

## Levels of Charismaphobia Among Veiled and Unveiled Muslim Women

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### Abstract

Physical attractiveness is known to be associated with several socially desirable outcomes. With the growing emphasis on beauty in media and other platforms, attractiveness related concerns are becoming more common in today's world, making the problem an intensified clinical condition. In the current study, data was collected and analyzed quantitatively to analyze the difference in levels of Charismaphobia between Muslim women who cover their heads and faces when going outside and those who do not cover their heads and faces in any form when they go out. Using convenient sampling method, data was collected from 615 Muslim women who filled out paper questionnaires as well as online survey. Unveiled Muslim women were found to exhibit higher level of Charismaphobia than veiled Muslim women. Differences based on marital status, professional level, body shape and skin tone were also analyzed in terms of Charismaphobia. The study has its valuable implications in understanding the condition of Charismaphobia more, especially as it exists in Pakistan and to explore ways to manage and treat it.

**Keywords:** Physical attractiveness, beauty, charismaphobia, unveiled Muslim women, veiled Muslim women



## **Introduction**

Beauty is an immensely powerful attribute as physical appearance is a highly visible and most identifiable characteristic of an individual.<sup>1</sup>

## **Charismaphobia**

Charismaphobia is regarded as either being afraid of becoming physically unattractive or losing one's physical attractiveness when the person was previously considered attractive. Clinically, the symptoms of Charismaphobia are manifested as <sup>2</sup>

- A persistent urge to be accepted and praised for one's facial features and attractive body as well as to influence others with one's beauty and physical attractiveness.
- An intense urge to be dominating over others solely based on physical attractiveness.
- A strong preference for oneself to look younger than their actual biological age.
- A strongly held belief and confidence as being superior to others solely based on physical appearance and body features.
- Excessive time consumption on Internet surfing to keep up with the trending fashion.
- Showing sensitivity in selecting dresses or outfits carefully.
- Serious concern or possible anxiety about one's own perception in others' view in terms of physical attraction.
- Seeking medical procedures like taking medications or undergoing aesthetic surgery to improve or maintain physical attractiveness.

For the diagnosis to be made, the individual should have the symptoms persistently present for the past 6 months. Furthermore, it is important for an individual to be anxious about being seen as unattractive to be labelled with Charismaphobia and also the individuals seeking medical beautification approach to improve or maintain their physical attractiveness. These are indicators of the key theme of Charismaphobia, which most of the times appears as anxiety.<sup>3</sup>

## Veil

eil can be defined in terms of multiple types and levels of intensity. The term 'hijab' refers to cover the head only while 'niqab' is associated with covering both the head and the face.<sup>4</sup> Veil applies to a type of cloth that covers up the body from head to ankle without concealing the face, hands and feet.<sup>5</sup> Islamic clothing varies greatly between countries and comes in a variety of styles; some Muslim females cover their heads while their faces are exposed and this type of clothing is called Hijab and 'Niqab' is a word for a piece of clothing that completely covers one's body and face while only their eyes are uncovered.<sup>6</sup> Veiling may ensure the Muslim family members that the individual is adhering to Islamic principles while following modern educational and career goals that would otherwise be unacceptable without wearing the veil.<sup>7</sup> Veiling serves religious and social functions by symbolizing women's modesty and religious commitment, their social identification and community membership and political resistance to negative non-Islamic ideologies.<sup>8</sup>

## Rationale of the Study

Physical attractiveness is considered the most defining characteristic of a person and is depended upon how one perceives it. This rationale of this study is to explore how physical attractiveness and related concepts are experienced by Muslim women populations differing in terms of religious dressing style or veil. To be specific, this study aims to explore how these Muslim women differ in the desire to be liked in social situations in terms of their beauty and fear losing the attractive features of their appearance and physical charm. As in the past, several researches have been conducted assessing physical attractiveness and related concepts, this particular research focuses on two different populations of Muslim women only where the main difference is in terms of veil-practicing. The objectives of this particular study include highlighting patterns of fear of getting unattractive in the veiled and unveiled women and providing insight regarding prevalence of charisma and

attractiveness maintaining attitudes and behaviors in women in a Pakistani context.

### **Sample and Procedure**

This study was conducted on 615 Muslim females differing across variable of veiling practices and belonging to different areas of Pakistan. Data was collected from females of different colleges, universities, government organizations, private companies, public places and also the health care department. The sample consisted of 316 veiled females, covering their heads and faces completely when going outside as well as 299 unveiled females who did not cover their heads or faces at all when going outside. It included 76 adolescents in the age range of 18-19 years, 479 young adults in the age range of 20-30 years and 60 adults in the age range 31-61. The researcher attempted to create enough variation in the participants' selection on the basis of different demographics particularly age, gender, educational qualification, socioeconomic status and other factors. The research employed purposive convenient sampling method as the participants were approached by the researcher on the basis of their veiling and non-veiling routine as well as their availability and willingness to participate. Data was collected from participants in different settings like educational institutions, households, government organizations, private companies, public places and also the health care department. The research participants were informed about the aim of research and their agreement to participate was obtained prior to the actual data collection. They were also allowed to withdraw from the research if they felt uncomfortable. Participants were instructed to read the items carefully and inquire about any confusion or misunderstanding regarding the statements. Participants were permitted to take as much time as they needed to read the entire questionnaire and fill it out completely. The collected data was then examined and analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

### **Results**

#### **Table I**

*Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

Demographic Characteristics	N	%
Total	615	
Age Range		
18-19	76	12.36
20-30	479	77.89
31-61	60	9.76
Marital Status		
Unmarried	524	85.2
Married	91	14.8
Profession		
Student	439	71.4
Working	106	17.2
Jobless	23	3.7
Housewife	47	7.6
Body Type		

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Muscular	39	6.3
Curvy	124	20.2
Chubby	125	20.3
Thin	327	53.2
Skin Tone		
Fairly White	125	20.3
Pale White	259	42.1
Light Brown	185	30.1
Brown	46	7.5
Subjective Age		
As Actual	290	47.2
Slightly Younger	154	25.0
Extremely Younger	49	8.0
Slightly Older	101	16.4
Extremely Older	21	3.4
Routine of Veiling		
Veiled	316	51.4

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Unveiled	299	48.6
Reasons for Veiling		
Forced by Religion	191	31.0
Forced by Family	8	1.30
Personal/Free	117	19.02
Choice		

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of Sukoon Charismaphobia Scale (N=615)*

Variable	Item	Range							
		$\alpha$	M	SD	%	Potential	Actual	Skewness	Kurtosis
Sukoon									
Charismaphobia	19	.89	44.5	15.3	46.9	19-95	19-87	.41	-.45
a			8	9	2				
Scale									

$\alpha$  =Chronbach's Alpha; M =Mean; SD =Standard Deviation

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of Sukoon Charismaphobia Scale with research data of 615 Muslim female participants from different areas of Pakistan. All the participants are assessed on the Sukoon Charismaphobia

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Scale through its 19 items. The Chronbach's alpha value of the scale is .89 which shows its good reliability. The mean or measure of center of distribution of data is 44.58. The value of standard deviation is 15.39 which shows low variation of the data. On this scale, a person's lowest possible score could be 19 and the highest possible score could be 95. The actual lowest score obtained in this data was 19 whereas the highest actual score obtained was 87. The value of skewness is 0.41 which shows that the data is approximately symmetrical. The kurtosis with value of -0.45 indicates the distribution of data to be flatter and having light tails or lesser outliers.

**Table 3**

*Correlation of Charismaphobia with its underlying factors, age and education*

	Exhibitio n	Narcissisti c Trends	Media Consum- ption	Anxiet y	Age	Education
Charismaphobia	.60**	.61**	.73**	.84**	-.10*	-.05
Exhibition		.34**	.28**	.37**	-.09*	-.05
Narcissistic Trends			.27**	.41**	-.05	-.04
Media Consumption				.40**	-.05	.02
Anxiety					-.09*	-.08*
Age						.54**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



Charismaphobia is found to have a significant strong positive correlation with exhibition, narcissistic trends, media consumption and anxiety which means presence of these lead to higher level of Charismaphobia. Charismaphobia has a significant negative correlation with age which means that as age advances, level of Charismaphobia declines. The negative correlation between Charismaphobia and education also shows that with more educational qualifications, the tendency to exhibit Charismaphobia decreases. Exhibition, narcissistic trends, media consumption and anxiety all seem to have a significantly positive correlation with each other whereas with age, all are negatively correlated showing the decline in these tendencies as a person ages. The negative correlation between education and exhibition, narcissistic trends and anxiety also show the decrease in these tendencies as a person acquires more education. The correlation between age and education is significant and positive which shows that with age, a person’s educational qualification increases. Media consumption has a weak correlation with educational qualification showing no significant relationship between amount of media content being consumed and the educational qualification.

**Table 4**

*Differences in Levels of Charismaphobia Between Veiled and Unveiled*

*Muslim Women*

Variable	Veiled (n=316)		Unveiled (n=299)		<i>t</i> (613)	<i>p</i>	Cohen’s <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			

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Charismaphobia	42.61	14.93	46.67	15.62	-3.29	.001	0.26
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M =Mean; SD =Standard Deviation

As depicted in Table 4, the sample consisted of 615 Muslim female participants who are further categorized as 316 veiled and 299 unveiled Muslim women. The mean value of Charismaphobia found in veiled women is 42.61 with a standard deviation value of 14.93 whereas in unveiled females, the mean value of Charismaphobia is found to be 46.67 with a standard deviation value of 15.62. The t value indicated by t-test is -3.29 while the significance or p value is 0.001; this shows that there is a significant difference in the level of Charismaphobia between veiled and unveiled women with a higher level of Charismaphobia in unveiled Muslim females (M=46.67; SD=15.62). The value of Cohen’s d, 0.266, shows that the effect size or difference in means of the two groups is smaller. Therefore, this table overall portrays a significant difference between the level of Charismaphobia present in the veiled and the unveiled female participants of the study.

**Table 5**

*Differences in Level of Charismaphobia Between Single and Married Women*

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	Single		Married		t (613)	p	Cohen’s d
	(n=524)		(n=91)				
Variable	M	SD	M	SD			

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Charismaphobia	44.64	15.40	44.25	15.40	0.22	.823	0.02
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M =Mean; SD =Standard Deviation

Table 5 shows the relationship of Charismaphobia with the marital status of the sample. Therefore, this table above overall portrays no significant difference between the Charismaphobia present in the single participants and the married participants of the study.

**Table 6**

*Profession-based Analysis of Variance for Charismaphobia in Veiled and Unveiled Women*

Variable	Students (n=439)		Working (n=106)		Jobless (n=23)		Housewives (n=47)		F (3)	p	η <sup>2</sup>
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Charismaphobi	45.1	15.4	45.6	15.6	40.1	13.7	39.6	14.0	2.58	0.05	0.01
a	0	6	0	1	7	1	3	9		2	3

M =Mean; SD =Standard Deviation

Table 6 implies the relationship between Charismaphobia and the participants' professions, including students, working, unemployed, and housewives. Out of 615 total females, 439 were students, 106 were working

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participants, 23 were jobless participants, and 47 were housewives in the study. The mean value of Charismaphobia in students was 45.10 with a standard deviation of 15.46 while the mean of Charismaphobia in working women was 45.60 with a standard deviation of 15.61. For jobless females, the value of Charismaphobia was 40.17 with a standard deviation value of 13.71 and for housewives mean of Charismaphobia was 39.63 with a standard deviation of 14.09. The F value in the ANOVA test is 2.58 and is thus large and the significance value is 0.052, which shows that no significant difference occurs in the level of Charismaphobia in the groups varying across different professions. The value of variance 0.013 indicates low variance in the means across the groups.

**Table 7**

*Body Type-based Analysis of Variance for Charismaphobia in Veiled and Unveiled Women*

Variable	Muscular		Curvy		Chubby		Thin		F (3)	p	$\eta^2$
	(n=39)		(n=124)		(n=125)		(n=327)				
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Charismaphobi	45.8	13.7	43.6	16.5	45.3	15.9	44.5	14.9	0.3	0.79	0.00
a	4	2	1	5	1	8	2	2	4	3	2

M =Mean; SD =Standard Deviation

Table 7	Post hoc	(I-J)	I < J < 2 < 3	indicates the relationship of Charismaphobia with different body
relationship of				

types. Significant differences are indicated

**Table 8**

*Skin Tone-based Analysis of Variance for Charismaphobia in Veiled and Unveiled Women*

Variable	Fairly White		Pale White		Light Brown		Brown		F (3)	p	η <sup>2</sup>
	(n=125)		(n=259)		(n=185)		(n=46)				
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Charismaphobia	44.89	14.71	43.89	15.59	45.24	15.37	45.00	16.47	0.31	0.816	0.002

M =Mean; SD =Standard Deviation

Table 8 demonstrates the relationship between Charismaphobia and the skin tone of the participants in this study.



Table 9 depicts the relationship between Charismaphobia and the participants' subjective ages in terms of actual, slightly younger, extremely younger, slightly older, and extremely older. The F value for this analysis was 4.81 which is high, and the significance value is 0.001, showing that level of Charismaphobia differs significantly across groups with different subjective ages. The value of variance is 0.031 which shows very small variance or effect size of the data. The results of post hoc test indicated a significant difference in levels of Charismaphobia in the five groups with different subjective and chronological ages:  $F(4,610) = 4.81, p = 0.001$ . Pairwise comparisons of means using Tukey test revealed a significant difference between the actual age, slightly younger age, very younger age, and slightly older age. More specifically, level of Charismaphobia in actual age condition ( $M=42.47, SD=15.46$ ) is lower than slightly younger ( $M=46.94, SD=15.31$ ), very younger ( $M=51.30, SD=16.43$ ) and very older age condition ( $M=43.66, SD=13.37$ ). Thus, very younger age group has highest level of Charismaphobia.

**Table 10**

Reasons for Veiling-based Analysis of Variance for Charismaphobia in Veiled Women

Forced by	Forced by	By			
Religion	Culture/Fami	Personal/Free			
	ly	Choice			
			F	p	$\eta^2$
			(61)		
(n=191)	(n=08)	(n=117)			

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Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Charismaphobi	43.4	14.7	52.2	23.11	39.7	13.72	1.24	0.12	0.234
a	1	1	8		6			7	

M =Mean; SD =Standard Deviation

The Table 10 of Charismaphobia demonstrates how level of Charismaphobia differs in veiled women groups having different reasons for veil practicing. Out of 316 veiled Muslim women, 191 opted for veil as per religious obligations, 8 reported the veil to be enforced by family or culture whereas 117 chose to take veil as their personal/free choice.

**Discussion**

The current study examined the difference in the levels of Charismaphobia among veiled and unveiled Muslim women. The unveiled Muslim women of Pakistan were found to have higher fear of getting unattractive, express more desire to be appreciated by others, show more interest in beauty and fashion and dislike discussing their age with others more than the veiled women. The sample consisted of women differing across the variable of veil practicing; 316 women covering their heads and faces when going outside and 299 women going outside without covering their heads and faces.

Beauty has more influence since it can be used to make social comparisons, such as indicating a person's social position. The prevailing beauty notion is based on physical appearance which is depicted through one's body posture, skin color and texture as well as makeup use (Listyani et al., 2018)<sup>9</sup>. Beauty is defined as the characteristics of an object that are appealing to eye, including the properties like symmetry, balancing proportions, geometrical features, intricacy, uniqueness and clarity.<sup>10</sup>

In this study, the level of Charismaphobia was found to be significantly higher in unveiled Muslim women than the veiled Muslim women and these findings were in accordance with the research hypothesis. Unveiled Muslim women thus possess more fear and anxiety to be labelled as unattractive and they are more socially and culturally compliant to norms in comparison with



veiled Muslim women. The findings of earlier literature also revealed that females covering their heads and faces with veil experienced lower level of body dissatisfaction, lesser appearance related concerns and a higher level of self-esteem.<sup>11</sup>(Dunkel et al., 2010; Rastmanesh et al., 2009; Swami et al., 2013<sup>12</sup>; Wilhelm et al., 2018). Such association between veiling practices and lesser concerns about one's physical attractiveness can be explained in terms of veil being an indicator of a woman's religious level. Muslim women, on the basis of their religious status, choose to conceal their feminine beauty charm.

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The comparison between single and married females in this study shows that there is no significant difference in the level of Charismaphobia between the two groups, where no significant difference in the level of Charismaphobia was found between single and married individuals. The almost similar level of beauty related concerns in married and unmarried females can be explained in light of different studies. Unmarried females may show physical attractiveness related concerns as researchers found that girls and young women are repeatedly introduced to the importance of looks and beauty since their early age.<sup>14</sup>

Findings of the current study showed no significant difference in the level of Charismaphobia across different body types i.e., muscular, curvaceous, fat or chubby and thin or slim. However, the level is slightly higher in muscular and chubby females than the curvy and thin ones and this finding is again contradictory to earlier research on Charismaphobia, in which chubby individuals were found to exhibit lower level of Charismaphobia.<sup>15</sup>The slightly higher level of Charismaphobia in muscular females can be explained by findings of Sugahara<sup>16</sup>, according to which the body type that is most physically appealing in girls and women is the one that lies in between chubbiness and skinniness. As muscular females are neither fat nor slim, they might feel the pressure to stay in the shape and do not lose their physical attractiveness

Charismaphobia is found to be significantly higher in individuals who perceive themselves to be younger than their actual biological age. This finding is in line with the studies of<sup>16</sup>: who came up with findings that younger individuals are considered more physically attractive than aged

people and they possess more attractiveness related concerns than people of other age groups. Kwart et al., 2012<sup>17</sup>

The level of Charismaphobia does not seem to differ significantly in the groups with different reasons for veiling among the veiled women. In other words, women who veil for religious purposes have almost the same level of Charismaphobic symptoms as women who veil under cultural or family pressure as well as women who take veil when going outside due to their personal choice. This shows that tendency of women to show concerns about their physical attractiveness does not depend on the reason they opted veiling for.

The present study explored the occurrence of physical attractiveness related concerns in two populations of Muslim women and it was discovered that Muslim women do exhibit symptoms of Charismaphobia, in an Islamic country like Pakistan. This finding is valuable for mental health professionals, psychologists and counsellors who may develop a deeper understanding of this condition and provide their services to those exhibiting symptoms of Charismaphobia.

This study also has implications in feminism point of view regarding veil or Hijab, as such practices are considered a means of oppression towards women and they are being banned and criticized in a number of countries including Turkey, France, Germany etc. The findings of this study imply that veil acts as a protective factor against mentally disturbing concerns and psychologically distressing conditions and its importance needs to be recognized and acknowledged instead of the practice being criticized. These findings may help reduce the stigma and negative image associated with veil. Furthermore, the educational implications include the awareness about the condition to common citizens of Pakistan who should understand as well as identify it as a part of mental disorders and may seek for help in case of experiencing such concerns. Educating Psychology students about Charismaphobia may help them explore the understudied area more which will lead to more recognition of the problem. As a result, appropriate measures can be taken and therapeutic techniques can be devised for those who need help in this regard.

Lastly, these findings can play an eye-opening role for the media as well as policy makers who need to acknowledge these concerns and the resulting

obsessions people especially females experience, due to the promotion of unachievable beauty ideals and adopted beauty standards. People internalize these ideals and standards which leads to beauty related worries and worsening of the condition. This study, therefore, may pave the road to a better understanding of Charismaphobia as well as exploring ways to control and manage it.

### **Conclusion**

The study revealed that no significant difference occurs in the levels of Charismaphobia in females of the two groups across the marital status of unmarried or married and professional levels of students, working females, jobless females and housewives. In a similar vein, no significant differences were found in the variable of body shapes like muscular, curvaceous, chubby/fat and slim/thin as well as that of skin tone varying across fairly white, pale white, light brown and brown complexion. Nevertheless, the participants with younger subjective age were found to exhibit the symptoms of Charismaphobia the most. This research, on the whole, has significance in identifying those dealing with beauty or attractiveness related concerns or Charismaphobia and thus to explore more treatment or management ways in this regard.

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