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Reframing *Hijrah* and *Hubbul Wathan Minal Iman*: A Mosque-Based Community Service for the Indonesian Diaspora in Tokyo

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ABSTRACT

The growing Indonesian diaspora in Japan continues to face a persistent challenge in preserving its religious identity, national values, and moral character within a highly secular society. This community service addresses this need by clarifying the essence of hijrah, a concept that is commonly reduced to physical relocation or superficial lifestyle change. The activity aimed to reframe hijrah as a continuous spiritual and moral transformation pertinent to diaspora life and to reinforce the value of hubbul wathan minal iman (love of the homeland as part of faith). The partner institution was the Nusantara Akihabara Mosque in Tokyo, with twenty-five members of the Indonesian diaspora as participants. The program employed a da'wah-based approach that integrated a thematic lecture with participatory dialogue, preceded by a communal recitation of Surah Yasin and tahlil. Data were collected through participant observation, field notes, audio and photographic documentation, and participants' contributions to the dialogue, and analyzed using thematic categorization. The results indicate heightened participant awareness that hijrah constitutes a means of mujahadah grounded in firm faith and expressed through self-improvement, family religiosity, and constructive contribution abroad. Participants took an active part in dialogue on maintaining Islamic and national identity. Nevertheless, because it was a single session evaluated qualitatively without pre- and post-activity measurement, the activity captures only shifts in awareness rather than sustained behavioral change, which requires continued follow-up. The activity indicates that mosque-based scholarly engagement is a promising avenue for nurturing a moderate and globally minded diaspora community.

Keywords: *Community Service, Diaspora; Hijrah, Hubbul Wathan, Religious Moderation*

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INTRODUCTION

Rising global mobility has given rise to a large and diverse Indonesian diaspora in Japan, comprising skilled professionals, students, technical-intern and specified-skilled workers, and their families. Recent scholarship demonstrates that these Indonesian Muslims must continually negotiate their religious identity within a society that is statistically among the least religious in the world, in which Muslims constitute a very small minority and public understanding of Islam is often shaped by media portrayals rather than direct acquaintance (Budianto, 2024; Widarahesty, 2024). According to a 2023 Pew Research Center survey, only 7% of Japanese adults stated that religion was very important in their lives, and fewer than half identified with any religion, which places Japan among the least religious of the 36 countries surveyed (Evans et al., 2025). The Muslim population was estimated at about 420,000 people at the beginning of 2025, or roughly 0.3% of the total population, of whom around 176,000 are Indonesian nationals, who constitute the largest national group among foreign Muslims (Tanada, 2025). Consequently, because they live far from a Muslim-majority environment, members of the diaspora encounter unfamiliar norms surrounding worship, food, dress, and social interaction that demand constant adjustment (Athallah & Dharma, 2024).

These adjustments are not merely practical; they affect the core of religious identity. Studies of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan document how workplace pressures and the wider secular culture can erode religious commitment, with some workers reporting a perceived loss of their Muslim identity as the discipline of prayer and the wearing of the hijab become difficult to sustain (Rizcha, Mulyadi, & Rustam, 2024). Culture shock, isolation, and the absence of familiar religious support structures further exacerbate these difficulties (Athallah & Dharma, 2024). Under such conditions, congregational spaces such as mosques serve as vital anchors for maintaining faith, character, and a sense of belonging.

Concurrently, the term hijrah has undergone a marked semantic shift in contemporary Indonesian religious culture. Once understood primarily as the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina, hijrah has increasingly become a popular label for lifestyle change, religious rebranding, and outward changes in appearance, which circulate widely through digital media (Basri, 2023; Fansuri, 2023; Hasanah & Aisa, 2021). Although this popular movement has drawn many toward greater piety, its reduction to symbols and slogans risks fostering a shallow and, at times, exclusive understanding that detaches hijrah from its deeper ethical substance. For a diaspora community negotiating identity abroad, an impoverished understanding of hijrah offers little guidance in addressing the actual spiritual and social challenges of migration.

The scholarly and scriptural traditions present a considerably richer picture. In the Qur'an, hijrah denotes a physical, spiritual, and social movement from one state to a better one in order to draw nearer to God, as affirmed in QS al-Baqarah [2]:218, QS an-Nisa' [4]:100, and QS at-Taubah [9]:20, and as encapsulated in the well-known hadith stating that actions are judged by their intentions. Classical and contemporary commentators accordingly distinguish between physical hijrah, understood as relocation, and maknawi (inner) hijrah, understood as the migration from sin to obedience and from lower to higher moral states (Basri, 2023). Understood in this light, hijrah is not a single event but an ongoing striving (mujahadah) rooted in sincere faith.

For the diaspora, this deeper meaning must also be linked to the value of hubbul wathan minal iman, love of the homeland as part of faith, a principle long cultivated in Indonesian Islam to harmonize religious devotion with national belonging (In'ami & Suryadi, 2024). When reframed for those living overseas, love of the homeland becomes an act of faith that keeps the diaspora connected to Indonesian values while enabling them to contribute positively to their host society. This orientation is consistent with wasathiyyah, the principle of religious moderation and balance, which calls on Muslims to present a friendly, just, and beneficial image of Islam and to avoid extremes (Nurrochim, 2023; Putri & Fadlullah, 2022; Kurniawan & Haikal, 2024).

The mosque occupies a distinctive position in this effort. Beyond its function as a place of worship, the mosque has historically functioned as a center of education, social cohesion, and community empowerment, and mosque-based programs have been shown to be effective in strengthening moderate religious understanding and mobilizing congregations toward shared goals (Kurniawan & Haikal, 2024; Mokodompit, 2022). For the Indonesian diaspora, congregational mosques such as the Nusantara Akihabara Mosque additionally serve as cultural homes that preserve language, tradition, and national identity far from the homeland. They are therefore natural partners for scholarly da'wah aimed at deepening religious understanding while reinforcing national belonging, and they provide the continuity that enables a single engagement to develop into an ongoing relationship.

Existing scholarship on the Indonesian Muslim diaspora, and on Muslim minorities in Japan more broadly, has tended to focus on describing the problem rather than on intervening in it. A substantial body of research documents how migrant workers and professionals assert, negotiate, or lose their religious identity within Japan's secular workplaces and everyday life (Budianto, 2024; Rizcha et al., 2024; Widarahesty, 2024), and how communication strategies help them manage culture shock (Athallah & Dharma, 2024). A parallel body of literature analyzes the popular hijrah phenomenon in Indonesia, tracing its shift from physical migration

toward lifestyle and identity branding in the digital public sphere (Basri, 2023; Fansuri, 2023; Hasanah & Aisa, 2021). A third strand elaborates the theory and practice of wasathiyyah da'wah and mosque-based religious moderation as instruments of community empowerment (Kurniawan & Haikal, 2024; Mokodompit, 2022; Nurrochim, 2023).

However, these bodies of work rarely intersect. Studies of diaspora identity identify the erosion of religiosity abroad but stop short of proposing concrete da'wah interventions; studies of the hijrah phenomenon critique its shallowness within Indonesia but seldom trace the concept overseas to the very diaspora that most needs a deeper reading of it; and studies of wasathiyyah da'wah develop models that are seldom tested among Indonesian communities living as a minority in a non-Muslim, highly secular society. Consequently, little community-service literature addresses the specific task of delivering structured, scholarly religious guidance to the diaspora that simultaneously reframes hijrah, reinforces hubbul wathan minal iman, and cultivates moderation, with the mosque serving as its operational base. This community service was designed to address this gap through a special religious study session for the Indonesian diaspora at the Nusantara Akihabara Mosque in Tokyo, which brought an academic from the Faculty of Sharia and Law into direct dialogue with the community.

Accordingly, this community service set out to achieve three objectives: first, to deepen participants' understanding of the essence of hijrah beyond physical migration; second, to reinforce the value of hubbul wathan minal iman and a moderate, rooted religious identity among the diaspora; and third, to foster synergy among academics, community figures, and the Indonesian diaspora in building a religious, globally minded community that upholds both Islamic and national values.

METHOD

This community service employed a da'wah-based participatory religious-education approach, which was documented using a descriptive qualitative method. The approach was chosen because the transformation of understanding, namely the reframing of hijrah, is best achieved through direct scholarly transmission complemented by dialogue, rather than through one-way instruction alone. This design accords with wasathiyyah da'wah, which emphasizes balance, gentleness, and relevance to the audience's lived context (Nurrochim, 2023), and with mosque-based models of religious empowerment that utilize congregational spaces for community development (Kurniawan & Haikal, 2024).

The partner institution was the Nusantara Akihabara Mosque in Tokyo, Japan, a congregational hub for Indonesian Muslims residing in Tokyo and its surrounding areas. The activity was carried out on Thursday, 30 July 2026, and was

attended by twenty-five participants representing various segments of the Indonesian diaspora, including workers, professionals, and families. The mosque board served as the community partner and facilitated coordination, provision of the venue, and mobilization of participants.

The program was organized into three stages, adapting the standard management functions of planning, implementation, and evaluation to a community-service setting (Nurhikmah, 2024). In the preparation stage, the facilitator coordinated with the mosque board to identify the community's needs and to formulate a theme responsive to the diaspora's circumstances, which resulted in the topic "Understanding the Essence of Hijrah for the Diaspora." In the implementation stage, the session commenced with a communal recitation of Surah Yasin and tahlil as a collective act of prayer and spiritual grounding, followed by a thematic lecture (ceramah) and an extended participatory dialogue. In the evaluation stage, the facilitator and mosque board reflected on the session on the basis of observation, documentation, and informal feedback from participants.

Data for this program were drawn from three sources, namely participant observation, documentation, and the questions and responses raised by participants during the dialogue. Throughout the session, the facilitator acted as a participant observer and recorded brief notes on the general atmosphere, participants' attentiveness and involvement, and moments when participants responded notably to the material. With the consent of the mosque board, a committee member additionally made audio recordings and photographs of the session. Shortly after the activity concluded, these brief notes were expanded into complete field notes. Each question, comment, and personal experience shared during the dialogue was recorded in paraphrased form, together with the context in which it was raised. Participants' informal feedback and the mosque chairman's reflections were likewise documented on the same day.

During the evaluation stage, the records were organized using a simple thematic coding procedure based on the three objectives of the program. Each dialogue contribution and observation note was assigned to one of four categories: (1) participants' understanding of *hijrah*, distinguishing physical or lifestyle-based meanings from inner (maknawi) meanings rooted in *mujahadah*; (2) expressions of *hubbul wathan minal iman* and national identity; (3) the challenges of practicing religion in the diaspora, such as preserving Islamic identity in a secular setting and nurturing religious families; and (4) an orientation toward moderate and constructive engagement with the host society. Contributions that fell outside these categories were recorded separately as emerging themes. The coded data were subsequently reviewed with the mosque board to verify the accuracy of the notes and the interpretation of participants' responses, and were cross-checked

against the audio recordings and photographic documentation to ensure consistency. This categorization underpins the descriptive analysis presented in the following section, which illustrates how the activity unfolded and the shifts in awareness and engagement observed among participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service took place in a warm and enthusiastic atmosphere. The session began with a communal recitation of Surah Yasin and tahlil, which established a shared spiritual foundation and united the twenty-five participants as a congregation before the main study session. This opening reflects a broader pattern in mosque-based da'wah, in which collective worship lays the groundwork for reflective learning and strengthens communal bonds (Kurniawan & Haikal, 2024). The subsequent lecture and dialogue proceeded in an open and participatory manner that encouraged questions and exchange. The overall sequence of the activity is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Stages of the community service activity

No	Stage	Activity	Method / Output
1	Preparation	Coordination with the mosque board, identification of community needs, and formulation of the theme	Discussion; agreed theme
2	Opening	Communal recitation of Surah Yasin and tahlil	Congregational prayer
3	Core study	Thematic lecture on the essence of hijrah for the diaspora	Ceramah (lecture)
4	Dialogue	Questions and discussion on the challenges of diaspora life	Participatory dialogue
5	Evaluation	Reflection, documentation, and participant feedback	Observation and field notes

The core of the study focused on reframing the meaning of hijrah. The facilitator emphasized that hijrah should not be understood merely in its physical or literal (hakiki) sense as a movement from one place to another, but also in its inner or maknawi sense as the spirit of continually striving to become a better person and elevating the quality of one's faith and character (akhlak). This distinction reflects the scriptural and scholarly tradition, in which hijrah signifies a physical, spiritual, and social movement from a lower state to a higher one for the sake of nearness to God, and in which inner hijrah is the migration from disobedience to obedience (Basri, 2023; Fansuri, 2023). Presenting hijrah in this fuller sense directly counters the tendency, prominent in contemporary popular

discourse, to reduce it to outward markers and lifestyle branding (Hasanah & Aisa, 2021; Ayyubi et al., 2025).

Building on this foundation, the facilitator framed hijrah for the diaspora as a wasilah mujahadah, a means of earnest striving, that must be grounded in firm faith. Diaspora life, he argued, poses its own distinctive challenges in preserving Islamic identity, national belonging, and the noble values of Indonesia. Understood as ongoing mujahadah, hijrah equips the diaspora to face these challenges not by withdrawing from their host society but by deepening their inner commitment while engaging constructively with their social surroundings. This interpretation is consistent with research on Indonesian Muslims in Japan, which indicates that those who consciously assert and cultivate their religious identity are better able to sustain it amid secular pressures, whereas the absence of such intentional grounding may lead to its erosion (Budianto, 2024; Rizcha et al., 2024).

A second core theme was hubbul wathan minal iman, love of the homeland as part of faith. The facilitator emphasized that this value must be sustained wherever the diaspora resides, so that love for Indonesia is maintained as an expression of faith and is not diminished by distance. This principle, cultivated within Indonesian Islam to unite religious devotion with national belonging, offers the diaspora a coherent identity that does not require a choice between being a good Muslim and being a loyal Indonesian (In'ami & Suryadi, 2024; Purnamasari et al., 2025). For a community physically distant from the homeland, reframing patriotism as an act of faith provides a strong psychological and spiritual anchor.

Third, the study called on the diaspora to serve as ambassadors of the nation who present an image of Islam that is moderate, friendly, and oriented toward the common good (maslahah) within international society. This aspiration constitutes the practical expression of wasathiyyah, the principle of balance and moderation that rejects extremes such as takfirism and prioritizes justice, gentleness, and benefit in conveying Islam (Marwal & Ilyas, 2024; Nurrochim, 2023; Putri & Fadlullah, 2022). In a setting where local understanding of Islam is frequently shaped by unfavorable stereotypes, a moderate and courteous diaspora becomes a living form of da'wah that corrects misperceptions through character and conduct (Abdulaev, 2023). The disciplined practice of worship, particularly prayer, was highlighted as central to shaping this exemplary character (Oktaviani & Rhamadhan, 2024).

The significance of this reframing becomes clearer when contrasted with the trajectory of the popular hijrah movement. Whereas that movement often foregrounds visible markers, such as dress, vocabulary, and social affiliation, as the primary evidence of transformation, the study shifted the decisive criterion of hijrah to the inner life of intention, faith, and character (Basri, 2023; Fansuri, 2023; Nurhikmah & Ibrahim, 2025). This shift is particularly important for the diaspora,

whose circumstances rarely permit the outward display of piety that the popular movement rewards, and who instead require an understanding of hijrah that is portable enough to accompany them into secular workplaces and mixed social settings. By anchoring hijrah in mujahadah rather than appearance, the study offered participants a conception of religiosity that is resilient precisely because it does not depend on a supportive external environment, thereby addressing the erosion of identity documented among Indonesian Muslims abroad (Rizcha et al., 2024; Widarahesty, 2024).

The dialogue that followed the lecture revealed the depth of the participants' engagement and the emergence of new awareness. Participants actively raised concrete challenges of diaspora life, ranging from maintaining an Islamic identity in a secular environment and building religious families and raising children with faith to strengthening the positive contribution of the Indonesian community in Japan. The fact that participants themselves framed these issues, rather than passively receiving answers, indicates a shift from a symbolic understanding of hijrah toward an applied one, in which the concept serves as a resource for navigating daily life. This is consistent with findings that mosque-centered, dialogic interventions enhance participants' comprehension of moderate religious practice more effectively than one-directional instruction (Kurniawan & Haikal, 2024).

The response of the mosque's leadership further indicated the value of the activity and its potential to generate lasting change. The chairman of the Nusantara Akihabara Mosque, Muhammad Anwar, expressed the community's gratitude for the presence of the visiting academic, who had imparted both knowledge and motivation to the Indonesian community in Japan. In his reflection, Anwar observed that the study had provided spiritual strengthening as well as encouragement for the diaspora to remain steadfast (istiqamah) in practicing Islamic values and to sustain their love for Indonesia even while living abroad. His comment is noteworthy because it independently reflects the two pillars of the study, inner religious commitment and hubbul wathan minal iman, which suggests that the central messages of the session were clearly received and resonated with the community's own aspirations rather than being perceived as an external imposition.

Appreciation of this kind from a community leader carries greater weight than participant enthusiasm alone. As a recognized figure within the diaspora, the chairman serves as a local opinion leader whose endorsement can legitimize and help sustain the values conveyed after the visiting academic has departed. His feedback points to the possibility of continued programming, the cultivation of indigenous religious leadership within the diaspora, and the gradual embedding of moderate, rooted religiosity in the community's everyday life, which are

hallmarks of the social transformation that community service seeks to catalyze (Kurniawan & Haikal, 2024). The session concluded in the same warm and enthusiastic atmosphere in which it had begun, with a shared hope, expressed by both the facilitator and the mosque leadership, that the activity would strengthen the synergy among academics, community figures, and the Indonesian diaspora in building a community that is simultaneously religious, globally minded, and firmly committed to Islamic and national values.

Taken together, the results demonstrate that a single, well-designed scholarly engagement can produce meaningful progress toward all three objectives. Participants' understanding of hijrah was deepened, shifting from a physical or lifestyle-oriented notion toward an ethical and spiritual striving; the value of hubbul wathan minal iman was reinforced as a bridge between faith and homeland; and a durable synergy among academics, community figures, and the diaspora was initiated. The activity thereby affirms the strategic role of the mosque as a site of da'wah and empowerment for diaspora communities, and the effectiveness of pairing a thematic lecture with participatory dialogue for reframing deeply held religious concepts. The principal limitation of this activity is that a single session cannot, on its own, guarantee sustained behavioral change; continuity and follow-up are required to consolidate the awareness it generated.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this community service demonstrated that mosque-based scholarly engagement can meaningfully reshape how the Indonesian diaspora understands and practices the concept of *hijrah*. Through a da'wah-based approach that combined a thematic lecture with participatory dialogue at the Nusantara Akihabara Mosque in Tokyo, twenty-five participants were guided to understand *hijrah* not merely as physical relocation or outward lifestyle change but as a continuous spiritual and moral striving (mujahadah) grounded in firm faith. The activity reinforced the value of *hubbul wathan minal iman*, love of the homeland as part of faith, as a bridge that enables the diaspora to be devout Muslims and loyal Indonesians simultaneously, and encouraged participants to become ambassadors of a moderate, friendly, and beneficial Islam within their host society. The enthusiastic dialogue and the mosque board's appreciation indicate the genuine emergence of new awareness and the beginnings of a durable synergy among academics, community figures, and the diaspora. Theoretically, the activity contributes to models of *wasathiyyah* da'wah and diaspora empowerment by demonstrating how reframing a popular religious concept can serve as a vehicle for moderation and rootedness.

In practical terms, because a single session cannot by itself secure lasting behavioral change, this activity recommends a phased follow-up roadmap. In the short term, the mosque board and the facilitator may organize a regular study series (kajian), held monthly either in person or online, which elaborates on the themes raised in the dialogue, particularly maintaining Islamic identity in secular

workplaces, building religious families, and raising children with faith. In the medium term, participants may be organized into small peer-mentoring groups (halaqah) of five to eight members, each guided by a diaspora member who has been trained as a facilitator, in which participants set personal commitments to self-improvement, such as consistency in prayer, Qur'an recitation, and family religious routines, and review them together at regular meetings. This structure shifts the role of guidance from the visiting academic to the community itself and cultivates indigenous religious leadership within the diaspora. In the long term, the collaboration between the university and the mosque could be formalized as a sustained partnership, and the model could be replicated in other Indonesian diaspora centers in Japan and elsewhere. Future community-service programs and studies are encouraged to strengthen their evaluation through pre- and post-activity assessments of participants' understanding, together with a follow-up observation several months after the intervention, so that the durability of the transformation cultivated here can be measured rather than merely inferred.

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