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***Hijrah* as Socio-Religious Transformation Among Non-Hijabi Muslim Women in Singaraja, Bali**

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Article History	Abstract
Received March 21, 2026	<i>The phenomenon of hijrah is widely examined through visible symbolic changes, such as adopting the hijab. However, a significant research gap exists regarding how non-hijabi Muslim women interpret this transformation, particularly within minority contexts where their academic perspective remains underexplored in previous literature. This case study investigates the socio-religious transformation and identity construction of non-hijabi Muslim women in Singaraja, Bali. Singaraja was selected as a unique multicultural space where a Muslim minority community interacts closely with dominant Balinese cultural dynamics. Using a qualitative approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with fifteen participants, a sample size justified by data saturation, where no new themes emerged during iterative collection. The data were systematically analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings concretely reveal that participants understand hijrah not as an appearance-based milestone, but as a continuous, internal process of spiritual and moral self-improvement. This transformation is experienced through explicit personal actions, such as internalizing sincerity, refining character, improving worship consistency, and consciously practicing interreligious tolerance amidst local cultural values. Furthermore, digital media and social environments exert structural pressures by projecting idealized visual standards of piety. In response, these women exercise distinct spiritual agency by separating authentic religious conviction from visual conformity. This study contributes empirically grounded evidence demonstrating how minority Muslim women fluidly negotiate identity and sustain religiosity without fully submitting to dominant symbolic expectations.</i>
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INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, the phenomenon of *hijrah* has emerged as a central theme in the religious dynamics of Muslims in Indonesia (Hakim 2024). Historically rooted in the physical migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina to secure theological safety and institutional consolidation (Prasanti and Indriani 2019), the contemporary interpretation of *hijrah* has undergone a radical recontextualization. It is no longer confined to geographic mobility but has transformed into a massive, media-driven socio-religious movement (Hamudy and Hamudy 2020). This modern expansion is closely intertwined with the commodification of religion and the rise of a new wave of Islamic conservatism within the public sphere (Rijal 2025). The dominant discourses produced by contemporary *hijrah* actors tend to reduce the essence of this spiritual transformation into highly performative and reductionist indicators, specifically targeting the visual standardization of the female body through the mandatory adoption of the *hijab* or *syar'i* clothing (Nuruzzaman and Bakar 2025). Consequently, the *hijrah* narrative has trapped Muslim women within a normative binary dichotomy: those who adopt these symbolic visual markers are idealized as the epitomes of the "pious Muslim woman" (*Muslimah saleha*), while those who abstain are relegated to the peripheral margins of dominant religious discourse (Taufiq et al. 2022).

This reductionist inclination is mirrored in the conceptual homogeneity of prior scholarship. The vast majority of Indonesian sociology of religion literature focuses on urban actors who have fully embraced symbolic transformation, investigating lifestyle changes, consumerism, digital performativity, and social conformity in metropolitan areas (Rosharlianti 2021). Consequently, the lived experiences and agency of non-hijabi Muslim women remain overlooked within *hijrah* studies. Investigating this demographic is theoretically significant because they stand at

a critical intersection: they strive for spiritual self-improvement (the internal substance of *hijrah*) while resisting the visual conformity demanded by hegemonic discourse (Juliansyahzen 2023). Deconstructing their experiences is vital to shattering homogenized *hijrah* narratives and dismantling the symbolic power that dictates female morality (Pambayun 2020).

This research gap is particularly crucial and complex within the Muslim-minority landscape of Singaraja, Bali, which differs significantly from both globalized southern Bali and Muslim-majority Java. In this Balinese Hindu-dominated setting, non-hijabi Muslim women face dual social pressures. Internally, they confront intense moral surveillance and communal pressure to display overt Islamic symbols to reinforce minority borders (Kheryadi and Chorbwhan 2025). Externally, however, their non-hijabi appearance serves as a sociological bridge with local values of *menyama braya* (brotherhood) and *sagilik saguluk sahunglung* (harmony). This specific geographical complexity has been virtually absent from prior *hijrah* research, which heavily favors homogeneous settings (Basyir 2013).

Theoretically, this study rejects orthodox structuralist frameworks that reduce individuals to passive recipients of socio-cultural scripts (Ritzer 2018). Instead, it synthesizes Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality (Sulaiman 2016) with the Islamic Feminist Spiritual Agency framework of Saba Mahmood and Amina Wadud (Johnson and Fairweather 2017). Through a Bergerian lens, religious reality is understood as a dialectic in which actors reflectively reconstruct, rather than blindly internalize, the objectified public discourse of symbolic *hijrah*. Concurrently, Mahmood's theory helps argue that the moral negotiations of non-hijabi women represent an active engagement to cultivate an authentic inner spirituality, not passivity or religious failure (Rinaldo 2014). Ultimately, this study positions these women as autonomous, active

subjects over their bodies and spiritual narratives, rather than peripheral objects of patriarchal religious hegemony.

Building upon this background and theoretical sharpening, this study formulates three primary research questions: (1) How is the construction of the meaning of *hijrah* developed by *non-hijabi* Muslim women in Singaraja, Bali? (2) What social, cultural, and religious factors shape their understanding of *hijrah*? And (3) how does their position within dominant religious discourses affect their identity and expressions of religiosity?

Correspondingly, the objectives of this study are: (1) To analyze in depth the subjective construction of the meaning of *hijrah* from the perspectives of *non-hijabi* Muslim women in Singaraja; (2) To identify the web of sociocultural and local religious factors underlying this meaning-making process; and (3) To formulate a new conceptual foundation within religion and gender studies based on the empirical experiences of minority groups within multicultural societies. Ultimately, this research is expected to make a significant theoretical contribution to the sociology of Islam in Indonesia, helping the field transcend reductionist-symbolic approaches and offer a more inclusive and humanistic understanding of Muslim women's diverse spiritual expressions.

Literature Review

Contemporary sociological studies of religion in Indonesia that map the phenomenon of *hijrah* can be classified into three main intertwined trends, but they leave significant contextual limitations when describing the reality of non-hijab (non-hijabi) Muslim women.

The first trend views *hijrah* as a vehicle for symbolic identity transformation and urban Muslim lifestyle commodification. Rosharlianti (2021) asserts that this millennial trend is dominated by shifts in visual identity, such as changes in dress codes

and religious fashion aesthetics. Similarly, Sirait (2024) observes that social media algorithms accelerate this lifestyle, amplifying hyper-visible standards of piety and polarizing superficial symbolic *hijrah* against its critics. While both studies show how public spaces and digital structures dictate religious behavior through visual instruments, this trend suffers from an urban-homogeneous bias. It wrongly assumes all Indonesian socio-religious transformations move linearly toward symbolic uniformity, thereby neglecting localized resistance or alternative configurations of piety.

The second trend delves into the socio-psychological motivations and community dynamics driving individual decisions to undergo *hijrah*. Taufiq et al. (2022) offers a critical counter-narrative by demonstrating that the motivation for *hijrah* among young Muslim women is frequently driven by external socio-religious pressures and the need for peer group acceptance (*social conformity*), rather than stemming purely from autonomous internal spiritual awakening. Taufiq's focus on conformity shares an analytical boundary with Juliansyahzen (2023) research on the religiosity of *non-hijabi* Muslim women in urban spaces. Addini (2019) finds that for Muslim women, religiosity is experienced as a deeply personal, internal, and substantive domain that does not necessitate public symbolic expressions; instead, it prioritizes the internalization of Islamic ethical values in everyday life.

A critical comparison of these two strands reveals a stark divergence in orientation: while the dominant *hijrah* discourse demands external visual compliance (Taufiq et al. 2022), non-hijabi women offer an analytical antithesis centered on an interiorized spirituality (Taufiq et al. 2022). Nonetheless, both studies remain conceptually limited because they isolate their analyses within Muslim-majority urban centers, thus failing to account for how these

identity dynamics fluctuate when the subjects operate as a religious minority.

This geographic and demographic limitation is partially addressed by the third trend, which centers on minority Muslim studies. Basyir's (2013) research on Muslim communities in Bali illustrates that religious minority groups confront unique socio-cultural challenges that compel them to develop highly adaptive, fluid, and non-exclusive modes of socio-religious transformation compared to their counterparts in majority regions. In a minority setting, religious expressions must constantly be negotiated to maintain social cohesion and avoid friction with the dominant local culture.

Although these three scholarly trajectories focusing on digital performance (Sirait 2024), gendered conformity (Taufiq et al. 2022), and minority adaptation (Basyir 2013) have provided invaluable theoretical insights, a glaring lacuna persists at their intersection. The critical issue that remains unresolved in the broader academic literature is: how is the spiritual negotiation of *hijrah* articulated by women who consciously reject body standardization (non-hijab), yet must navigate this inner transformation within a space where they are simultaneously a religious minority and subjects to conservative digital moral surveillance?

It is precisely within this critical research gap that the current study establishes its academic positioning. This study transcends the limitations of prior literature by offering distinct empirical, conceptual, and theoretical contributions. *Empirically*, this research is located in Singaraja, Bali, a unique multicultural minority setting that provides a sociological dialectic entirely distinct from the homogenous, urban Javanese landscapes that dominate the works of Rosharlianti (2021).

Conceptually, this study deconstructs *hijrah*, which is often reduced to fashion aesthetics (Mustofa 2023), by demonstrating

that socio-religious transformation can occur profoundly at cognitive and moral levels without outward visual changes. Theoretically, it integrates Peter L. Berger's social construction theory (Sulaiman 2016) and Saba Mahmood's spiritual agency (Rinaldo 2014) to analyze non-hijabi Muslim women in Singaraja as autonomous subjects. These women actively filter digital narratives and communal expectations while leveraging inclusive local cultural values to sustain an authentic religiosity. Consequently, this study repositions their lived experiences not as an anomaly, but as a legitimate, resilient manifestation of spiritual agency within the contemporary sociology of religion.

Conceptual Framework

This study establishes a theoretical synthesis between Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality and the theory of Spiritual Agency within Islamic feminism to examine the meaning of *hijrah* among non-hijabi Muslim women without structuralist biases (Berger and Luckmann 2016; Wadud 2009). Through a Bergerian lens, religious meaning-making operates as a three-step dialectic of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. While contemporary *hijrah* discourse has been objectified as a rigid institutional reality demanding bodily standardization via hijab conformity (Kütük-Kuriş 2021), individuals act as active agents who reflectively reconstruct these meanings during the internalization phase. At this stage, the theory of Spiritual Agency pioneered by Saba Mahmood and Amina Wadud posits that the deferral of visual conformity is not a religious failure, but a conscious exercise of agency, the subjective capacity to inhabit and sustain authentic inner ethical-spiritual commitments amidst heavy normative constraints.

Within this framework, the relationship between *hijrah* and socio-religious transformation is understood not as a mechanical shift in external appearance, but

as a paradigm shift toward a spiritual-reflective orientation. While dominant digital discourses project idealized visual attributes of piety, their internalization by non-hijabi women triggers a deconstruction of meaning that shifts the locus of transformation to the internal realm (*tazkiyatun nafs*). By decoupling the core essence of spirituality, such as sincerity, worship consistency, and moral conduct, from institutional demands for external attributes, these women demonstrate a profound internalization of substantive piety (Sulaiman 2016).

Furthermore, the construction of this identity is sharply shaped through a dialectic with the unique multicultural landscape of Singaraja, Bali, as a Muslim-minority space. Non-hijabi Muslim women navigate intense dual pressures: internally, the local Muslim community enforces strict moral surveillance, while externally, the inclusive Hindu-Balinese cultural context provides a flexible sociological cushion. Their non-hijabi appearance is internalized as an adaptive mechanism that eliminates ethnic barriers, smoothing social assimilation within the local values of *menyama braya* and *sagilik saguluk sahunglung*. Ultimately, by weaving together social construction and spiritual agency, this framework balances macro-level social structures with individual resilience, positioning non-hijabi women as active subjects who affirm their religiosity through refined character, interreligious empathy, and constructive civic contributions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design based on Yin (2009) to explore empirical realities such as narratives, lived experiences, and social interactions that provide an in-depth, non-statistical understanding of the subjective meaning of *hijrah* as a socio-religious transformation among non-hijabi Muslim women. The case study design allows for a holistic, contextual, and in-depth exploration of a specific social unit within a limited

timeframe and real-life context. The research was conducted over approximately eight months in Singaraja City, Buleleng Regency, Bali, chosen specifically for its unique religious minority dynamics interacting with the dominant local Balinese cultural landscape.

The subjects of this study are non-hijabi Muslim women residing in Singaraja, selected via purposive sampling based on deliberate criteria: (1) Muslim women, (2) members of the local Muslim community, (3) religious figures, and (4) related parties with relevant knowledge or experience. The final sample size was determined by the principle of data saturation, continuing field collection until no new significant information emerged. The research utilizes both primary data obtained through direct field interactions and secondary data from written sources such as books, academic journals, research reports, and other relevant documents. Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: in-depth interviews as the primary tool for detailed perspectives, observation to complement and validate behavior within the social context, and archival and literature studies to enrich the analysis.

Data analysis follows the descriptive qualitative interactive model of Miles and Huberman, executed simultaneously and iteratively through three main stages: data reduction (selecting and simplifying raw data), data display (systematic descriptive narratives based on relevant themes), and conclusion drawing/verification. To ensure academic justification, data validity and reliability are strictly maintained through two triangulation techniques: method triangulation (comparing data across interviews, observations, and documents) and source triangulation (comparing accounts from various informants and different sources).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Construction of the Meaning of *Hijrah* from the Perspective of Non-Hijabi Muslim Women

The empirical data gathered from in-depth field tracking reveal that the meaning of *hijrah* does not manifest uniformly among Muslim women, particularly when situated within the structural complexities of diverse subjectivities and localized religious minority experiences. For non-hijab-wearing (*non-hijabi*) Muslim women, *hijrah* is subjectively constructed as an intensive inner journey imbued with deep existential reflection and progressive spiritual awareness. In-depth interviews with fifteen primary informants demonstrate that *hijrah* is explicitly rejected as a mere alteration of outward appearance or a standardized sartorial milestone; instead, it is conceptualized as an ongoing internal process that demands absolute sincerity of heart, genuine theological intention, and a continuous commitment to ethical self-improvement.

For non-hijab Muslim women in Singaraja, *hijrah* is constructed as an internal journey (*tazkiyatun nafs*) oriented toward spiritual maturity and moral improvement, not merely an artificial change. Informants (such as AG, SR, ADM, AAS, and KAM) consistently emphasized that *hijrah* is not a sartorial finish line, such as immediately donning the hijab, but rather a personal process aimed at drawing closer to God through worship and moral refinement. Through this reorientation, they reject the hegemonic reductionism that measures women's religiosity solely based on visual representation.

The findings indicate that *hijrah* among non-hijabi Muslim women in Singaraja does not occur suddenly but emerges through prolonged reflection on life experiences, inner struggles, and social interactions. The meaning of *hijrah* was constructed through daily life, marked by a

dialectic between personal beliefs and social demands that often judge faith by outward symbols. As in Peter L. Berger's theory of social construction in Sulaiman (2016) explains that reality is formed through a dialectical process, the informants' narratives reveal an externalization of their prolonged reflection on their life experiences. In this context, *hijrah* serves as a space for the fluid negotiation of religious identity, balancing the desire to become a better person with the awareness that spiritual transformation need not always manifest in a uniform outward appearance.

Most informants interpret *hijrah* as a process of spiritual and moral self-improvement, including efforts to enhance worship, refine character, regulate speech, and manage emotions and intentions. As noted in the findings (Zakiyah et al. 2025) which emphasizes that the meaning of *hijrah* lies more in the pursuit of self-improvement, both morally and spiritually. For them, *hijrah* is not an endpoint but an ongoing journey requiring sincerity, patience, and self-acceptance. It begins "from the heart" and is manifested through behavioral and attitudinal changes that reflect closeness to Allah, without waiting for outward appearance to become the primary marker of piety.

These findings highlight the prominence of the internal dimension of *hijrah* over the symbolic one. The spiritual transformations experienced are reflective and personal, shaped by life events such as loss, trials, or the search for deeper religious meaning. In this sense, *hijrah* becomes a symbol of self-awareness and inner transformation oriented toward moral and spiritual development. This is confirmed by Ayuningtyas, Hidayati, and Rahmawati (2022), who explain how *hijrah* serves as a means of finding inner peace.

Moreover, this construction challenges social views that measure religiosity based on visual appearance. For non-hijabi Muslim

women in Singaraja, social pressure to adopt the hijab often creates a dilemma between social acceptance and personal authenticity. They reject the notion that *hijrah* should be measured through clothing, emphasizing instead sincerity and readiness of the heart as the foundation of religiosity. Based on the interview results, this was also confirmed in a study such as Taufiq et al. (2022) and Zakiyah et al. (2025) which found that: the measure of one's spiritual journey is not based on outward appearances. This stance represents a form of subtle resistance to religious hegemony that centers symbols in women's religious identity.

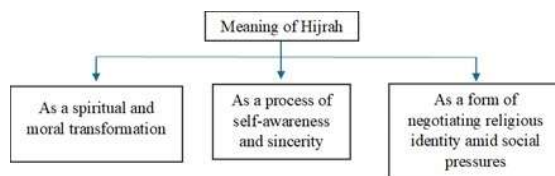
Accordingly, the construction of *hijrah* among non-hijabi Muslim women in Singaraja reflects a process of spiritual identity formation centered on sincerity, self-reflection, and moral transformation. *Hijrah* is understood as a journey toward the maturity of faith rather than symbolic conformity to religious norms. As expressed by ARO (22 years old):

“*Hijrah* is not just about leaving bad things or changing clothes, but also about improving attitude and worship; it's not something that can be put on and taken off like a headscarf.” (Interview, ARO, August 17, 2025)

This interpretation shows that non-hijabi women do not reject the value of *hijrah* itself; rather, they reinterpret its meaning in accordance with their lived religious and spiritual experiences.

Based on the data analysis, the meaning of *hijrah* constructed by non-hijabi Muslim women can be categorized into three main themes:

Figure 1. Meaning of *Hijrah*



Source: compiled by the author

Referring to Figure 1, three main themes can be identified as the core of the meaning construction of *hijrah*. These are elaborated as follows:

***Hijrah* as Spiritual and Moral Transformation**

For most informants, *hijrah* begins with an inner drive to become a better individual in relation to both Allah and fellow human beings. The transformation they refer to is not always outwardly visible but manifests as changes in attitudes, behavior, and ways of thinking. For instance, several informants (VER, EM, and others) reported becoming more mindful in their speech, controlling anger, improving their religious practices, and striving to spread goodness within their environment.

These small changes constitute part of a spiritual journey that they interpret as the tangible manifestation of *hijrah*. In their reflection, *hijrah* is not about achieving religious perfection, but about undergoing a consistent process of self-improvement. This perspective reflects a more substantive orientation toward religious values, where the essential aspect lies not in external symbols but in the quality of one's spiritual and moral relationship. A similar view was expressed by EM (24 years old):

“In my opinion, every effort to become better is part of *hijrah*. It does not have to be a major change; even small steps toward goodness count as *hijrah*. The essence is that *hijrah* is an ongoing process as long as we strive to improve ourselves and draw closer to Allah.” (Interview, EM, August 18, 2025)

Thus, based on the informants' cumulative understanding, *hijrah* is essentially perceived as a journey toward spiritual maturity rather than an instant transformation judged by outward appearance. Although external appearance often becomes the primary basis for evaluation, the informants emphasize that

symbolic dimensions are not the sole indicators of the true meaning of *hijrah*.

***Hijrah* as a Process of Awareness and Sincerity**

This theme highlights the reflective dimension of the *hijrah* experience. Informants acknowledge that each individual has a different rhythm and inner readiness in undergoing religious transformation. They reject the notion that *hijrah* must follow a uniform pattern, as sincerity is considered the most essential element in the spiritual journey.

Some informants describe *hijrah* as “a process of making peace with oneself,” in which individuals learn to accept their limitations, organize their intentions, and undergo transformation without coercion.

The awareness that *hijrah* is a long-term journey leads them not to rush into changing their outward appearance, but rather to focus more on strengthening their inner self and purifying their intentions. This is reflected in the statement of WL (21 years old), when confirmed during a Zoom meeting in response to a question addressing whether someone can be considered to have “undergone *hijrah*” without wearing the hijab.

“For me, the answer is yes, because *hijrah* is an internal process that cannot occur all at once. There is a process that accompanies each person’s long journey in undergoing *hijrah*.” (Interview, WL, October 11, 2025)

This perspective demonstrates that for non-hijabi Muslim women, *hijrah* is an internal process that requires reflection and existential awareness, rather than a formal obligation that must be immediately manifested outwardly.

***Hijrah* as the Negotiation of Religious Identity amid Social Pressure**

The third section highlights the social dynamics accompanying the *hijrah*

experiences of non-hijabi women. In many cases, they encounter significant social pressure from religious environments, communities, and social media, which often equate *hijrah* with the adoption of the hijab. This pressure creates an identity dilemma between the desire to remain authentic to oneself and the need to be accepted within religious circles. As expressed by RDC (21 years old):

“I cannot yet say that I have undergone *hijrah*. Wearing the hijab is indeed our obligation, but I still sometimes feel the desire to remove it. However, due to prevailing cultural and religious values in society, wearing the hijab is seen as an essential identity of a Muslim woman.” (Interview, RDC, October 9, 2025)

In response, the informants construct alternative narratives emphasizing that *hijrah* cannot be measured solely through clothing. They perceive religious symbols such as the hijab as part of the journey rather than the ultimate goal. In doing so, they renegotiate their religious identity to remain aligned with their faith while preserving personal autonomy.

The stance adopted by most informants reflects a form of soft cultural resistance to standardized religious expectations, while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of respecting diverse spiritual paths within Islam.

From these findings, it is evident that the construction of *hijrah* among non-hijabi Muslim women encompasses both a profound spiritual dimension and a critical reflection on society’s predominantly symbolic orientation. As discussed by Kütük-Kuriş (2021), the hijab (commonly referred to as *jilbab*) is often regarded as a marker of Muslim identity that signifies a woman’s body as belonging to a devout Muslim, thereby implicitly requiring women to perform as “ideal” or “proper” Muslims. The definition of a “proper” Muslim woman thus includes a combination of discursive and

physical practices, such as modesty in speech, behavior, and dress.

Such interpretations demonstrate that women's religiosity cannot be reduced to visual expressions alone but must be understood as a layered and contextual existential experience. Accordingly, *hijrah* for non-hijabi Muslim women represents an autonomous, reflective form of religiosity oriented toward deeper spiritual meaning, affirming, as noted by Meiranti (2019), that the journey toward God is not always outwardly visible but grows within the depths of the heart and self-awareness.

The meaning of *hijrah* among non-hijabi Muslim women proves that religious experience is dynamic and socially negotiated. Externalizing their faith through daily actions such as self-improvement, emotional regulation, and deeper worship, these women reject the dominant societal narrative that equates *hijrah* solely with the hijab. Instead, they critically reconstruct the concept through personal awareness, demonstrating that their religious reality is autonomously and reflectively constructed rather than passively adopted from social structures.

From the perspective of religious identity and gender theory, the *hijrah* experiences of non-hijabi women can also be interpreted as a negotiation of patriarchal religious norms that often position women as symbols of collective morality (Pambayun 2020). Islamic feminist scholarship, such as the works of Saba Mahmood in Johnson & Fairweather (2017) and Amina Wadud (2009), highlights that women's religious experiences are closely tied to the dynamics of power, authority, and agency. In this context, the decision of non-hijabi women to delay or redefine *hijrah* in non-symbolic forms reflects spiritual agency, the capacity to negotiate religious identity amid normative social pressures.

Thus, the meanings of *hijrah* constructed by these women embody a

subtle form of resistance to social structures that dictate how a Muslim woman "should" express her piety. However, this resistance does not signify rejection of religion; rather, it affirms that authentic spirituality arises from sincerity and inner awareness (Fajriani and Sugandi 2019), rather than from social pressure or external moral demands (Fitrianti 2019).

In a broader framework, these findings can also be understood through the lens of reflective spirituality in modern Islam. According to Azizah and Jannah (2022), modern spirituality emphasizes the search for meaning and authenticity rather than mere compliance with formal rituals. The *hijrah* experiences of non-hijabi women reflect this pattern, as they seek to balance religious values with their existential experiences as modern individuals. They engage in processes of self-reflection and self-renewal, leading to a deeper, more personal, and meaning-oriented spirituality

By linking these empirical findings with the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, it can be concluded that *hijrah* among non-hijabi Muslim women is a reflective, contextual, and multilayered social construction, emerging from the interplay between spiritual experience, social pressure, and identity formation (Zahara et al. 2020). Their interpretations challenge the dichotomy between "pious" and "non-pious" and open new avenues for understanding women's religiosity beyond symbolic expressions, emphasizing awareness, sincerity, and moral transformation instead.

Through this lens, the construction of *hijrah* among non-hijabi Muslim women in Singaraja shifts the religious paradigm from symbolic-normative to spiritual-reflective (Taufiq et al. 2022). *Hijrah* is viewed not as a uniform, formal obligation, but as a humanizing spiritual journey with a unique rhythm of faith for each individual (Nugraha 2021). Consequently, these findings enrich the discourse on how Muslim women

negotiate their religious identities (Sunesti 2018), and how individuals, especially youth, reaffirm their faith amid evolving social dynamics (Fansuri, 2023).

In conclusion, the construction of *hijrah* among non-hijabi Muslim women in Singaraja reflects a shift toward a substantive, personal, and reflective religious paradigm rather than a purely symbolic transformation. They interpret *hijrah* as a "journey of becoming" an internal spiritual and moral process rooted in self-awareness, sincerity, and continuous growth toward Allah, rather than an immediate endpoint. This perspective demonstrates a mature spirituality driven by inner conviction and diverse individual paths of faith, rather than external societal pressures.

These findings reaffirm Berger and Luckmann's theory that religious meaning emerges from the dialectic between subjective experience and social structures (Sulaiman 2016). Rather than rejecting *hijrah*, non-hijabi women reinterpret it to fit their existential contexts and spiritual readiness. This highlights the agency of modern Muslim women, demonstrating their capacity to direct their own religious experiences instead of fully submitting to dominant social definitions (Zahara et al. 2020)

In practical terms, these findings encourage a more inclusive understanding of women's religious practices by framing *hijrah* as a personal, gradual, and multidimensional process rather than a uniform obligation. Respecting these diverse spiritual rhythms fosters an empathetic, dialogical, and humane religious ecosystem. Ultimately, the *hijrah* of non-hijabi Muslim women in Singaraja offers a gentle, reflective expression of Islam that prioritizes core spirituality over mere symbolism.

Social, Cultural, and Religious Factors Influencing the Construction of

***Hijrah* Meaning among Non-Hijabi Muslim Women**

The construction of *hijrah* among fifteen non-hijabi Muslim women in Singaraja is a reflective, adaptive response shaped by intersecting socio-cultural factors rather than an isolated consciousness. While families instill foundational religious values without coercion, peers, university settings, and religious communities serve as arenas where these women negotiate moral expectations with personal authenticity. This negotiation is supported by the tolerant, multicultural Balinese context, which offers a flexible space free from rigid, homogeneous norms. Conversely, digital media exerts a dual influence, acting as both a spiritual inspiration and a source of symbolic pressure that threatens to reduce *hijrah* to visual conformity.

Social Factors: Family, Peers, and Community

As the primary agent of socialization, the family introduces foundational religious values through non-coercive guidance, providing the psychological comfort these women need to navigate their faith at their own pace. However, this domestic foundation interacts with broader social environments, including peers, religious communities, and university settings, which simultaneously offer positive spiritual encouragement and impose acute moral surveillance. As illustrated by the experience of RDC (21 years old), whose fluid pattern of wearing and removing the hijab stems from both family and peer dynamics, the *hijrah* journey becomes a complex site of identity negotiation where internal aspirations for self-improvement must constantly balance against societal demands for visual conformity.

Cultural Factors: The Local Balinese Context and the Value of Tolerance

Singaraja's multicultural landscape and interreligious tolerance shift the informants' interpretation of *hijrah* from an exclusive theological framework toward an inclusive, socially oriented paradigm. As emphasized by TZP (22 years old) and ED (20 years old), living as a minority in a predominantly Hindu society requires balancing religious identity with multicultural adaptation. This demographic setting transforms *hijrah* from a purely vertical relationship with the Divine into a horizontal civic commitment to embody daily tolerance. Consequently, local Balinese culture functions as a vital space for dialogue, shaping a highly contextualized and non-exclusive model of Islamic piety.

Religious Factors: Spiritual Understanding and Inner Readiness

From a religious perspective, the informants' understanding of *hijrah* is rooted in a highly reflective religiosity that prioritizes a continuous internal trajectory of moral and spiritual self-improvement over passive ritualism. While recognizing *hijrah* as an act of obedience to Allah, informants like AG (22 years old) and TZP (22 years old) explicitly reject reducing this transformation to rigid external symbols or dress codes. Instead, they emphasize inner readiness, emotional regulation, and sincere intention (*niyyah*). This sophisticated awareness effectively decouples substantive piety from outward appearances, enabling these women to balance their lived existential realities against aggressive social expectations for uniform visual conformity.

Digital Media: Between Inspiration and Social Pressure

Digital media simultaneously inspires and pressures non-hijabi women by projecting idealized, visual standards of piety, forcing informants like VER (21) to selectively filter digital content to maintain their focus on substantive values. Ultimately, their *hijrah* is a reflective trajectory co-constructed between

individual faith, supportive non-coercive families, and the wider social environment.

This localized socio-religious transformation is further validated by the external perspective of the Hindu majority community, as reflected in interviews with Ni Kadek WD (22 years old), YDKS (21 years old), and I Putu WS (24 years old). who draw on the cultural principles of *menyama braya* and *Tat Twam Asi* to prioritize civic participation and horizontal social cohesion over rigid religious symbols, viewing a non-hijabi appearance as a structural bridge for seamless assimilation. However, this local space of tolerance faces distinct boundaries, as residual collective traumas from the Bali Bombings still trigger instinctive resistance toward visual attributes perceived as extreme, such as the all-black *niqab*. Consequently, *hijrah* manifests not as a uniform theological command, but as a contextualized, socially embedded, and dialogical trajectory wherein non-hijabi Muslim women continuously adapt their religious identity to pluralistic realities.

Family as a Space of Values and Moral Support

The family serves as the primary foundation for introducing religious values and moral conduct (Hall 2016), acting as an essential socialization agent that instills initial values to help individuals navigate broader realities (Steets 2016). Even in families that do not mandate the hijab, a gentle, communicative, and humanistic parenting style creates a safe space for women to independently discover the meaning of *hijrah*. Consequently, these findings indicate that the motivation for *hijrah* does not always stem from social control or religious pressure, but rather from the organic internalization of spiritual values within the home.

Tolerant Culture as an Arena for Identity Negotiation

Within the Balinese socio-cultural context, a prevalent culture of tolerance and openness provides a vital space for informants to negotiate their religious identity flexibly and contextually. Living in a society that values diversity, non-hijabi Muslim women do not feel alienated; instead, they express their religiosity through ethical behavior, mutual respect, and active civic participation to maintain social harmony (Qumseya 2018). Grounded in the framework of everyday religion theory (Ammerman 2014), this dynamic affirms that religious practice is not dictated solely by formal symbols, but by how individuals meaningfully embody faith values in their daily social interactions.

Digital Media as a Space for Da'wah and Symbolic Pressure

Social media serves as a powerful space for Muslim women to learn, reflect, and construct their religious identity (Rahman and Mala 2025), but digital da'wah creates profound ambivalence by simultaneously strengthening spiritual motivation and exerting pressure to conform to visual standards of the "ideal Muslim woman." Viewed through representation theory (Hall, Evans, and Nixon 2024), this phenomenon demonstrates that digital religious identity is shaped not only by sacred texts but by visually constructed, socially loaded representations. In response, informants develop a highly selective and reflective approach to digital media, filtering performative aesthetics to safeguard messages that reinforce internal sincerity.

Religion as a Source of Reflection and Transcendence

At its core, *hijrah* is understood as a highly reflective internal journey of moral and spiritual self-improvement rather than mere compliance with external norms. Rooted in Al-Ghazali's concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul), this holistic process prioritizes sincere intention (*niyyah*), inner

readiness, and continuous self-correction to draw closer to Allah (Hasyim 2022). By decoupling substantive piety from outward appearances, these non-hijabi women demonstrate strong religious agency (Singh 2015). They reject views that reduce spiritual transformation to rigid external symbols, asserting their capacity to determine their own spiritual direction through personal conviction and inner awareness.

Sociologically, this meaning is co-constructed through a dynamic dialectic between external structures and individual consciousness. The gentle religious foundations of the family, the tolerant, pluralistic Balinese local culture that facilitates flexible Islamic expression, and the digital media landscape that introduces both inspiration and symbolic visual pressure all frame these women's experiences. Rather than passively submitting to these overlapping structural forces, non-hijabi Muslim women dynamically negotiate, select, and reinterpret these values to fit their existential contexts. This ongoing tension between symbolic social expectations and the search for authentic inner meaning reveals that their religious and gender identities are fluid, contextual, and deeply agentic processes of becoming.

The Dynamics of Religious and Gender Identity

In the Muslim-minority context of Singaraja, Bali, the religious and gender identities of non-hijabi Muslim women are forged through a complex negotiation among Islamic values, pluralistic social norms, and intersecting cultural expectations. Inhabiting a social space that demands a balance between spiritual commitment and social acceptance, these women experience multilayered identity dynamics. They must continuously strive to maintain their personal faith while navigating dominant societal discourses and social perceptions that frequently use outward appearance and the

hijab as benchmarks for measuring a woman's piety (Koenig and Shohaib 2014).

Rather than accepting a static or singular religious identity, these informants engage in an evolving spiritual process rooted in life experiences and self-awareness. By prioritizing inner sincerity, purity of intention, and moral self-improvement over rigid outward appearance, their stance serves as a subtle resistance to normative social pressures that idealize a single mode of religious expression. Ultimately, their *hijrah* experiences reflect an existential struggle to sustain their religious and gender identities amid demands for symbolic conformity (Bagir and Martiam 2016), highlighting how gender critically shapes their capacity to negotiate authentic piety, obedience, and autonomy within a complex social space.

Religious Identity as a Space for Spiritual Negotiation

For non-hijabi Muslim women in a minority environment, religious identity is not a singular form but is continuously negotiated between ideal values and social realities (Lefebvre 2020). They interpret Islam not as an attribute that must be visibly symbolized (Sujibto 2024), but as an inner journey and moral awareness that develops over time. Consequently, most informants view *hijrah* as beginning with improved worship, strengthened intention, and self-control rather than immediate changes in appearance. As informant ADM (21 years old) notes, wearing the hijab without spiritual readiness risks reducing it to a hollow symbol, arguing that *hijrah* can instead begin with fundamental steps like improving daily prayers.

This perspective highlights women's agency in determining their own forms of religiosity (Rinaldo 2014). Rather than rejecting religious teachings, they reinterpret Islamic practices to fit their personal contexts and evolving spiritual readiness. Viewed through social identity theory (Tajfel and

Turner 2004), this dynamic demonstrates that religious identity is not dictated solely by rigid group membership but is actively shaped by the specific, personalized meanings individuals construct regarding their position within that group.

Gender, Piety, and Spaces of Resistance

As non-hijabi Muslim women in a minority environment, the informants recognize that their bodies often serve as sites of social interpretation where they are expected to publicly represent ideal Islamic piety (Kuppinger 2024). Rather than yielding to these symbolic moral pressures, they utilize them as opportunities for reflection and subtle cultural resistance, asserting that piety must be measured by moral integrity, honesty, and social responsibility instead of clothing. Grounded in Islamic feminism (Badran 2011), this stance demonstrates a distinctive religious agency (Leming 2007), which allows women to contextually interpret Islamic values without rejecting their spiritual essence (Erwani and Siregar 2025). ultimately constructing a reflective religious identity rooted in inner awareness rather than mere compliance.

Challenges of Dominant Discourses and the Preservation of Authenticity

Informants acknowledge that dominant *hijrah* discourses on social media and in urban communities often portray the phenomenon as a total transformation toward a uniform, religious appearance (Juliansyahzen 2023). While these narratives can inspire, they also create spiritual dilemmas, prompting non-hijabi women to adopt a reflective stance that honors their unique spiritual timelines rather than fully submitting to dominant standards. For them, authentic *hijrah* is measured by internal sincerity and consistent self-improvement rather than the speed of physical transformation. Ultimately, this perspective functions as a subtle resistance against the

moral surveillance imposed on women's bodies (Syed Salim and Hashim 2017). Demonstrating that a strong religious identity and spiritual autonomy can be preserved without conforming to conventional symbolic expressions.

Solidarity and Spirituality within Diversity

Living in a predominantly non-Muslim environment, the informants do not feel alienated; instead, they perceive Singaraja's tolerant social fabric as an enabling space to express an open, inclusive, and empathetic face of Islam. Their religious identity balances a vertical relationship with God with a horizontal civic commitment to others, creating a dialogical religiosity rooted in both spiritual and social consciousness (Barazili and Syukur 2023). Facing dominant *hijrah* discourses that idealize homogeneous, visual expressions of piety (Juliansyahzen 2023), these women are not disoriented. Instead, they emphasize that authentic faith is expressed through consistency in goodness, sincerity, and moral responsibility, thereby fostering social harmony without compromising their identity.

Ultimately, these findings reveal that the religious and gender identities of non-hijabi Muslim women emerge from an ongoing dialectic between social structures, normative discourses, and individual consciousness (Lefebvre 2020). Rather than passively submitting to external expectations, they utilize their bodies and appearance as loci to negotiate piety, obedience, and spiritual freedom. Through this reflective process, *hijrah* is redefined not as a superficial symbolic transformation, but as a form of spiritual resilience, a steadfast commitment to an honest, autonomous inner journey. This shift underscores women's agency to move beyond rigid, homogeneous concepts and actively construct a more humane, plural, and contextual religious discourse.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *hijrah* for non-hijabi Muslim women in Singaraja, Bali, cannot be reduced to symbolic outer attire. Instead, it constitutes a dynamic, open-ended spiritual trajectory that foregrounds self-awareness, internal sincerity, and a sustained commitment to personal ethical improvement over outward conformity. Operating within a Muslim-minority context, these women navigate their identity through pluralistic social spaces where daily interactions with the non-Muslim majority foster a reflective form of interfaith tolerance. Concurrently, social media and religious communities serve as dual arenas, acting as both vital sources of spiritual inspiration and conduits for normative external pressure to conform to dominant standards of visual piety.

Amidst these socio-cultural dynamics, non-hijabi Muslim women manifest a distinct form of agency and subtle resistance against the homogenization of the *hijrah* discourse, which is frequently framed in masculine and patriarchal terms. Despite encountering social judgments that conflate faith with appearance, they confidently assert that substantive religiosity resides in interior intention, attitude, and behavioral consistency. In doing so, they embody an autonomous form of faith, maintaining their religious commitment without relinquishing bodily autonomy or self-determination. Ultimately, their lived experiences provide a critical counter-narrative to reductionist discourses, proving that *hijrah* can transcend institutionalized conformism to become a journey of personal courage and spiritual liberation.

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