



Cultural-Religious Analysis of the Role of the Hijab in Women's Psychological Well-being and Individual Identity Formation

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Abstract

The present study purpose was the cultural-religious analysis of the role of the hijab in women's psychological well-being and individual identity formation. The statistical universe included all the religious, cultural and psychological texts. The sample enfolded the texts concerning hijab, psychological well-being and women individual identity. The research method was descriptive-analytical. To collect data, a library method was processed in the form of systematic note taking on index cards from valid psychological references with an emphasis on the psychological well-being construct of Riff (1989) and Islamic references (Quranic verses, hadiths, and religious texts). The findings indicated that hijab affects the strengthening of women's individual identity by increasing self-acceptance, strengthening individual independence, facilitating mastery over the environment, deepening positive relationships, increasing purpose in life, and accelerating personal growth, which were among the six categories of psychological well-being. Hijab is not only a religious obligation, but also an effective cultural-psychological capital in promoting women's mental health and identity. Hijab acts not as a restriction, but as a psychological and cultural resource that helps women through various mechanisms of psychological well-being and the formation of an independent and integrated identity. Therefore, it is essential that special attention should be paid to the psychological dimensions of the hijab in cultural and counseling planning.



Extended abstract

Introduction: The hijab, as a multidimensional phenomenon, lies at the intersection of religion, culture, and psychology. From an Islamic perspective, it is a divine commandment (Quran 24:31; 33:59) that has also evolved into an identity marker (Castells, 1997) and a response to cultural globalization (Giddens, 1991) within socio-cultural contexts. Studies indicated that in Islamic societies, the hijab serves a function beyond religious obligation, becoming a tool for preserving cultural identity (Schwartz, 2005) and mitigating the psychological impacts of objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1998). Grounded in contemporary theories, the conscious choice to wear the hijab fulfills the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000), as it reduces focus on physical appearance and diminishes social anxiety (Objectification Theory, Fredrickson & Roberts, 1998). Furthermore, by enhancing self-acceptance, the hijab contributes to improved psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989). This study adopted an interdisciplinary approach, integrating positive psychology (Ryff, 1989) and cultural sociology (Castells, 1997), to implement cultural-religious analysis of the role of the hijab in women's psychological well-being and individual identity formation.

Method: The statistical universe included all the religious, cultural and psychological texts. The sample enfolded the texts concerning hijab, psychological well-being and women individual identity. The research method was descriptive-analytical. To collect data, a library method was processed in the form of systematic note taking on index cards from valid psychological references with an emphasis on the psychological well-being construct of Riff (1989) and Islamic references (Quranic verses, hadiths, and religious texts).

Results: The findings indicated that hijab affects the strengthening of women's individual identity by increasing self-acceptance, strengthening individual independence, facilitating mastery over the environment, deepening positive relationships, increasing purpose in life, and accelerating personal growth, which were among the six categories of psychological well-being. Hijab is not only a religious obligation, but also an effective cultural-psychological capital in promoting women's mental health and identity. Hijab acts not as a restriction, but as a psychological and cultural resource that helps women through various mechanisms of psychological well-being and the formation of an independent and integrated identity. Therefore, it is essential that special attention should be paid to the psychological dimensions of the hijab in cultural and counseling planning.

Conclusions: In conclusion, this research confirmed that the hijab significantly contributes to enhancing the components of psychological well-being - including self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth - as defined by Ryff (1989). The study established that the hijab serves as a powerful identity-forming and psychological factor that strengthens women's personal identity and mental health. By serving as a conscious choice that liberates women from social approval dependence and facilitates authentic self-discovery, the hijab promotes self-awareness, self-confidence, and psychological security. Ultimately, the hijab empowers women to build their identity based on internal values rather than external validation, leading to comprehensive psychological well-being.



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