

# Culture of Veil among University Students in Pakistan

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## Abstract

Culture is a set of norms that a society or a group of people set to live peaceful life and every member of that group has to follow these norms. These norms changes with the passage of the time. The socio-cultural factors that exert their influence within a family structure are belief, values, attitudes, acculturation levels, socialization goals and practices for modeling behaviours, communication styles, language use at home, interpersonal relations and experiences, and problem-solving about learning. So, the culture of the society has a great impact on the life of a person in the development of attributes. With respect to culture, Pakistan is a country of various cultures but every custom is attached to religion because it came into being on Islamic ideology. So, Islamic culture can be found dominating in every aspect of our life in spite of modernization or to imitate Europe is a common practice in Pakistan. Among other norms veil among females is also taken as Islamic culture or can be said religious obligation. In Pakistan there is separate system of education up to graduate level but at higher education and in professional education institution there is co-education system. So, it affects a

lot on the female students who belongs from the society where there is compulsion to hide their face (use veil) from male members other than their family members. Consequently it affects their education especially in the campuses where there culture of veil is not present.

**Key words:** Culture, Religious Obligation, Veil, Hijaab, Burqa

### **Introduction**

Word “Culture” is very difficult to define like many other abstract words such as personality, virtue, intelligence etc. Sometimes, in our everyday life, we use this word for a person as “cultured”: sophisticated, well mannered and learned one and so on. According to Microsoft Encarta World English Dictionary culture is a group of people who shared beliefs and practices identify the particular place, class, or time to which they belong while Oxford Dictionary (2003) includes in culture the customs, traditions, civilization and masterpieces of art of a particular period. “Culture” like many other terms has been used in different meanings in different times, languages, countries and disciplines e.g. Sociology, Biology, Anthropology and comparatively with more detail in Psychology. In early years of Eighteenth Century it started its travel of refinement from “Cultivation” and gradually embraced the meanings of training, growth and Development. In 1869 famous British Poet and Social Critic Mathew Orndal in his book “Culture and Anarchy” limited the culture to the cultivation of human ideals and inner civilization. He used it as antonym to anarchy. Edward Burnett Taylor was the first among western scholars who coined the all inclusive definition of Culture. He is generally known as a founding figure of modern anthropology. He says culture is a complex whole which includes beliefs, knowledge, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities that a man acquires as a member of a particular society. Simply saying, Culture is the common, voluntarily adapted life style of the individuals of a specific society that makes their lives more meaningful (Abdullah, 2001). In recent years, this word has been used in very wide sense. The term “Culture” has been divided into various other terms by the sociologists like popular culture, colonial culture, media culture, minority culture, organizational culture, culture of violence, culture of classes and so on. It is further divided by adding the prefix ‘sub’ within the social sciences. Laungani (2007) in his work “Understanding Cross-Cultural Psychology” is of the opinion that “each culture or each society has its own unique features, which vary along several important dimensions, such as ecology, climate, levels of education, technological developments, political, social, economic and environmental conditions, beliefs, attitudes, and value system”. Great Islamic Scholars like AlFaarabi, Ibn e Khuldoon, Hujjat ul Islam, Imam Muhammad Ghazali Shah Wali Ullah, Dr Muhammad Iqbal (RahimahumuALLAH) organized the guiding principles of culture on well disciplined bases. Alfaarabi is famous for his well known Philosophy of Faid (Alfalsafatul Faidia). According to him “Al Madina tul Faadilah” bases on “Hikmah” which is the origin of a good culture (Abdullah, 2001). He discussed the individual, the state and the head of state. He formulated the qualities of Raees al Madina under the principle of Hikmah. Similarly, he described two indicators of culture: Expertise in Sana’at( skills) and Sa’adaat. He set parameters to assess the culture; whether it is good or bad.

Imam Muhammad Ghazali Alaihir rahmah (2004, 1054-1111) was the first who portrayed the Physical and Biological Foundations of culture and for their development illustrated the natural need of cooperation that fulfils the economic requirements. His book *Ihya ul Uloom* contains valuable guidelines for a good individual, culture and the society simultaneously. Keemia e Sa'adat demonstrates an inclusive picture of all the ethical and moral values of a society. Ibne Khuldoon discussed the culture under the wider circle of history and named it "Ilm al Imran" which is now taught as Sociology. So we can get a clearer and more precise picture of culture by incorporating different viewpoints about it that is:

- 1) All cultures have a set of primary or core features.
- 2) All cultures comprise a set of secondary features that may vary from culture to culture.

Primary features of a Culture:

- A dominant religion(s); comprising certain rights, rituals and ceremonies.
- A Past History; that may be in written form or just oral.
- A set of Systems: political, legal and social systems along with a set of communication network.
- A set of values and traditions; containing personal, familial and social norms according to which people of that society have to live.
- Exclusive Artifacts; literature, masterpieces of art, architecture, painting, music etc.

Secondary features of a culture:

- Liberty from linguistic, political, religious and social discrimination.
- Shared languages.
- Common geographical boundaries within which people of that society live, recognized by international community,
- Living arrangements of people.
- Accepted practices of the society regarding food, health and hygiene.

### **Pakistani Culture**

Pakistani society is a multicultural society. Majority of people is Muslim. Although Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and other non-Muslim live in the country too very small number comparatively. Muslims started their journey from Madina al Munawwarah with their peculiar Arab Culture and adapted all the elements and factors of culture of their subordinate nation that were not against the fundamental Principles of Islam. It is worth knowing that the core features and the guiding principles remain according to Islam. Invasions by the Greeks under Alexander, the Huns, the Arabs, and the Central Asian tribes who settled to form the Muslim Slave Dynasty and later the Mughal Empire left their mark on the culture, faith, language and physical appearance of its people (Pickthal, 1969). The region that is now Pakistan fostered Buddhism at Gandhara in the north, and Sikhism at Nankana in the Punjab. Muslims ruled this area for several centuries. Muhammad bin Qasim, who secured the territory around Multan in the early eighth century, introduced Islam to the region with epic consequences and the Muslim Culture gone through a new experience., making it a defining force that unites the nation even today (Mahmood, 2002). Local culture of the Hindu majority along with Sikhism and other sects added more to it and it became multihued. It was relatively different culture, called Indo-Islamic Culture, but it could not change the fundamental feature of Islamic Culture.

British influence started invading in Islamic World by the second half of the Eighteenth Century. It reached India (Indo-Pak) in the early years of Nineteenth Century. It reached its climax after the failure of Dehli Revolution in 1857. The British responded by replacing Urdu with Persian as official languages with English, thus rendering many Muslims functionally illiterate and unemployable. The British also placed Hindus in many positions previously occupied by Muslims trying to devastate the Muslims' social system. This new phenomena divided the Muslim Community into two groups. Due to prevailing demographic situation one of them was of the opinion that they should take on the British Government along with their education system while the other craved to regain the Muslim State and Status. They argued that British Education System would damage their Cultural Identity by changing their values that formulate culture norms (Bhattacharya, 2006) and the culture as a whole.

With the passage of time, negative behavior of Hindus and the oppression of Muslims by the British provided enough evidence for the Two Nation Theory. Their negative behavior and blind adaptation of English Culture by some Muslims led the majority to demand for a separate Muslim state in India (Hussain, 2003). Quaid e Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah in his address to famous meeting of Pakistan Muslim League on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1940, said "Islam and Hinduism are not just religions but two social system in real....the basis for Muslim nationality is Kalima tut Tauheed, neither country nor a race." Very logically Muslims of India raised the slogan "Pakistan Ka Matlab Kia, Laa Ilaha Illalah" and consequently Pakistan came in to being on August 14, 1947.

With an estimated population of 169 million as of 2010, this country has a distinct diversity of ethnic groups and tribes, having evolved through its history of invaders who later settled and mixed with local population. Islam is the Official Religion of the State and Urdu as Official Language. It comprises four provinces, capital area and federally administered Tribal Areas. Men use to wear Shalwar Qameez and the same dress with Dopatta is commonly used by women.

Punjab is the most populous province of the Pakistan, with approximately 56% of the country's total population. Forming most of the Punjab region, the province is bordered by Azad Kashmir to the north-east, the Indian states of Punjab and Rajasthan to the east, the Pakistani province of Sindh to the south, the province of Baluchistan to the southwest, the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the west, and the Islamabad Capital Territory to the north. The main languages are Punjabi and Saraiki and the dialects of Mewati and Potowari.

Capital of Sindh, the Second largest province of Pakistan, is Karachi which is considered the economic hub of Pakistn. In 972 AD, Muhammad Bin Qasim attacked sub continent getting freed the Muslims prisoners from Raja Daahir and thus opening the gate towards India for Islam and Muslims. That is why Sindh is called Baab ul Islam (the gate of Islam). The name, Sindh, is derived from the Indus River that separates it from Balochistan and the greater Iranian Plateau. Culturally, it is also known as the valley of Mehran. Though Muslims are the largest religious group in Sindh, a good number of Christians and Hindus can also be found. Sindh is bounded to the bordered by Indian territory Rajisthan, bounded west by the Indus River and Balochistan, to the north by Punjab, and to the south by the Arabian Sea. The main language spoken is Sindhi. Shalwar Qameez and Ajrak is the symbolic dress of Sindhi People.

Old name of Khyber Pakhtun Khawah was The North-West Frontier Province. During British rule in India it was established in 1901. The province covered an area of 70,709 km<sup>2</sup>. The capital is Peshawar. The province is bordered by FATA to the north, the Gilgit Agency to the northeast, the province of Punjab to the east and Balochistan to the south. Afghanistan lay to the northwest with the tribal agencies forming a buffer zone. People here are called Pakhtun or Pathans who still maintain the age-old, time-tested code of behaviour known as Pukhtun Wali. Honour, revenge and hospitality are the fundamental principles. The jirga, or tribal assembly, plays a potent part in the resolution of issues according to riwaj or tradition. The presentation of "Lungi" or "turban of honour" is an effective measure to control and acknowledge tribal elders. These Lungi-holders along with the Maliks or chiefs provide the socio-political power structure of the tribal society.

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan covering more than half of the total land of the country. Quetta is the capital. There are evidences that Alexander the great passed through Balochistan in 325 B. C. long after him the Muslim started ruling Balochistan 712 A.D. The parts of Balochistan which were ruled by the Arabs were called by them Turan. Balochistan became a part of Pakistan after it came into being in 1947. People use to live tribes. Three major tribes are Baloch, Pashtoon and Brahvi. Most of the people understand and speak more than two languages. In addition to Balochi, Pashtoo and Brahvi, the majority of the population understand and speak Urdu. Though people speak different languages, there is a similarity in their literature, beliefs, moral order and customs. The cementing factor is religion which provides a base for unity and common social order. Turban is the common headwear of the men. Wide loose shalwar and knee-long shirts are worn by all. The dress of the woman consists of the typical shirt having a big pocket in front. The shirt normally has embroidery work with embedded small round mirror pieces. Big 'Dopatta' or 'Chaddar', a long rectangular piece of cloth cascading down the shoulders and used to cover head, are used by the women.

### **Veil; the Basic right of a Muslim Woman**

There are voices carrying very attractive slogan of Fundamental or basic Rights, particularly Human Rights; Right to Education, Health, Liberty of Living and Opinion etc. United Nation's Charter gives right to each and every individual on this Globe to enjoy the life style of his own choice irrespective of his/her cast, creed and religion. Every culture has its own dress code that makes it prominent (Oloyede, 2010) from other cultures or communities. The requirement of Hijab is not intended to imprison a woman rather it is to protect her from unwanted harm. In the United States alone, one of out every three women has been the victim of physical and sexual abuse, (Survey of Women Helth, 1999) and a woman is raped every two and a half minutes (National Crime and Victimization Survey, 2006). Because women are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, Islam advises them to take their protection into their own hands. Although a large number of Western Scholars (like King, 2009) present it as a violation of human rights and oppression of women by Islam. They wrongly interpret the Islamic Philosophy of Hijab (Veil) in being aware of it or quote exceptional cases in this regard. Studies show (Byng, 2010) that it is American newspaper media that positioned France, Britain, and the USA as ideologically alike in spite of their different framings of religious freedom. Western nation despite their claim of torch bearer of human rights irrationally, rely on

media reports. The reporting supported the interests, values, and hegemony of the West with representations that created the common sense that Muslim women would not veil in public.

So essentially, the veil is not only a physical practice. Rather, it must be both physical and mental in order to serve as a protective factor against body image issues in women. In fact, if a woman doesn't believe in it, she risks being even more vulnerable. Hijab provides freedom to women from being thought of as sexual object of ill wishes or from being valued for their looks, or body shape rather than their minds and intellect. Hijab liberates women from the need to conform to unrealistic stereotypes and images dictated by the media. Women wearing Hijab have expressed that dressing modestly and covering their hair, minimize sexual harassment in the workplace. The aura of privacy created by Hijab is indicative of the great value Islam places upon women.(Stacey, 2009).

### **Veil as a part of culture**

Every society there is essentially some exclusive features that shape its identity. The foremost characteristic of any culture is the Religion or Religious Dogmas underpinning the life style of members of a particular society. Islam is known as a Deen (a complete code of life) concerned with community cohesion and moral boundaries, and therefore Veil (Hijab) is a way of ensuring that the moral boundaries between unrelated men and women are respected. In this sense, Islamic Veil (Hijab) encompasses more than a dress code. Every society not only preserves its values and norms but manages to transfer them to next generation. Modesty or Piousness is very unique characteristic of Islamic Society. As a result, Islamic veil (Hijab) is considered as modest dressing and modest behaviour (Stacey, 2009). Studies provide evidence to the idea that a large number of Muslim women use veil as a part of their culture (Atasoy, 2006 & Shamsie, 2010).

### **Types of Veil in Pakistan**

Pakistan experiences a very rich and colourful Cultural Heritage. Although the majority of the people is Muslim but due to cultural variety and climatic conditions, people use diversified dresses. Traditionally, people belonging to Tribal Areas, Khaybar Pakhtun Khawa and Balochistan have considerable touch of Islamic Values. This can be observed easily in their dressing. Turban and “Chaadar” for men and “Burqa” for women is the exclusive feature of their culture. Although it varies from Rural to Urban Population, Islamic Veil (Hijaab, Burqa) is considered to be sober and modest dressing in women.

A study conducted by (Awan et al., 2011) to measure the attitude of university students about veiling or not reveals that unveiled students were very careful in their comments but certainly were not in favor of adopting it. The study shows that that personal preferences, religious obligation, family pressure and social values were the main causes of wearing veil (Awan et al., 2011). Due to modern social demands, influence of media and lack of awareness about Islamic obligations, a large majority of woman do not use “Parda” especially in elite class of urban areas or among women with relatively having higher education. On the other hand, due to negative western behavior and changing scenario of the Islamic World under the influence of Islamic Movements, number of veiled girls especially students have been considerably increased.

Islamic Veil which is called Hijab, Jilbab or Abaya in Arab and Haaik in Algeria (Al-Saji, 2010) has diverse types in Pakistan. In rural areas and along the Western and North Western areas with exceptional cases, Veil is used in the shape of Pardah. There is no significant difference in the shape of veil among women belonging to different rural areas. Likewise the trend of veil design among urban women of different provinces is almost the same.

Rural women also use “Chaadar” to cover their bodies in almost all provinces of the country. Very interestingly, rural women of Thar, the desert area of Sind Province, use veil of very dissimilar style that does not match to other parts of the country.

A comparatively modern style of Veil is used among majority of the students in the universities of Pakistan which contains a long relatively loose gown with pockets on the lower front part and a scarf to wear on their heads. Normally the gown has full sleeves. Head scarf also maintains a small piece of cloth to hide the facial features. Some girls also use gloves with the colour of their own choice commonly, black and black socks.

### Significance of the study

This study was conducted to see either veil among university students have some cultural background or it has any connection with religion of Islam. No doubt religion has been a part of culture but this research would help to differentiate it as well. It will help to bring into light the perception of university students’ about veil. Veil is being discussed in all over the world nowadays and has become controversial. So this research will help to bring out the concept and attitude of the graduates towards it especially with respect to Islamic point of view.

### Objectives

Major aim of this study was to see the impact of culture on students’ attitudes towards the practice of veiling in Pakistani Universities. Objectives of the study were:

- To examine the cultural background of veil in Pakistan
- To analyze the attitude of university students toward veil

### Methodology

Population of the study was the female students of The Islamia University of Bahawalpur in Punjab, using veil. The study was delimited to the female students whose use “Burqa” or “Niqaab” as both are considered to be the real Islamic veil in Pakistani Society. Simple random sample technique was used to select the sample. It was a survey type study and a self-developed questionnaire was used as a research tool to collect data. Three point attitude Likert Scale was used (1-never, 2-ever, 3-always) there were other options also as Yes/No etc according to the nature of the statements. To make sure the reliability and validity of the research tool, it was distributed among teachers, researchers and experts in different departments of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. According to the suggestions of the experts and researchers it was revised and then administered in the field for data collection. After data collection, the reliability of the tool was found using SPSS software version 17 and Cronbach Alpha (reliability of questionnaire internal consistency) value was found to be 0.935. The value was strongly significant as the standard value according to Feldmann et al. (2007) for the Cronbach Alpha is 0.70. Then the collected data were analyzed with the help of SPSS using simply Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentage score.

### Data analysis and interpretation:

The data was collected by personal visit by the researchers. The options vary with respect to the type of the question. Items about the same aspect were sum up and mean value as well as standard deviation while percentage of the items was calculated. Only female university students were respondents in this study either using veil or not using veil. The data was collected randomly and the total respondents were 388; 202 urban and 186 rural. The mean value shows consistency and standard deviation diversity of the respondents' views.

### Category of the respondents

**Table-1: Parents' qualification**

| Levels              | Father % | Mother % |
|---------------------|----------|----------|
| Illiterate          | 5.7      | 20.9     |
| Literate            | 12.1     | 25.6     |
| Matric/Intermediate | 29.6     | 28.5     |
| Graduate            | 28.9     | 19.6     |
| Higher              | 23.7     | 5.4      |

The number of the respondents with respect their parents' education the is that their father education that is as; matric/intermediate were 29.6%, graduates 28.9%, highly educated 23.7%, literate 12.1% and only 5.7% were illiterate. The respondents' belong to the parents where their mother education is matric/intermediate 28.5%, literate 25.6%, illiterate 20.9%, graduate 19.6% and only 5.4% have been highly educated.

**Table-2: Parents' profession**

| Father's occupation |      | Mother's   |      |
|---------------------|------|------------|------|
| Occupation          | %    | Occupation | %    |
| Business            | 20.8 | Worker     | 15.1 |
| Private job         | 6.2  |            |      |
| Govt job            | 42.3 | House-wife | 84.9 |
| Farmer              | 13.9 |            |      |
| Other               | 16.8 |            |      |

With respect to parents' occupation of the respondents' their fathers belong to Govt job 42.3%, business 20.8%, farmer 13.9% and are from private job 6.2%. On the other hand mothers' belong to 15.1% from working persons and 84.9% working persons.

**Table-3: Job status**

| Father's job rank |       | Mother's job rank |       |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| Rank              | %     | Rank              | %     |
| Worker            | 20.70 | Worker            | 24.00 |
| Non-gazette       | 49.20 | Non-gazette       | 52.90 |
| Gazette           | 30.10 | Gazette           | 23.10 |

Job status of the parents is as fathers' belong to 49.20% non-gazetted, 30.10% gazette and 20.70% are from workers' community. While the mothers of the respondents' are working are 52.90% non-gazetted, workers 24.00% and gazetted 23.10%.

### Overall Results with Respect to Residential Areas

**Table-4: Mean of veiling students**

| Area         | N          | Mean        | St.D        |
|--------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| <i>Urban</i> | 202        | 2.18        | 0.80        |
| <i>Rural</i> | 186        | 2.52        | 1.12        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>388</b> | <b>2.30</b> | <b>0.93</b> |

The calculated mean values and standard deviation are presented in the table-1. According to the results mean value of female university students belonging to the urban areas is 2.18 and rural areas is 2.52 (Minimum value=1; Maximum value=3) while standard deviation is 0.80 and 1.12. It means more students belonging to urban areas uses veil as compare to the students from urban areas.

**Table-5: Attitude towards veil**

| Veil out dated fashion |      | Religious         |      |
|------------------------|------|-------------------|------|
| <i>Option</i>          | %    | <i>Option</i>     | %    |
| <i>Not at all</i>      | 77.8 | <i>Not at all</i> | 6.4  |
| <i>May be</i>          | 16.2 | <i>May be</i>     | 19.6 |
| <i>Surely</i>          | 5.9  | <i>Surely</i>     | 74.0 |

The respondents' reply on veil is out-dated fashion was 77.8% rejected this and 74.0% replied that it is a religious obligation for women.

**Table-6: Why veil**

| Provide security  |      | Hide face that has no attraction |      |
|-------------------|------|----------------------------------|------|
| <i>Option</i>     | %    | <i>Option</i>                    | %    |
| <i>Not at all</i> | 5.7  | <i>Not at all</i>                | 53.4 |
| <i>May be</i>     | 20.9 | <i>May be</i>                    | 25.3 |
| <i>Surely</i>     | 73.5 | <i>Surely</i>                    | 21.4 |

According to the calculated values 73.5% respondents replied that veil provide security to the female and 53.4% replied that it is not used to hide the face that has no attraction for male members.

**Table-7: Cumulative result**

|             | Culture of veil in society | Veil among family members | I use veil | Affects of veil | Fun at veil |
|-------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <i>Mean</i> | 2.17                       | 2.22                      | 2.30       | 1.82            | 1.68        |
| <i>St.D</i> | 0.66                       | 1.07                      | 1.06       | 0.80            | 0.52        |

According to the calculated results the respondents belong to the society where (mean value 2.17 shows) that most of the persons use veil, among their family members (M=2.22) are veil user so most of them are also veil users (M=2.300). While most of them are agreed that veil does not affect on their learning and most of them are agreed that their fellows do not make fun on their veiling.

### Conclusions

The Islamia University is situated in Bahawalpur and every department has its own prescribed uniform even morning/evening sessions have different uniform. So it has become the culture of the university full dress and scarf or veil by female students. Majority of the women of this area uses veil so university students also adopt the culture of this area during their stay in the university. The conclusions that are drawn from the calculated results also showed the dominant culture of veil among the university students. The conclusions are as:

- According to the results the respondents belonging to rural areas are more inclined in using veil as compare to urban areas.
- Majority of the respondents' are agreed that the veil is not out-dated fashion. But it is a religious obligation for women.
- According to the calculated values respondents replied that veil provide security to the female and that it is not used to hide the face that has no attraction for male members.
- According to the calculated results the more respondents using veil belong to the society where most of the females use veil as well as their family members.
- Most of the respondents using veil agreed that veil does not affect on their learning and most of them also agreed that their fellows do not make fun on their veiling.

### Suggestion

- Parents should pay religious duties accordingly so that their children learn while imitating them.
- Parents should pass their life according to the teaching of the Islam that will create better learning environment for their children.

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