and Luckmann (1966) through three dialectical moments. In *the externalization stage*, IP projects reflective religious ideas into the digital public space through infographics, opinion articles, memes, and women's testimonials. This process resulted in a narrative that challenged the dominance of conservative interpretations of the obligation of the hijab. At *the objectification stage*, the narrative begins to gain social legitimacy through intensive public interaction. The uploads of HI, which have received hundreds to thousands of reactions and comments, show that this alternative discourse is no longer seen as a fringe view, but has become part of a legitimate Islamic discourse in the digital space. At *the internalization stage*, some users do not just discuss the narrative, but internalize it as the basis for personal decisions regarding clothing choices and religious expressions. This shows the transformative power of social media in reshaping the religious subjectivity of individuals, beyond the role of formal religious institutions.

These findings are in line with and at the same time expand on a number of previous studies. The research of Tohir, Ghufroon, and Sholeh (2024) documenting that Quraish Shihab views the obligation of hijab as not absolute is confirmed by the findings of this study, where HI explicitly cites Shihab's position as academic legitimacy. However, this research goes further by showing how interpretive authority is no longer hierarchical-institutional, but rather selectively cited by the digital community to reinforce certain ideological positions. Rohim (2022) notes the shift in the meaning of the hijab from sharia obligations to contextual moral choices, and this study confirms this shift while documenting its digital mechanism: the narrative of the shift in meaning is reproduced, disseminated, and legitimized collectively through the Facebook platform.

Relevance to the study Aziza et al. (2024) about the representation of Muslim women in digital content is also visible, but with different nuances. When the study portrayed women as represented subjects, this study found that women in the IP community are positioned as narrative agents who actively produce and distribute religious meanings. This shows a new dimension in the study of Muslim women's representation in the digital space. Meanwhile, the conformity with the findings of Taufiq, Royanulloh, and Komari (2022) regarding the phenomenon of hijrah as a religious expression mediated by digital platforms is confirmed, but this study reveals an interesting paradox: pages using the name "Hijrah" actually advocate a position that is contrary to the conventional hijrah narrative which is synonymous with strengthening sharia practices.

The findings on the polarization of audience responses between groups that accept contextual narratives and those that maintain textual-normative interpretations are in line with Pariser's (2011) argument about *bubble* filters and *echo chambers* in social media. Platform algorithms tend to amplify users' exposure to content that suits their preferences, so that the polarization of religious discourse is not solely a product of theological differences, but also of the technological architecture of social media itself. Lasswell's (1948) communication model used as an analytical framework has proven to be relevant in identifying how IP designs messages, selects channels, targets audiences, and produces persuasive effects, but this model also shows its limitations in capturing the complexity of two-way feedback that occurs in digital comment spaces.

This research has a number of strengths. First, he fills in the study gaps identified in the introduction by analyzing specifically one community page that has not been researched before. Second, the use of primary data directly from the content and comments of the page provides a strong empirical representation. Third, the integration of social construction theory and Lasswell's model of communication allows for layered analysis from the mechanisms of meaning production to the effects of communication. However, this research also has limitations. Focusing on a single Facebook page limits the generalizability of findings; similar dynamics may develop differently on other platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok. In addition, observations of comments cannot fully represent the perceptions of the entire page's followers, as users who do not comment remain a quantitatively significant audience.

From a critical point of view, it should be noted that the narrative constructed by HI rests on non-conventional spiritual authority, especially the teachings sourced from the book *The Beloved and I* and the transmission of Sheikh Hefzibah which is not rooted in the methodology of interpretation recognized in the normative Islamic scientific tradition. This raises academic questions about the boundary between legitimate contextual reinterpretation and new doctrinal constructions that are syncretic in nature. This aspect is important to observe in the context of digital religious literacy, given that social media audiences do not always have the capacity to verify the methodological validity of an interpretation.

This research has relevant practical and theoretical implications. Practically, these findings affirm the urgency of increasing media literacy and religious literacy among digital Muslims, so that users have critical skills in evaluating religious claims circulating in the digital space. For formal religious institutions, this research is a signal that the authority of interpretation can no longer be managed exclusively and hierarchistically; a more dialogical and contextual communication approach is needed to reach the digital Muslim generation. Theoretically, this research contributes to extending the application of social construction theory into the context of digital space, showing that the process of externalization-objectification-internalization is now taking place at a speed and scale far beyond the imagination of Berger and Luckmann when they proposed the theory in 1966.

Further research is recommended to examine similar dynamics on other digital platforms, using mixed methods that combine content analysis with surveys or in-depth interviews with followers, and extend the object of study to other Islamic digital communities that carry alternative religious narratives. Cross-platform and cross-community comparisons will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how social media is reshaping religious discourse in contemporary Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This research proves that the Hijrah Indonesia Facebook Page actively reconstructs the perception of the obligation to wear hijab through three forms of narrative that reinforce each other: semantic deconstruction of the terms *hijab*, *hijab*, and *khimar*; historically-contextual rereading of Qur'anic verses; and advocacy for women's freedom in expressing religion. These narratives are disseminated through communication strategies that are counter-hegemonic and advocateic, including counter-narrative, critical education, emotional, visual-symbolic, and *call-to-action-based* digital advocacy. The audience's response is polarized in two poles: a group of supporters who accept contextual arguments about the hijab as a personal choice, and a group of naysayers who hold to textual-normative interpretations who view the hijab as a non-negotiable divine command. This polarization shows that social media has become an arena for contesting real religious meanings, not just a channel for distributing information.

Within the framework of the social construction theory of Berger and Luckmann 1966, these findings show that the process of externalization, objectification, and internalization of religious meaning is now taking place massively and rapidly in the digital space. Communities like Hijrah Indonesia prove that the authority of religious interpretation is no longer exclusive-institutional, but can be produced, disseminated, and legitimized collectively by online communities. This marks a paradigm shift in the formation of Islamic discourse: from a hierarchical-dogmatic model to a more dialogical, participatory, and contextual model. These findings also underscore the urgency of increasing media literacy and religious literacy among digital Muslims, so that the public has a critical capacity to evaluate religious claims circulating on digital platforms.

Future research is suggested to expand the object of study by comparing several Islamic digital communities that have different orientations, conservative, moderate, and progressive, in order to map the overall landscape of religious discourse on Indonesian social media. The use of blended methods that combine content analysis with surveys or digital ethnography will enable a more comprehensive understanding of the extent to which digital narratives influence individuals' religious practices over the long run. Cross-platform studies that include Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok are also important to conduct, given that the characteristics of different audiences and content formats on each platform can produce distinct dynamics of meaning construction.

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