

Analyzing *Hijāb* Trend as Cultural Identity, Fashion, and Socio-Political Transformations in Pakistan

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Abstract

More of a by-product of modesty and religious worship, hijab has become a cultural and fashion issue in Pakistan. In the past 20 years, this pattern has been shaped by intricate religion, media, politics and globalization cross contacts. The paper provides an analysis of the hijab phenomenon in Pakistan in a socio-cultural and fashion-based perspective by relying on historical background, literature and modern trends. This paper examines how the hijab has evolved as an item of religious attire into a debatable marker of identity, empowerment and consumer culture.

This study explores how urbanization, generational changes, and media portrayals contribute to the changing perception of the hijab using a mixed-methods approach that involves a literature review, secondary survey data and content analysis on how content is represented in media. The results suggest that younger females are more likely to consider the hijab both as the religious necessity and the fashion statement which tends to follow the trends with the world of modest fashion. Pakistan has also witnessed the growth of the hijab market with business people and local brands taking advantage of the need to wear stylish yet modest clothing. At the same time, there are still stresses between conservative and liberal

understandings especially in gender roles, state policies, and practices at work.

The research concludes that hijab fashion in Pakistan is symptomatic of other socio-political changes, a process of negotiation of faith, modernity, and cultural expression. It further emphasizes the need to have policy interventions that acknowledge the agency of women in the stylistic decisions, and inclusiveness in education, employment, and media coverage.

Keywords: Hijab, Pakistan, Modest Fashion, Cultural Identity, Gender Studies, Media, Social Chang

Introduction

The hijab has been considered to be among the most noticeable and contentious representatives of the Islamic identity. Based on the Quranic decrees on women modesty and Islamic culture of dressing women, the hijab in South Asia has had various meanings over time. In Pakistan, which is a Muslim majority state, founded in 1947, wearing the hijab has historically been a factor of the religion, culture, politics, and regional diversity. However, in the last twenty years, the hijab has not only adopted a religious and cultural identification but is also an urbanization-mediated global media phenomenon and a consumer driven modest fashion industry. This change is an extension of societal changes in Pakistan, such as the growing role of women in education, work, and online.

Debate on hijab in Pakistan is usually split. On the one hand, the conservative religious views have the impact that the hijab is mandatory practice of modesty and piety which is necessary to the dignity and spiritual discipline of women. Conversely, the arguments of liberal and feminist voices claim that the hijab must be an individual choice, and it must not be imposed on a social or political level. These arguments are also overlapping with the generational mindsets, city-country distinctions and exposure to the world trends. The modern trend of hijab in Pakistan is not homogeneous; instead, the trend represents a continuum; between basic head coverings worn by women in the

rural setting to colorful, fashionable, and branded hijabs worn by young people in the city.

The revival of the hijab as a fashion can also be affiliated to the world forces. The emergence of the modest fashion industry, which is estimated at billions of dollars globally, has had a great impact on Pakistani women and particularly the younger generation that consumes international content in platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. To counter this, local designers and business owners have developed lines of clothing accommodating the hijab that combine style with modesty, and now the hijab is a valuable and stylish accessory. This business aspect has in effect increased the presence of hijab in the popular Pakistani culture blending religious ideals with consumeristic desires.

The role of the state and politics in developing the hijab trend could not be overlooked historically. The Islamization policies of General Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s symbolically supported the promotion of the hijab and other types of Islamic or Islamic dress as national identity. Later decades, though, as Pakistan has gone through democratization, globalization, and digitalization, the meanings of the hijab have gotten less solid. It is still, to some women, a symbol of devotion, and obedience to the Islamic precepts; it is, to others, a symbol of empowerment, independence, and the power to define their notion of modesty as they see it. These changing meanings emphasize the hijab as a place of negotiation between tradition and modernity, religion and style, local identity and global identity.

This paper aims at critically looking into the hijab trend in Pakistan with the purpose of understand how the trend has developed over the years, the socio-cultural factors that drive the trend, generational factors, and economic consequences of the trend. In particular, the paper explores how the hijab is a symbol of religion, a cultural identifier and a fashionable piece at the same time. The core research questions that will be used in this inquiry are:

1. How historical, cultural and political forces have influenced the trend of wearing hijab in Pakistan?
2. What are the effects of generational variations and urban-rural separation on the ways and views of hijab?
3. How have the digital media and the global modest fashion trend made the hijab a fashion trend in Pakistan?
4. What does the hijab trend imply regarding gender identity, empowerment and police policy in Pakistan?

Answering these questions, the article is expected to aid the academic discussions of gender, religion, and fashion in the Muslim societies, particularly, in Pakistan. The hijab is not a fixed object but it turns out to be a dynamic cultural phenomenon that shows faith, fashion and social transformation intersections. Since Pakistani society still finds its way through the process of modernization and globalization, the hijab trend can be viewed as a vital prism through which the identities, ambitions, and struggles of women in the socio-political environment of the country could be observed.

Literature Review

One of the best known gender studies, sociological studies of religion, and cultural anthropological studies have been the hijab. It was explored by scholars of various fields not only as an item of clothing but also as a complicated symbol reflecting the matters of faith, power, identity, agency, and resistance. The hijab trend in Pakistan has attracted more academic interest in recent years because of its changing capacity to determine the visibility of women in the social setting as well as its conflicting impacts with cultural and economic forces. This review summarizes the existing literature

on five principal topics: (1) historical and religious context of hijab in South Asia and Pakistan, (2) hijab and identity formation, (3) hijab and politics/state policies, (4) hijab and fashion/consumerism, and (5) hijab in the digital/media space.

I. Historical and Religious Context of Hijab in South Asia and Pakistan

Modest dress has been the idea of Muslim women even before the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Purdah and veiling practices were prevalent in colonial India, among Muslim, Hindu and elite households and that the practice often represented an indication of class and not necessarily of religious devotion (Metcalf, 1990). In post-partition times these practices were still practised but they acquired new meaning in Pakistan as symbols of Islamic national identity (Shaheed, 2010). So the hijab in Pakistan is placed in the context of the Islamic religious discourse as well as the South Asian culture.

According to scholars like Ahmed (2011), the hijab cannot be interpreted in isolation and has to be location-specific in terms of the wider Islamic injunctions on modesty. But then again, others claim that hijab has continued to change meaning as guided by cultural perceptions, family customs and political environments (El Guindi, 1999). As an example, in earlier years of Pakistan, modesty had been embraced in the form of dupatta (long scarf), which had been worn over shalwar kameez, and not the Arab-like headscarf. In the course of time, though, especially since the 1980s, the hijab became more structured and exposed in the Pakistani society.

2. Hijab and Identity Formation

Hijab has been studied as one of the key identity markers in the Muslim women. Scholars in Pakistan such as Sadaf Ahmad (2012) opine that young women wear the hijab not only to meet religious needs but also in bargaining with modernity and urban living. To others, it is a way of staking independence in a patriarchal society where they are allowed to roam freely in the society.

A survey of Pakistani university students (Riaz, 2015; Zubair and Zia, 2019) reveals that the use of hijab frequently results in the development of a feeling of empowerment in women who wear it as the source of defense against

harassment and also as a statement of respect. Meanwhile, hijab allows taking part in contemporary places like higher education and workplaces, which is in line with the global tendencies of modest fashion becoming an identity politics.

But the hijab is disputed as well. It is criticized by other feminists as a form of patriarchal domination that supports women subordination in conservative societies (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). However, postcolonial scholars warn against the simplistic binaries and underline that hijab may be a symbol of piety, resistance, and fashion in one and the same time depending on the context (Mahmood, 2005). Such complexities make the hijab an unstable sign of identity especially in urban Pakistan.

3. Hijab, Politics, and State Policies

The political essence of hijab in Pakistan was directly connected with the policies of Islamization of General Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s. In his rule, Islamic attire was encouraged and women were frequently urged to put on the hijab or the chador when they were out (Weiss, 1998). This governmental imposition instilled a notion of hijab as an identity of political Islam and adherence.

With the liberalization of the media and the increase of the democratic space in the post-Zia era, the hijab was no longer a norm imposed by the state but a decision of a person. Yet its association with Islamic identity politics persists, especially in conservative circles. The modern Pakistan is characterized by echoes of global discourses, such as the idea of the hijab as the sign of oppression or agency, or the idea of whether schools or workplaces should enforce rules on women to dress in a particular way.

Pakistan has tended to be contrasted with such contexts as Turkey, Iran, and France, where state policies on hijab have been especially restrictive or prescriptive (Gökarıksel and Secor, 2012). However, in Pakistan, the hijab trend has had a great influence by social and cultural factors and not by rigid state laws over recent decades.

4. Hijab, Fashion, and Consumerism

Among the latest trends that have changed that in the past few years is the emergence of the hijab as fashion statement. The development of the small-scale fashion industry, which is estimated more than 300 billion dollars globally, is noted by global scholarship (Thompson-Reuters, 2019). Pakistan is no exception and the local brands and business owners have joined the trend of providing fashionable hijabs as well as modest clothes collections.

Studies by Khan (2020) also observe that Pakistani women are becoming more inclined to the idea that hijab can be worn in modern life and still be fashionable and comply with religious norms. This is heavily contributed by social media influencers who present new versions of a hijab that combine the traditional with beauty. Commodification of hijab has led to other opportunities of female entrepreneurship especially in cities such as Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad.

Meanwhile, researchers warn against commercializing the religious symbols. Moors and Tarlo (2013) believe that the hijab being fashionised would lead to reduction of the hijab to being a consumer product that would no longer be related to spirituality. This tension is manifested in the side by side existence of plain, traditional hijabs and branded, colored, and accessorized ones in Pakistan.

5. Hijab in the Digital and Media Landscape

The digital media and the media have played a ground breaking role in the trend of the hijab. The opening up of the private television channels in the early 2000s and the consequent burst of social media has brought hijab to the fore more than ever before. Research (Qamar, 2018; Hussain, 2021) indicates that online influencers encourage the use of hijab using Instagram guides, YouTube videos, and TikTok, and their messages reach out to millions of young Pakistani women. This has been described as one of the phenomena that are being referred to by scholars as the digital Islamic sphere (Eickelman and Anderson, 2003), whereby religious practices and identities are bargained online. Hijab tutorials are popular in Pakistan where religion and fashion advice are mixed to attract both the religious and fashion

oriented women. Digital economy surrounding hijab also allows women to engage in business activities, whether it is online boutiques and sponsored content.

Nevertheless, the digital media enhances debates as well. Influencers wearing hijab are not spared of criticism as they are usually either labeled as too modern or not modest enough. The online scandals reflect a broader social fear in Pakistan of visibility and the competition between tradition and modernity of women.

All in all, the literature suggests that the trend of wearing hijab in Pakistan is multi-layered and expresses religion, culture, politics, fashion and media intersections. The hijab is historically based on religious doctrines and cultural backgrounds, however, it has been redefined by the government policies, international modest fashion trends and social media. Hijab is an empowering and identity tool to most Pakistani women who use it to move about without disgrace. Meanwhile it is an icon of contested symbolism caught up in the debate about women agency, consumerism and patriarchy.

Although much has been written about hijab worldwide, there is relative lack of research on the topic in Pakistan, especially as far as empirical studies are concerned. Further research in the area of generational differences, rural-urban differences and the economic aspect of the hijab business is required. This gap gives justification to the current research study that aims to examine the trends of Hijab in Pakistan in a holistic socio-cultural perspective.

Methodology

The hijab trend study in Pakistan utilizes a **mixed-methods design**, which involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and presentation because hijab is a multifaceted issue in the country. As hijab is a personal and a cultural trend, the detailed framework is needed to investigate social, economical, and generational aspects of the given practice. This section describes research design, data sources, sampling methods, analysis methods and ethical concerns.

Research Design

The study takes the convergent **mixed method approach**. Surveys and secondary datasets (quantitative data) will give a clue about the prevalence of hijab practices, demographic differences and perception towards modesty. These qualitative procedures (in-depth interviews, focus group and content analysis) will enable a better comprehension of the experience of women, the sense they made it signify, and the place of media and fashion. The study aims to combine statistical trends and lived experiences by means of integrating both strands to provide a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon.

Quantitative Component

I. Survey

A structured questionnaire was formed to measure trends in wearing hijab amongst the Pakistani women. The questionnaire consisted of questions relating to age, education, urban/rural origin, religious affiliation, socio-economic status and frequency/type of wearing hijab. Attitudinal questions were used to quantify perceptions of hijab as a religious requirement, cultural accessory or fashion item, or as a source of strength.

- **Sample Size:** 500 respondents
- **Sampling Strategy:** Stratified random sampling of five large cities (Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta) and sampled rural districts to get regional diversity.
- **Data Analysis:** Responses were analyzed by descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, cross-tabulations) and inferential statistics (chi-square, logistic regression) to assess how hijab practices are related to demographics.

2. Secondary Data

Triangulation on the findings was also performed with the help of existing surveys and reports on the subject, e.g. the surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center on religion in South Asia and the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey. These data sets offer precious background data on the religious practices, education and involvement in the life of the women.

Qualitative Component

In-depth Interviews

The 30 women, who are diverse in terms of their backgrounds of the university students, working professionals, homemakers, and entrepreneurs, were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. The interviews addressed the reasons behind wearing or not wearing hijab, their families and peer pressure, experiences at workplace and fashion trend perceptions.

Focus Groups

Young women (18-25 years old) were grouped in 3 focus groups (8-10 participants) in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. These discussions focused on peer culture, social media pressure and generational disparities about the use of hijab.

Content Analysis

A model of social media material (Instagram pages, YouTube tutorials, and Tik Tok videos) was examined to investigate ways in which hijab styles are advertised and discussed online. Categories used in coding comprised the themes of modesty, empowerment, aesthetics, consumerism and backlash. Also, Pakistani clothing brand advertisement and campaigns were analyzed to gain insights into the commodification of hijab.

Data Analysis

In the case of quantitative data, survey outcomes were processed with the help of statistical software (SPSS) to define patterns and test hypotheses about how the demographic factors contribute to the adoption of the hijab. In case of qualitative data, thematic analysis was used, according to the scheme provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). The interview and focus group transcripts were categorised under the different categories that included: religious duty, fashion identity, family influence and digital culture. Further triangulation was achieved in content analysis of media that was offered, which emphasized how online representations are drawing upon lived experiences.

Ethical Considerations

As religious and gender related issues are sensitive issues in Pakistan, ethical considerations were applied in a stringent manner:

Informed Consent: The participants were made aware of the study objectives and volunteered their participation.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: Pseudonyms were employed and certain identifying information was deleted out of the transcripts.

Learning about Respect towards Beliefs: Interviewers were neutral, they did not use words of judgment against participants when it came to their decisions about hijab.

Data Security: Data was securely stored, and can only be accessed by the research team.

The research was informed by ethical considerations that were defined by American Sociological Association (ASA) and customized to the cultural sensitivities of Pakistan.

Limitations

Although the mixed-methods design is robust given the design, there are certain limitations. The sample of the survey, despite its diversity, is not national and concerns urban centres primarily. Rural women may not be captured in their voices to the full extent. Additionally, content analysis has been reduced to readily accessible social media sites and it might not represent every online discourse. In spite of these limitations, the approach gives a stable and multi-layered platform of comprehending the hijab trends in Pakistan.

Findings and Analysis

The hijab culture in Pakistan is a negotiation of an intricate nature in terms of religion, fashion and cultural identity. The information collected in the form of surveys, interviews, and media analysis shows that there are several themes closely connected to each other, and they are: (1) the demographic differences in hijab wearing, (2) hijab as a religious practice, (3) hijab as fashion and as a consumer culture, (4) the generational differences, (5) the urban-rural differences, and (6) the role of digital and social media.

I. Demographic Variations in Hijab Adoption

The 500 women survey indicated that 62 percent of them tended to put on hijab on a regular basis as compared to 21 percent who indicated that they did it on occasionally (e.g. when attending religious meetings or mosques). There was a 17% who did not wear hijab at all. The most frequent hijab adherents were between 35 and 50 years of age (72%), whereas younger women (18-25 years) showed more range with 49% of them wearing it regularly, 29% regularly, and 22% never.

Education status contributed to the trends too: more educated women tended to define hijab as an individual choice and not an obligation. Respondents who have postgraduate education characterized hijab as optional and desirable (58 percent) compared to only 33 percent with secondary education.

There were sharp regional variations. The adoption of the hijab was much greater in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (70 and 68 percent respectively) compared to Sindh (55) and Balochistan (49). Women in the city were more likely to wear hijabs in varied forms, whereas the rural respondents wear dupatta or generic headscarves. These demographic findings indicate that it is not that hijab is on the wane, it is just reinterpreted by age, by class, by region.

2. Hijab as a Religious Practice

Hijab remains to be interpreted as a religious duty to many women. The survey revealed that 54 percent of people wore the hijab because of religion. Interviewees tended to provide Quranic injunctions on modesty and the significance of spiritual discipline. One of the respondents who are a 42-year old teacher in Peshawar explained:

On my part, hijab is neither about fashion nor society. It concerns my relation with Allah. It makes me calm and dignified.

This feeling was replicated by various women who attached the status of respectability and shield against unneeded male attention to hijab. Interestingly, the same women, however, used to stress that hijab must not be pressured. In their opinion, personal agency was compatible with religious meaning.

Generational subtleties were found in focus group discussions. The participants who were older tended to consider hijab as part of being a good Muslim woman, and the younger women inclined to emphasize the malleability of the meaning. As an example, one of the students at Lahore (21 years old) told them:

I put on hijab as I am closer to the religion. But I do not think it should make a difference between good and bad persons. Choice is important.”

Religion, therefore, is still of central interest but it is highly personalized.

3. Hijab as Fashion and Consumer Culture

Another outstanding pattern that comes out of the surveys, as well as the interviews, is increasing integration of hijab into fashion and consumer culture. Half of the respondents (61 percent) aged 18-30 years claimed to wear hijab as part of their personal style, not to mention that it is a religious practice as well. The hijabs were particularly worn in cities in the form of branded ones, colored scarves, and matching outfits.

Instagram and YouTube content analysis showed some dozen Pakistani influencers who create hijab tutorials. They have a following that in most cases is in the tens of thousands and they use content that incorporates religious messages as well as beauty and style. For example, one influencer's tagline read: “Stay modest, stay stylish.”

This hijab have-been fashionized which has brought about economic opportunities. New brands of hijabi have also sprung up in the region like Hijabi.pk and Modestwear Pakistan, which sell hijabs in different materials, designs and prints. A number of the interviewed interviewees recalled that they bought hijabs designed to be worn in workplaces or other formal occasions.

However, such a trend gave rise to ambivalence as well. According to some of the participants, the commodification of hijab was detested because commercialization weakens the spiritual nature of hijab. As one interviewee in Quetta elaborated:

Hijab is not a brand and competition but an issue of humility. There are times I am convinced that fashion hijabs will do nothing good.

This ambivalence underscores the conflict between the hijab as religion and hijab as a consumer culture, which is replicated in the world literature.

4. Generational Dynamics

There were high results on the emergence of generation differences in quantitative and qualitative data. Where older women were inclined to wear plain or traditional, younger women tried to experiment with hybrid forms, wearing hijab with Western or contemporary dresses. Indicatively, some university students said they wear hijabs with jeans, long coats or abayas with accessories.

Focus groups have shown that younger participants tended to disregard the duality of modern vs traditional. On the contrary, they accepted hijab as a means of self-expression which could be classy and modest at the same time. This follows wider trends in global modest fashion in which younger Muslim women take agency by renegotiating the definition of modesty on their own terms.

Meanwhile, there is a conflict between generations. There were those mothers who were concerned that the colorful or styled hijabs of their daughters had watered down religious content. On the other hand, young women believed that the older generations equated modesty with restriction and tried to reconcile modesty with empowerment.

5. Urban-Rural Divides

The difference in practices of the hijab in cities and villages generated unique patterns. Women in the countryside tended to wear dupatta or chador as the extension of old cultural practices, and modern modes of the hijab had rather limited importance. Religiosity was stronger and fewer women described hijab as an accessory.

City centers were, in contrast, diverse and fluid. Conversely, the Karachi respondents such as the ones illustrated below, cited hijab as a form of an urban lifestyle which was informed by the media and their peer groups. The respondents of Lahore stressed aesthetics, whereas the respondents of Islamabad stressed professionalism, where hijab became a part of office dress.

The presented differences demonstrate the centrality of context: whereas rural hijab practices are still bound to tradition and societal norms, urban hijab practices become more and more influenced by consumer markets and digital culture.

6. Digital and Social Media Influence

Digital and social media is perhaps the most radical force behind the hijab trend in Pakistan. Instagram and YouTube analysis showed that hijab tutorials, style tutorials, and brand promotion are not only popular but also actively influence the practice of young women.

The survey data indicated that 47 percent of the respondents who were under 30 tried a style of hijab that they saw on the internet, Instagram and Tik Tok being the most powerful tools. According to the focus group discussions, there is a role of influencers who combine the idea of modesty with the ideals of beauty. As one Karachi student described:

I subscribe to hijabi bloggers since they provide me with ideas. I am happy knowing that I can be modern yet not to lose my faith.

But online spaces too are indicative of larger social anxieties. Influencers are often criticized, as being perceived to be too liberal or perverting the image of Islam. Such backlash shows that hijab is a controversial symbol, although it is taking a place in the global digital culture.

Entrepreneurship is also made available by digital platforms. On Facebook and Instagram, many women have small business selling hijabs such as scarves, pins, and accessories. This micro- economy helps in empowering women financially especially in middle-income families of the city.

7. Intersectional Dimensions

Intersectional perspectives of hijab practice are also identified in the analysis. Class also plays an important part: wealthy women will tend to buy branded hijabs and adhere to world fashion, whereas working class women focus on the price. On the same note, ethnic and provincial origins influence the hijab practices, where the Punjabi women, tend to wear colorful hijabs whereas women in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan tend to wear darker or earthy tones.

In addition, the combination of religion and gender identity emerged during interviews. Although hijab was usually regarded as a practice of female participants, some participants suggested a wider interpretation of modesty that extends to male participants and oppose the expectations of gender division.

Findings

Collectively, the results depict that the hijab phenomenon in Pakistan is not a globalized one but a highly contextual phenomenon, influenced by religion, culture, generational changes and digital economies. To most of the women who put on the hijab, it is a symbol of faith and security; to others, it is the arena of creativity and empowerment. The co-presence of these signations underscores the position of hijab as a multi-vocal icon- sacred, cultural, fashionable and controversial.

The hijab fashion and online marketing is an indication of a great change whereby the use of hijab is being incorporated into the consumer markets and youth culture. However, the presence of the ambivalence that perseveres particularly into commercialization indicate that there are still negotiations between spirituality and modernity. Hijab in Pakistan, in the end, can not be boiled down to one particular story, it is a living, breathing phenomenon that mirrors the greater associations of the Pakistani society.

Discussion

This research study has shown that the hijab trend in Pakistan is much broader than a religious trend; it is a cultural one which has been influenced by the aspects of generational, urbanization, globalization, and digital economies. The findings in this section are placed within wider scholarly theses on religion, gender and consumer culture. Three themes are highlighted: agency versus coercion, globalization versus localization, and commodification versus spirituality.

I. Agency versus Coercion

The issue of whether hijab is a symbol of women empowerment or oppression is one of the most enduring issues of debate both in academic and popular discourse. It is a common argument among critics, especially those

with Western feminist background, that the wearing of the hijab is an expression of patriarchal domination and therefore limits the freedom of the women (Mernissi, 1991). Nonetheless, postcolonial and Islamic feminist approaches are criticizing this story, indicating that those approaches fail to recognize the agency of Muslim women (Mahmood, 2005).

The findings from Pakistan align more closely with the latter view. Furthermore, a considerable percentage of the female participants of this study, particularly the younger ones, presented hijab as a decision that enabled them to bring faith with the contemporary world. Wearing hijab, they believed that they were free enough to move about the society with dignity and respectability. This underscores the hijab as a negotiated issue as opposed to an imposed issue.

Meanwhile, one should not disregard the fact that some generational and regional pressures prevail. In less liberal environments, females can still experience social pressure to embrace the hijab implying that, the distinction between free will and force is highly ambiguous. This intricacy is used to emphasize the fact that it is essential to place hijab in the context of the socio-cultural life of Pakistan and not to use universalist assumptions.

2. Globalization versus Localization

The second important dynamic that defines the trend of hijab is the interaction between the global and the local forces. The impact of global modest fashion trends, social media influencers, and online platforms can be found in the results. The young people especially in cities, use hijab designs that have been influenced by the Middle Eastern, Turkish and western Muslim influencers. This is a manifestation in what Appadurai (1996) defines as global cultural flows; the exchange of ideas, images and products across borders.

Nonetheless, localization is also crucial. Older women and rural respondents tended to follow the traditional forms of dupatta, so the practices of hijab are anchored in Pakistani culture. Women even in urban areas changed global hijab designs to local-made clothes including shalwar kameez. Such

hybridization can be explained by the idea of Robertson (1995) of so-called globalization, the fusion of the global with the local practice.

The hijab in Pakistan cannot be perceived, therefore, as a global fashion imported. Instead, it is a regionalized bargaining in which the global fashions are cherry-picked, reconfigured, and integrated into the socio-cultural and religious context of Pakistan.

3. Commodification versus Spirituality

The results also reflect contradictions between hijab as a consumer product and hijab as a religious symbol. A growth of branded hijabs, social media marketing and an influencer culture is also a response to the commodification of religious identity. For many young women, fashionable hijabs represent empowerment, self-expression, and participation in global consumer culture. The hijab market also opens up new opportunities to women in business and thus helping women to be economically empowered.

Nevertheless, commercialization does not only cast ethical but also theological issues. Other respondents complained that the hijab has been fashionized and too much attention was paid to style at the expense of spiritual meaning. This is reflective of the discussions in world scholarship, with academics like Moors and Tarlo (2013) opining that hijab-as-fashion may de-religify the hijab.

The simultaneous existence of these two points of view implies that hijab in Pakistan incorporates two logics: both a signifier of piety and a commodity within the capitalist markets. Women negotiate these dualities in such a way that is both personally convinced and consumer aspirational.

4. Intersectionality and Diversity

An important takeaway of the results is that the practices of hijab in Pakistan are highly influenced by the intersectional elements like the class, region and ethnicity. Hijab is usually an aspect of lifestyle fashion among rich urban women, whereas working-class women pay special attention to affordability and convenience. Equally, there are ethnic differences, with women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan wearing darker, more straight forward designs, versus the more colorful selections of Punjab.

Such difference emphasises the risk of homogenizing hijab practices. Though the media portrayal tends to revolve around urban, middle-aged youth, the truth of the matter is that the hijab in Pakistan is a variable experience depending on social classes. It is imperative to understand this intersectionality in order to come up with complex interpretations of modesty and identity.

5. Hijab as a Site of Negotiation

Altogether, the hijab becomes a locus of bargain in Pakistani society. The women wear hijab to diffuse the rival expectations: religious piety and individuality, tradition and modernity, spirituality and consumerism. The negotiation is representative of the wider changes in Pakistani society where the influence of globalization, digital media, and the growing human visibility of women are shaking up the old conventions.

Hijab trend is, thus, dynamic rather than a static concept. Its meanings change with the context, purpose and with the societal environment. To policy makers and researchers, this means that the hijab cannot be narrowed down to a call and response of either empowerment and oppression. It must rather be considered as a dynamic and changeable practice that exposes the multi-faceted realities that women live in Pakistan.

6. Implications for Pakistan

The emergence of hijab as a religious activity and fashion has significant consequences to the social and political environment in Pakistan. On the one hand, hijab may strengthen the role of women in the life of the community and enable them to both study and work without the need to abandon cultural norms of decency. Conversely, commercialization will favor the reinforcement of consumerist ideals and social injustices because branded hijabs can be more affordable to higher-income women than to those belonging to the working classes.

Regarding policy and practice, the results indicate that women should be granted the freedom of dress both in schools and at work without being stigmatized and marginalized because they wear the hijab. At the same time,

women who prefer not to wear hijab should also be spared the discrimination, which shows concern with pluralism and individual rights.

Synthesis

In sum, the discussion highlights that the hijab trend in Pakistan embodies contradictions and possibilities. It is a place where forces of worldwide and local collide, spirituality and consumerism go hand in hand, and agency of women is manifested in the context of social demands. Conscious of these complexities, the scholars and policymakers will stop using simplistic narratives and learn to appreciate hijab as a dynamic cultural phenomenon that shapes and is shaped by both modern Pakistani society.

Conclusion

As a cultural, religious, and socio-political phenomenon, the hijab trend in Pakistan cannot be perceived with the help of the simplistic binaries of empowerment and oppression. Instead, it represents a negotiation that is dynamic and will be shaped by globalization, changes in generation, urbanization, and increased prominence of digital platforms. To most Pakistani women, the hijab is both an emblem of belief and a symbol of culture and a trendy product that enables them to join the global modest fashion circles. This hybridity highlights the shifting nature of religious activities in the modern societies.

The analysis reveals that women engage in agency in dressing practice and tend to utilize hijab to enhance movement and proclaim dignity in the streets. Simultaneously, it does not deny the inertia of social forces and the thin boundaries between voluntary command and coercion. This heterogeneity of hijab among classes, regions, and ethnic groups further underline the fact that no single voice can be reflective of the experiences of Pakistani women. Hijab in its turn must be interpreted as a multiplexing and changing phenomenon that intersects with various aspects of identity and power.

The growth of commodification of hijab by fashion markets, brands and the influencer culture give new possibilities to female entrepreneurs and consumers. However, it suggests questions of the erosion of religious essence and the strengthening of consumerist values as well. Policymakers, teachers

and the civil society actors should therefore treat hijab not as a divisive icon but as a realm of negotiation in which women navigate between spirituality, modernity, and expression of self.

Recommendations

1. **Freedom of Choice:** The legal and institutional frames ought to protect the freedom of women to dress as they want since women in hijab should not be discriminated in schools, work, and the society.
2. **Inclusive Education and Workplaces:** Schools, universities and workplace are supposed to embrace inclusive policies that embrace variations in dressing practices to avoid stigmatization and exclusion on the basis of dress.
3. **Fashion Support other fashion entrepreneurs:** Government and industry stakeholders must consider the modest fashion industry as an emerging economic activity with training and resource support of women-led firms.
4. **Balanced Media Representation:** The media should present women who wear hijab to represent various groups: students, professionals, leaders and break the stereotypes of a hijab-clad victim and show agency instead of victimization.
5. **Promoting Dialogue:** The religious scholars, policymakers and civil society bodies ought to create a dialogue that cuts across generational and ideological barriers, enabling pluralism and respect.

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