Hijab as the Legal Identity and Spirituality of Muslim Women in Modern Social Dynamics

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Abstract: *This study explores the meaning, function, and social perception of hijab use in the lives of Indonesian Muslim women from the perspective of Islamic law, spirituality, and multicultural dimensions. The purpose of the research is to examine the normative basis of the obligation to wear the hijab in the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as to understand the subjective experiences of Muslim women of various ethnicities in Indonesia. This study uses a phenomenological qualitative approach with in-depth interview techniques with 20 Muslim women from Javanese, Sundanese, Madura, Batak, and Minangkabau ethnic backgrounds, followed by surveys as well as literature and documentation studies. The results of the study show that the hijab is not only understood as a sharia obligation, but also a symbol of spiritual identity, a means of self-protection, and a medium of identity negotiation in a pluralistic society. Muslim women interviewed acknowledged the challenges of social stigma, discrimination, and negative stereotypes, but they also affirmed the hijab as a source of spiritual strength and a symbol of ethno-religious pride. The practical implications of this study recommend the development of multicultural education programs in schools, teacher training on religious sensitivity, and media guidelines to portray the diversity of hijab practices in an equitable and inclusive manner.*

Keywords: *Hijab, Islamic Law, Identity, Spirituality, Social Perception*

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi makna, fungsi, dan persepsi sosial penggunaan jilbab dalam kehidupan perempuan Muslim Indonesia dari perspektif hukum Islam, spiritualitas, dan dimensi multikultural. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji dasar normatif kewajiban mengenakan jilbab dalam Al-Qur'an dan Hadis, serta untuk memahami pengalaman subjektif perempuan muslim dari berbagai etnis di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis dengan teknik wawancara mendalam dengan 20 perempuan muslim dari latar belakang etnis Jawa, Sunda, Madura, Batak, dan Minangkabau, dilanjutkan dengan survei serta studi literatur dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa jilbab tidak hanya dipahami sebagai kewajiban syariah, tetapi juga simbol identitas spiritual, sarana perlindungan diri, dan media negosiasi identitas dalam masyarakat yang pluralistik. Perempuan Muslim yang diwawancarai mengakui tantangan stigma sosial, diskriminasi, dan stereotip negatif, tetapi mereka juga menegaskan jilbab sebagai sumber kekuatan spiritual dan simbol kebanggaan etno-agama. Implikasi praktis dari penelitian ini merekomendasikan pengembangan program pendidikan*

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multikultural di sekolah, pelatihan guru tentang kepekaan beragama, dan pedoman media untuk menggambarkan keragaman praktik jilbab secara adil dan inklusif.

Kata kunci: *Hijab, Hukum Islam, Identitas, Spiritualitas, Persepsi Sosial*

Introduction

The hijab is a head and neck covering for Muslim women that serves to maintain modesty and honor, and is an obligation as part of the command to cover the aurat. (Yulikhah, 2017);D anil, 2022). In its development, the hijab contains a hidden ideology of modernization and becomes a medium of socio-cultural messages. In the Islamic movement, the hijab functions as a symbol of identity and resistance (Budiati, 2011). The requirements of the hijab in Islam include not being transparent, not forming a curve, not showy, and seemingly simple. The obligation to wear the hijab for Muslim women has legitimacy in the Qur'an and hadith, among which is listed in Surah Al-Ahzab verse 59:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُل لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَٰتِكَ وَنِسَآءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ اَدْنَىٰٓ اَنْ يُّعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ اللهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيْمًا ۟

"O Prophet, say to your wives, your daughters and the wives of the believers: 'Let them spread their veils over their whole bodies.'"

Surah An-Nur verse 31 emphasizes the obligation to cover the chest with a veil. The hijab not only covers the head and neck, but it contains a deep spiritual and social meaning. It is a form of obligatory worship, a symbol of Muslim women's obedience, piety, and identity that distinguishes them from non-Muslims. The hijab also reflects honor, dignity, and protection for women. Although the model varies according to culture and preferences, the essence of the hijab remains the same: covering the aurah and maintaining self-esteem. The hijab is not only a symbol of religious observance, but also forms the identity of Muslim women. This identity is formed from self-perception in social interaction, where the hijab is part of the self-image based on religious values. Its use can increase confidence and demonstrate moral commitment. According to Rita Bennett, Islamic clothing provides a sense of security, dignity, and strengthens one's identity in the midst of modern social pressures (Rita Bennett, 2002: 89).

Hijab has a protective effect on mental health, especially in maintaining emotional stability and strengthening self-concept. Studies show that Muslim women who wear hijab are more resistant to social pressures such as body shaming and objectification. Katherine Bullock notes that women who wear the hijab with spiritual awareness feel more proud, calm, and emotionally happy. (Katherine Bullock, 2002:112). In a complex modern society, the hijab is no longer just a head covering, but a multidimensional issue that touches on aspects of human rights, religious freedom, and gender equality. In a number of countries, Muslim women's right to wear the hijab is still controversial. Therefore, it is important for the public to understand that the hijab is an expression of faith and identity that deserves respect. The hijab is also related to culture, fashion, and the fashion industry. In the era of globalization, the hijab has become a trend that crosses religious boundaries and enriches cultural discourse and encourages an inclusive fashion industry. In addition, the issue of hijab touches on social, economic, and political aspects. Negative stigma against her can lead to discrimination against Muslim women. Therefore, it is important to

understand that the hijab is not a symbol of extremism, but rather an expression of faith and identity. (Sahar Amer, 2014:142).

In psychology, religious coping is a mechanism for dealing with stress or stress in life through a spiritual approach. The hijab is often used as a coping tool by Muslim women to stay strong in the face of life's challenges because they believe that the hijab is a form of worship and a symbol of closeness to God. A study of the psychology of religion by Kenneth Pargament states that religious expressions such as the hijab can reduce stress levels, increase a sense of meaning in life, and strengthen emotional resilience. (Kenneth I. Pargament, 1997: 235). Research by Ardiyansyah (2024) in *the Journal of Exposure* concluded that the hijab is a sharia obligation for Muslim women as a form of protection and obedience. This article reviews the requirements of the hijab according to sharia to cover the entire body except the face and hands, are thick, loose, and do not resemble men's clothing and affirms the hijab as a symbol of commitment to Islamic values in the face of modern challenges. This research provides important insights, but more research is needed to explore the dynamics of the hijab in the context of contemporary society.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of hijab for Muslim women, including spiritual, identity, and empowerment aspects. The hijab is understood as a symbol of dignity, protection, and honor. Through in-depth analysis based on empirical data, this research is expected to be able to enrich public discourse, eliminate stereotypes, and become the basis for fair and inclusive policies in a society that respects diversity and individual rights. The hijab in Islam has a clear normative basis, as stated in the Qur'an and Hadith, as an obligation of Muslim women to cover the awrah. However, the practice of wearing the hijab in Indonesia is not only determined by normative texts, but also by social, cultural, and political realities. In a multiethnic society like Indonesia, the hijab is a religious symbol as well as a cultural identity that is negotiated in the context of plurality. Previous research has highlighted the legal and spiritual aspects of the hijab, but relatively few have attributed it to Indonesia's ethnic diversity and multicultural dynamics. This is the research gap that this study aims to answer.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the perceptions and experiences of Muslim women from different ethnic backgrounds (Javanese, Sundanese, Madura, Batak, Minangkabau) in interpreting the hijab. By examining the interaction between legal, spiritual, and social dimensions in a multicultural framework, this research is expected to enrich the literature on hijab in Indonesia and make practical contributions to education, media, and society policies.

Method
This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to explore the subjective experiences of Muslim women in wearing the hijab, especially related to self-identity, psychological conditions, and social meaning in a multicultural context. The analytical framework used involves the concepts of Islamic psychology and social psychology, with a focus on self-identity, mental health, and religious coping strategies. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 20 Muslim women aged 18–45 years old who were of Javanese, Sundanese, Madura, Batak, and Minangkabau ethnicities. The selection of participants was carried out by purposive sampling technique, with the criteria of adult Muslim women who actively use the hijab in their daily lives. The data collection technique included several approaches: (1) semi-structured interviews to explore participants' perceptions, experiences,

spiritual motivations, and reflections, with sample questions such as "What does the hijab mean to you personally?" and "How does the surrounding environment respond to your choice to wear the hijab?"; (2) non-participatory observation of social activities and their interactions in public spaces; (3) documentation studies on Islamic literature, ulama fatwas, and socio-cultural articles related to the hijab; and (4) textual studies and analysis of religious literature to strengthen the conceptual framework of the research.

Data analysis was carried out through thematic coding techniques with the help of NVivo software. The analysis stages include interview transcription, open coding, axial coding, and thematic interpretation that relates empirical data to the conceptual framework of Islamic and social psychology. The validity of the data was strengthened by triangulation of sources (interviews, observations, literature) and member checking to several participants to ensure the accuracy of interpretation.

Results and Discussion
1. Hijab as a Source of Self-Identity and Self-Confidence

Participants consistently stated that wearing the hijab strengthened a sense of self-identity, especially in terms of religious affiliation, moral values, and psychological stability. For many respondents, the hijab is not just a physical covering, but a symbol of inner commitment and spiritual transformation. Some participants said that the hijab gave them a distinctive identity, especially in secular settings, where the hijab acts as a marker of faith as well as an expression of personal values. These findings support Bullock's view that the hijab allows women to negotiate their public identities by balancing personal piety and social engagement (Katherine Bullock, 2002:88). In interviews, participants from the Javanese ethnicity mentioned that the hijab is part of the process of spiritual maturation that makes them feel more dignified. Meanwhile, participants from the Sundanese ethnicity emphasized aspects of psychological comfort and increased self-confidence. For participants from the Batak ethnicity, the hijab is seen as a declaration of religious identity that must be fought for, especially when they are in a predominantly non-Muslim work environment. This shows that the hijab has a dual function, namely as a religious instrument as well as a symbol of social struggle.

The self-identity that is built through the hijab is not only based on religious symbols, but also related to the concept of social psychology. Self-definition as a Muslim woman wearing hijab is a representation of values, commitments, and conscious choices that strengthen resilience in the face of social stigma. In the framework of Islamic psychology, the hijab is part of a religious coping mechanism that helps individuals in overcoming social and emotional pressure. In addition, respondents also stated that the hijab makes them feel more valued and respected in public spaces. Confidence increases because they are able to present themselves in accordance with religious beliefs without having to be affected by external pressures. Socially, the hijab serves as a symbol of nonverbal communication that affirms the position and principles of a Muslim woman's life in the midst of cultural plurality.

2. Hijab in the Perspective of Islamic Law

The concept of hijab in the Qur'an is emphasized in several verses, one of which is Surah Al-Ahzab verse 59:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّاَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنٰتِكَ وَنِسَاۤءِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يُدْنِيْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيْبِهِنَّۗ ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ يُّعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا

"O Prophet, say to your wives, your daughters and the wives of the believers: 'Let them spread their veils over their whole bodies.'" (QS Al-Ahzab: 59).

This verse confirms the command for Muslim women to cover their entire body with a hijab, except for the face and palms. The term hijab is understood as outer clothing that covers the entire body, in contrast to the veil (khimar) which only covers the head. Surah An-Nur verse 31 also commands that the veil be stretched to cover the chest:

وَقُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوْجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِيْنَ زِيْنَتَهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلٰى جُيُوْبِهِنَّۖ وَلَا يُبْدِيْنَ زِيْنَتَهُنَّ اِلَّا لِبُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اٰبَاۤئِهِنَّ اَوْ اٰبَاۤءِ بُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اَبْنَاۤئِهِنَّ اَوْ اَبْنَاۤءِ بُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ اَوْ بَنِيْٓ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ اَوْ بَنِيْٓ اَخَوٰتِهِنَّ اَوْ نِسَاۤئِهِنَّ اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ اَوِ التّٰبِعِيْنَ غَيْرِ اُولِى الْاِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ اَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوْا عَلٰى عَوْرٰتِ النِّسَاۤءِۖ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِاَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِيْنَ مِنْ زِيْنَتِهِنَّۗ وَتُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا اَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ

"Tell the believing women that they should guard their eyes, guard their genitals, and not show their ornaments, except what is visible. They had to cover the veil to his chest. Nor should they show their ornaments except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers' sons, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their daughters, their daughters, their servants, their male servants who have no desire (for women), or children who do not understand women's awrah. They must not step on their feet so that the ornaments they are hiding can be revealed. Repent to Allah, you who believe, that you may be blessed."

This verse emphasizes that the hijab is a sharia obligation to maintain the honor of Muslim women. The Prophet's hadiths also confirm this. Narrated by Abu Dawud states:

إِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْمَحِيضَ لَمْ تَصْلُحْ أَنْ يُرَى مِنْهَا إِلَّا هَذَا وَهَذَا

"A woman, when she has reached puberty, should not be seen from herself except this and this," pointing to her face and palms.

لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ‐صلى الله عليه وسلم‐ الرَّجُلَ يَلْبَسُ لِبْسَةَ الْمَرْأَةِ وَالْمَرْأَةَ تَلْبَسُ لِبْسَةَ الرَّجُلِ

"The Prophet PBUH cursed women who resemble men and men who resemble women." (HR. Ibn Majah). This hadith shows that the hijab or women's clothing should not resemble men's clothing.

The hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad mentions that women who are thinly dressed as if they are naked, which emphasizes that the hijab must be thick and non-transparent in order to meet the requirements of sharia. These hadiths serve as clear guidelines for Muslim women in wearing the hijab. (Purhasanah et al., 2023). The majority of scholars of the Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali, and Hanafi schools state that the hijab is mandatory for Muslim women. (Al-Majmu', Juz 3, p. 167). Imam Nawawi wrote in al-Majmu' that the entire body of a woman is awrah except for the face and the palms of the hands. Imam al-Kasani in Bada'i al-Sana'i also affirms the same thing, especially when outside the home. (Bada'i al-Sana'i, Juz 1, p. 232). Yusuf al-Qaradawi in al-Halal wa al-Haram fi al-Islam emphasizes the obligation of the hijab as part of the protection and respect for the dignity of women. ."(Al-Qaradawi, *al-Halal wa al-Haram fi al-Islam,* p. 189).

The command to wear the hijab in Islam is not merely formal or symbolic, but contains deep meaning and wisdom. The hijab functions as a form of protection and protection of women's honor from inappropriate views and behaviors, which have the potential to degrade their dignity, as well as an effort to prevent slander and moral deviations (Arifuddin, 2019). In addition, the hijab is a manifestation of obedience to Allah SWT which reflects faith and piety. It also plays a role in maintaining self-purity, fostering confidence and inner peace, and contributing to the creation of a healthier social environment. The hijab is the identity as well as pride of Muslim women, which represents Islamic values such as simplicity, honor, and piety (Muhammad, 2020).

Although the command to wear the hijab in Islam is clear, Muslim women who choose to wear it often face various challenges and forms of criticism, both from the outside world and from the Muslim community itself. External challenges are generally related to misconceptions or negative stereotypes about the hijab, which are often associated with religious fanaticism, restraint against women, or even wrongly associated with extremism and terrorism (Masyhur, 2024). Meanwhile, from the internal side, there are differences of opinion among Muslims regarding the limits of the awrah and the form of clothing that is considered in accordance with sharia. This causes some women who wear hijab to have to deal with social and cultural stigma that views the hijab as a symbol of underdevelopment or unmodernity (Masyhur, 2024). In the legal context, the application of hijab-related rules in various Muslim countries also shows a diversity of approaches. Each country has different interpretations and practices in interpreting sharia teachings regarding the obligation to wear the hijab, depending on the social, political, and cultural context of each community (Wartini, 2014).

In practice, the application of hijab law is different in various Muslim countries. Saudi Arabia and Iran strictly enforce hijab obligations, while Malaysia and Brunei are more flexible, by integrating hijab rules in the context of family law. This shows that the understanding of the hijab is not only normative but also influenced by social, cultural, and political factors in each country. Thus, the hijab is not just a formal dress code, but a spiritual and social instrument that functions to maintain honor, identity, and protect women from objectification.

3. **The Impact of the Hijab in a Spiritual Perspective**

In Islam, the hijab is not only a dress code, but also a symbol of obedience and a spiritual means for Muslim women to get closer to Allah, maintain honor, and show commitment to His religious teachings and pleasures. (Harris & Kurniati,

2021). The hijab is seen as a means of maintaining purity and faith, as well as a symbol of Muslim women's gratitude and submission to Allah, which reflects spiritual closeness, sincerity, and devotion in practicing religious teachings. (Sa'dan, 2014). In the Islamic tradition, the hijab is not only an obligation to dress, but a manifestation of faith and piety, as well as an outward expression of Muslim women's obedience to Allah's commands as stated in the Qur'an and Sunnah (Wijayanti, 2017). The hijab plays a spiritual role as a spiritual means that encourages consistency of worship, helps to center the heart and mind on Allah, and increases the responsibility and commitment of Muslim women in fulfilling religious obligations (Fitri Shafwa & Machfud Fauzi, 2023).

The hijab reflects Muslim women's awareness of maintaining honor and obedience to Allah, becoming a spiritual symbol that strengthens closeness to Him. Its use encourages reverence, tranquility, and enthusiasm in worship, as well as motivates the improvement of spiritual qualities and piety. (Nurhayat, 2018). With its various positive impacts, the hijab encourages the consistency of Muslim women in worship, both mandatory and sunnah, so that it can help improve spiritual quality. In the Islamic tradition, the hijab is not only an obligation to wear, but reflects the shame (ḥayā') and self-esteem of a Muslim woman before Allah. (Othman et al., 2016). "Covering the awrah reflects an awareness of the greatness of Allah and a commitment to protect oneself from His prohibitions. This shame is the basis of piety, while the hijab is a symbol of honor and pride in the feminine identity bestowed by Him.

The hijab raises awareness of self-nobility, safeguards the purity and honor of Muslim women from indecent treatment, and reflects the noble shame of not highlighting beauty excessively, thus providing a sense of security in interacting in society. (Wijayanti, 2017). The hijab reflects self-esteem that fosters self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as being a symbol of shame, honor, and a noble feminine identity, which promotes the formation of a godly character that is pleasing to God. Wearing the hijab not only fulfills religious obligations, but also has a positive impact in the form of security, confidence, and inner peace, as well as strengthening Muslim women's identity and spiritual commitment to Islamic teachings (Arifuddin, 2019). By covering the aurrah, Muslim women feel closeness to Allah as well as protection from worldly temptations, which results in increased reverence in worship, confidence, inner peace, and overall spiritual qualities.

In Islam, the hijab is not just a covering for the aurah, but a symbol of obedience that strengthens spiritual closeness to Allah, provides a sense of inner peace and contentment, builds a positive social identity, and supports mental health through privacy protection, self-control, and confidence-building. The experience of wearing the hijab varies between individuals, where social pressures and stigma can be stressful for some women, so their impact on emotional balance is strongly influenced by personal beliefs, social support, and cultural context; nevertheless, for many Muslim women, the hijab still contributes positively to their mental health.

Fatimah, a student at a well-known university. Initially, Fatimah felt hesitant and afraid to decide to wear a hijab because she was worried that she would receive unpleasant treatment from the surrounding environment. However, after praying and determining, Fatimah finally decided to wear a hijab. From then on, Fatimah felt a tremendous change in her. He feels calmer, focused, and closer to Allah SWT. The hijab, which was originally considered a burden, is

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now a source of inner peace. Fatimah shared, "Every time I wear the hijab, I feel that Allah embraces me with His love. It's an irreplaceable spiritual experience."

A similar experience was also experienced by Salsabila, a housewife who had just decided to wear the hijab after delaying for some time. Initially, Salsabila was worried that the hijab would hinder her daily activities. However, as time went by, he actually felt such a great blessing. "Since wearing the hijab, my heart has become calmer. It is easier for me to remember Allah and worship solemnly. The hijab has become a protector that protects me from various worldly temptations," said an emotional Salsabila.

The inspiring stories of Muslim women show that the hijab is not just a covering, but a symbol of obedience, identity, and a spiritual bridge to Allah; Through this experience, they hope to be role models in strengthening their faith, including through the practice of wearing the hijab. The researchers have conducted interviews with several Muslim women, especially students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. Here are their testimonials about life changes after wearing the hijab:

> Resource person 1: "*Before wearing the hijab, I was very confident in my physical appearance and followed fashion trends without hesitation in displaying the aurat. However, over time, I felt emptiness and longing for inner peace. The decision to wear the hijab initially felt heavy as she had to adapt to a more closed style of dressing. However, as time went on, I felt a significant change; the heart becomes calmer, feels protected, and gets closer to Allah SWT. The hijab changed my understanding of true beauty, from just physical appearance to a focus on character building and spirituality. Alhamdulillah, my life now feels more meaningful and directed*".

> Resource person 2. "*I grew up in a religious family, but as a teenager I started to move away from the teachings of Islam by wearing revealing clothes and following trends that were not in accordance with sharia. Once, an ustadzah reminded me of the importance of covering the aurat, which touched my heart very much. I also decided to wear a hijab even though it felt heavy at first. Over time, the hijab brought about significant changes in me that brought me back on the right path, bringing me calmness, closeness to God, and better self-control. My life is now more meaningful and I am forever grateful for His guidance.*"

> Resource person 3. "*Before wearing the hijab, I was a very ambitious career woman who prioritized work over worship. However, after experiencing serious health problems, I began to rethink the meaning of life. I realized that I had been late in world affairs and had forgotten my obligations as a Muslim woman. The decision to wear the hijab was a turning point that brought a big change in my life. The hijab brought me back to fitrah, brought me closer to Allah, and made me calmer, more patient, and more focused in worship. In fact, my career actually flourished because I was able to balance work and spirituality. Alhamdulillah, the hijab makes my life more meaningful.*"

4. The Impact of the Hijab in a Social Perspective

The hijab not only serves as a head covering, but represents the religious identity inherent in a Muslim woman. A Muslim woman's choice to wear the hijab is a form of affirmation of religious observance and pride in her Islamic identity. In this context, the hijab not only reflects adherence to Sharia teachings, but also

reflects personal integrity, principles of life, and commitment to Islamic values in daily life.

For many Muslim women, the hijab represents the values of modesty, self-esteem, and modesty that are upheld in Islamic teachings. The wearing of the hijab not only serves to cover the aurat, but also becomes a symbol of the dignity and honor of a Muslim woman. In the midst of a global plurality of cultures and beliefs, the hijab serves as a marker of Islamic identity that reinforces a sense of solidarity and collective pride within the Muslim community. In addition, for some Muslim women, the hijab is also a cultural da'wah medium that visually reflects Islamic values, as well as forms a positive and inspiring image in their social environment. Thus, the hijab is not just a physical attribute, but is a manifestation of a Muslim woman's religious beliefs, personal integrity, and spiritual commitment to the teachings of Islam. In society, women who wear the hijab are often considered as religious and moral figures, but they are inseparable from stigma and negative stereotypes that reduce the meaning of the hijab as a mere symbol, without looking at the spiritual and personal dimensions behind it (Firdiyah & Primasari, 2019). Some people consider hijab women to be introverted, conservative, and less adaptive to modern dynamics, so they are often tied to outdated images and inflexible in social interactions.

In certain circles, women who wear the hijab are often considered subjects of patriarchal cultural pressure and are considered to have no autonomy in choosing clothing. In addition, they are also often stigmatized with negative stereotypes such as backward, radical, or even associated with extremism, which reflects a lack of understanding of the sharia and spiritual meaning of the hijab in Islam (Firdiyah & Primasari, 2019). This kind of negative perception raises concerns because it has the potential to perpetuate discrimination and social prejudice against Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab as an expression of their religious beliefs. In the midst of various perceptions that are developing, more and more Muslim women are showing commitment to the use of hijab as a form of obedience and self-identity. They prove that the hijab is not a barrier to actively contributing in various sectors of life. Therefore, an inclusive and reflective understanding of society is needed to create a just social order and respect each individual's religious choices.

In a social context, the use of the hijab by a Muslim woman is often understood as a symbol of collective identity that strengthens solidarity and a sense of togetherness in Muslim society (Awwaliyah, 2019). Women who wear the hijab are often associated with high moral integrity and religiosity, so they are often used as role models in their social environment. In the realm of education, the hijab acts as a symbol of self-esteem and honor for Muslim students or students. In addition to encouraging a focus on learning and protection from inappropriate treatment, the hijab is also a symbol of the struggle in demanding the right to dignified and equal education.

In the workplace, the hijab can have a diverse impact on Muslim women. On the one hand, some companies value the value of religiosity and consider the hijab as a positive form of personal integrity. But on the other hand, discrimination is still found against Muslim women who wear hijab which is considered incompatible with the company's image, thus affecting their job opportunities and career paths. In this situation, Muslim women wearing hijab face challenges to defend their rights and dignity. They are required to show that the hijab is not an obstacle, but a form of moral and spiritual commitment that actually

strengthens their capacity to contribute optimally in the social, educational, and professional realms (Othman et al., 2016). Ultimately, a more inclusive understanding and acceptance from society is needed so that the hijab is seen positively not as an obstacle, but as part of an identity and expression of faith that must be respected in the efforts of Muslims to develop their potential and contribute in various aspects of life.

In social life, women who wear hijab often face complex social challenges. One of the main challenges is the stigma and negative prejudice that is still rooted in some circles. Women who wear the hijab are often associated with old-fashioned, closed-minded, or difficult to adapt to the dynamics of modernity, and are even often labeled as symbols of conservatism or religious radicalism. This kind of stereotype can give birth to forms of discriminatory treatment in various living spaces. In the world of education, for example, there are still cases where students or students who wear hijab face subtle and explicit rejection, both from the institution and their social environment. They are often treated differently by teachers, lecturers, or peers simply because of their visually visible religious identity. Similarly, in the world of work, women who wear the hijab often face structural and cultural barriers to equal opportunities, including in terms of job acceptance, promotion, or professional recognition.

This phenomenon underscores the importance of advocacy for the values of inclusivity and justice, as well as the need for public education to erode prejudice against the hijab as a symbol of backwardness, and instead recognize its role as a legitimate form of expression of religious identity in a pluralistic society. Women who wear the hijab often face stigma and discrimination in public spaces, both in the form of cynical appearances, derogatory comments, and unpleasant treatment. Their choices are often perceived as out of step with modernity, thus marginalizing and reflecting the low respect for religious freedom and expression of identity in pluralistic societies. (Nurhayat, 2018). The social challenges faced by hijab women not only impact psychological pressure, but also motivate them to remain empowered and actively participate in community life. Despite facing stigma and discrimination, many of them remain steadfast in defending their identities and beliefs, and proving that the hijab is not a barrier to contributing. Therefore, a collective commitment from all elements of society is needed to eliminate negative stereotypes and build an inclusive environment that respects diversity.

Women in hijab have shown a strategic role and real contribution in various sectors of life, including politics, economics, and education. Despite often facing stigma and social barriers, they continue to prove their capacity and integrity. In the political sphere, many Muslim women who wear the hijab are active as policymakers and public leaders, providing an inclusive gender perspective. In the economic sector, they appear as innovative and competitive business actors, helping to create jobs and encourage community empowerment. Meanwhile, in the field of education, women in hijab are present as students, educators, and researchers who contribute to the development of science and the formation of future generations. The presence of women wearing hijab in these various fields has provided inspiration and role models for the wider community, especially for fellow Muslim women. They have proven that the hijab is not a barrier for women to contribute optimally and work for the progress of the nation. However, efforts to eliminate stigma and discrimination against women who wear hijab are still being carried out. Wider support and appreciation are needed from all levels of

society so that they can be more free to develop their potential and make a greater contribution to the progress of the country.

In the face of social challenges and pressures, women in hijab need strong collective support. The presence of Muslim women is an important element that provides a safe space to share experiences, strengthen identity, and build solidarity. Such communities not only serve as a place for exchanging views and emotional support, but also strengthen a sense of connection, acceptance, and collective empowerment in defending Islamic values in the midst of complex social dynamics. (Firdiyah & Primasari, 2019). The support of their families and the immediate social environment has an important role in empowering women who wear the hijab to remain steadfast in their values and principles. A supportive family provides a strong emotional foundation, while an inclusive circle of friends helps them overcome social stigma. In addition, the involvement of organizations and institutions that care about women's issues, especially those related to women wearing hijab, is very important in providing empowerment and advocacy space. Through the programs offered, women wearing hijab not only get access to build their own capacity, but also feel recognized in their social struggles. Therefore, strengthening community networks and cross-sectoral support needs to be continuously pursued to create a more equitable and inclusive social space, as well as encourage the optimal contribution of women wearing hijab in various aspects of life.

The issue of the use of hijab has become one of the hot public discussions, both at the national and global levels. In Indonesia, this debate reflects the tug-of-war between religious freedom, self-expression, and secular views on the role of religion in the public sphere. On the one hand, the pro-hijab campaign carries the values of religious freedom, cultural identity, and the spiritual expression of Muslim women. Its supporters emphasize that wearing the hijab is an individual right that must be protected by human rights principles. The hijab is seen as a form of obedience, pride of identity, and personal expression that should not be limited by social pressure or state policies. The campaign also promotes the narrative that the hijab is not a symbol of oppression, but a form of conscious choice based on religious beliefs.

In contrast, anti-hijab campaigns are often based on concerns about the symbolization of religion in public spaces, as well as the assumption that hijab reflects the backwardness or subordination of women. (Moors, A. 2009: 393). In some contexts, the hijab is considered to be contrary to the principles of secularism and gender equality (Scott, JW 2007). These groups tend to highlight the potential politicization of the hijab or its association with certain ideologies, including concerns about radicalism or intolerance. The tension between these two campaign poles reflects the complexity of debates about individual freedom, religious identity, and the socio-political dynamics underlying the use of the hijab. Therefore, a dialogical and inclusive approach is needed that respects personal choices while encouraging cross-cultural and religious understanding, to create a just and respectful social space.

Anti-hijab groups often advocate for restrictions or bans on the wearing of hijab in public spaces such as educational institutions, government offices, and other strategic public spaces. They are of the view that hijab can hinder the process of social integration and strengthen identity-based segregation, and is considered to have the potential to perpetuate gender-based discrimination (Firdiyah & Primasari, 2019). The debate between pro-hijab and anti-hijab campaigns reflects

the complexity of issues that are not only religious, but also political and cultural, so they often cause polarization in society. In this context, the principles of tolerance, respect for differences, and the protection of human rights, including women's right to choose how to dress according to their beliefs, are essential. (Firdiyah, L. R., & Primasari, A. (2019).

The role of mass media and social media has become very central in shaping public opinion regarding the discourse on the use of hijab. Digital platforms provide a wide space of expression for different groups of people to voice their views, both for and against the hijab. Through the media, narratives about the hijab can be constructed, reinforced, or even debated, ultimately influencing public perceptions and attitudes towards this religious practice. For Muslim women who support the wearing of the hijab, social media serves as a strategic platform to voice spiritual values, religious identity, and women's right to choose clothing. Through visual content, educational videos, and inspirational narratives, they promote the hijab as a symbol of faith, equality, and freedom of expression (Awwaliyah, 2019). Hijab-wearing women who are successful in various fields are also often raised as positive representations in pro-hijab digital campaigns.

Meanwhile, conventional mass media such as television, radio, and newspapers play a role in expanding the reach of discourse through programs that raise the issue of hijab in an informative and inclusive manner. This positive representation helps shape a more open public perception, as well as reduce the stigma that is often attached to women who wear the hijab. However, anti-hijab groups also actively use the media to voice critical views. Through articles, opinions, and social media posts, they voice that the hijab is a patriarchal symbol that is contrary to the principles of gender equality, and is sometimes associated with political issues and radicalism.

In this context, the media has an important role in shaping public opinion. The narrative built through the media not only affects public perception, but also determines the direction of social discourse related to the hijab. Therefore, it is important for the media to present information that is balanced, inclusive, and sensitive to cultural and religious contexts in order to create a space for dialogue that is constructive and does not trigger polarization.

5. The Dynamics of the Hijab in a Multiethnic Context

The results of the study also found four main themes related to the multiethnic dimension in the meaning of the hijab:

a. Spiritual Identity: The hijab is understood as a symbol of obedience and inner strength. Minangkabau participants emphasized the aspect of family piety, while Batak participants attributed it to personal determination in a non-Muslim majority environment.

b. Social Challenges: Almost all ethnicities report stigma and discrimination. Sundanese and Javanese face conservative stereotypes, while Batak face discrimination in the workplace.

c. Cross-Ethnic Hijab Practices: Hijab styles vary between ethnicities. Javanese and Sundanese choose fashionable hijab, Madura is simpler, Minangkabau has a local cultural pattern, and Batak combines hijab with traditional clothing.

d. Multicultural Dynamics: In multiethnic public spaces, the hijab is a means of identity dialogue. The diversity of hijab practices strengthens intra-community solidarity while opening up space for interfaith understanding.

These findings are in line with studies in Malaysia and Turkey, where the hijab is also debated in the context of religious pluralism and modernity. Thus, the hijab can be understood as a universal symbol that represents the negotiation between faith, culture, and modernity.

Conclusion

Based on discussions from various perspectives, it can be concluded that the use of hijab has a broad and complex dimension: The use of hijab for Muslim women has a broad and multidisciplinary dimension. From a theological perspective, the hijab is a sharia obligation that reflects obedience, protection of honor, and spiritual closeness to Allah SWT. Spiritually, the hijab is a means of strengthening faith, inner peace, and affirming the value of piety, so that it is not only of outward value but also reflects deep religious awareness. From a socio-cultural perspective, the hijab affirms the identity and integrity of Muslim women, even though they still face stigma, discrimination, and stereotypes that demand respect for freedom of expression and inclusive social space. From a psychological aspect, the hijab provides a sense of security, confidence, and emotional balance that helps women cope with social pressure.

In multicultural contexts, such as in Indonesia, the meaning of the hijab varies according to cultural background—from religious symbols, simplicity, to expression of identity in pluralistic societies. Meanwhile, from the perspective of media and advocacy, the hijab is a global issue that is often debated between a symbol of patriarchy and a symbol of liberation, so the media plays an important role in presenting a fair and objective narrative. Overall, the hijab is not only concerned with personal and spiritual aspects, but also reflects social, psychological, and cultural dynamics that require a comprehensive and respectful understanding of the diversity of Muslim women in various life contexts.

Practical recommendations for this research can be carried out through various social, educational, and cultural strategies. One important step is to include hijab awareness modules in the teacher education and training curriculum, especially in multifaith schools, as a means of building tolerance and respect for religious identity. In addition, the mass media and social media need to be encouraged to display the representation of the hijab in a diverse, fair, and non-discriminatory manner, in order to create a public space that is inclusive and free from negative stereotypes. Cross-cultural community programs also need to be developed to encourage identity dialogue, so that the hijab can be understood as part of religious freedom and freedom of expression in the context of a multicultural country like Indonesia. Thus, the hijab is not only understood as sharia clothing, but also as a theological, spiritual, social, psychological, and multicultural phenomenon that is full of meaning. It is an identity, a symbol of struggle, as well as a space for dialogue that brings together religious, cultural, and modernity values in contemporary social dynamics.

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