Celebgram Hijab: the Representation of Cultural Hybridity on Nowadays Indonesian Young Muslim Women’s Fashion

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ABSTRACT
As globalization goes pervasively over decades, western hegemony through its popular/mass culture has been inevitably widespread across nations including Indonesia, the country with its huge Muslim population. The advancement of media spreads this spirit and makes the American youth culture like wearing sneakers, jeans, and denim going globally and becoming the trend among youths around the world. New social media like Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Path, Line, and Instagram that are popularly used by young people fasten the delivery of global youth culture ideology. However, global youth culture in some cases undergoes negotiation with a country’s local culture. In Indonesia, the Muslim youths do some negotiation towards global youth culture by hybridizing it with Islamic values. This hybridity creates a new culture portrayed in several aspects, especially young Muslim women’s fashion. This new way of fashion is being persistent in Indonesia along with the emergence of Muslim woman celebgram(s) – celebrity on Instagram – like Aghnia Punjabi, Nabila Zirus, and Joyagh who address themselves as hijab celebgram and do some experiments on dressing by mix-matching those two different cultures. Based on these phenomena, using textual analysis and qualitative method, this paper which applies Homi K. Bhaba’s hybridity theory intends to examine the authenticity appeared from nowadays Indonesian young Muslim women’s fashion formed by the cultural hybridity between Islamic values and global youth trend represented by some hijab celebgrams. The hijab celebgrams chosen for this research are those whose Instagram accounts are prominent among Indonesian young Muslim women and possess many followers.

KEYWORDS: celebgram: fashion; hybridity; Moslem women; textual analysis

Lately, the presence of commercial products containing Islamic values is increasingly prevalent in Indonesia; started from movies (Ayat-Ayat Cinta), music (nasyid), and reality show (Udah Putusin Aja), magazine, soap opera, and cosmetics –
such as Wardah, to even fashion. According to Widodo in Hariyadi (2010, p. 1), in Indonesia nowadays, Islam is not merely a religion; it has transformed into various popular brands for media and cultural products and is considered to be called as Islamic Popular culture. The emergence of Islamic popular cannot be separated from the liberalization of media brought by the popular culture that has been formerly occupied Indonesian people in the beginning of New Order era.

The development of popular culture in Indonesia is said to be largely accelerated since the end of Old Order government to a New Order government in 1967 (Hariyadi, 2010, p. 2). In Old Order era, Soekarno, the first president, restricted the flow of western-influenced popular culture, which was deemed as a deterrent to the development of Indonesian national/traditional culture (Budiman, 2004, p. 71). Meanwhile, after the emergence of New Order era (between 1968-1998) that introduced more liberal economy policy and freer flow of global capital, popular culture significantly started to impact the lives of most Indonesians along with the growth of sustained industrialization (Budiman, 2004, p. 84). The pervasive burgeoning of popular culture has fastened more since the collapse of New Order era in 1998 that really esteemed the liberalization of media.

However, for the 85.1% of 200 million Indonesian populations are Muslim (BPS, 2010), this condition created moral panic among Muslims because mass media introduce and show westernization and western-style popular culture to the youths (Hariyadi, 2010, p. 2). Despite of the arisen moral panic among Muslims, the modernity brought by western culture that have become global popular culture trends inevitably allures most of them, especially Muslim youths. Many of them regard western culture hegemony can lead to moral decline of young people and threaten Islamic cultural values (Nilan, 2006, p. 91), at the same time, they consume and devote
western pop cultural products such as listening to American pop music, going to cinema to watch Hollywood movie, eating at McDonalds or KFC, wearing jeans, buying sneakers, and many more. Yet, it does not mean that there is no selectivity when consuming western products. Some Muslim youths are in fact making efforts to preserve their religion law.

After doing his research regarding Muslim youth in Sulawesi and Central Java, Nilan (2006) reveals that some Muslim youth make appropriation by choosing the positive aspects of western modernization, while marginalizing culturally inappropriate aspects. He contends that the distinctive youth culture of Indonesian young Muslims combine both religious law and global popular culture trends altogether to create hybrid youth products and practices that serve to anchor them securely in the world of Islam and teen popular culture (Nilan, 2006, p. 107). Therefore, bringing up Islamic symbols and Islamic popular culture is born. Some Islamic values are being packaged in many kinds of commercial product. Islamic popular culture then emerges, since market for Islamic lifestyle products selling Islamic magazines, nasyid music, halal cosmetics, clothes, and other form of Islamic accessories, especially fashion, are increased and widely provided.

In general, fashion is one of the crucial things for young people because it constructs their identity. Clothes, that become part of fashion, help individuals to embody their social beings and to communicate who they are; clothes are social and cultural skin (Schulte Nordholt, 1997, p. 3). Hijab, which is conspicuous symbol of Muslim women, undergoes the significant changes until it becomes new trend fashion. In Koran, there are two verses emphasizing women to cover their aurat – the specific part of whole body that is prohibited to be shown publicly – by including wearing hijab: “O Prophet. Tell your wives and daughters and the believing women that
should cast their outer garments over themselves, that is more convenient than they
should be known and not molested” (sura an-nur 33: 59) and sura alahzab 24: 31 that
urges women “not to display their beauty and adornments” but rather to “draw their
head cover over their bosoms and not display their ornaments” (Bartkowski & Jen'Nan,
2000, p. 400).

In Indonesia, the term ‘hijab’ itself was being known in around 1980s. Contrast
to the recent condition where we can see many women wearing hijab at most of public
places, in that era, Muslim women wearing hijab were quite rare (Rakhmawati &
Handoyo, 2014, p. 2). It is due to the old attribution attached to hijab, which was
considered as less-stylish and ‘out-dated’. However, hijab has been considerably
transformed to be the trend fashion among Muslim women, since many hijab-creator
communities (Hijabers Community) initiated by some young Muslim women, such as
Dian Pelangi, were established in 2011 (Ibid 2). Now, hijab is not merely a piece of
garment covering women’s head; it can be modified, recreated, and hybridized with
any style of other fashion attributes such as shoes, hat, bag, or shirt, that make it more
eye-catchy, stylish, and of course fashionable.

The phenomenon of nowadays Indonesian young Muslim woman fashion has
been part of Islamic popular culture since media, through advertisement, soap opera,
music video, and many else expose it. Social media platforms, for example Instagram,
also has important role in promoting hijab fashion. Instagram, a new social media
platform which reaches 22 million active Indonesian users in 2015 (Kamiruddin,
2016), can be noted to be the most popular place for young Muslim women to express
any kind of modern hijab fashion remarked with a hash tag ‘hootd’ or ‘hijab outfit of
the day’. Hijab fashion or ‘hijab outfit of the day’ is more easily accessed since the
term celebgram hijab lately appears among Instagram users. Celebgram itself stands
for celebrity on Instagram or a person who becomes celebrity due to his/her popularity in Instagram. *Celebgram hijab* is celebrity on Instagram who starts her career as a hijab fashion stylist, and most of hijab *celebgrams* are, of course, Muslim women.

*Celebgram* hijab often becomes reference and inspiration for young Muslim women to do experiment with their fashion style. Among hijab several *celebgrams*, there are three prominent figures favored by Muslim Instagram users, they are Aghnia Punjabi, Joyagh, and Nabila Zirus. What make those three hijab *celebgrams* unique and favored by young Muslim women are their courage in showing distinctive Muslim fashion by mix matching some different aspects, especially Islamic aspect and global youth culture aspect. As fashion is cultural skin, it is socially constructed. Thus, examining fashion, especially Indonesia young Muslim woman fashion, is intriguing because it always undergoes transformation and hybridization. Thus, using textual analysis this study intends to examine the authenticity appeared from nowadays-Indonesian young Muslim women’s fashion formed by the cultural hybridity between Islamic values and global youth trend represented by those three hijab *celebgrams*. Furthermore, this study is also aimed to explore how this kind of hybridized fashion style is essential for Indonesia young Muslim women reference in fashion.

**Hybridity and the Third Space**

Homi K. Bhabha firstly proposes the conceptual vocabulary of hybridity and the third space. In postcolonial era, the notion that any culture or identity is pure or essential is arguable. According to Hoogvelt (1997, p. 158), hybridity is “celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweeness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference”. For Bhabha, hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority accomplishes to translate the identity of the colonized (the Other) within a
singular universal framework, but then fails producing something familiar but new because both parties make a *negotiation* instead (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 19-20). This new mutation establishes a ‘mutual and mutable’ pattern that represents cultural difference that is positioned *in-between* colonizer and colonized. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002) in *The Empire Writes Back* introduce the term of ‘appropriation’ and ‘abrogation’; meaning receiving something from the culture of other, yet as they find some inappropriateness with their own culture, they do appropriation. Appropriation itself always goes hand in hand with abrogation (rejection).

Hybridity is a form of in-between space where the ‘cutting edge of translation and negotiation’ occurs in term of *third space*. Rutherford (1990, p. 211) contends that the importance of hybridity is not able to trace two original moments or cultures from which the third space emerges; rather than hybridity, the *third space* will emerge and enable other positions to emerge. Therefore, third space is “mode of articulation, a way of describing a productive, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new possibility (Meredith, 1998, p. 3). Third space is an ambivalent state where cultural meaning and symbols have no ‘primordial unity or fixity’. In third space, the similar signs could be ‘appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37). Since fashion articulates one’s cultural skin and is always socially constructed in its production of meaning, it always transforms from time to time and is undergone hybridization like what we can see in hijab fashion or Muslim women fashion represented by hijab *celebgrams*. Thus, it is crucial to trace any kind of hybridity appeared in fashion, especially in nowadays Indonesian young Muslim women’s fashion.
RESEARCH METHOD

Since this study intends to examine cultural phenomenon, which is the cultural hybridity on nowadays-young Muslim women fashion represented by *celebgram* hijabs, it will utilize descriptive qualitative approach for it generates social and cultural theory (Alasuutari P., 1996, p. 371). Nawawi in (Anandita, 2014, p. 7) contends. To collect the data, purposive sampling will be used in this research for this study will entail deliberate selection of particular criteria to determine the suitable data (Kothari).

Since this study uses purposive sampling, the primary data are the photos uploaded by Aghnia Punjabi, Nabila Zirus, and Joyagh on their Instagram account and the followers’ comments that are relevant to hibridity between Islamic culture and global youth trend on young Muslim woman fashion. The term global youth trend here refers to western youth trend because like what Nilan (2006, p. 91) has said in his research concerning on hybridity of Islamic youth culture, western popular culture is considered to bring ‘modernity’, ‘newness’, and is practiced in most of this world countries, including Indonesia. Thus, the photos selected are limited to those whose style are combination between Islamic culture and global/western youth trends.

Those three young *celebgram* hijabs, who are in their early 20s years old, are chosen because they belong to the-top-five-most-popular *celebgram* hijabs in Indonesia with 254.000 followers for Aghnia, 199.000 followers for Nabila, and 497.000 for Joyagh, in which the followers are mostly young Muslim women. Thus, it can be said that they represent nowadays young Muslim women. In addition, the other texts such as journals concerning on nowadays hijab style and fashion become the secondary data to help the researcher doing intertextuality in order to attain broader interpretetation.
This study applies textual analysis as the methodology to analyse the data. Textual analysis is a methodology in media and cultural studies researches that is used to analyse text as well as to interpret, to explore, to unpack, to deconstruct, and to understand its several signs which consist of certain meaning (Ida, 2014, p. 64). In textual analysis, the research is started by interpreting the signs produced in a text. Then, these signs are construed with connotative codes and connotative meaning in order to be ‘readable’ (Ida, 2014, p. 71).

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

*Celebgram Hijab: The Representation of Being In-between*

In-between is a term related to cultural hybridity. Hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority accomplishes to translate the identity of the colonized (the Other) within a singular universal framework, but then fails producing something familiar; instead, it creates something new because both parties make a negotiation (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 19-20). Meanwhile, the emergence of the third-space occurs when the ‘original or originary’ identity and conceptualization is in critical position.

The photos below are the examples of cultural hybridity between Islamic culture and global/western youth trend. The photos were taken from Aghnia Punjabi, Nabila Zirus, and Joyagh’s Instagram account. In Figure 1, Aghnia wears black hijab, black watch, white t-shirt, long grey cardigan; long black skirt combined with tight black jeans, black tote bag inscribed VANS, and striped-polka dot sneaker shoes. In Figure 2, Nabila wears brown hijab, black-and-white plaid shirt, black watch, black short skirt combined with skinny legging, and black sneakers. In figure 3, Joyagh wears RnB hat, blue hijab, Henley t-shirt inscribed VENICE BEACH LOS ANGELES with plaid pattern on the arms, skinny jeans, plus a green skateboard as a complement.
Figure 1: Aghnia Punjabi
Source: Instagram.com/aghniapunjabi.2015

Figure 2: Joyagh

Figure 3: Nabila Zirus
The above figures illustrate an authentic and unique collaboration of two
different cultures. Here, hijab, which is the most conspicuous symbol of Muslim
women, has undergone shifting in function. If we take a look to essential function of
hijab based on Koran interpreted by some mullahs, hijab has some criteria; hijab for
covering all of women’s body (aurat) except face and hand as well as protecting
women from men’s sight, for veiling women’s chest (An-Nur: 31), and for cautioning
Muslim women to not over use make-up (Al-Ahzab: 33) to not wear thin cloth showing
women’s body shape (Shahab, 2013, p. 39). Whereas, Aghnia, Nabila, and Joyagh do
not genuinely apply the essential function of wearing hijab stated in Shahab (2013,
p.39). They wear hijab, which is not covering their chest. Instead of fashioning in
accordance with sharia convention, they prefer exploring more modern hijab fashion
style, leaving hijab’s ‘out-of-date’ label, and experimenting with other elements,
which make them more contemporarily, stylish.

In this case, global/western youth trend such as jeans, legging, sneakers, plaid
shirt, Henley t-shirt, VANS brand, and RnB hat, Jeans are the elements being
combined. Before being popular globally, jeans – a cowboy and miner (working class)
pants firstly invented by Levi Strauss, once called as “single most potent symbol of
American style on planet earth” by Los Angeles Times and increasing American youth
culture’s influence on Britain’s youth in around 1950s (Representig Youth Culture
Levi Strauss and Television Advertising, 2010). Sneakers, a made-by-rubber
footwear, remains nostalgic part of American’s past and one of popular footwear in
the world introduced by an American shoes factory, Converse, in 1930s (Heard, 2013,
p. 20). Leggings, another kind of pants worn by highland people, particularly Scottish,
for warming up the body, have become 80s American most influential trend and
pervasively become a staple for women today (Kass, 2011, p. 29). Plaid shirt has been
American fashion trend since early 1990s (Kamal, 2015). While, VANS is a well-known American shoes and apparel manufacturer based in California.

However, exploring more hijab fashion style does not mean that they do not fulfill the sharia convention of Islam. As devout Muslims, they do observe their religion law by concealing their *aurat*. Yet, at the same time, they also want to be recognized as youths who always engage in creativity and often lead to a ‘new countercultures’ since youth stage is placed in a critical period of identity formation (France, 2007, p. 57). Bennett in (Nilan, 2006, p. 91) asserts, “There is a ‘plurality of issues and circumstances’ that inform the cultural practices of contemporary youth in a global sense”. Thus, like young people everywhere, in order to be addressed as young, today Indonesian youths including young Muslims express themselves by consuming certain goods that become global youth trends. Their preference to wear global youth popular products like sneakers, jeans, legging, plaid shirt, marks their state of being young. Moreover, the use of famous global youth brand VANS evidenced on this picture and other western youth cultural products shown such as skateboard and RnB hat strengthen the legitimation of being young.

This mix-and-match process portrays how young Muslim women’s intention to observe Islamic religion law and the desire of being youth supported by western-derived global youth trend are negotiated. It also explains how negotiation and appropriation process of two different cultures that lead to cultural hybridity create a new culture – new hijab fashion style among Indonesian young Muslim women. In this sense, the *celebgram* hijabs’ fashion style constitutes what Bhabha calls as ‘third space’ or ‘in-between’ identity which is not shared by non-Muslim Indonesian age peers, westerners, or adults. Aghnia, Joyagh, and Nabila as the important role in presenting Indonesian young Muslim women’s fashion have constructed themselves
as modern and funky, but essentially different from other Indonesian youths, and western youths because they observe Muslim religious laws in their hijab fashion practices.

**Third Space Identity: Islamic Youth Culture**

The pictures below show the other posts, including followers’ comments, of nowadays Indonesian hijab fashion by Aghnia Punjabi, Nabila Zirus, and Joyagh, relevant to cultural hybridity of global/western youth trend and Islamic values. Some circled words on those photos are capturing how the followers, that are mostly young Muslim women, really like the celebgram hijabs creativity in mix-matching their fashion style. The Indonesian words ‘kece’ or ‘keren’ – meaning ‘cool’ – appear seven times. The words ‘cantik’ (beautiful) appears five times. Some followers commented ‘syukak banget’ (really like it), cool, cute, ‘lav lav lav’ (love it), ‘sepatunya kakak suka banget’ (really like the shoes), and even ‘Gusti Allah, bisaan amat yak’ – (Gosh, how it could be!). Based on the comments, it can be understood that the in-between style represented by Anghina, Nabila, and Joyagh has lured some of their followers to like even probably imitate their ‘third space’ style.

![Figure 4: Aghnia Punjabi](source: instagram.com/aghnia.2016)
Figure 5: Nabila Zirus

Figure 6: Joyagh
The kind of third space being created here is Muslim women’s trendy Islamic fashion style as part of Islamic youth culture. Here, young Muslim women take an active role in the social construction of identity. Those youths may commit to Islamic religion law, yet there are other aspects of their lives that cannot be easily ordered by religious faith alone. They are living in a more plural and globalized world where the hegemonic of western culture possess the most valued forms of cultural capital. Thus, they do appropriation by performing Islamic rituals as well as following global youth trend. By choosing what they wear or consume, these Muslim young women construct their identity as devout Muslim, young, trendy, and Indonesian. They bring the spirit of modern and fashionable Muslim women proving that hijab fashion style is becoming increasingly contested since it can be combined with many common fashion accessories that have no religious connotation.

However, something needs to be addressed from Muslim women’s trendy Islamic fashion style. Even though in this case Islamic values harmoniously meet with global/western youth trend, still there is a more dominant ideology over another. If we look at all of the pictures above as well as the comments, the ideal of being young is stronger. It is true that all of hijab celebgrams complete their religion law by covering their aurat, yet most of the fashion attributes they wear are the global youth trend attributes that are mostly inherited from western youth fashion style, except the hijab itself.

The global youth trend brought by popular culture through media has strong influence in shaping the nowadays-Indonesian young Muslim women’s perception in fashioning. The appropriation during the negotiation process remains articulating the more dominant ideology of hegemonic western culture. Western popular culture has successfully imposed its influence toward the way Indonesian Young Muslim women
express their fashion style. This form of fashion challenges the assumption that hijab has merely a single meaning. Hijab obtains the characteristics of a trendy accessory as it is contested and constructed by the movement of dominant culture among youths. Therefore, hijab and its connection to religion modesty are somehow becoming subverted.

The study has found that nowadays-Indonesian young Muslim women’s fashion draws upon both religious laws and western-derived global youth trend. Young Muslim women fashion style represented by Aghnia, Joyagh, and Nabila constitutes what Bhabha calls as ‘third space’ or ‘in-between’ identity which is not shared by non-Muslim Indonesian age peers, westerners, or adults. They are devout Muslims who observe their religion law by covering their aurat. Yet, like young people everywhere, in order to be addressed as young, today Indonesian youths including young Muslims express themselves by consuming certain goods that become global youth trends. This hybridization creates third space of Muslim women’s trendy Islamic fashion style as part of Islamic youth culture. These Muslim young women construct their identity as devout Muslim, young, trendy, and Indonesian. They are still considered as devout Muslims but at the same time, they are funky, cool, and young.

Indeed, it seems that hijab as Islamic symbol harmoniously meets with global/western youth trend. However, the appropriation during the negotiation process remains articulating the more dominant ideology of hegemonic western culture in nowadays young Indonesian Muslim woman fashion practices. In fact, western popular culture has successfully imposed its influence toward the way Indonesian young Muslim women express their fashion style. The meaning of hijab fashion style develops; not merely a symbol of religious rituals. As the consequences, hijab and its
connection to religion modesty are somehow becoming subverted since the ideal of being young in this globalized era is stronger.

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