

The Hijab and Muslim Women's well-being in a Western Society

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Introduction. Social contexts are important to support and facilitate the natural growth process of individuals (Deci & Ryan, 2000). While living in Western societies, Muslim women are surrounded by social contexts that are different from those of their home countries. These differences often result in facing some challenges, in particular because of their hijabs. In spite of the difficulties they face, most Muslim women choose to continue wearing their hijabs (El-Ghobashy, 2011). However, the difficulties that these Muslim women face can have an impact on their well-being. It is the purpose of this research to explore the effect of wearing the hijab on Muslim women's well-being while living in a Western society. This study uses self-determination theory (SDT) and clothing comfort model (CCM) to specify the psychological, physiological and physical needs that are linked to Muslim women's well-being.

According to SDT, the satisfaction of three basic human psychological needs, autonomy, relatedness and competence, gives individuals psychological power, and in turn helps with directing people through the pursuit of their goals (Ryan & Deci, 2004). Therefore, the three basic psychological needs must be satisfied in order to achieve psychological well-being. In addition to psychological well-being, the comfort aspects of hijab are closely tied to the Muslim women's physical and physiological well-beings. Clothing comfort is a fundamental requirement that has been identified as one of the key attributes that consumers desire (Malik & Sinha, 2012), which includes physical, physiological, and psychological elements (Branson & Sweeny, 1991). Through the clothing comfort model, the researchers can understand how the comfort aspects of the hijabs affect Muslim women's well-being while living in Western societies.

Method. To answer the question on how does wearing the hijab relate to Muslim women's well-being while living in a Western society, the researchers employed qualitative data collection and analysis using the conventional content analysis and directed content analysis approaches. Guided by semi structured interview guides, in-depth interviews of the 22 participants and follow up conversations with 15 of the 22 participants were conducted. The sample (N=22) included Muslim women who live in Corvallis, Oregon. The interviews were completed in person and audio recorded. The basic needs satisfaction general scale (BNSG) was used to provide an objective perspective of the level of satisfaction for the three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness). To enhanced trustworthiness of this research, three different techniques were used including clarifying the potential for researcher bias, peer review, and providing detailed and thick information about the participants.

Results and Discussion. Results of the BNSG objective measurement show that the participants

have a high level of satisfaction for all of the three basic needs, and in turn a high level of individual well-being. Findings from the subjective interviews also indicate that wearing the hijab has a positive impact on Muslim women's well-being, demonstrated by the high level of satisfaction for the three basic psychological needs. All participants in this study are autonomously motivated to wear the hijab regardless of outside influences/pressures. As for the satisfaction of the need of competence, the participants demonstrate a high level of self-confidence, which helps them to face different challenges. Also because of their self-confidence, they use the same way of hijab covering/style in different cultures, for different occasions, and for a long period of time. They do not take off their hijabs to compromise their religious requirements and values; their motivation to wear the hijab is the same no matter where or when they wear it. The participants understand the importance of connecting to others and its effects on their well-being. They show high level of satisfaction for their relatedness needs through their hijabs. They emphasize the importance of feeling related to both of the Western society and the society from where they moved. In addition, the participants also use their hijabs to create their own cultural space and to have a sense of belonging to the group surrounding them, which helps them to feel safe and in harmony with themselves. The results also specify that thermal comfort of the hijab is the main physiological need for the participants. These Muslim women also pay special attentions to the hijab material properties, such as drapabe, lightweight and soft hand, because of the impact on their physical needs.

In summary, the participants in this study believe that hijabs are powerful tools that represent their identities and empower them while living in a Western society. This study provides an initial indication of the effects of the hijab on Muslim women's well-being while living in Western societies. Further studies that provide more in-depth understanding of the topic such as the type and level of motivations to wear the hijab are needed.

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