SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

Hijab and Social Anxiety: Perceptions of University Students from Pakistan

Nasreen Hussain

Institute of Business Management, Korangi Creek, Karachi, Sindh 75190, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This study aims at exploring the general trends of social anxiety in female university students observing the hijab in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. A survey approach was chosen to collect the data from private and public tertiary institutions from all over the country. The Social Anxiety Scale was sent to faculty working in various universities, who facilitated the data collection. The scale was distributed to 3000 female students wearing hijab out of which 1601 forms were returned. The tool deployed for the study had three sections: perceptions of participants regarding hijab, demographics and the actual tool. This tool had 15 items falling under three factors: (a) perceived self, (b) perceived social image, and (c) perceived peer response to self-image. Descriptive data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 17. The findings showed that a majority of the participants had a very low and almost non-significant level of social anxiety, thus rejecting the hypotheses developed for the study. The results are a sounding board for those who consider this Islamic attire as one of the important factors in building up the anxiety level in university students.

Keywords: Female university students, hijab, immigrant Muslims, self-image, social anxiety, veil

INTRODUCTION

The symbolic practice of observing the hijab or veil is increasing in prominence in the East as well as the West; however, the hijab is often portrayed negatively, especially in the Western society and the myths attached to it are at times extorted to suit the personal agenda. The hijab, veil, head scarf, voile (French) refer to a piece of cloth that is used to cover the head so that one's hair is not visible; while some wear along with it a long coat referred as *abayah* or *jilbab* to cover the whole body. The word hijab is derived from the Arabic word *hajaba* that means to conceal or hide from the view and refers to a piece of cloth that covers the

upper part of the body and is considered as an Islamic dress. Zahedi (2008) claimed that in spite of the common belief, the idea of the veil did not originate in Islam and a brief glance at the history of veiling shows that the first mention of veil was believed to be in an Assyrian legal text of the thirteenth century b.c.e (Keddie & Baron, 1991), much before the advent of Islam. Leila (2011) put forth similar views and argued that hijab should not be made obligatory in Islam as this attire was used way before the advent of Islam. The upper-class women of those times veiled themselves to reflect their power, superior class distinction and a status symbol. Later, the trend seeped into other dominant Mesopotamian and Mediterranean cultures and was also introduced by the Jews and Christians for religious purposes and conveying status. With the passage of time, Muslim women began to wear the veil and it very soon became a norm among those living in the Middle East and later in other Muslim dominated countries in South and Far East Asia.

The Holy Quran clearly mentions in three specific places that the women should protect themselves from the gaze of men and cover their head and bosom. This command of Allah was reiterated by Prophet Muhammad as well. Keeping in mind that Islam is a *deen* or a way of life, and the Quran a complete code of conduct, *haya* or modesty plays a pivotal role in the lives of all believing men and women and as such, faith and *haya* either exist simultaneously or both die. To dress decently by not showing body curves and private parts of the body as

defined by the Quran and hadith (sayings of the Prophet), is to exhibit *haya* and following the Islamic dress code to control the gaze of men and the intrusion of *Shaytan* (Satan) from their lives. Contrary to the fact, hijab clad females are under constant stereotype threats and are portrayed negatively not only in the West, but people in Muslim countries also have differing views. Culture, values, religious requirements, individual and family perceptions and politics play a dominant role in imposing the trend of observing the hijab.

The concern that lingers in the minds of many researchers is what makes Muslim females observe the hijab in the 21st century that gives rise to complex political, social and religious questions. Is hijab a symbol of empowerment or suppression? Does the society accept females who wear hijab? Are such women accepted in the society, academia or workplace at large? Are such females' high achievers? Do such females develop social anxiety? For this article, hijab has been used as a generic term to include any fabric that covers the head, bosom and the body, which may include a veil, scarf, dupatta, *chaddar*, burqa, *niqab, abayah* or *jilbab* (long coat). Although the objective of this material is to conceal one's body, Ruby (2006) and Yusuf (2014) advocated that the term hijab embraced a woman's behavior and attitude as well, although what was to be covered and how it was covered was highly controversial.

One of the main reasons for the reemergence of hijab in the Muslim countries after World War II was to get

freedom from the claws of the colonial era (Cinar, 2005). Later, the resurgence of the Islamic awakening movement in the Middle East in the 1970s changed not only the society and politics, but also the symbolic nature of hijab. Carvalho (2010) claimed that the reappearance of hijab was due to the broader rise among Muslims regarding religious commitment, termed as the Islamic revival. Extensive research in this area has been carried out in the Middle East, Turkey and on immigrant communities in the US, UK, Europe and Australia (Bhimji, 2009). Females in Muslim dominant countries like Turkey (Gokariksel, 2011; Rheault, 2008), Indonesia (Hefner, 2007), and Malaysia (Hochel, 2013) strongly propagated the concept of donning the hijab to nullify the imposed western trends of society that were bent on bringing about an artificial and unnatural equality between men and women (Mohammad, 2010), thus demoralizing and demotivating the fairer sex. Some preferred to cover themselves up to protect from the vying eyes of male, some found solace and inner comfort, many found it convenient to involve in immoral and illegal acts under the cover of the veil and many more wanted to follow the command of God. Along similar lines, Haque (2010) gave a broader perspective and argued that the revival of the hijab could be religious, psychological, Islamization of the society, economics and status symbol.

A battery of research studies conducted in the West has tried to find out the reasons for donning hijab, but the majority of the research studies have concentrated on the theoretical aspects of Islam, women and hijab based on the perceptions of female working professionals, housewives and students. Limited researches have tried to find out if this extra garb builds up the anxiety level academically.

The purpose of the researcher was to explore the situation in Pakistani universities pertaining to: (a) the anxiety caused by donning the hijab, and (b) how such females participate academically. Many Muslim women wear it voluntarily and their decree is respected as this is their individual and conscious decision, not a forced one and they prefer to be considered hijabis. This is proven by Ali (2005), who used three sets of data to find out why second-generation Muslim immigrants wore the hijab in North America. The results showed that the participants had chosen to wear the hijab to make them comfortable in co-education universities and they considered the dress to be Islamic. All unanimously said that they were not pressurized by their family and the attire was a symbol of Muslim female identity and sobriety.

According to Abdullah et al. (2013), researchers to date have not identified dominant factors that influence social anxiety to occur among university students in Muslim countries. Family, academics, peer pressure and social issues may fan anxiety levels in university students, but the exact reason is unknown. In the same stance, limited studies have been conducted in Pakistan to measure the anxiety levels of female university students who wear the hijab, in spite of the country having

approximately 96% Muslim population as per official statistics with the second highest Muslim population, thus restricting the literature review to a certain extent. This paper therefore, sets out to explore if hijab plays a lead role in building social anxiety in female students studying in Pakistan at higher level institutes. The hypothesis that emerged for this study is:

> Hypothesis 1: There will be a low social anxiety in female students who wear hijab in higher learning institutions in Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The hijab in the recent years has become controversial in the US and Europe among second and third generation Muslims (Ali, 2005, Alvi et al., 2003) due to anti-Islamization fervor and terrorism at the forefront of much exaggerated electronic media. Racism towards South Asians, especially women who prefer to wear Islamic clothes in Britain is on the increase and is exploited by the media (Bhimji, 2009)0. Substantial evidence illustrates that male and female Muslims are hurt and harassed by the negative image of hijab and Islam (Bullock, 2002), which causes disruption in their routine life. France banned the head scarf in schools (Bigger, 2006; Carvalho, 2010; Scott 2007); Belgium and some German regional states projected banning the hijab as it would scare the children (Sharp, 2012). Further, restrictions have been imposed on Muslim women who observe the veil in Denmark, Netherland, Switzerland and Italy (Bremner 2010, as

cited in Carvalho, 2010). In the UK, Muslim women have lost legal battles to wear hijab and burqa to schools and in the US, hijab clad Muslim females have fallen victim to the post 9/11 attack discrimination, which has aggravated ever since. Aziz (2012) called attention to the sparse consideration that had been paid to the impact of the post 9/11 national security era on Muslim women and specifically for those who wore the headscarf. Although anxiety was not a criterion for the researchers to measure, any disturbance in the lives of human beings caused behavioral changes and one of them could be anxiety.

Since Muslim females in the western countries wear the hijab to carve an identity for themselves, they have to face resistance and exclusion academically and socially, which leads to social anxiety and depression. Crozier and Alden (2005) posited that generally the presence of anxiety assisted in the learning process; however, the impact of it was not realized much. McGrath (2006) contradicted this belief and reiterated that such students displayed a passive attitude in education, demonstrated lack of interest in learning, got low grades and failed to produce good quality assignments. Moreover, social anxiety in academic situations such as seminars, conferences, group discussions and presentations can restrain student participation and affect the quality of their academic life. The students are usually stressed and worried how others perceive them and are thus pressurized to follow the norms set by their peers or they are shunned from the social circle

thus building up their anxiety level. Turner (1988) argued that anxiety undermined the motivation to communicate with other individuals and as such highly anxious people were more likely to avoid social interactions.

Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore if female students who wore the hijab in higher learning institutions in Pakistan had low social anxiety level. From the reviewed literature there is an indication that generally 85% of the research work on hijab has been done in the West on Muslim immigrants, whereas research studies in similar area in Muslim populated countries is minimal. Moreover, all research work has not been directly related to hijab and anxiety, but this factor has affected the status of females in Pakistan.

This research coincides with the theory developed by Cooley (Looking-Glass-Self) in 1902 (as cited in McIntyre, 2006). Cooley (1998) defined self as "that which is designated in common speech by the pronouns 'I', 'me', 'mine' and 'myself'." The self-feeling is the 'I' and since this is known to our feelings and perceptions, we cannot move ahead without suggesting that feeling. Cooley theorized that social communication was the core of socialization practices as they were part of the whole. Self-image is formed largely by the messages people get from others and how those messages are interpreted by them. He argued that people self-grew due to their actions with others, forcing them to see themselves as intelligent, average or dull, attractive or ugly and many other ideas of the self as others deem to see them in this process of recognizing one-self from manifold signals given by others. This has been termed as the looking-glass-self; figuratively others are a mirror. Cooley's (1902) three components in the process of formation of looking-glass-self are universal to individuals (Shaffer, 2005) and for the present study, could contribute towards social anxiety in hijab wearing females. Table 1 gives an overview of the relationship between Cooley's framework and the present research factors:

The hijabis don the attire in good faith, but usually get perplexed by the way they are perceived and treated by the society, which includes their family, friends and

Table 1
Looking-glass-self factors

Looking-Glass-Self Factors	
Looking-Glass-Self Elements	**Research Factors**
1 Imagination of our appearances to the other person; actions, body language, words directed towards the person by others.	Perceived self
2 Imagination of self and how we think others judge us and forming subjective interpretation.	Perceived social image
3 Feeling gratified or embarrassed and humiliated on the judgements of other people based on self-evaluation and self-interpretation.	Perceived peer response of self-image

peers (primary group) in particular and other social elements, such as media (generalized group). Eventually, one's self image and perception of self is overpowered by the thoughts of the others. Thus, the hijabis see themselves from the other's perspective as others do and others become the looking glass. Mead (1964) noted that in this way, the person learnt to see oneself as if through the eyes of others; first through the eyes of significant others, that was, parents and friends and then generalized others that included the community. The constant shift of signals creates anxiety, which is an unpleasant emotional state or condition characterized by feelings of tension, apprehension and worry (Beuke et al., 2003). Excessive or inappropriate anxiety negatively affects social life as he perceptions formed by others have been engraved in our minds. Individuals with such disorders experience obsession, fear and worry which compel them to avoid situations that aggravate anxiety or to think of alternatives that might lessen the anxiety level. In these situations, they either avoid embarrassing encounters or face them with reluctance and discomfort (Stein & Stein, 2008) Many studies have indicated that socially anxious people are likely to misjudge their skills in social situations (Alden & Wallace, 1995; Rapee & Hayman, 1996; Stopa & Clark, 1993), thereby aggravating anxiety level before and after any performance. On the other hand, support from the same environment enhances motivation and words of indulgence and more likely to overvalue the importance of public view.

Researches have proved that hijab is worn for self-satisfaction or due to the pressure from primary and generalized groups. Seggie and Sanford (2010) carried out a case study at one of the four-year research universities in the US to understand the perceptions and experiences regarding campus climate among undergraduate female students wearing the hijab. Findings indicated that the students were not forced to wear the hijab and started donning the Islamic dress at different points of time and it injected and increased comfort level as they progressed from high school to higher learning institutes.

Javed (2014) conducted a study in Pakistan to find the meanings, patterns and social functions of hijab. Five females wearing the hijab and five who did not wear the hijab were selected from one university through purposive sampling and the data were drawn using in depth interviews. The findings were almost similar to Awan et al.'s (2011) study; however, the study sample for the latter research was larger (60 participants) from three universities of the Punjab, Pakistan. Interview data culled from both research studies were indicative of the fact that the reasons for observing the hijab were based on religious, personal and family preferences and social value. The findings also exhibited that hijab in no way restricted their movement. On the contrary, it gave them space and respect academically and in the society. The participants also believed that the hijab helped to preserve their modesty and protected them from male gaze and their untoward behavior

and allowed them to become self-ruling subjects. This notion is parallel with the views of Bigger (2006), Roald (2001), and Siraj (2011) and supports the Holy Quran that clearly advises (Surah An Noor 24:30-31) "Believing men lower your gaze and guard your modesty and believing women lower your gaze and guard your modesty by wrapping your heads and covering your chests." This Surah indicates that the gaze between men and women should be avoided to guard their modesty or *haya* and believing women should follow the Islamic dress code by covering their heads and chest to maintain proper decorum of dressing, thus the gaze serving as hijab for both.

A study was carried out on 30 Muslim females (15 veiled and 15 unveiled), who were living in Scotland using in depth structured interviews by Siraj (2011). The aim of the study was to explore the understanding of the meaning of hijab and how society, religion and family usually influence this decision. The results clearly indicated that the hijab gave them respect and status in the society and protected them from the male gaze, while the ones who did not wear the hijab were of the opinion that it made them submissive and lowered their status socially; however, both groups believed that females should be dressed modestly to create a space between male and female. Both groups stated categorically that their dressing was influenced by family and religion.

Hochel (2013) used a descriptive ethnographic method of study and interviewed 30 veiled, unveiled and sometimes veiled professional females teaching in the universities of Malaysia to appreciate and comprehend women's awareness and the motives for wearing the hijab. The findings revealed that all but one believed that hijab was mandatory based on the verses given in the Quran and as per their responses, the hijab was socially acceptable and assisted male to focus on women's intelligence and aptitude instead of their physical appearance.

A research study was conducted by Atasoy (2006) on 13 undergraduates, two graduates, and three highly qualified women observing the hijab in Winnipeg, Canada to find out their personal reasons for wearing the hijab through face-to-face interviews and document analysis. The findings indicated that the students started using the hijab on joining high school or after joining the university to help them gained dignity, self-respect and cultural recognition. They were interested in remaining close to their community and maintaining peer group relation with other Muslim students in the institute so as to maintain a distance from the Canadian youth culture. The participants also realized that wearing the hijab was part of Muslim women's struggle to carve a distinct identity different from others and to be happier and more fulfilled and satisfied. Similarly, Darnell and Shafiqa (2003) found in their study that females in a Canadian college adopted the hijab as they wanted to be good Muslims and they considered it a modest form of dressing. On the other hand, few participants stopped covering because people around them did not understand the norms of Islam and they were isolated

from their friends and teachers. This is in accordance to Cooley's looking-glass theory.

The research studies are indicative of the fact that those who wore the hijab formed their own self-perceptions of how the primary and generalized groups viewed them and they either glued to their decisions or made adjustments to mold themselves in the environment for acceptance.

METHODS

The study engaged a survey research method to investigate the prevalence of social anxiety in female university students from all over Pakistan who wore the hijab. Radhakrishna (2007) argued that in a survey method, self-administered questionnaire was one of the most common and efficient method of collecting data systematically in social sciences. It provides opportunities for the researchers to explore the information in breadth by using statistics and producing numeric trends, which are easily accessible to the researcher in a short time. This was a nation-wide study for which data were collected from 32-degree awarding colleges and universities.

This was a cross-sectional survey study in which data were collected from 1601 female participants coming from universities all over Pakistan. The primary means of data collection was a self-developed tool using a self-administered paper survey. The questionnaire comprised mainly Likert type questions and the data were analyzed using Statistical Packaging for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.

Participants

The participants were chosen using non-random selective sampling with the objective to include only female students who wore the hijab, as defined in the research, were currently studying in public, private universities or degree awarding colleges and had experienced the phenomenon of the present study. Table 2 provides statistical frequencies of their demographics.

Table 2
Demographic details of the participants

Variables	Descriptions	F
Province	Sindh	375
	Baluchistan	470
	KPK	139
	GB / Kashmir	326
	Punjab	291
Working status	Employed	332
	Unemployed	1269
Marital status	Married	93
	Single	1508
Level of study	Bachelors	1035
	Masters	566

Out of the total sample of 1601 participants spread country-wide, female students from the universities in Sindh was 375; from Baluchistan 470; from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) 139; from Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Kashmir 326; and from Punjab 291. Out of this, 332 women were employed and studying in universities, whereas 1269 were unemployed while studying in various universities; 93 were married and 1508 were unmarried; and 1035 were enrolled in a Bachelor's degree program, while 566 were doing their Master's degree program.

Research Tool

Since the words veil and hijab denote different attire in Muslim and non-Muslim countries, the research tool provided definition of hijab for better understanding of the terms for the given context: (a) a piece of cloth that covers the head and upper part of the body (hijab); (b) a piece of cloth that covers the head/face and a coat or an 'Abayah' that covers full body; (c) a 'Chaddar' that covers from head to toe.

The first section on demographics had eight items, the second section included four Likert type questions on perceptions of hijab by the participants and the third section included the actual Social Anxiety Scale (SAS) developed by Bhamani and Hussain (2012), consisting of 15 items on a four point Likert scale distributed under three factors: a) perceived self-image, b) perceived social image, and c) perceived peer response of self-image. This scale has been used internationally in education contexts and has a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.742 indicating strong reliability, consistency and trustworthiness of the questionnaire. The data were calculated using the scoring guide provided by the authors of the scale.

Data Collection

The data were collected by secondary data collectors because the scope of the study was country-wide and the researcher could not practically go to each region for data collection. The survey tool was distributed to 3000 participants studying in 32 degree awarding colleges and universities and 1601 duly completed forms were received from five different regions of Pakistan; the return rate being 53.37%. The questionnaire could not be disseminated through the internet or institutional email as the public universities do not provide official email ID to its students and IDs for students in private institutions was not accessible. A simple structural procedure was followed and each secondary data collector, who was a faculty at an educational institution, was given a written debriefing followed by telephonic updates on the process of data collection. Letters of request with the details of the study along with the sample of the tool were mailed to few University Vice-Chancellors at their request for approval to collect the data, while few faculty members of the concerned universities volunteered to collect the data by using their personal contacts. Soft and hard copies were sent to suit the convenience of the data collectors, who were free to gather the data via the internet or by paper pencil. The researcher ensured that no questionable research practice was included throughout the data collection process and the participants were asked to provide their written informed consent as an agreement to collect and disseminate the data. Moreover, they carried the right of refusal and could withdraw their participation at any point of time during the data collection phase. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection and analysis phases. The data collection procedure took almost six months to get an acceptable response rate due to the closure of educational institutions because of country-wide strikes. Simple descriptive

frequency analysis was done to explore the trends by using the Statistical Packaging for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In order to explore the trends of social anxiety in female students who wore the hijab at large, descriptive analysis was used, and the frequencies were taken out to explore the level of anxiety in the overall sample. Table 3 reflects the perceptions of the participants on hijab.

It is evident that 58.1% wear the veil based on their self-satisfaction, 46.6% feel that veil gives them a sense of being safe, 61.9% state that hijab should be made compulsory at tertiary level and 9.3% are of opinion that they make friends with all irrespective of their dress. Table 4 indicates the level of anxiety in the overall sample. Out of 1601 females, 21 were rated in high social anxiety category, 257 moderate, 621 average, and 702 with no social anxiety. This indicated that the majority of the sample

Table 3
Perceptions of the participants on hijab

Questions	Percentage Response
Why do you wear the hijab?	
Family requirement	9.1%
Self-decision	58.7%
Religious requirement	31.2%
Fashion	0.9%
Hijab keeps women:	
Covered	20.7%
Respectful	30.9%
Safe	46.4%
Hijab should be .... in universities	
Compulsory attire	61.9%
Prohibited	32.4%
Optional	5.4%
I make friends with………	
Ones who wear a veil	9.7%
Any female regardless of their dress	90.3%

Table 4
Frequencies of level of social anxiety

Variables	F
High social anxiety	21
Moderate social anxiety	257
Average social anxiety	621
No social anxiety	702

of female students who wore the hijab did not show a significant level of anxiety in general.

To explore the trends of the level of anxiety, region-wise descriptive cross tabulation analysis was used to extract the frequencies and percentages for the same. The details are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Region-wise social anxiety level of veiled female students

Variables	Sindh	Baluchistan	KPK	GB/Kashmir	Punjab
High Social Anxiety	0.8%	2.3%	0%	0%	2.4%
Moderate Social Anxiety	9.3%	19.1%	8.6%	26%	18.9%
Low Social Anxiety	39.7%	40.8%	25.8%	39.8%	39.1%
No Social Anxiety	50.1%	37.6%	65.4%	40.1%	39.5

The data showed that in Sindh, 0.8% female students with hijab showed high social anxiety out of 100% sample count, 9.3% moderate social anxiety, 39.7% low social anxiety and 50.1% no social anxiety. In Baluchistan, 2.3% female students wearing the hijab appeared to have high social anxiety, 19.1% moderate social anxiety, 40.8% low social anxiety and 37.6% no social anxiety. In the case of KPK, no evidence of high social anxiety was found in female students, 8.6% showed moderate social anxiety, 25.8% low social anxiety and 65.4% no social anxiety. With respect to GB/Kashmir region, there was no high social anxiety, whereas 26% showed moderate social anxiety, 39.8% low social anxiety and 40.1% with no social anxiety. In the region of the Punjab, 2.4% had high social anxiety, 18.9% moderate social anxiety, 39.1% low social anxiety and 39.5% showed no social anxiety related to wearing the hijab.

DISCUSSION

This study was an attempt to address the issue of anxiety level of students who wore the hijab in universities. The findings exhibited no significant level of social anxiety in university going female students who preferred to use the hijab, which is consistent with the hypothesis formulated for the exploratory research in hand. In all regions, more than 70% of the sample did not show any significant anxiety level, whereas in the provinces of Baluchistan and the Punjab, there were a few evidences of high or moderate social anxiety in the sample. Almost similar results were found in studies carried out to explore the relationship of self-anxiety and donning the hijab (Awan et al., 2011; Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; McIntosh, 2010; Mule & Barthel, 1992; Seggie & Sanford, 2010).

It is important to note the theoretical underpinning of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Abbott, 1968), when Islamization policies promulgated under the military rule from 1977 to 1988 made the wearing of hijab compulsory for all females working and studying in public institutions. However, the trend has mellowed down and the country as a multicultural nation is now making its way towards a rather rapid modernization (Haqqani, 2004). At the same time, the country is progressing and adapting an open-minded approach towards the society, yet it holds firm to its moral, cultural and religious values (Nasr, 2001). The present research findings project that the hijab as an attire is a natural phenomenon and is in no way imposed by the family and society at large and hence the female students do not

get anxious. Malik (1999) put forward that Pakistan had struggled to become a country where women were encouraged to maintain *haya* as well as followed the culture of covering themselves while working side by side with men. Even though the hijab is considered a symbol of oppression towards women of the Muslim world, it is rather a symbol of purity, self-respect and confidence in Pakistan. The wearing of hijab is not just a religious practice, but it is also a strong entity of Pakistani culture and the women since independence have covered their heads and bodies as a way of paying respect to themselves in a male dominated society (Ahmed & Donnan, 1994), a tradition that is passed on to the up-coming generation. The country is a melting pot of several cultures following similar traditions and cultural aspects (Critelli, 2010), where covering one's body is highly appreciated and practiced in families from all levels of socio economics status. This reflects the findings of the research that even in cosmopolitan cities of Pakistan, hijab is considered as a routine dress for the university students. All female politicians and many women at high positions wear the hijab, which has influenced young girls to follow suit; thus, putting forward an image that Islamic attire enhances a woman's personality, rather than the other way around (Ahmed & Donnan, 1994). The women in Pakistan have a positive role to play in a society in transition, which is negotiating a compromise between the old tradition of hijab and the modern way of life (Haque, 2010).

For women and young girls in Pakistan who go to colleges and universities, wearing the hijab is a natural phenomenon and is in no way imposed on them by the primary and secondary groups as shown in the present research, thus minimizing social pressure and anxiety. Ahmed and Donnan (1994), Ali (2005), Haqqani (2004), Seggie and Sanford (2010), and Shaheed (2002) supported the finding and reiterate that many incidents had been found where the students put on the hijab voluntarily and had no social anxiety. Hijab for university students forms a safety enclosure, generates confidence in them (McIntosh, 2010; Sharlach, 2008), and they are received with added respect. Further, it generates a sense of equality in them, which makes them see every individual as human being and not products of different fashion fusion and creativity (Critelli, 2010; Seggie & Sanford, 2010). When fellow male students see girls with their heads covered, they keep themselves away from mindlessly flirting with them (Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Shaheed, 2002), thereby giving birth to several role models and examples in the society because of which women in Pakistan have identified their own place and platform to voice their thoughts and feelings (Ahmed & Donnan, 1994).

The findings of this study also indicate that the hijab gives the female students the right to decide what to wear without any compulsion and they would prefer the Islamic dress code to be made compulsory in higher learning institutes. This supports Hefner's (2007) three research studies carried out in 1999, 2001 and 2002 in

Indonesia where she found that the use of veil had increased by 60%. Itani's (2016) study at the American university revealed that there was a drastic increase of veiled students on the campus over the years.

CONCLUSION

The issue under scrutiny was to explore the perceptions of female students studying at tertiary level who wear the hijab and the anxiety factor involved in it. The results of this study may add to the body of researches done in Asia and the findings could be termed definitive due to the scope of the study, but probably not in the western countries owing to social and cultural differences. Nevertheless, based on the currently available evidence of previous researches, the common trends that emerged from the present study were that inter alia, Muslim female university students wear the hijab to be safe in an alien environment, to increase comfort level, to carve an identity for themselves for empowerment, and above all to stay within the parameters of *haya* as prescribed by the Quran. The most important reason that surfaced was that these students don the graceful attire of their own free will. Studies in the West have been carried out on second and third generation immigrant Muslims who are struggling to sculpt an image and a place for themselves in a foreign society while maintaining their religious, social and cultural values. This gives rise to social anxiety and they have to learn the hard way how their actions and words are mistranslated through the lens of

religion, leading to the much-coveted hijab controversy. The Muslim females globally have to prove through actions and words that the hijab does not degrade them but empowers them to be part of the society. This is akin with Cooley's three Looking-Glass-Self factors. A woman with a positive image of her character, not only ends up being more confident than others, but develops a staunch faith to follow the right path of Islam and please God as well. This notion is true for university students as well where they have to study with male students and come in contact with male teachers too. It should not be forgotten that Islam is a holistic religion concerned with physical, spiritual and emotional health of men and women. The Quran has recommended dress code for both genders and instructs them to lower their gaze and protect their modesty to create a healthy social environment.

In a nutshell, the study findings of this research concur with the outcomes of other researches that wearing the hijab is more beneficial religiously, morally and socially for women in an academic or industry environment than being a reason of oppression, especially in learning institutions. It also serves as a sounding board for those who consider the Islamic attire as one of the important factors in building up the anxiety level in university students. The current study highlights the need for more future studies, which could be extended to the universities in Muslim countries and the west where females wear the hijab by using the same instrument. Mixed method could also be used by

including interviews to cull thick descriptive data through the opinion and perceptions of the female students at tertiary level.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

Abdullah, C. H. B., Abidin, Z. B. Z., Hissan, W. S. M., Kechil, R., Razali, W. N., & Zin, M. Z. M. (2013). The effectiveness of generalized anxiety disorder intervention through Islamic psychotherapy: The preliminary study. *Asian Social Science, 9*(13), 157-162.

Abbott, F. (1968). *Islam and Pakistan.* New York, USA: Cornell University Press.

Ahmed, A., & Donnan, H. (1994). *Islam, globalization, and postmodernity.* London, England: Psychology Press.

Alden, L. E., & Wallace, S. T. (1995). Social phobia and social appraisal in successful and unsuccessful social interactions. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 33*(5), 497-506.

Ali, S. H. (2005). Why here, why now? Young Muslim women wearing hijab. *The Muslim World, 95*(4), 515-530.

Alvi, S., McDonough, S., & Hoodfar, H. (2003). *The Muslim veil in North America: Issues and debates.* Toronto, Canada: Women's Press.

Atasoy, Y. (2006). Governing women's morality: A study of Islamic veiling in Canada. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 9*(2) 203-221. doi: 10.1177/1367549406063164

Awan, R., Naz, A., Naureen, G., Nasreen, A., Aziz, S., & Hassan, H. (2011). Veiling and unveiling: Attitudes and experiences of university students in the Punjab. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, *1*(4), 353-366.

Aziz, S. F. (2012). The Muslim 'veil' post-9/11: Rethinking women's rights and leadership. A joint publication from the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding and the British Council. Retrieved February 10, 2018, from http://ssrn.com/abstract=2194119

Beuke, C. J., Fischer, R., & McDowall, J. (2003). Anxiety and depression: Why and how to measure their separate effects. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *23*(6), 831-848.

Bhamani, S., & Hussain, N. (2012). Soocial anxiety in higher education learning context: Scale construction and reliability. *Golden Research Thoughts, 2*(5), 1-5.

Bhimji, F. (2009). Identities and agencies in religious spheres: A study of British women's experience. *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography, 16*, 365-380.

Bigger, S. (2006). Muslim women's views on dress code and the hijab: Some issues for education. Jo*urnal of Beliefs and Values, 27*(2), 215-226.

Bullock, K. (2002). *Rethinking Muslim women and the veil: Challenging historical and modern stereotypes*. The International Institute of Islamic Thought. Retrieved April 3, 2017, from http://www.iiituk.com/docs/pdf/preamble-veiling-v3.pdf

Carvalho, J. P. (2010). *Veiling*. Oxford, England: University of Oxford. Retrieved April 3, 2017, from http://belfercenter.ksg.*harvard*.edu/files/uploads/mei/conference/veiling.pdf

Cinar, A. (2005). *Islam and secularism in Turkey: Bodies, places and time*. Minneapolis, USA: University of Minnesota Press.

Cole, D., & Ahmadi, S. (2003). Perspectives and experiences of Muslim women who veil on college campuses. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*(1), 47-66.

Cooley, C. H. (1902). The looking glass self. In C. Lemert (Ed.), *Social theory: The multicultural readings*. Philadelphia, USA: Western View Press. Retrieved February 3, 2017, from http://mills-soc116.wikidot.com/printer--friendly//notes:cooley-looking-glass-self

Cooley, C. (1998). *One self and social organization.* Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press.

Critelli, F. M. (2010). Beyond the veil in Pakistan. *Affilia, 25*(3), 236-249.

Crozier, W. R., & Alden, L. E. (Eds.) (2005). *The essential handbook of social anxiety for clinicians.* Chichester, England: Wiley.

Darnell, C., & Shafiqa, A. (2003). *Perspectives and experiences of Muslim women who veil on college campus*. Baltimore, USA: The John Hopkins University Press. doi: 10.1353/csd.2003.0002

Gokariksel, B. (2011). The intimate policy of secularism and the headscarf: The mall, the neighbourhood, and the public square in Istanbul. *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography, 19*(1), 1-20. doi:10.1080/0966369X.2011.633428

Haqqani, H. (2004). The role of Islam in Pakistan's future. *Washington Quarterly, 28*(1), 83-96.

Haque, R. (2010). Gender and nexus of purdah culture in public policy. *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies, 25*(2), 303-310.

Hefner, S. (2007). Javanese women and the veil in post Soeharto Indonesia. *Journal of Asian Studies, 6*(2), 389-420.

Hochel, S. (2013). To veil or not to veil: Voices of Malaysia Muslim women. *Intercultural Communication Studies, 22*(2), 40-57.

Itani, B. (2016). Veiling at the American University of Beirut: Religious values, social norms and integration of veiled students. *Contemporary Arab Affairs, 9*(4), 536-551.http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2016.1245386

Javed, N. (2014). Meanings patterns and the social function of hijab amongst female university students. *European Academic Research, 1*(12), 5499-5510.

Keddie, N. R., & Baron, B. (Eds.). (1991). *Women in Middle Eastern history: Shifting boundaries in sex and gender.* New Haven, USA: Yale University Press.

Leila, A. (2011). *A quiet revolution: The veil's resurgence, from the Middle East to America.* New Haven, USA: Yale University Press.

Malik, I. (1999). *Islam, nationalism, and the West: Issues of identity in Pakistan.* New York, USA: Palgrave Macmillan.

McGrath, M. (2006). *Generalized anxiety disorder causes: The origins and causes of gad*. Retrieved December 10, 2016, from http://www.MedicineNet.com

McIntosh, J. C. (2010). Beyond the veil: The influence of Islam on female entrepreneurship in a conservative Muslim context. *International Management, 6*(1), 103-109.

McIntyre, L. (2006). *The practical skeptic: Core concepts in sociology* (3rd ed.). New York, USA: McGraw Hill.

Mead, G. H. (1964). *George Herbert Mead on social psychology-selected papers*. In A. Strauss (Ed.). Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press.

Mohammad, R. (2010). Marginalization, Islamism and the product of the 'other's' 'other'.*Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography, 6*(3), 221-240. doi: 10.1080/09663699925006

Mule, P., & Barthel, D. (1992). The return to the veil: Individual autonomy vs. social esteem. *Sociological Forum, 7*(2), 323-332.

Nasr, S. V. (2001). *Islamic leviathan: Islam and the making of state power.* Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Radhakrishna, R. B. (2007). Tips for developing and testing questionnaires/instruments. *Journal of Extension, 45*(1), 1-4.

Rapee, R. M., & Hayman, K. (1996). The effects of video feedback on the self-evaluation of performance in socially anxious subjects. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 34*(4), 315–322.

Rheault, M. (2008) Headscarves and secularism: Voices from Turkish women. *Gallup World.* Retrieved December 5, 2017, from http://www.gallup.com/poll/104257/headscarves-secularism-voices-from-turkish-women.aspx

Roald, A. S. (2001). *Women in Islam: The Western experience*. New York, USA: Routledge.

Ruby, T. F. (2006). Listening to the voices of hijab. *Women's Studies International Forum, 29*(1*),* 54-66.

Scott, J. W. (2007). *The politics of the veil*. New Jersey: USA, Princeton University Press. Retrieved April 20, 2018, from http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/i8497.pdf

Seggie, F. N., & Sanford, G. (2010). Perceptions of female Muslim students who veil: Campus religious climate. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(1), 59-82.

Shaffer, L. (2005). From mirror self-recognition to the looking-glass self: Exploring the justification hypothesis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 61*(1), 47-65.

Shaheed, F. (2002). *Imagined citizenship: Women, state & politics in Pakistan.* Lahore, Pakistan: Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre.

Sharlach, L. (2008). Veil and four walls: A state of terror in Pakistan. *Critical Studies on Terrorism, 1*(1), 95-110.

Sharp, D. (2012). *Bridging the disconnect: Unveiling the hijab and Islamic feminism*. Retrieved January 7, 2018, from http://teachingconstributions.wordpress.com/2012/04/23/bridging-the-disconnect-unveiling-the-hijab-and-islamic-feminism/

Siraj, A. (2011). Meanings of modesty and hijab amongst Muslim women in Glasgow, Scotland. *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography, 18*(6), 716-   731.

Stein, M. B., & Stein, D. J. (2008). Social anxiety disorder. *Lancet, 371*(9618), 1115–1125.

Stopa, L., & Clark, D. M. (1993). Cognitive processes in social phobia. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 31*(3), 255–267.

Turner, J. H. (1988). *A theory of social interaction*. Stanford, USA: Stanford University Press.

Yusuf, H. E. (2014). Purdah: A religious practice or an instrument of exclusion, seclusion and isolation in women in a typical Islamic setting of north Nigeria. *American Journal of Contemporary Research, 4*(1), 238-245.

Zahedi, A. (2008). Concealing and revealing female hair: Veiling dynamics in contemporary Iran. In J. Heath (Ed.)*, The veil: Women writers on its history, lore, and politics.* London, England: University of Oxford Press Ltd.