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Shifting Religious Values in the Representation of “Jilboobs” Among Out-of-Town University Students

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Abstract

The phenomenon of hijab use among Muslim female students in the modern era is experiencing increasingly complex dynamics of meaning. One form of this is the emergence of a fashion style known as “jilboobs”, namely the use of a hijab combined with tight clothing to highlight the curves of the body. This study aims to describe the form of jilboobs fashion style representation among Muslim female students who are away from home at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Surabaya State University, analyze the shift in religious values reflected in this practice, and identify the social, cultural, and campus environmental factors that influence it. This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of ten informants of Muslim female students who are away from home. The shift in religious values is not interpreted as a loss of religiosity, but rather as a form of reinterpretation of religious values that is more flexible and contextual. Factors from the environment of travel, the influence of social media, campus culture, and pressure to be accepted in social circles are dominant factors in shaping this change. This study confirms that the hijab is no longer understood solely as a symbol of religious obedience, but also as an expression of social identity and lifestyle of Muslim female students in urban environments.

Keyword: *Shifting Religious Values, Jilboobs, Muslim Students From Out Of Town, Religious*

Identity, Representation of Fashion Style

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Introduction

The development of globalization, urbanization, and digitalization has brought significant changes in how the younger generation of Muslims expresses their religious identity. Religious identity is no longer understood in a singular and normative sense, but rather is negotiated through various social symbols that intersect with popular culture, lifestyle, and the demands of the modern social environment. One religious symbol that has undergone this transformation in meaning is the hijab. If previously the hijab was understood primarily as a sign of compliance with religious norms, in the context of urban and campus communities it also functions as a medium for expression of identity, aesthetics and social strategy (Adli, 2022).

In this context, a fashion phenomenon known as *jilboobs* has emerged, namely the wearing of a hijab combined with tight-fitting clothing to accentuate the body's curves (Eveline, 2022). This phenomenon has sparked debate in the public sphere because it is perceived as representing a contradiction between religious symbols and dress practices that do not fully align with Islamic teachings (Ilham & Pratama, 2025). On the one hand, the *jilboobs* phenomenon is seen as a deviation from religious values, while on the other, it is understood as a manifestation of freedom of expression and adaptation to modernity.

This phenomenon becomes even more complex for Muslim female students living far from home. Moving from a relatively conservative hometown to a more open urban environment, such as Surabaya, and specifically Surabaya State University, requires an intense social adaptation process (Izzah, 2025). Students living away from home face the new reality of freedom from family supervision, the pressures of campus social circles, and the powerful influence of social media and popular culture. Furthermore, for Muslim female students living away from home, these changes are even more intense (Ashlock et al., 2022). The transition to a pluralistic urban campus space creates a new situation where religious norms, social demands, and the logic of modernity intertwine (Ase Risdianti, 2024). This situation encourages identity negotiations between deeply rooted religious values and the social demands of the new environment.

The campus environment, as a pluralistic social space, also plays a significant role in shaping female students' clothing patterns. A culture of tolerance, the normalization of modern dress styles, and the lack of strict dress codes make the campus an arena for the reproduction of new meanings for the hijab. In this context, the hijab functions as a social symbol containing multiple layers of meaning (Tsurayya & Mushodiq, 2018). On the one hand, the hijab continues to represent a personal religious commitment, but on the other, it also serves as a means of negotiating social position within the campus environment. Data demonstrates that the meaning of the hijab is not solely determined by religious doctrine, but rather is produced through the interaction between the subject, social conditions, and the surrounding normative structures

(Bargallie, 2025). The shifting meaning of the hijab thus reflects broader dynamics in the religious lives of young Muslims, where faith, identity, and social demands continue to interact in complex ways. The hijab is no longer simply a symbol of religiosity, but also part of a lifestyle, self-image, and a social strategy for gaining acceptance within social groups (Ase Risdayanti, 2024).

Individual adaptation to a new social environment is an integral part of the practice of lived religion, namely, how religion is lived, interpreted, and practiced in concrete daily life (Paulina & Mutiah, 2022). From this perspective, religiosity is not understood as a static and ahistorical normative adherence, but rather as a reflective practice that is continuously negotiated within dynamic social relations. The religious experiences of Muslim female students traveling abroad, therefore, cannot be separated from the environmental context in which they interact, whether on campus, in urban spaces, or in digital spaces, which contribute to shaping their horizons of religious meaning.

Theoretically, the process of adaptation to a new environment can be mapped into four main strategies: integration, separation, marginalization, and assimilation (Amiruddin, 2024). The findings of this study indicate that most Muslim female students traveling abroad tend to pursue the integration strategy, namely maintaining their religious identity while adapting to the norms, values, and culture of a more modern and pluralistic urban campus (Hanan & Sa'i, 2025). However, integration in the context of lived religion is not a neutral or entirely free-choice process. It involves a series of symbolic compromises, particularly in visible religious expressions in public spaces, such as dress and the use of the hijab (Jeffrey et al., 2025). As a practice of lived religion, this integration is often marked by tension between religious values internalized in the family and community of origin and the demands of an urban campus environment that normalizes standards of body aesthetics, modern lifestyles, and the image of active, independent, and open young women (Hapsari, 2024). Muslim female students from other regions, who previously lived in a relatively homogeneous religious environment, are faced with a new situation that demands the ability to read the social context and adapt to remain accepted within campus society (Jasmaludin & Hayati, 2024). In this situation, religious expression is no longer solely determined by normative teachings, but also by social considerations, affective experiences, and strategies for survival in a competitive social space (Hasim, 2023).

The data shows that the hijab, as a key symbol in the practice of lived religion, has undergone a transformation in meaning. The hijab is no longer understood solely as a symbol of adherence to religious norms, but rather as a symbol that is flexible, contextual, and open to reinterpretation. Adjustments in dress style are understood by informants as a way to continue "practicing religion" within boundaries they deem realistic and applicable to the campus environment. This practice

reflects how faith is lived out through every day, situational decisions, not simply through formal adherence to standard dress codes. Thus, the female students' religiosity is not diminished, but rather transformed in its form, intensity, and mode of expression.

Furthermore, cross-cultural interactions on campus and intensive exposure to digital media further reinforce the contextual and dynamic nature of lived religion (Maria, 2021). Social media and the hijab community serve not only as spaces for expression but also as symbolic ecosystems that produce visual standards, moral judgments, and hierarchies of popularity (Halberstadt, 2026). In this context, the hijab is often represented through the logic of commodification and aestheticization, where religious values blend with market demands, self-image, and popular culture (Hafni, 2024). The practice of wearing the hijab, then, reflects not only an individual's personal relationship with God but also their relationship with the social environment, the symbolic marketplace, and the implicit public morality (Potutu, 2023).

The changes in lifestyle, social interaction patterns, ways of thinking, and clothing choices experienced by Muslim female students from other countries demonstrate that lived religion is formed through the intersection of internal drives—such as faith, spiritual experiences, and self-reflection—with external pressures in the form of social norms, environmental expectations, and moral validation mechanisms in public spaces. This process produces complex and ambivalent forms of religiosity, which, on the one hand, open up space for adaptation and agency, but on the other, have the potential to reproduce new normative pressures on Muslim women's bodies and religious expression.

This study examines how the representation of the *jilboobs* fashion style among Muslim female students from outside the region at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Surabaya State University reflects shifting religious values in an urban campus context. The study conceptualizes *jilboobs* as a socially constructed label embedded in gendered power relations and moral regulation, rather than as a neutral empirical category (Scott & Szili, 2025). Using a descriptive qualitative approach and integrating symbolic interactionism with perspectives of *lived religion* and religion as social control, this study analyzes the hijab as a religious symbol negotiated through everyday interactions, migration experiences, and campus cultural dynamics (Zhukova, 2025). The findings contribute to the sociology of religion by showing how religious expression among young Muslim women is shaped by both individual agency and informal normative pressures within and institutional environments.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to understand the representation of *jilboobs* (headscarves) and the shift in religious values among Muslim female students living away from home. The qualitative approach was used to explore the personal experience, narratives, and interpretations of Muslim female students living away from home in

interpreting their clothing choices between religious requirements and urban cultural pressures. The research location was the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Surabaya State University. The research subjects were purposively selected: Muslim female students living away from home who wear the jilbab and actively interact on campus. Ten informants participated in the study.

Data collection was conducted through non-participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stage of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was maintained using source and technical triangulation techniques. This study uses a symbolic interaction perspective to understand the jilbab as a social symbol whose meaning is shaped and negotiated through social interactions on campus.

Result and Discussion

A Representation of the “Jilboobs” Style of Out-of-Town Students of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Unesa

The phenomenon commonly referred to as "jilboobs" among Muslim female students from abroad at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Surabaya State University, cannot be adequately understood simply as a matter of individual fashion preferences or personal aesthetic choices. This phenomenon is the result of a complex social process, in which religious symbols, moral norms, and social structures intertwine to shape young women's religious expressions in urban campus spaces (Sobande & Zeng, 2022). Drawing on George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism perspective, this study positions the hijab as a social symbol whose meaning is not fixed but is continually constructed, debated, and negotiated through everyday social interactions. The meaning of the hijab emerges from the dynamic relationship between the mind, the self, and society, so that individual clothing choices are always situated within a broader network of social meanings and collective norms (Halik, 2024).

Empirical data shows that the clothing practices of Muslim female students from abroad are shaped by ongoing symbolic reflection. Informants such as Farah, VA, and NF described how their minds operate when interpreting the meaning of the hijab in relation to their childhood experiences of religious socialization, family values, friendships, and expectations developed within the campus environment (Staab & Thiel, 2022). Their decision to combine the hijab with modern fashion styles was not a spontaneous, meaningless act, but rather the result of a process of role-taking, namely the ability to imagine the responses and judgments of others—lecturers, peers, and the broader campus community. In this context, clothing functions as a symbolic medium of communication that allows female students to present themselves as religious subjects

who are still considered appropriate, modern, and professional in urban academic spaces.

The formation of the self through the dialectic between the "I" (I) and "Self" (Me) further emphasizes that religious expression is never entirely individual or entirely determined by structure. For some informants, the drive to appear confident, attractive, and trendy represents the "I" aspect as a spontaneous expression of personal identity. However, this drive always interacts with the "Self" aspect, namely the internalized awareness of social norms, moral judgments, and the boundaries of appropriateness for women wearing the hijab. The relationship between "I" and "Self" is not always conflictual, but often results in symbolic compromises in the form of hybrid clothing styles that straddle the line between normative piety and personal freedom. Meanwhile, other informants displayed the dominance of the "Self" aspect by choosing loose, covered clothing as a form of moral commitment rooted in the values of their families and communities of origin. This choice cannot be understood as passive or outdated, but rather as a form of reflective agency and an assertion of moral autonomy within a pluralistic and relatively permissive campus environment.

Furthermore, campus environments and digital spaces function not only as contexts for adaptation, but also as symbolic and moral environments that actively produce and reproduce norms about femininity, the body, and religiosity (Just, 2025). Within this framework, the label "jilboobs" circulating in campus discourse and social media can be understood as a social construct imbued with power relations and public morality. The term does not simply describe a particular style of dress but also functions as a stigmatizing mechanism that regulates women's bodies through symbolic judgment, surveillance, and sanctions. Thus, "jilboobs" operates as a form of informal moral regulation that resembles social control, even though it is not formally institutionalized. Interestingly, the data shows that several informants did not passively accept this labeling but instead responded with symbolic resistance, both through rejecting the term and through attempts to redefine the hijab as a contextual symbol of autonomy, negotiation, and religiosity.

The role of social media like Instagram and TikTok further complicates this dynamic. The practice of sharing outfit-of-the-day (OOTD) content places female students in a space where affirmation, criticism, and surveillance occur simultaneously. This process reflects the concept of the looking-glass self, where self-image is formed through the reflection of social evaluations received from digital audiences (Maya Sabrina, n.d.). Digital space, therefore, expands the reach of moral regulation while opening up new opportunities for self-representation and narrative control. In this context, the hijab becomes part of a visual economy that intersects with commodification, the logic of popularity, and standards of moral respectability, so that its meaning is constantly negotiated between faith, aesthetics, and social demands. Cannot be simplified as an indicator of declining religiosity among Muslim female students from out-of-town. Rather, this phenomenon reflects the dynamics of lived religion, where religious values

are lived, reinterpreted, and continually negotiated in the face of structural pressures, symbolic environments, and everyday social interactions. The hijab emerges as a living social symbol, whose meaning changes according to the context and social relations surrounding it. This demonstrates that religiosity is not static or uniform, but rather a complex social process, characterized by the interplay between individual agency, normative control, and adaptation to the realities of urban campus life.

Representation of Fashion Style and Shifting Religious Values

From the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, human action is fundamentally shaped by meanings produced through social interaction rather than by objective or fixed realities. Meanings are neither inherent nor static; they are continuously constructed, interpreted, and modified through reflective processes embedded in everyday encounters. In this framework, the practice of wearing the hijab among migrant female students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIPOL), Universitas Negeri Surabaya, cannot be reduced to individual aesthetic taste or personal religiosity. Instead, it must be understood as a socially situated practice through which identity, morality, gender norms, and power relations are negotiated.

The hijab in this context operates as a *contested social symbol*. While normatively positioned as a marker of religious obligation, in lived experience it functions as a medium of self-presentation, moral communication, and social positioning. Students interpret and enact the hijab through ongoing interactions with peers, lecturers, institutional norms, and digital platforms. These interactions produce a dynamic field in which religious meaning is not simply inherited, but actively reworked (Alivia Anjelita Syafa Rizqi, 2025). Consequently, religiosity emerges not as a fixed set of doctrines, but as a form of *lived religion*—contextual, situational, and reflexive.

Empirical data reveal that migration from relatively homogeneous and religiously regulated hometowns into the pluralistic urban space of Surabaya initiates a process of symbolic destabilization. Students arrive on campus carrying moral frameworks shaped by family, pesantren, and local community norms that emphasize modesty, obedience, and moral visibility. However, within the campus environment—where diverse styles of dress are normalized and aesthetic self-expression is valorized—these frameworks are subjected to reinterpretation. This encounter does not result in the erosion of faith, but rather in its renegotiation.

Three dominant but fluid interpretive orientations emerge from the data. The first, integrative-adaptive, is characterized by an effort to reconcile religious values with the symbolic demands of modern academic and urban life. Informants such as Farah, VA, and JH do not abandon modesty as a moral principle; instead, they reinterpret it through contemporary fashion aesthetics that align with professionalism, confidence, and social acceptability. Their clothing practices reflect a

form of strategic agency, in which the hijab is mobilized to signal both religious commitment and cultural competence. This orientation challenges binary assumptions that frame religiosity and modernity as mutually exclusive.

The second orientation, protective-reflective, evident in NA and NF, reflects a more cautious engagement with change. These students consciously preserve dress practices rooted in familial and community norms while remaining selectively open to new influences. Their preference for loose-fitting, minimalist styles functions as an ethical stance rather than passive conformity (Ramadhani et al., 2023). Importantly, this orientation reveals that resistance to fashion trends does not necessarily indicate rigidity, but may instead express moral autonomy and reflective piety. In this sense, modesty becomes an internally articulated value rather than an externally imposed rule.

The third orientation, critical-resistive, represents the most explicitly political engagement with the meaning of the hijab. Informants such as Anisa, Nadia, RA, and Nabila articulate a critical awareness of how female bodies are regulated through moral discourse. The stigmatizing label “*jilboobs*” is interpreted not as a neutral descriptor, but as a form of symbolic violence that reduces women’s religiosity to visual compliance and reinforces patriarchal standards of moral surveillance. By rejecting this label, these students assert interpretive authority over their own bodies and redefine piety as a matter of intention, ethics, and agency rather than outward appearance.

This resistance is particularly salient in digital spaces, where social media simultaneously amplifies surveillance and provides tools for counter-narratives. Through curated self-representation, students engage in what can be understood as *symbolic counter-conduct*, challenging dominant moral scripts while remaining within the framework of religious identification. The hijab thus becomes a site of struggle over meaning, where compliance, adaptation, and resistance coexist.

Crucially, these orientations are not static categories. Students may move between them over time as they encounter new social situations, institutional expectations, or moral dilemmas. This fluidity underscores the argument that religious identity is not an essence, but a process—formed through continuous interaction between internal convictions and external pressures. Situational triggers such as academic presentations, organizational dress codes, climatic conditions, or evaluative gazes from others often prompt moments of reflexivity that lead to incremental changes in dress practices.

At a broader level, these findings expose the limits of moral frameworks that equate visible conformity with authentic religiosity. By foregrounding students’ interpretive labor, this study reveals how religious symbols are embedded within regimes of gendered power and social control. The hijab is not merely worn; it is read, judged, praised, and policed. In response, female students do not simply submit to these readings, but actively negotiate, reinterpret, and sometimes contest

Theoretically, this study extends Symbolic Interactionism by demonstrating how meaning-making processes are entangled with gendered moral regulation in contemporary urban Islamic contexts. In line with Blumer’s proposition, action is guided not by objective norms, but by meanings produced through interaction—meanings that are themselves shaped by unequal power relations. The hijab, therefore, emerges as a *living symbol* whose significance shifts across contexts and interactions.

Ultimately, the variation in hijab styles among migrant female students at FISIPOL UNESA should not be interpreted as evidence of declining religiosity. Rather, it reflects the emergence of a more reflexive, contextual, and agentic form of religious expression. Changes in dress are not superficial adaptations, but part of an ongoing process of identity formation that integrates faith, autonomy, and critical social awareness within the realities of a pluralistic urban campus.

Social, Cultural, and Campus Environment Factors that Influence Value Shifts

Within the framework of Symbolic Interaction Theory, shifts in religious values cannot be understood as solely internal changes within individuals, but rather as the result of a continuous process of symbolic communication within social interactions. The meaning of the hijab is not fixed or inherent, but is shaped, negotiated, and modified through social relations, language, symbols, and subjective interpretations of the social responses received by individuals. Thus, the hijab functions as a living social symbol, reflecting both the religious identity and the social position of the wearer in a constantly changing context.

In the context of Muslim students living away from home at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP), Surabaya State University (UNESA), shifts in religious values cannot be separated from the social dynamics of the campus as a pluralistic and heterogeneous public space. The campus is not only an academic institution, but also a social arena where the process of identity formation, value normalization, and the production of collective meaning takes place (Ciddan et al., 2025). In this space, students encounter diverse cultural backgrounds, ideologies, and religious practices that challenge the value frameworks previously internalized by their families and communities of origin.

The process of changing the meaning of religious symbols such as the hijab does not occur in a vacuum but is influenced by various factors that shape how they think, act, and interpret reality. As a public space that serves as a meeting point for students from various backgrounds, the campus plays a strategic role as an arena for identity formation and value articulation. Within it, students not only undergo academic learning but also experience a process of negotiation between previously internalized personal values and new social values developing within the campus community.

Social factors in this case include interpersonal relationships formed through friendships, organizational activities, and interactions within informal communities. The presence of peers from various regions and cultural backgrounds fosters a new awareness of the plurality of religious practices and dress codes.

Informants in this study stated that the experience of socializing on campus has fostered a more open and tolerant attitude toward differences, including in terms of religious expression. In such a pluralistic social space, the hijab is no longer positioned merely as a symbol of spiritual obedience, but also as a medium for adapting to diverse social dynamics. Through symbolic communication that occurs in daily interactions, religious values, which were previously normative, are reinterpreted into a more reflective and contextual form of awareness, in line with the social realities individuals face in academic environments. Information obtained from interviews with ten informants in this study indicates that the dynamics of shifting religious values in dress practices, particularly in the use of the hijab, cannot be separated from the influence of three main factors: social, cultural, and the institutional campus environment.

a) Social Factors

Social aspects play a crucial role in shaping female students' perceptions of modesty and how they express themselves, particularly through interactions with peers, lecturers, and campus social networks. In academic life, social spaces such as classrooms, student organizations, and digital media serve as crucial arenas where the negotiation of meaning and identity formation actively takes place. On campuses like the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIPOL) at UNESA, which accommodates students from diverse cultural and geographic backgrounds, a mosaic culture has emerged, a complex and diverse social structure that interprets values such as modesty, including in the context of dress and wearing the hijab. Social factors play a central role in shaping the shifting meaning of the hijab through daily interactions with peers, organizational communities, and informal social circles. Friendships across regions and cultural backgrounds broaden female students' interpretive horizons regarding religious practices. In this process, the hijab is no longer understood solely as a symbol of normative compliance, but also as a means of social communication that reflects the desire to be accepted, recognized, and understood within the campus community.

The personal experiences of Farah from Blitar and a TA from Samarinda illustrate how social interactions with fellow students serve as an important space for self-reflection and negotiation of the meaning of modesty. Social responses in the form of comments, jokes, or compliments from those around them often serve as a social mirror, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and adapt their appearance to collective norms. This process aligns with Charles H. Cooley's concept of the mirror self, which emphasizes that

individuals construct their self-understanding based on their perceptions of how others see them. In this context, social support, such as recognition that a particular hijab style is considered "fashionable yet modest," can boost self-confidence and guide female students toward forms of self-expression considered ideal within their social community.

Beyond direct interactions, digital media also contributes significantly to shaping narratives about the hijab and modesty. Through platforms like Instagram and TikTok, female students gain access to a variety of hijab styles, ranging from Islamic approaches to modern modest fashion. In this context, social media functions as a space for symbolic exchange, where the meaning of the hijab is no longer tied to a single interpretation as a symbol of religiosity, but evolves into a representation of personal identity, professionalism, and a modern lifestyle. This perspective aligns with the thinking of Herbert Blumer, who stated that meaning is not inherent in the object itself but is formed through a continuous and dynamic process of social interaction.

Therefore, it can be concluded that social factors not only contribute to determining how female students dress but also play a role in the formation of a more reflective and contextual religious identity. Through interpersonal interactions and symbolic exchanges, female students learn to navigate the values of modesty instilled by family and religious teachings, with the aesthetic demands and needs for self-expression on campus. Thus, the hijab becomes not only a symbol of morality but also a medium for identity negotiation, as individuals strive to demonstrate that they can be both modest and relevant in a constantly changing social environment. Responses in the form of praise, criticism, jokes, or even stigma—including labels such as "jilboobs"—function as informal moral regulation mechanisms that guide how female students evaluate and adjust their appearance. In symbolic interactionist terms, these social responses become important symbols that influence the process of self-reflection and the formation of self-concept. In other words, changes in clothing style are not simply a personal choice, but a response to social expectations that are constantly being negotiated.

b) Cultural Factors: Urbanity, Digital Media, and Aesthetic Normalization

Culture plays a significant role in shaping a person's way of thinking, formulating moral values, and understanding the concepts of manners and religious identity. It is not only evident in specific traditions or ceremonies, but also internalized through values passed down from an early age through family, the surrounding environment, and educational institutions. These values then serve as a kind of moral guide that individuals refer to when making daily decisions, including regarding appropriate clothing. Cultural factors, particularly urban culture and digital media, contribute to accelerating the process

of value shift (Iceland, 2025). Urban environments like Surabaya offer a more open, permissive, and self-expression-oriented cultural landscape. These values interact with the religious experiences of female students from other regions who previously grew up in a relatively homogeneous and normative social context. As a result, there is a shift from understanding the hijab as a rigid moral obligation to a more flexible and contextual interpretation.

In the cases of informants NA from Tuban and JH from Jombang, their strong religious family backgrounds were the primary foundation for shaping their views on the hijab. From childhood, they were accustomed to teachings about the importance of covering their genitals, dressing modestly, and not appearing conspicuous. Here, the family played a key role in enculturation, introducing the hijab not only as a religious obligation but also as a symbol of honor and obedience. These values were not limited to the home environment but were also reinforced by the social atmosphere in their religiously homogeneous hometowns.

Wearing covered clothing was seen as a form of social obedience to Islamic norms and local culture. However, when they moved to Surabaya to pursue higher education, they were confronted with a far more diverse social reality. The city offered a plurality of clothing styles, a more open mindset, and diverse interpretations of modesty. These differences presented identity challenges they had to face: how to maintain the religious values instilled in them since childhood while adapting to a more complex and modern social environment. In this process, what is known as symbolic negotiation occurred, an attempt to reinterpret the hijab not only as a symbol of religious obedience, but also as a form of self-expression and social adjustment.

Using the Symbolic Interaction Theory approach developed by Herbert Blumer and George H. Mead, it can be understood that the meaning of a symbol, including the hijab, is formed and developed through social interaction. In other words, the meaning of the hijab, once understood solely as a form of worship, is now undergoing a renewal of meaning according to the social context. In a more diverse campus environment, the hijab no longer merely signifies religious identity but also functions as a tool of social communication and a means of building self-image or personal branding. It is important to emphasize that this adaptation process does not mean a weakening of religious values.

Rather, it is a form of cultural reinterpretation, in which religious values are placed within a broader and more dynamic social framework. Therefore, the more diverse choice of hijab styles, from color combinations and styles that follow urban trends to the concept of modest fashion, cannot be immediately interpreted as a decline in religiosity. Instead, it demonstrates an effort to maintain a balance between spiritual commitment and

openness to changing social realities. All of these dynamics demonstrate that the hijab as a religious symbol is dynamic and constantly undergoing a process of negotiating meaning, especially for Muslim women who migrate and find themselves at the intersection of traditional and modern values. Social media acts as a symbolic space that expands and deepens this process.

Platforms like Instagram and TikTok not only showcase diverse hijab styles but also shape new aesthetic standards that associate the hijab with modernity, self-confidence, and social visibility. These representations create a comparative logic that encourages female students to reflect on their own clothing practices. In this context, the hijab operates within a symbolic economy that combines religious values, visual aesthetics, and social popularity, making the boundaries between expressions of faith and cultural demands increasingly fluid. This shift reflects the complexity of the identities of young Muslim women on campus, who strive to harmonize religiosity, self-expression, and the need for social acceptance in a pluralistic academic environment.

c) Campus Environmental Factors

The campus environment plays a strategic role in shaping how students understand themselves, their values, and their expressions of identity, including in their dress and religious practices. The campus serves not only as an academic space for the production and transmission of knowledge, but also as a value-laden institutional space where social norms, public morality, and professional standards are produced and reproduced. In this context, the practice of wearing the hijab among Muslim female students from abroad cannot be separated from the symbolic structures and power relations at work in everyday campus life.

While formally, the campus is often positioned as an inclusive and value-neutral space, in practice, it operates as an implicit moral environment that defines the boundaries of appropriateness, rationality, and legitimacy of religious expression. Dress norms are not outlined in written regulations but are shaped through lecturer expectations, organizational culture, academic professional ethos, and visual representations of the “ideal student.” These mechanisms create a subtle yet effective form of informal social control, where the appearance of the hijab-wearing female body is constantly evaluated and judged within a framework of morality and professionalism.

In this context, the hijab functions as a symbol fraught with dual demands. On the one hand, it represents religious commitment; on the other, it is expected to align with a modern, rational, and professional academic image. Muslim female students from other regions are in a vulnerable position, having to navigate often contradictory expectations: maintaining their

religious identity while avoiding the stigma of being "not modern," "inflexible," or "unrepresentative" of the institution. Thus, clothing choices become a negotiation arena between faith, self-image, and structural pressures.

The informants' experiences demonstrate how the campus environment concretely influences the practice of wearing the hijab. VA (Bojonegoro) recognized that involvement in organizations and intense interactions with lecturers required adjustments to her appearance to be perceived as competent and credible. NF (Situbondo) emphasized the importance of dressing modestly and elegantly in formal academic forums as a sign of respect for the institution and the audience. Anisa (Lumajang) emphasized that wearing the hijab on campus is not only an expression of faith but also a self-presentation strategy to fully participate in the academic space without experiencing symbolic delegitimization. These findings suggest that the hijab is not merely a spiritual symbol but also a form of symbolic capital that influences students' social standing within the institution.

Within the framework of Symbolic Interactionism, this process is the result of ongoing symbolic communication. The meaning of the hijab is shaped through the social responses—whether in the form of recognition, appreciation, correction, or stigma—that individuals receive in daily interactions. Female students actively reflect on these responses and adjust their dress practices through a process of self-indication, an internal dialogue between the “I” and the “self” in response to social demands. The campus, in this case, functions as a symbolic learning arena where individuals learn the social consequences of their identity choices.

However, it is important to emphasize that this adaptation process is not always value-free or entirely emancipatory. The campus environment can also function as a space that reproduces dominant moral standards that normalize certain types of religious expression while marginalizing others. The absence of formal regulation often reinforces the power of majority norms, as individuals are forced to conform without clear institutional protection mechanisms. In this context, certain hijab practices can be viewed as “too religious” or conversely “inappropriate,” depending on the dominant value configuration.

From a lived religion perspective, this dynamic demonstrates that female students' religiosity cannot be measured solely by symbolic adherence to dress codes. Rather, religiosity is lived out through contextual decisions that consider social pressures, institutional positions, and personally constructed moral meanings. Adapting hijab-wearing styles to campus environments does not mean compromising one's faith, but rather a reflective and situational form of religious practice, in which individuals strive to maintain spiritual values while still functioning socially and academically.

Overall, campus environmental factors play a crucial role in the shifting religious values of female Muslim students living abroad. The campus serves not only as a space for adaptation but also as a space for the production of norms that direct, select, and limit certain religious expressions. The shifting meaning of the hijab reflects a process of negotiation.

Meaning and Negotiation of Identity, between Religious Values and Social Demands

For most informants, the hijab is not understood solely as a normative religious obligation, but rather as a marker of social, moral, and cultural identity formed through a long-term socialization process. Since childhood, female students have been exposed to a set of values about modesty, honor, and the appropriateness of the female body, inherited through family, religious education, and local communities. In the experiences of NA (Tuban), JH (Jombang), NF (Situbondo), and Nabila (Banyuwangi), the hijab functions as an ethical instrument that regulates how women's bodies appear in public spaces. It is not only a symbol of a vertical relationship with God, but also a horizontal moral mechanism that signifies adherence to the social norms of their home community. The meaning of the hijab, therefore, is shaped through intense interactions with significant others—parents, religious teachers, and community leaders—who actively instill the values of obedience, shame, and self-control as the foundation of female religiosity (Ervan Wahzudin, *haditama*, 2023).

However, this relatively stable meaning began to shift when the informants entered the campus environment in Surabaya, an urban space characterized by cultural plurality, heterogeneity of religious practices, and the logic of modernity. Campus not only brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds, but also presents new symbolic structures that demand identity flexibility. In this context, the hijab no longer functions solely as a symbol of normative piety, but rather as an instrument of social communication related to professionalism, academic credibility, and self-image. This transformation demonstrates that the female students' religiosity is lived as a lived religion: a religion lived through practical decisions, daily compromises, and situational reflection, rather than as a rigid textual adherence.

All informants described an ongoing negotiation between religious values internalized at home and the social demands evolving within the campus environment. Farah (Blitar), TA (Samarinda), and VA (Bojonegoro) stated that living away from family supervision creates a new space for autonomy, as well as pressure to conform to more fluid social norms. In this situation, the concept of "modest clothing" becomes an intermediary moral category that bridges religious values and institutional demands. Modesty is no longer defined narrowly as adherence to a particular form, but as the ability to read social contexts and present oneself appropriately in academic relationships.

Religious identity, in the female students' experiences, is fluid and performative, constantly being reformulated through social interactions. The ability to code-switch in dress—formal in classrooms and presentations, casual in private spaces, and functional in fieldwork—demonstrates symbolic skill in managing identity. This process aligns with Mead's concept of self-reflection, in which individuals shape actions based on imagined responses from generalized others. Thus, the practice of wearing the hijab becomes an arena of intense reflection, where female students weigh personal faith, social expectations, and their position within the institutional structure of the campus.

Social media expands and deepens this arena of negotiation. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube create religious visual spaces that intersect expressions of faith with aesthetics, popularity, and market logic. For Farah, NF, and Anisa, social media is not only a source of fashion inspiration but also a space for self-presentation and social recognition. However, their engagement is selective and reflective; content deemed contrary to moral values is consciously filtered. This phenomenon demonstrates the emergence of visual piety, where the hijab functions simultaneously as a symbol of piety and a marker of urban lifestyle. At this point, the hijab is engaged in a process of symbolic re-signification, where religious meaning is not lost, but rather expanded and negotiated within the digital visual economy.

It is in this context that the term "jilboobs" becomes a crucial discursive field. Informants—particularly TA, NA, and VA—interpreted this term not as a neutral description, but as a social construction fraught with power relations, gender bias, and public morality. The label operates as a form of informal social sanction that normalizes certain standards of piety and disciplines women's bodies through stigma. It reflects how religious and cultural norms operate as religion as social control, regulating behavior without the need for formal legal intervention.

The informants' responses to this labeling demonstrate agency and symbolic resistance. By rejecting the term "jilboobs" and emphasizing that piety cannot be reduced to physical appearance, they attempt to reclaim authority over their bodies and religious identities. This practice demonstrates that Muslim female students are not merely. They considered the label problematic because it contains elements of body-shaming and objectifies women. Meanwhile, Nabila highlighted how this term reinforces the practice of sexual joking on campus, which can exacerbate stereotypes against women. In contrast, JH and NF acknowledge the ethical dilemmas associated with tight-fitting clothing but reject public judgment. From these perspectives, it appears that the term "jilboobs" reflects a negotiation between patriarchal views (male gaze), social morality, and women's freedom of expression. This phenomenon not only marks a shift in religious values but also a social transformation in how the body and religiosity are constructed in public spaces.

The hijab-wearing identity among female students from other regions is formed through a reflective process that combines religious values, social demands, and personal needs for expression. RA (Tulungagung) and Nabila (Banyuwangi) demonstrate a critical awareness of the social control often placed on women's bodies. They reject narrow moral standards that measure piety solely through dress and emphasize that modesty should encompass behavior and attitude, not just outward appearance. This negotiation reflects women's active role as agents who consciously shape the meaning of the hijab. From a Symbolic Interaction perspective, this can be seen as a form of self-reflexive object, where individuals reinterpret religious symbols according to their social context and identity needs.

Based on the overall narratives gathered from informants, it is clear that the meaning of the hijab among female students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Surabaya State University, is not singular, fixed, or ahistorical. Instead, the hijab emerges as a flexible, relational social symbol, constantly undergoing reinterpretation in line with the changing social context surrounding the students' lives. This finding suggests that the hijab can no longer be understood solely as a religious symbol standing outside of social dynamics, but rather as a symbolic practice situated at the intersection of religious values, social identity, institutional demands, and urban cultural currents.

From the perspective of George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interaction Theory, the meaning of the hijab is formed through a continuous process of interaction between individuals and their social environment. Meaning is not inherently attached to the hijab as a material object, but emerges from how it is interpreted, negotiated, and reflected upon through everyday social experiences. Thus, the hijab is not simply inherited as a set of taken-for-granted religious norms, but is reproduced through social dialogue—both external dialogue with others and internal dialogue with oneself. This process confirms that female students' religiosity is not passive, but rather reflective and contextual.

Most informants revealed that the initial interpretation of the hijab was deeply rooted in family socialization, religious education, and local values in their hometowns. In this context, the hijab was understood as a symbol of adherence to religious teachings, a guardian of morality, and a representation of female modesty in the public sphere. These values formed a relatively stable initial symbolic foundation and could be described as inherited normative meanings. However, as female students entered the pluralistic, heterogeneous, and more socially fluid urban campus space, the meaning of the hijab began to shift. The hijab was no longer practiced solely as a normative obligation, but as a conscious moral choice, continually reconsidered in relation to new social realities.

The campus environment serves as a crucial social arena in this process. The campus is not only an academic space, but also a space for the production of meaning, where values, identities, and moralities are encountered, questioned, and negotiated. In interactions with lecturers, peers, student organizations, and academic culture, the hijab began to be interpreted as a sign of professionalism, maturity, and readiness to participate in the intellectual public sphere. At this point, the hijab functions as a dual symbol: it retains a spiritual dimension, but also carries social and institutional meanings. This process demonstrates that the practice of wearing the hijab is never entirely free from social structures, but is always intertwined with the expectations, judgments, and standards prevailing in the campus environment.

Beyond the campus environment, social media expands and deepens the dynamics of hijab interpretations. Digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube create intensely visual spaces where religious symbols are produced, curated, and displayed en masse. In these spaces, the hijab is presented not only as a symbol of piety but also as part of an urban lifestyle, body aesthetics, and self-image. Social media shapes what can be called visual religiosity, where religious values are expressed and assessed through visual displays. This process demonstrates how the meaning of the hijab is negotiated not only in face-to-face interactions but also in symbolic interactions mediated by technology and algorithmic logic.

However, it is important to emphasize that female students are not simply objects of this symbolic pressure. Self-reflection—as Mead emphasized—plays a central role in the process of interpreting the hijab. Through internal dialogue involving consideration of religious values, personal experiences, and social responses, female students develop a critical attitude towards existing norms. Several informants explicitly reject moral standards that judge women's religiosity solely on physical appearance, as in the stigma of "jilboobs." This rejection demonstrates a critical awareness of power relations, public morality, and control over women's bodies. In this context, the hijab becomes a medium for articulating women's agency—not merely a symbol of obedience, but also a means of asserting authority over their own bodies and identities.

Based on the overall research findings, it can be emphasized that the meaning of the hijab among female students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNESA), is neither singular nor static, but rather a social construct that is constantly being negotiated. The hijab operates within a symbolic field shaped by the interaction of internal values inherited from early socialization, external pressures from the campus social and institutional environment, and an ongoing process of personal reflection. These three dimensions do not operate in a linear fashion, but rather intertwine, forming a dynamic of meaning that is situational and contextual.

Internal values derived from family, religious education, and local culture serve as the initial foundation for understanding the hijab as a symbol of morality, modesty, and religious

observance. However, this foundation does not operate deterministically. As female students enter a pluralistic, urban campus space filled with demands for professionalism and visual aesthetics, these values undergo a process of negotiation. External pressures— whether through interactions with peers, lecturers' expectations, campus organizational culture, or exposure to social media—do not simply replace old values but encourage a symbolic reinterpretation of the hijab as part of a social adaptation strategy.

In this context, personal reflection becomes a key mechanism bridging internal values and external demands. Female students do not simply react passively to social norms, but actively engage in moral, social, and existential considerations in determining their dress practices. This reflective process demonstrates that changes in fashion style are not the result of a decline in religious awareness, but rather an expression of increased agency and symbolic awareness. The hijab is positioned as a discursive space where individuals redefine the relationship between faith, self-identity, and social acceptance.

This finding also challenges the normative view that often interprets variations in hijab style as an indicator of deviation or degradation of religiosity. Instead, this study demonstrates that female students' religiosity is actually undergoing a transformation toward a more reflective, contextual, and dialogical one. Within the framework of Symbolic Interaction Theory, the meaning of the hijab is formed through social interaction and internal dialogue between the "I" and the "self," as proposed by Mead. The symbolic meaning of the hijab is not final but is continually reproduced through social experiences, environmental responses, and ongoing self-evaluation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the phenomenon commonly labeled as the *jilboobs* fashion style among Muslim female students from outside Surabaya at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Surabaya State University, reflects a dynamic, contextual, and negotiated transformation of religious values, rather than a decline in religiosity. The findings indicate that changes in dress practices emerge from complex interactions between inherited religious values, social expectations within the campus environment, and individual reflective processes shaped by urban life and digital culture. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, the jilboob functions as a hybrid social symbol whose meaning is continuously constructed and reconstructed through everyday interactions. It no longer operates solely as an indicator of normative religious obedience, but also as a medium for self-representation, social positioning, and moral articulation in a pluralistic academic space. In this sense, the jilboob embodies a form of lived religion, where faith is not abandoned but reinterpreted in ways that allow young Muslim women to remain religious while navigating the demands of modernity, professionalism, and social acceptance.

The experience of migration—living away from family and hometown—plays a significant role in enabling this reinterpretation. Spatial and social distance from familial and communal control creates room for reflexivity, allowing students to renegotiate religious practices based on situational needs and personal convictions. This process reveals that religious identity among young Muslims is not fixed or inherited uncritically, but actively shaped through engagement with new social realities. The shift in religious expression is driven by intersecting factors, including the plural social environment of the campus, informal norms regarding appearance and professionalism, urban cultural permissiveness, and the influence of social media and the Muslim fashion industry. These forces do not operate independently; rather, they form a symbolic ecosystem in which religious meanings are negotiated. Social media, in particular, expands the arena of interaction by introducing visual validation, aesthetic norms, and market logics that further complicate the interpretation of hijab as both a religious and cultural symbol.

Importantly, this study challenges moralistic and reductionist interpretations that frame stylistic variations in hijab as indicators of weakened faith. Instead, the findings suggest that such variations reflect an increase in agency, reflexivity, and symbolic awareness among Muslim female students. Through continuous interaction with peers, institutional norms, and digital publics, they actively construct religious meanings that are responsive to context while remaining anchored in moral considerations. Theoretically, this research contributes to the sociology of religion by reinforcing the view that religiosity among younger generations should be understood as a socially embedded and interactional process rather than a static set of practices. The study underscores the relevance of symbolic interactionism in explaining how religious symbols such as the hijab function as flexible communicative tools within changing social environments. Empirically, it highlights the university campus as a critical site for the negotiation of religious identity, where spirituality, modernity, and social belonging intersect. In conclusion, the evolving styles of hijab observed among these students are not merely aesthetic shifts, but part of a broader process of identity formation and meaning-making. The jilboob emerges as a living social language—one that articulates faith, selfhood, and adaptation simultaneously—reflecting how young Muslim women navigate the moral, social, and symbolic complexities of contemporary urban academic life.

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