



The Social Lives of Veiled Women: Exploring Religious Identity and Modern Society's Reactions

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Abstract: The primary objective of this study is to investigate and gain a comprehensive understanding of the social experiences of women who wear the veil in their everyday lives. The study seeks to achieve two key objectives: first, to discern the motivations driving women to wear the veil, and second, to examine the social dynamics governing their utilization of the veil in daily life. Employing a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, data collection was carried out through interviews and observations. The findings of this study shed light on the diverse motivations that drive veiled career women to wear the veil. These motivations are rooted in various causal factors, including experiences of disturbance, societal influences, concerns, and familial issues. The overarching objective for these women is to fortify their faith and safeguard themselves against undesirable behaviors. Moreover, the study reveals that the veil holds multiple meanings for career women who wear it, such as serving as reminders, protective elements, expressions of gratitude, symbols of communication, obligations, and even challenges. The dynamics of communication among women who wear the veil, as explored in this study, encompass interactions with their immediate environment, their social circles, and communication within the workplace. These interactions elicit a spectrum of responses and reactions, ranging from rejection and alienation to serving as role models and sources of inspiration for others considering the practice of wearing the veil. This research provides valuable insights into the complex interplay of motives, meanings, and social interactions surrounding the practice of veiling among career women.

Keywords: *Modern society; Religious identity; Social life; Veiled women.*

Introduction

The veil represents an advanced form of head covering, requiring full coverage of the head, including both the right and left sides, extending over the cheeks, and draping down to conceal the chest of Muslim women. In contrast, the veil serves to shroud the face, leaving only the eyes exposed. Beyond the physical attributes of the veil itself, it is essential to explore the individuals who choose to wear it, as they are perceived as a distinct minority within society. As exemplified by one informant, the presence of unfamiliarity and inquiries from family members regarding the choice to wear a veil is a common experience.

The anecdote above is emblematic of the reactions faced by some veiled individuals, characterized by inquiries and concerns from family members upon observing them in a veil. This reaction reflects the prevailing attitudes within Indonesia towards the use of the veil. Despite the fact that the majority of Indonesians are Muslim, the sight of veiled Muslim women remains relatively uncommon. However, in recent times, the use of the veil has been on the rise, as evidenced by the emergence of various communities dedicated to veiled Muslim women in Indonesia, such as the Indonesian Veiled Community, the Niqab Squad, and the Veiled Muslim Community, among others.

Indonesia itself does not impose a strict obligation on women wearing veils to conform to a specific dress code, yet there are contrasting opinions suggesting that veiled women should adhere to the dress norms of their environment (Tirta, 2018). Concerning the veil and headscarf, Indonesia has a historical record of the transition from headscarves to veils, which was a significant concern during the New Order era. During this period, policies were enforced to prohibit Muslim women from wearing headscarves in specific areas, such as schools and workplaces. However, after the reformation period, the hijab gradually gained acceptance as an identity for Muslim women (Bukino et al., 2018). Within the realm of Islamic interpretation, debates continue regarding the obligation of wearing the veil. Nevertheless, it is unequivocal that women who choose to wear the veil often face social rejection compared to those wearing headscarves (Ratri, 2011).

The controversy surrounding the veil persists within Islam. In 2018, the Indonesian Muslim community was shaken by the issuance of Circular Letter No. B-1301/Un.02/R/RAK.08.3/02/2018 by the Chancellor of Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, Prof. Yudian Wahyudi, dated 20 February 2018, which discussed the "Development of Veiled Students" (Bukino et al., 2018). The issuance of this circular was accompanied by statements from the university's chancellor, characterizing the veil as a radical ideology that could disrupt the learning process (Juliani, 2018). Furthermore, an incident occurred at Tribhuwana Tunggaladewi University in Malang, where a female student who wore a veil was reprimanded by the Head of the Study Program, who expressed discomfort with her choice. Subsequently, the veiled student chose not to wear the veil during her classes (Tirta, 2018).

The aforementioned events shed light on the existence of an indirect prohibition on veiling within the realm of education. Additionally, a Muslim woman in France experienced a situation where she was arrested by the police for driving while wearing a veil. The police argued that her face was covered, which could pose safety risks while driving and result in accidents. However, the veiled Muslim woman contended that her veil did not completely obscure her vision and allowed her to see adequately, a point she emphasized during a televised interview (Mutia, 2013). These incidents and controversies surrounding the veil highlight the diversity of responses and societal attitudes toward it in both Indonesia and other parts of the world.

The cases of discrimination and prohibitions associated with wearing the veil elicit diverse responses from various groups, particularly in contemporary society. These responses are not entirely in favor or against the practice. For instance, the Kedai KOPI survey, conducted by the Indonesian Public Discussion and Opinion Group in March 2018, addressed a range of topics, including the veil, the controversy surrounding the labeling of individuals as infidels, and the protection of worship during the Jokowi era. The survey involved 1135 respondents across 34 provinces from March 19 to 27, 2018, with a Margin of Error (MoE) of +/- 2.97% at a 95% confidence level, overseen by the Research Director of the Kedai KOPI Survey Institute (2018).

The results of the Kedai KOPI survey demonstrate that the veil is not solely linked to radicalism or terrorism. However, it does not dismiss the possibility that negative perceptions and restrictions on wearing the veil persist. Apart from the issues related to discrimination and stigma against veiled women, particularly concerning associations with fundamentalist Islamic teachings and terrorism, the veil also encounters practical objections, notably within the context of public services. For example, a lecturer from IAIN

Bukittinggi faced consequences related to the veil she wore (Hida, 2018). Moreover, a study conducted in Spain revealed distinct circumstances in which veiled women in public spaces often experienced negative reactions, including street harassment, bias, and exclusion from social activities (Yeste et al., 2020). Similar challenges are encountered by veiled women in Western countries such as France, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, and Germany, where the niqab or veil has been banned due to its perceived associations with political symbols, support for violence, and Islamic extremism (Chowdhury et al., 2017).

This study is dedicated to examining the social experiences of veiled women in modern society. The author's particular interest in this research stems from the paradoxical nature of the situation, where, in an era of expanding freedoms, veiled women still face the weight of stigmatization and predominantly negative perceptions.

Literature Reviews

The author conducts a comprehensive examination of relevant information and literature. The sources include four international journal articles and one national journal, forming the foundation for researching veiled women. Additionally, several journal references are employed to reinforce the exploration of this phenomenon.

Yeste et al.'s (2020) study analyzes the principles of equality and egalitarian dialogue as a framework for understanding the experiences of Muslim women who wear the niqab in Spain, particularly in the context of rising conflicts related to racism and Islamophobia in Europe. This research strives to provide insights into the lived experiences of women who don headscarves and niqabs, with the ultimate goal of promoting mutual respect and equality. It delves into the discrimination faced by this group and explores potential avenues for change. The study also underscores that while there is no explicit ban on niqab use in Spain, women often encounter negative reactions in public spaces, leading to street harassment, prejudice, and exclusion. These challenges can hinder their participation in daily activities, including education. The study suggests that the resistance of niqab-wearing women in Spain revolves around mobilizing the Muslim women's community and engaging in interfaith dialogues to combat prejudice and promote cooperation in a multicultural society.

Zempi's (2019) research sheds light on Denmark's recent ban on niqab use in public spaces, which aligns with similar prohibitions in France, Belgium, and Australia. The study explores the life experiences of Muslim women who wear the niqab and the implications of such bans from the perspective of women who wear the hijab or niqab in England. Veiled Muslim women perceive these prohibitions as oppressive and liken them to a form of house arrest. Moreover, such regulations tend to reinforce the negative stereotypes associated with the veil and contribute to Islamophobia and radicalism in countries that permit its free use. These bans raise significant concerns and potential human rights violations.

Ahmed and Roche's (2018) ethnographic research focuses on the perspectives of women from the Sultanate of Oman concerning laws related to headscarves in Oman and other countries. The study also delves into Omani women's views on the niqab, a topic that dominates global media debates. Omani women generally believe that veiling should not be mandated by a legal framework but should be regarded as a personal choice rooted in Islamic notions of piety and respect. The study emphasizes the importance of respecting

women's freedom to dress in accordance with their religious beliefs, even in non-Muslim nations.

Chowdhury et al. (2017) employ a phenomenological approach to explore the meaning, structure, essence, and life experiences of niqab-wearing Muslim women. The niqab is perceived as a cultural artifact, reflecting the diverse perspectives surrounding its use. While it has become divisive and controversial in some countries, cultural ties to the niqab are highlighted, encompassing pre-Islamic and Christian Arab culture, and even Jewish usage. The study also acknowledges the negative perceptions held by some individuals, including non-Muslims who view the niqab as oppressive and offensive, leading to social stigmatization and rejection.

Permatasari and Putra's (2018) research, specific to Indonesia, reveals that negative stigmas surrounding veiled Muslim women have not deterred a growing number of women from choosing to wear the veil as an act of religious devotion. The study seeks to analyze the symbolic interactions contributing to the self-identity formation of veiled Muslim women in the Bandung Niqab Squad Community. It demonstrates that these women consider the veil a form of self-protection and an expression of religious obedience. Regardless of societal acceptance or rejection, these women continue to embrace their identity with conviction, reflecting their understanding of the nature of women and knowledge of Sunnah.

Veil: Culture, Identity or Islamic Sharia, The term "veil," as per the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), refers to a cloth that covers the head. In Arabic, it is known as himar, niqab, and includes synonyms like burqa (Rasyid, et al., 2018). Another perspective suggests that the term "veil" is derived from the Persian word "chador," signifying a tent-like covering. Hence, the veil constitutes a fabric that covers the face, leaving only the eyes exposed. Scholars have traced the origins of the veil for women to regions around Persia, predating the emergence of Islam, as indicated by Quraish Shihab, referencing Murtada Motahhari's explanation. Additionally, there are theories proposing that veiled women have roots in the adherents of the Zardasyt religion, which regarded women as impure beings. Consequently, when women engaged in religious rituals, they were required to conceal their noses and mouths to prevent their breath from contaminating the fire they worshipped (Sudirman, 2019). Some scholars, however, assert that the veil is primarily a matter of tradition or custom (adat) and falls within the cultural domain, unrelated to Islamic law. This perspective is supported by the Ministry of Waqf of the Arab Republic of Egypt, which once published a treatise titled "al-Niqab 'Adat wa Laysa' Ibadah: al-Ra'y al-Shar'i fi al-Niqab bi Aqlam Kibar al-'Ulama," emphasizing that the veil is a matter of tradition, not an act of worship (Kudhori, 2018).

From a sociological perspective, the veil cannot be dissociated from the discourse concerning the body as a social identity. The human body signifies not just a physical identity but also a social one, often delineating social boundaries. Consequently, the veil emerges as a symbol and a form of non-verbal communication that directly conveys the wearer's identity (Lisa Aisyah Rasyid, et al., 2018). The term "identity," originating from the English "Identity," denotes a self or a symbol of identity affiliated with an individual or group, setting them apart from others (Saleh, et al., 2019). In contemporary society, the veil has metamorphosed into a defining element of self-identity for Muslim women.

The status of the veil within the realm of Islamic law remains a subject of continuous debate and divergence of opinions. The discourse surrounding the veil has

persisted since the time of the Companions, when disagreements arose regarding the interpretation of the hijab verse, which commands the covering of women's private parts. These differences of opinion have transcended into the domain of fiqh, specifically concerning the private parts of women that require coverage in the presence of unrelated men (ajnabi). Scholars' perspectives on the requirement to wear the veil are, at a minimum, categorized into three groups: obligatory, recommended (sunnah), and permissible (Muhammad Kudhori, 2018). Scholars' views on the veil's legal status vary; some argue that the veil must cover the genitals for Muslim women, substantiated by strong evidence. Notable proponents of this view include Muhammad bin Salih al-Usaimin, Mustafa al-Adawi, Muhammad bin Qasim Al-Gazhali, Imam Ahmad bin Hambal, and some followers of the Shafi'i school. Conversely, scholars such as Muhammad Nasiruddin Al-bani, ibn Abbas, Imam Hanafi, and Maliki do not insist on the veil's necessity for Muslim women (Ritonga, 2022).

Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing qualitative research methods to investigate the perspectives of women who wear the veil as informants concerning their social experiences while donning the veil. Engaging with informants directly allows researchers to acquire comprehensive and in-depth research data regarding this phenomenon. To initiate this study, the researcher initiated the inquiry process by posing open-ended interview questions to the informants. These inquiries encompassed the informants' experiences related to their motivations for wearing the veil in their everyday lives. Furthermore, the researcher posed a series of open-ended questions regarding the process of wearing the veil and queries aimed at uncovering the significance of the veil. The line of questioning eventually delved into detailed inquiries regarding the intricate dynamics of veiled women's social lives as they engage with the veil in their daily routines.

The interview questions were intentionally open-ended, permitting informants to construct meaning from their communicative experiences as shaped by their daily lives. As Creswell (2015) elucidates, within the constructivist paradigm, individuals seek to comprehend and cultivate subjective meanings concerning specific subjects. The multitude of interpretations that surface prompts researchers to delve into the subjective meanings of informants regarding various aspects, including their motivations, the significance of the veil, the process of donning the veil, and the evolving social dynamics in the contemporary era.

Results and Discussions

Women's Motives in Using the Veil

During the data collection process, several findings emerged, particularly pertaining to the motivations driving women to wear the veil. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the informants' motivations for veiling, it is imperative to elucidate the causal factors leading to their decision and the intended purposes behind it. The subsequent elucidation will be presented diagrammatically below to facilitate a clear and structured representation of this aspect.

Figure 1. Motives for Wearing the Veil



Based on the collected research data, each informant shared compelling narratives surrounding their adoption of the veil. These stories revolved around the backgrounds and reasons driving their decisions. Notably, it became evident that the majority of informants had been veiling for a period ranging from three to six years, with one informant having worn the veil for nearly seven years. These varying durations were rooted in diverse motivations, including experiences with the opposite sex, influence from social circles like peers and community affiliations, familial issues, high anxiety, and fear. Additionally, informants cited unique reasons for veiling, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of their choices. Through in-depth interviews, four overarching categories of motives for wearing the veil emerged. These encompassed intentions to strengthen faith, provide genital cover, shield against unwanted attention from the opposite sex, and guard against undesirable behaviors.

Analyzing and interpreting the interview data on the motivations behind women's daily use of the veil, we draw from the phenomenological perspective of Alfred Schutz (Mulyana, 2018), distinguishing motives into "in-order-to-motives" and "because-motives." The former involves goals characterized as intentions, plans, hopes, and interests aimed at the future. The latter, "because-motives," are rooted in past experiences and accrued knowledge, oriented toward the past. In this context, the reasons for women's adoption of

Social Life in the Family Environment

Each informant inevitably brings forth a distinct narrative of experiences and emotions intertwined with the social interaction and perspectives offered by their respective families upon adopting the veil. The researcher elucidates these experiences in the family setting, encompassing interactions with parents, spouses, and extended family members, including uncles and cousins. The choice to wear the veil by the informants naturally spawns a variety of experiences, including feedback and reactions from their families.

Notably, one informant, YH, described the ongoing communication process related to her veil usage with her parents and children, who held diverse attitudes. She endeavored to elucidate the reasons behind her daily use of the veil to her mother and child, recounting the difficult circumstances that led her to make this decision. Her statement reflects her commitment to open communication within her family:

"Obviously, this is the toughest part, right? We must not only consider our own happiness but also acknowledge the people around us. We can't pretend in the face of adversity. So, I chose to be candid with my mother and child, particularly my eldest daughter, who is old enough to comprehend our family's issues. I explained to them the reasons that led me to this decision." (Interview with YH, a Veiled Career Woman, 16/4/2021).

Despite the challenges in explaining her reasons for wearing the veil to her mother and child, YH recognized the necessity of disclosing this information within her family to maintain transparent relationships. Regrettably, her eldest daughter secretly disagreed with her mother's decision to wear the veil. YH narrated her daughter's sentiment, citing embarrassment as the primary reason for her dissent:

"What surprised and saddened me the most was that my eldest daughter, who is a teenager, disapproved of my wearing the veil. Just imagine, Ma'am, she had an overnight stay at school, and the next day she asked me not to pick her up or approach her friends because she was embarrassed of me, claiming that I was different from the other parents in terms of clothing. It was truly disheartening, more so than any of the other challenges I faced while wearing the veil." (Interview with a Veiled Career Woman, YH, 16/4/2021).

The reason behind YH's decision to wear the veil failed to elicit a favorable response from her daughter, who expressed her unease with her mother's distinctive attire. Consequently, their communication deteriorated, primarily concerning clothing choices and perspectives related to the veil. Another informant, MLW, encountered a similar predicament regarding family communication and approval of her decision to wear the veil. MLW attributed her mother's initial reluctance to grant permission for veiling to the fact that she had not been married at the time. Despite her mother's reservations, MLW elaborated on her motivation to wear the veil, stemming from negative experiences with the opposite sex:

"When I first started wearing the veil, my mother was quite talkative, asking numerous questions. Fortunately, my father and sister supported my decision to continue wearing the veil, and they encouraged me to talk to my mother. My father advised me to do it gradually and suggested that I marry someone who is also in favor of the veil so that I could demonstrate to my mother that veiling is acceptable, even preferable. That's what my father said. I'm even more enthusiastic about veiling." (Interview with MLW, a Veiled Career Woman, 20/4/2021).

While MLW's father and younger sibling expressed support for her choice, her mother responded with skepticism and raised a series of inquiries that conveyed a negative perception of veiling. Consequently, this had an impact on the sensitivity of clothing and veiling-related opinions in the communication between MLW and her mother. The majority of informants in this study extensively discussed interactions with their parents, siblings, and children. This context revolved around the process of conveying information, with informants acting as children to their parents or as mothers to their children. During this exchange, the informants encountered a spectrum of reactions and responses from their families. To facilitate mutual understanding, informants explained the origins of their decisions to wear the veil, elucidated the legal and Islamic foundations of veiling, and highlighted the benefits derived from this practice.

Social Life in the Association Environment

Additionally, within the societal context, socialization extends to various environments, encompassing friendship circles, neighborhoods, and activities beyond the confines of family or work. Each informant brings forth their own unique experiences within these environments. Notably, many informants share the experience of interacting within friendship circles, which constitute an integral facet of their lives. Throughout the process of donning the veil, individuals surrounding the informants, including their friends, have reacted in a multitude of ways. A recurring theme among informants is the reception of negative responses from friends following their decision to wear the veil. This phenomenon is exemplified in the account of the AP informant:

"At first, it hurt, because I greeted them, and their response was silence. Then, they looked at me as if they were afraid, especially when I wore the dark robe. He called me a 'ninja' and seemed afraid to approach." (Interview with AP, a Veiled Career Woman, 30/4/2021).

The AP informant not only experienced indifference and being ignored by friends but also encountered instances where some friends responded with surprising words:

"In the past, I was quite popular (pauses and laughs). I was very confident (followed by laughter). However, that's the reality; I had a lot of admirers, those who wanted to date me or be close to me. Now, after I began wearing the veil, a friend asked me, 'Why are you wearing the veil? You're beautiful, aren't you?' I replied, 'No, it's not about being ugly; I wear the veil to conceal my face.' Hearing that was disheartening. In addition to friends who distanced themselves from me after I started wearing the veil, there were also some who made derogatory remarks." (Interview with AP, a Veiled Career Woman, 30/4/2021).

The responses received by AP ranged from indifference to derogatory comments, contributing to strained relationships between AP and some of her friends. Nevertheless, not all informants encountered negative reactions; one, with the initials INQ, experienced a different response from her friends when she chose to wear the veil. INQ was met with positive responses and support from certain friends:

"Alhamdulillah, my friends have been very supportive of my decision to wear the veil. They have been praying for me to remain steadfast and have offered many prayers. Perhaps they also respect my choice more; they simply understand it. They don't treat me any differently or avoid me altogether. Thankfully, I have friends with a high level of tolerance." (Interview with INQ, a Veiled Career Woman, 10/5/2021).

Within her social circle, INQ's decision to wear the veil was met with good wishes for her continued commitment to veiling, fostering a positive and unaltered social dynamic. HMA, who resides in an environment infused with Islamic influences, received support from her friends, including those who wore the veil and those who did not:

"Overall, I haven't faced any issues; my friends support me in wearing the veil, even though the majority of those around me are non-veiled friends. They haven't bullied me or distanced themselves from me. I'm immensely grateful for friends like them. My old friends didn't have many comments when they saw me wearing the veil; they simply said 'MashaAllah, may you remain steadfast' and offered many prayers." (Interview with HMA, a Veiled Career Woman, 20/5/2021).

In the realm of friendship environments, the researcher identified several categories of responses received by research informants from their friends following their decision to wear the veil, as elucidated above. These categories encompass sensitive communication, indifference, awkwardness, and no change, which implies that relationships remain unaffected. These sub-categories can be further divided into negative experiences and positive experiences. Negative communication experiences are exemplified by the AP informant's account of negative perceptions from certain friends. This experience aligns with prior research that associates the veil with radicalism and negative connotations, particularly in regions where veiling is not commonplace (Zempi, 2019). On the other hand, several informants experienced positive responses, including prayers and being viewed as role models. Such positive behaviors were marked by requests for discussions with the informant about their veiling journey, its benefits, and related aspects of their decision to wear the veil.

Social Life in the Work Environment

Within the context of the work environment, several distinct sub-categories of responses were identified among research informants. The most prevalent response involved obtaining permission without restrictions. This often occurred when the workplace supervisor supported the use of the veil and deemed it non-disruptive to the informant's work. The second response was obtaining permission with certain conditions, particularly prevalent among informants who worked as teachers. The third response, however, involved receiving stern reprimands from colleagues due to internal regulations prohibiting veil-wearing. An illustration of the response category is exemplified by the experience of the YH informant, who received a warning from a colleague reprimanding her for wearing the veil at work. Consequently, YH decided to replace her veil with a mask while at the workplace.

In light of this, it is noteworthy that workplace regulations and attitudes towards the veil can lead to variations in communication and interactions. Such experiences align with previous research, which suggests that while the veil may not be globally banned, its presence in public spaces, such as workplaces, can invite negative reactions and prejudice (Garcia Yeste et al., 2020). In some cases, prohibitions on wearing the veil in public spaces are viewed as oppressive and coercive, confining veiled women as if under house arrest (Zempi, 2019). Moreover, existing literature indicates that bans on veiling may be fueled by suspicions of veiled individuals' connections to Islamophobia and radicalism (Zempi, 2019).

Another example is the experience of the IHP informant. In her previous workplace, IHP was subject to a ban on wearing the veil. Her role as an administrator and customer service staff involved frequent interactions with clients and the general public, prompting the company to issue a warning letter to IHP. The concern was that wearing the veil might impede the communication process at work. Consequently, IHP chose to resign from her previous workplace and joined her current workplace, where she is allowed to wear the veil. This transition brought her much satisfaction:

"The place where I used to work didn't allow me to wear the veil, even though I wore it. The problem was that I had a lot of interactions with clients, many of whom were non-Muslims. The previous work environment posed a considerable challenge. People were generally friendly. So, I decided to resign and moved to Bandung, where I work now." (Interview with IHP, a Veiled Career Woman, 22/4/2021).

IHP further elaborated, "I received warning letters from my superiors about my veil multiple times (accompanied by laughter). Eventually, I decided to leave. Alhamdulillah, I got what I wanted – the freedom to wear the veil, even though the incentives are not as attractive as my previous job. In my current job, I'm much more comfortable, despite working until Saturdays. The people are very welcoming, especially my boss. One of my superiors even allowed me to wear the full veil, without any exceptions. I'm very grateful for this" (Interview with IHP, a Veiled Career Woman, 22/4/2021).

IHP's current workplace permits her to wear the veil without any exceptions. Despite the longer working hours, even on Saturdays, she is grateful for the opportunity to work while wearing the veil. This decision has positively impacted her communication with superiors and co-workers. Notably, IHP also noted that her workplace environment allows her to wear the veil without any hindrance to her work.

The ZB informant had a distinctive communication experience in her workplace while wearing the veil. Although no regulations prohibited veil-wearing at work, ZB received a warning regarding her veil midway through her employment. This warning arose in the wake of widespread media coverage linking terrorists to veiled women during her first year of work. Her workplace, concerned about the potential negative associations, confronted ZB and gave her two choices: remove the veil or resign. After much contemplation, ZB decided not to remove the veil, as she had grown comfortable in her workplace. She instead requested a transfer to a department that had less interaction with the general public. Eventually, her request was granted, allowing her to continue wearing the veil. ZB's account highlights the impact of societal perceptions and media representations on veiled individuals in the workplace.

Moreover, the MLW informant encountered a unique communication experience when she resumed working after a brief hiatus due to her veil. Prior to her marriage, MLW worked as a kindergarten teacher, where she occasionally removed her veil to facilitate interactions with the children. However, her stance on the veil remained consistent with her husband's belief that, except for emergencies, she should not remove it in any setting, including her workplace. After marriage, she transitioned to a position as a Public Relations representative at a health institution. Initially, MLW was apprehensive about her job interview and whether she would be accepted while wearing the veil. Nevertheless, she was offered the position and encountered no restrictions on wearing the veil:

"I have been working here for about two years now. Initially, I was uncertain whether I would be accepted, given that I was still wearing the veil. However, Allah's plans

are extraordinary, Ra. I'm grateful to have been accepted, with no prohibitions on wearing the veil. I'm very thankful for this, even though the journey has had its challenges" (Interview with MLW, a Veiled Career Woman, 28/5/2021).

MLW continued, "Initially, when I joined, I was accompanied by just one person at work. No one offered guidance or greeted me. Typically, when new employees join, there is some interaction. However, I experienced none of that. It didn't bother me, Ra. Even the manager treated me similarly. Eventually, the manager's mother, who initially held negative views, had a change of heart and began to greet me. It was a gradual shift, and even though I still occasionally engage in debates about the veil with my sister, things have improved" (Interview with MLW, a Veiled Career Woman, 28/5/2021).

MLW's workplace allowed her to wear the veil without restrictions. Despite her initial experiences of indifference and silence, her commitment and dedication to her work gradually led to improved interactions. Her superiors recognized her abilities and skills, ultimately earning her a place of respect and acknowledgment among her colleagues. In this category, the dynamics of communication in the workplace have been delineated. The positive behaviors arising from the allowance to wear the veil encompass several influences, including the respectful attitudes and behaviors of superiors who honor their subordinates' choices and decisions, the perception that the veil does not interfere with work, and the absence of written prohibitions. This illustrates the varied responses veiled career women encounter in their work environments and how these responses influence their professional relationships and interactions.

The Veil as a Religious and Fashion Identity

Upon further analysis of the collected data, it becomes evident that women who wear the veil in public spaces have two primary motivations: the expression of religious identity and a fashion choice. In the context of this study, the religious identity closely aligns with the concept of self-identity, encompassing various facets, such as career identities, political identities, religious identities, interpersonal identities, intellectual identities, sexual identities, ethnic identities, interest-based identities, personality identities, and physical identities, as outlined by Erickson and corroborated by Hasanah.

The act of veiling by women in public spaces serves as an embodiment of their religious attitudes. This manifestation reflects their aspiration to become better individuals, more obedient to the divine will. This multifaceted approach to identity underscores the intricate nature of religious identity as it intertwines with individual identity. However, beyond this, the adoption of the veil can also be perceived as a fashion choice. This interpretation emerges from the underlying motives of the respondents, who indicate that their decision to wear the veil is not solely rooted in profound religious convictions that are expressed as a matter of diversity. Instead, it is often driven by various social factors within the family, workplace, or broader society.

It is crucial to acknowledge that both these dimensions, religious and fashion-based, contribute to the decision to wear the veil. It is essential to avoid attaching negative stigmas to veil-wearing individuals, such as assumptions of exclusivity, fundamentalism, or unfounded associations with terrorism, as such generalizations do not capture the full spectrum of motivations that underlie this choice. Understanding the complex interplay of religious and fashion identities in the decision to wear the veil is essential to fostering tolerance and respecting individual choices in this matter.

Conclusion

Every aspect examined in the research results section is fundamentally interconnected, forming a comprehensive understanding of the experiences that women undergo in their daily lives while wearing the veil. The findings of the research reveal that the primary reasons for informants choosing to wear the veil are rooted in negative experiences with the opposite sex, external societal influences, elevated levels of anxiety, and familial issues. Furthermore, these women who don the veil have distinct objectives, such as fortifying their religious faith, concealing their private parts, shielding themselves from unwanted advances by the opposite sex, and safeguarding against inappropriate behavior.

These social dynamics, which women experience in their daily lives while wearing the veil, extend to their family environments. This interconnectedness underscores the intricate nature of their experiences and the multifaceted factors influencing their decision to adopt the veil as a part of their daily lives. It is essential to recognize the interplay of these elements, as they collectively shape the experiences and identities of these women who wear the veil.

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