

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF HIJAB IN FOSTERING PERSONAL SECURITY AND POSITIVE BODY IMAGE A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Indonesian and Pakistani Women's Perspectives

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Abstract: This study explores the impact of the hijab on women's personal security, body image, and cultural perceptions in Indonesian and Pakistani contexts. Twenty-three female participants, aged 15-50, who regularly wear the hijab, participated in semi-structured interviews selected through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis of the interviews highlighted the hijab's role in providing safety and protection, influenced by cultural norms and the Islamic principle of 'Wajib' (obligatory practice). Both Pakistani and Indonesian women perceived the hijab as enhancing beauty, modesty, and comfort, challenging stereotypes and empowering women. Indonesian participants reported encountering job-related challenges due to hijab requirements, while Pakistani women faced fewer such obstacles. Overall, the hijab was positively perceived in both societies, symbolizing religious devotion, personal choice, and cultural significance. This research addresses a significant gap by examining the hijab's influence on personal security and body image among Indonesian and Pakistani women, contributing valuable insights into lesser-known aspects of hijab perception.

Keywords: Hijab, personal security, positive body image, Islam, culture.

Introduction

The Hijab, a traditional headscarf worn by Muslim women in the presence of men outside their immediate family, holds significant values. It relates closely to religious, cultural, and social value.¹ It acts

¹ Abdul Rahim, "Between Piety And Lifestyle: Hijab Shar'i on the Commodification Practices of the Islamic Culture Industry," *Ulumuna: Journal of Islamic studies* 26, 1 (2022).

as a symbolic barrier between genders, aimed at preventing adultery and carrying diverse meanings based on individual perspectives. In culturally rich nations like Indonesia² and Pakistan,³ which have large Muslim populations,⁴ the hijab transcends being mere attire to become a powerful identity marker for many women.⁵ Its historical and cultural importance is multifaceted and complex, shaped by various social and cultural influences over time.⁶ With different practices and degrees of seclusion observed across civilizations.⁷ Certainly, hijab is not *niqab*, which is covering all body from head to toe.⁸ The hijab's association with women's rights, modernity, religious identity, and political expression varies across cultural contexts.⁹ Admittedly, there are many factors that popularize the use of hijab in addition to religious motive, ranging from fashion, politics and media.¹⁰ Likewise, Indonesian Muslims often follow a syncretic form of Islam, placing less emphasis on religious symbols such as the hijab compared to other regions.¹¹

The hijab is linked to notable psychological benefits for women. Research by Gulamhussein reveals that women who wear the hijab experience lower levels of body dissatisfaction, and less societal

² Muhammad Zain et, al., "Hijab Discourse in Indonesia: The Battle of Meaning Between Sharia and Culture in Public Space," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 7, 3 (2023)

³ Waseem Fayyaz, et al., "Hijab and Social Cultural Factors among Urban Women of Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 43, 1 (2023)

⁴ LD. Indriani, "Trajectory Konstruksi Jilbab di Indonesia: Pertarungan Beragam Kepentingan," *Jurnal Mahasiswa Komunikasi Cantrik* (2023), p. 543).

⁵ A. Tawakalni, RYA. Hambali, & AG. Albustomi, "Konsep Hijab Menurut Muratdha Muthahhari dan Relevansinya dengan Persoalan Etis dan Teologis," *Jurnal Riset Agama* 2, 3 (2022) pp. 1–18.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ H. Çaksen & F. Çaksen, "Hijab Protects Adolescent Girls and Women from Sexual Harassment," *Journal of Pediatric Neurology* (2023), p. 67.

⁸ Maghfur Ahmad, et al., "Niqab, Protest Movement, and the Salafization of Indonesian Islam," *QIJS, Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, 2 (2021).

⁹ C. Puspitasari & H. Hanan, "The Impact of the Hijab Concept on Place Attachment in the Arab Settlement of Kutorejo, Tuban," *Journal of Settlements and Spatial Planning* 12 (2022), pp. 43–56.

¹⁰ Ali Tantowi, "The Popularizing Factors Of Muslim Women's Wear In Indonesia: From Politic, Media to Fashion," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 17, 2 (2023).

¹¹ Ali Tantowi, "The Quest of Indonesian Muslim Identity: Debates on Veiling from the 1920s to 1940s," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 4, 1 (2010), pp. 62-90.

pressure to conform to beauty standards set by peers and media.¹² This suggests that wearing the hijab can improve mental health by challenging societal appearance expectations. Additional research by Kertechian & Swami indicates that the hijab provides a sense of personal security and positively impacts body image.¹³ The hijab challenges traditional feminist imagery by offering protection and presenting an alternative narrative rooted in religious beliefs. Another study found that the hijab fosters self-respect, dignity, and allowing women to express their religious beliefs while maintaining modesty.¹⁴

This study aims to fill a critical gap by examining the hijab's impact on personal security and body image among Indonesian and Pakistani girls. It seeks to understand how the hijab affects personal security, compare its influence on body image in both countries, and analyze cultural differences in perceptions of the hijab. Understanding the hijab's role in shaping these aspects is crucial for promoting mental well-being and self-esteem within this demographic. The study included 23 female participants—11 from Pakistan and 12 from Indonesia—aged 15-50, from diverse socio-economic, educational, and regional backgrounds, using a purposive sampling technique. Participants wore the hijab in various styles, ensuring a wide range of perspectives. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexible and in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and views.

An in-depth literature review was carried out to collect secondary data, which provided essential context and corroborative evidence for the research. A comprehensive examination and analysis were performed on pertinent academic articles, books, and prior studies addressing the influence of the hijab on personal security, body image, and cultural differences. The interview transcripts underwent thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the hijab's impact on personal security, body image, and cultural diversity. This method offered qualitative insights into the hijab's role in shaping

¹² Q. Gulamhussein & NR. Eaton, "Hijab, Religiosity, and Psychological Wellbeing of Muslim Women in the United States," *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 9, 2 (2015).

¹³ KS. Kertechian & V. Swami, "The Hijab as a Protective Factor for Body Image and Disordered Eating: A Replication in French Muslim Women," *Mental Health Religion & Culture* 76 (2017).

¹⁴ MF. Najib, T. Fauziah, T. Djatnika, D. Saefulloh, & D. Purnamasari, "The Impact of Utilitarian and Hedonic Values on Hijab Buying Intentions: Evidence from Indonesia," *Journal of Marketing Innovation* 2,2 (2022).

personal security and body image, underscoring variations between Indonesian and Pakistani girls. The study aspires to enrich existing literature and support future efforts aimed at enhancing the mental well-being and self-esteem of Muslim girls in these areas.

Table 1. Participants Characteristics

Participant	Country	Age	Gender	Occupation	Ethnicity
P1	Pakistan	20-25	Female	Student	Pashtoon
P2	Pakistan	30-35	Female	Lecturer	Pashtoon
P3	Pakistan	40-45	Female	Teacher	Punjabi
P4	Indonesia	15-20	Female	Student	Javanese
P5	Indonesia	25-30	Female	Housewife	Javanese
P6	Indonesia	45-50	Female	Worker	Javanese
P7	Pakistan	25-30	Female	Worker	Punjabi
P8	Indonesia	20-25	Female	Student	Batak
P9	Pakistan	35-40	Female	Student	Punjabi
P10	Indonesia	20-25	Female	Student	Javanese
P11	Indonesia	30-35	Female	Doctor	Sundanese
P12	Pakistan	20-25	Female	Student	Pashtoon
P13	Indonesia	25-30	Female	Housewife	Javanese
P14	Pakistan	25-30	Female	Student	Sindhi
P15	Indonesia	40-45	Female	Teacher	Sundanese
P16	Pakistan	30-35	Female	Lecturer	Punjabi
P17	Indonesia	15-20	Female	Student	Batak
P18	Pakistan	20-25	Female	Housewife	Pashtoon
P19	Indonesia	35-40	Female	Worker	Javanese
P20	Pakistan	25-30	Female	Student	Sindhi
P21	Indonesia	25-30	Female	Lecturer	Javanese
P22	Pakistan	45-50	Female	Teacher	Pashtoon
P23	Indonesia	20-25	Female	Doctor	Sundanese

Impact of Hijab on Female Personal Security

Participants from Pakistan and Indonesia highlighted how societal attitudes and public acceptance significantly impact their sense of safety when wearing the hijab. Cultural norms play a crucial role in shaping these perceptions, with wearing the hijab often seen as enhancing confidence. For many women in both countries, the

religious significance of the hijab emerged as a prominent theme, with the Islamic obligation known as 'Wajib' frequently cited as a key factor in fostering confidence, peace of mind, and a feeling of security. Several Pakistani and Indonesian women emphasized its role as a religious duty that strengthens their faith and enhances their sense of security.

Participants view the hijab as a shield that enhances personal security, acting as a safeguard against unwelcome attention, exploitation, and criticism. Many describe it as a protective layer, with Participant 6, a 23-year-old woman from Indonesia, stated, "it gives safety against any kind of disrespect." The hijab is seen as bolstering security in diverse situations, from social gatherings to motorcycle rides and specific locales. Its role in boosting overall satisfaction is underscored, with several Indonesian and Pakistani women highlighting its contribution to their sense of safety, particularly in specific settings. Indonesian participants consistently address the cultural expectations and challenges they face when choosing not to wear the hijab. The widespread acceptance of the hijab in Indonesian society fosters a collective sense of security.

Previous research has yielded similar insights, highlighting the hijab's role as a protective element that fosters a strong sense of identity, social cohesion, and resilience against societal pressures such as negative media portrayals and objectification.¹⁵ This positive function correlates with increased life satisfaction and reduced psychological distress symptoms.¹⁶ Conversely, it can also heighten visibility as a religious minority, exposing Muslim women to discrimination, harassment, and victimization, thereby adversely impacting their psychological well-being. The hijab often represents a compromise that respects individual preferences for modesty.¹⁷ Moreover, its wearing can influence perceptions of attractiveness and

¹⁵ EN. Maqsood & HL. Chen, *The Hijab and Muslim women's Well-being in a Western Society* (Iowa State University, 2017).

¹⁶ Mercedes Sheen, Hajar Aman Key Yekani, and Timothy R Jordan, *The Good, the Bad and the Hijab: A Study of Implicit Associations Made by Practicing Muslims in Their Native Muslim Country* (Psychological Reports, 2023, 126(6), 2887).

¹⁷ JAC. Everett, et al., "Covered in stigma? The impact of differing levels of Islamic head-covering on explicit and implicit biases toward Muslim women," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 45, 2 (2015), pp. 90–104.

shape personal attributes attributed to individuals, underscoring its complex and context-dependent psychological effects.¹⁸

Table 2. Perceived Benefits of Wearing Hijab by Pakistani and Indonesian Participants

No.	Benefit of Hijab	Pakistani Participants (Number of Mentions)	Indonesian Participants (Number of Mentions)
1	Enhances sense of safety	3	4
2	Cultural and religious duty	2	3
3	Protection against exploitation	2	3
4	Respect and positive image	1	1
5	Social acceptance and community support	1	2
6	Reduction in anxiety and discomfort	-	3
7	Professional environment protection	1	2

Four Indonesian participants noted that abstaining from wearing the hijab could lead to discomfort due to cultural norms and beliefs. Participant 7, a 35-year-old woman from Indonesia, shared, “*In my community, most women wear the hijab, and not doing so makes me feel uneasy.*” In contrast, Pakistani participants highlighted the positive perception of the hijab in their society, noting its role in mitigating criticism. Participant 5, a 43-year-old woman, mentioned, “*Wearing the hijab gives me a sense of security and projects a positive image; others view me as a respectable woman.*” This perspective differs from research by Swami in France, where the visibility associated with the hijab can expose women to discrimination and harassment.¹⁹ Indonesian respondents, particularly

¹⁸ M. Mahmudulhassan & M. Abuzar, “Developing Religious Identity: Assessing the Effects of Aliya Madrasahs on Muslim Students in Bangladesh,” *Universal Journal of Islamic Education and Multiculturalism* 2, 1 (2024), pp. 49–60.

¹⁹ V. Swami, et al., “Is the hijab protective? An investigation of body image and related constructs among British Muslim women,” *British Journal of Psychology* 105, 3 (2017), pp. 352–363.

those living independently, emphasized the hijab's protective function in warding off negative interactions. The hijab is widely regarded as a safeguard, especially in challenging situations. Participant 3, a 29-year-old woman from Indonesia, succinctly stated, “*For me, the hijab serves as a shield against adverse circumstances, enhancing overall security.*” This viewpoint resonates with findings from Aytar and Bodor, highlighting the hijab's role in protecting against sexual harassment in professional environments.²⁰

Prior studies have underscored the hijab's role in shielding against sexual harassment in professional settings.²¹ Women who wear the hijab often find a profound sense of community and support within their religious circles.²² Gulamhussein and Eaton²³ highlight that the hijab can increase visibility as Muslims, potentially drawing negative attention in certain contexts.²⁴ Additionally, discussions surrounding the prohibition of the hijab in educational settings delve into broader societal issues such as national identity, secularism, and the intricate balance between religious freedom and gender equality.²⁵ Incorporating hijab practices into school programs further emphasizes the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of how religious identity, personal security, and societal perceptions intersect.²⁶

Analysis of participant statements highlights the complex relationship between wearing the hijab and female personal security in Indonesian and Pakistani settings. While common themes include the impact of cultural norms, religious obligations, and safety advantages of wearing a headscarf, notable distinctions emerge in how individuals from each country articulate their viewpoints. These insights deepen our understanding of the cultural, social, and personal dynamics

²⁰ E. Aytar & P. Bodor, “Coping strategies among an intersectional group: Muslim women in Hungary,” *Intersections* 7, 4 (2021), pp. 52–69.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Swami, “The Hijab as a Protective Factor for Body Image and Disordered Eating.

²³ Q. Gulamhussein & NR. Eaton, “Hijab, Religiosity, and Psychological Wellbeing of Muslim Women in the United States,” *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 9, 2 (2015).

²⁴ Çaksen, *Hijab Protects Adolescent Girls and Women from Sexual Harassment.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁶ J. Junaidin, et al., “Dimensions of spirituality and meaning of life in Muslim women wearing hijab in Indonesia: dimensions of spirituality and meaning of life in Muslim women using hijab in Indonesia,” *Psikis, Jurnal Psikologi Islami* 8, 2 (2022), pp. 151–159.

influencing the connection between the hijab and personal security across different contexts.

Impact of Hijab Adoption on Positive Body Image

Our research focused on examining how wearing the hijab influences positive body image among participants from Indonesia and Pakistan. Across both countries, women consistently reported feeling more beautiful, decent, and comfortable when wearing the hijab. A 25-year-old participant from Pakistan shared, "*Wearing the hijab makes me feel more beautiful, decent, and comfortable,*" emphasizing its positive impact on her body image. This reflects a broader belief in the hijab as a practice of virtue. Similarly, an Indonesian participant expressed increased self-confidence, comfort, and attractiveness as benefits of wearing the hijab. Participants from both nations rejected the idea that the hijab reduces their charm. Instead, they highlighted that the hijab enhances their beauty, countering misconceptions about diminished attractiveness. This contrasts with research from Saudi that suggests a link between hijab-wearing and lower perceived physical attractiveness.²⁷ Our participants provided views that challenge this association. For instance, an Indonesian participant mentioned that the hijab makes her look younger and more decent. For her and others, the hijab serves as both a religious duty and a source of empowerment in their personal appearance.

A 23-year-old participant from Indonesia stated, "*I feel more beautiful and comfortable because the hijab covers my hair, which I don't feel is good.*" This illustrates how the hijab can address perceived imperfections, thereby enhancing feelings of beauty and comfort. Similarly, a 44-year-old participant from Pakistan expressed, "*I feel relaxed because wearing a hijab allows me to conceal any imperfections. It shields me from judgment, and I feel at ease, relaxed, and more beautiful.*" For her, the hijab significantly contributes to relaxation by concealing perceived flaws, thus fostering a sense of ease. In her view, the hijab is a powerful tool for enhancing positive body image and beauty.

Supporting our findings, research in France indicates that Muslim women who wear the hijab experience lower weight discrepancy, and

²⁷ Jordan, *The Good, the Bad and the Hijab*.

reduced body dissatisfaction.²⁸ Studies in Indonesia suggest that negative stigma toward women wearing the hijab is diminishing, with fashionable hijabs maintaining elements of beauty and style while upholding religious values.²⁹ Research in the United Kingdom has found that hijab-wearing women report a more positive body image,³⁰ and studies in America highlight the hijab as a means of female empowerment.³¹ These findings reveal both positive and negative impacts of the hijab on body image. However, in our studies in Indonesia and Pakistan, most participants agreed that wearing the hijab enhances their feelings of beauty and comfort, providing a deep sense of relaxation.

Overall, the majority of Indonesian and Pakistani participants view the hijab as a way to enhance attractiveness and decency. They report increased beauty, decency, and comfort, challenging myths that suggest the hijab diminishes charm.

Challenges in Wearing the Hijab: A Cross-Cultural Perspective

The challenges faced by women wearing the hijab in Indonesia and Pakistan vary significantly. In Indonesia, women often encounter job search difficulties, with some employers requiring the removal of hijabs as a condition for employment. Refusal to comply frequently leads to job rejections, with a preference sometimes shown to candidates who do not wear the hijab, highlighting a significant professional barrier. Conversely, most Pakistani women did not report substantial challenges related to hijab-wearing, emphasizing the different social and professional environments for hijab-wearing individuals in diverse cultural contexts.

Numerous studies in Indonesia confirm these findings, documenting similar challenges faced by hijab-wearing women. Adding to the issue is the widespread scrutiny of women's decisions regarding the

²⁸ Muhammad Waqar, et al., "A Scholastic Review of the Injunctions Relating to Covering Oneself in Light of Surah Ahzab," *International Journal of Advanced Research* 10, 3 (2022), pp. 491–505.

²⁹ M. Asmara, et al., "Trendy Veil: Law, Function, and Its Stigma on Muslim Society," *Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah* 22, 2 (2023), pp. 245–257.

³⁰ Swami, "The Hijab as a Protective Factor for Body Image and Disordered Eating, p. 876.

³¹ Swami, et al., "Is the hijab protective? An investigation of body image, pp. 352–363.

hijab,³² which can lead to misunderstandings and potential violations of their autonomy.³³ These challenges underscore the complex nature of hijab adoption, where considerations go beyond religious duty to include physical appearance and lifestyle factors.³⁴ Some Indonesian women also reported discomfort from wearing the hijab in hot weather, necessitating the use of fans for relief, highlighting practical challenges due to environmental conditions. In the initial stages of hijab adoption, two Indonesian participants (Participant 3, aged 34, and Participant 5, aged 30) faced common social challenges. Queries from others during this period caused discomfort and self-doubt, highlighting the social hurdles encountered during the early phases of embracing the hijab. Interestingly, only one Pakistani participant mentioned such inquiries during the initial adoption stage.

Table 3. Challenges Faced by Wearing the Hijab in Indonesian and Pakistani Participants

Category	Indonesian Participants	Pakistani Participants
Professional Challenges	Indonesian participants Encounter job search obstacles, including demands to remove hijab as condition for employment; refusal results in job offer rejections. Some employers actively seek non-hijab wearers.	Majority Pakistani participants did not report significant challenges related to hijab in job market.
Environmental Challenges	The discussed issues regarding wearing the hijab in warm weather included discomfort due to heat, which led to the need for fans to alleviate these conditions, emphasizing practical challenges posed by the environment.	Not specified as a significant issue.

³² SW. Siswomihardjo, S. Sudiyanti, & B. Sutikno, "Testing the robustness of theory of planned behavior in predicting women's intention to wear Jilbab," *Jurnal Kawistara* 8, 3 (2019).

³³ UN. Prianti, et al., "Follow the style or the God? A case study on Religiosity Dynamic among Millennial Hijab-Stylists in Surabaya," (Proceedings of International Conference on Psychology, Mental Health, Religion, and Spirituality, 2023).

³⁴ S. Pertiwi & N. Asnawi, "Membaca persoalan hijab dan otonomi perempuan melalui epistemology ignorance," *Paradigma: Jurnal Kajian Budaya* 12, 2 (2022), p. 152.

Category	Indonesian Participants	Pakistani Participants
Social Challenges During Hijab Adoption	During the initial adoption of the hijab, Indonesian participants faced common inquiries from others. These questions often led to discomfort and self-doubt, underscoring the social challenges encountered during the early stages of embracing the hijab.	Only one Pakistani participant mentions inquiries during initial hijab adoption stage.

Previous studies suggest that hijab-wearing women in Pakistan may encounter discrimination. However, participants in our study did not report such challenges, except for initial inquiries during the adoption phase of the hijab. Ahmad's research indicates that hijab-wearing women may face challenges in various aspects of employment processes.³⁵ Women who wear the hijab encounter discrimination in job opportunities due to societal perceptions of the hijab as a prominent aspect of Muslim.³⁶ The hijab also contributes to divisions in the inclusion and exclusion of women within the Islamic/Muslim community in Pakistan.³⁷ Examples such as the ban on veils in France and the mandatory wearing of the chador in Iran illustrate state efforts to exclude “foreign influences” by regulating women's attire. Although these laws aim to uphold human rights, both French and Iranian states use veil regulations to discriminate against women.³⁸ In many religions women often hold subordinate roles compared to men.³⁹

Our study underscores the need for Indonesian governmental intervention to establish robust policies preventing discrimination

³⁵ S. Ahmed & KM. Gorey, “Employment discrimination faced by Muslim women wearing the hijab: Exploratory meta-analysis,” *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 32, 3 (2023), pp. 115–123.

³⁶ A. Ashfaq, A. Usman, & M. Saud, “The hijab debate in the European countries: Perspective of women return migrants in Pakistan,” *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik* 36, 2 (2023): pp. 278–287.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ DM. Safitri, “What went wrong with the veil? A comparative analysis of the discourse of the Veil in France, Iran, and Indonesia,” *Al-Jami'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 48, 1 (2010), pp. 81-100.

³⁹ AGJ. Nasution, et al., “Fashion Jilbab di Kalangan Mahasiswa Fakultas Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Sumatera Utara,” *Abkam* 1, 1 (2022), pp. 106–115.

against hijab-wearing individuals by employers, ensuring equitable opportunities in the job market for all.

Perception of Wearing the Hijab in Indonesian and Pakistani Communities

The hijab is widely valued and respected as a beneficial practice. Individuals from Pakistan and Indonesia express profound admiration for those who wear it. Serving as a symbol of protection, the hijab fosters a robust sense of identity, social cohesion, and resilience against societal pressures in these cultural contexts. It closely adheres to Islamic principles, promoting virtues and enhancing moral character.⁴⁰ For urban Muslim women in Indonesia, the hijab has become a means to assert their Islamic identity and engage in various community activities, from religious gatherings to fashion shows and charity events.⁴¹ It also acts as a boundary marker within communities like the Tuneeca Lover Community (TLC), fulfilling religious obligations and symbolizing obedience.⁴² The growth of halal hijab fashion within the hijabi community is largely driven by religious beliefs, with factors such as practical necessity, fashion trends, and economic considerations also playing significant roles.⁴³

The decision to wear the hijab in both countries is deeply rooted in Islamic values, highlighting its protective function and individual choice.⁴⁴ In Pakistan, cultural and social perspectives on the hijab are shaped by identity, belonging, and religious convictions.⁴⁵ The practice of hijab carries diverse meanings across different societal strata,

⁴⁰ Chen, *The Hijab and Muslim women's Well-being in a Western Society*.

⁴¹ A. Subagio, et al., "Pengaruh Religiosity Dan Materialism Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Hijab Wanita Muda Indonesia," *Jurnal Akuntansi Dan Ekonomi* 7,3 (2022), pp. 1–6.

⁴² W. Nuroniyah, "Rethinking Hijab in Contemporary Indonesia: A Study of Hijab Community "Tuneeca Lover Community," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya* 4, 2 (2019), pp. 214–221.

⁴³ N. Susilawati, et al., "The Halal Fashion Trends for Hijabi Community: Ideology and Consumption," *Dinar: Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Keuangan Islam* 8, 2 (2021), pp. 35–46.

⁴⁴ M. Mahmudulhassan & M. Abuzar, "Harmony in the Family: Indicators of Marriage Success in Cultural and Religious Foundations in Bangladesh," *Universal Journal of Islam and Sharia* 2, 3 (2024), pp. 221–230.

⁴⁵ Saud, "The hijab debate in the European countries, pp. 278–287.

underscoring its multifaceted nature.⁴⁶ Attitudes towards hijras, a marginalized sexual minority in Pakistan,⁴⁷ are influenced by factors including gender, religiosity, and levels of interaction with hijras.⁴⁸ Among Pakistani university students, the meanings, patterns, and social roles of the hijab are influenced by personal preferences, religious obligations, familial expectations, and cultural norms.⁴⁹

The broader community generally regards wearing the hijab favorably, recognizing it as a noble practice and a means of safeguarding against unwanted attention. This viewpoint resonates across both Pakistani and Indonesian societies. The choice to wear the hijab is closely tied to presenting oneself as a person of upright character, symbolizing moral and cultural significance.⁵⁰ In both nations, the hijab serves as a tool for identity formation, reflecting religious identity as well as social and economic status.⁵¹



Figure 1: Typical Indonesian Hijab Style
Source:

<https://www.wallpaperflare.com/hijab-muslim-women-beautiful-portrait-girl-gorgeous-indonesian-wallpaper-akngp>



Figure 2: Typical Pakistani Hijab Style

Source: https://www.freepik.com/premium-photo/beautiful-girl-wearing-hijab-with-denim-jacket-smiling-posing-camera-indian-pakistani-model-21489658.htm#from_view=detail_alsolike

⁴⁶ T. Azhar, Q. Khan, & A. Naz, “Face of Negotiation theory: A Critical Analysis of Hijab Among Muslim Women in Pakistan,” *Pakistan Journal of Applied Social Sciences* 4, 1 (2016), pp. 54.

⁴⁷ H. Jami & A. Kamal, “Measuring Attitudes toward Hijras in Pakistan: Gender and Religiosity in Perspective,” *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research* 30 (2015), pp. 151–187.

⁴⁸ N. Javed, “Meanings, Patterns and the Social Function of Hijab amongst Female University Students,” (2014), available at <https://www.semanticscholar.org>

⁴⁹ N. Reayat et al., “Socio-Religious and Legal Perspectives on Women Health in Pakistan,” *Review of Education, Administration & Law* 4, 1 (2021), pp. 1–10.

⁵⁰ M. Zinira, “The Politics of Veiling: A Study of Hijab and Female Muslim Identity Representation in Indonesia,” *Islamic Studies Journal for Social Transformation* 37 (2017).

⁵¹ I. Indarti & L.H. Peng, “Modern hijab style in Indonesia as an expression of cultural identity and communication,” (2016), p. 4.

Motivations for Wearing the Hijab among Pakistani and Indonesian Women

Islamic Values and Personal Conviction

The decision to wear the hijab among women in Pakistan and Indonesia is profoundly influenced by Islamic principles and personal beliefs. In Pakistan, the hijab is seen as congruent with religious teachings and offers comfort and security in the workplace. Participant 2, a 29-year-old Pakistani woman, shared, "Because of my workplace I decided to wear the hijab as I feel more comfortable and secure." This choice is shaped by both religious doctrine and a desire for professional comfort.

Fashion and Modernity in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the hijab has transcended its religious origins to become a fashion trend, especially among the youth,⁵² symbolizing modernity while retaining religious importance. Media portrayals of religious conflicts, like the Ahmadiyah conflict, have been criticized for bias, favoring the majority.⁵³ Studies in Pakistan highlight how media can reinforce or challenge stereotypes about the hijab and women's rights.⁵⁴

Noble Practice and Cultural Significance

Communities generally view wearing the hijab positively, recognizing it as a noble act that protects against unwanted attention. Participants from both Pakistan and Indonesia hold this view, linking the hijab to noble character and cultural significance. Studies have noted challenges faced by Indonesia's collectivist culture during the Covid-19 pandemic,⁵⁵ and research on the religiosity and materialism of hijab-wearing students shows a positive impact on their purchasing decisions.⁵⁶ Additionally, a study on the Urdu press's coverage of

⁵² R. Istikomah & U. Sumbulah, "Inovasi Kegiatan Keagamaan di Hijabers Community Malang," *Evaluasi: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 7, 1 (2023), p. 94.

⁵³ ED. Wahab, et al., "Representation of Religious Conflict in Local Media," *Journal of Islamic World and Politics* 6, 2 (2022), pp. 253–271.

⁵⁴ A. Tabassum et al., "Discourse analysis of Pakistan media coverage during 'Aurat March' 2023: A Feminist Approach," *English Education Journal* 14 (2023), pp. 626–636.

⁵⁵ Sunarno, AB. Ashar, & LZ. Azizah, "Sikap Pelajar Kawruh Jiwa Menghadapi Pandemi Covid-19," *Happiness: Journal of Psychology and Islamic Science* 4, 2 (2020), p. 23.

⁵⁶ Subagio, et al., "Pengaruh Religiosity Dan Materialism Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Hijab, pp. 1–6.

minority groups found limited and often negative representation of minorities, including those who wear the hijab.⁵⁷

Role of Social Media

Social media has significantly influenced Indonesian Muslim women to adopt the hijab, providing a platform for discussing and promoting religious identity and personal expression. Previous studies corroborate this, noting social media's pivotal role in encouraging hijab adoption. Digital marketing, particularly via platforms like TikTok Shop, has emerged as an effective means of promoting small and medium enterprises (UMKM),⁵⁸ with the shar'i hijab becoming a global fashion product targeting Muslim women.⁵⁹

Positive Perceptions and Community Support

The hijab is overwhelmingly viewed positively and commendably by both Pakistani and Indonesian participants, who express widespread support and acknowledgment for those who wear it. The hijab serves as a protective factor, offering a strong sense of identity, social support, and resilience against societal challenges, aligning with prior research indicating its confidence-boosting effects.⁶⁰ However, Indonesian society faces challenges like the stigmatization and rejection of cross-hijabers,⁶¹ reflecting ongoing issues despite the hijab's widespread acceptance. The hijab has transformed the public appearance of Indonesian women, influencing both fashion and societal norms.⁶²

⁵⁷ Zara Khalid, "Representation of minorities in Urdu press in Pakistan," *Advanced Humanities and Social Sciences* 7 (2022), pp. 20–35.

⁵⁸ Siti Aisyah, Raudatun Sumi, Sonia Purba, Finik Kharianti, & Melsa Siagian, "Pemanfaatan Aplikasi TikTok Shop Sebagai Media Promosi Terhadap UMKM Toko Hijab Abiee Hijab di MMTC," *Jurnal Nusantara Berbakti* 1, 1 (2023), pp. 10–20.

⁵⁹ A. Rahim, "Between Piety and Lifestyle: Hijab Shar'i on the Commodification Practices of the Islamic Culture Industry," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 26, 1 (2022), pp. 88–118.

⁶⁰ MF. Najib, et al., "The Role of Religiosity on Hijab Buying Intention on Premium Hijab of Muslim Consumers in Indonesia," *KnE Social Sciences* (2023), pp. 193–205.

⁶¹ H. Rahayu, "Representasi Dan Citra Visual Artis Hijrah Di Media Online," *DeKaVe* 15, 1 (2022), pp. 62–75.

⁶² A. Mecca, et al., "Men with Hijab: Menetapkan Kejamakan Identitas Gender Cross-Hijaber di Media Sosial," *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora* 15, 2 (2022), p. 90.

Conclusion

Participants from both Pakistan and Indonesia emphasized the hijab's role as a protective measure, enhancing their sense of security against exploitation, criticism, and intrusive gazes. In Pakistan, the hijab is widely viewed positively, helping to mitigate criticism and projecting a respectable image. Conversely, Indonesian women faced cultural expectations, experiencing discomfort when not wearing the hijab. This cultural disparity is evident in employment contexts where Indonesian participants encounter challenges related to hijab removal, contrasting with their Pakistani counterparts who face fewer such issues. The study also highlights the hijab's positive impact on body image, as women from both countries reported feeling beautiful, modest, and comfortable while wearing it. These perceptions challenge the misconception that the hijab diminishes attractiveness, instead underscoring its role in enhancing personal appeal and empowerment. The varied experiences and viewpoints among women from Indonesia and Pakistan highlight the intricate interaction of cultural, social, and personal factors influencing how the hijab relates to issues like personal safety, body image, and societal acceptance. This nuanced perspective enhances discussions on the hijab's complex role as a symbol of identity, moral values, religious commitment, and cultural resilience in different cultural settings. []

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