

The sociopolitical development of veiled women human rights perspective

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Abstract. In the midst of the strengthening sense of religiousness in the use of the veil for women, social and political developments also increasingly provide space for veiled women. This article aims to explore the sociopolitical developments for veiled women from a human rights perspective. The data obtained from observations, interviews, and literature studies were analyzed using sociology of religion. This investigation consisted of 20 in-depth interviews with veiled women and the people of Palangka Raya. The article is based on an argument that, from a human rights perspective, veiled women have the right to apply their religious rules in their daily lives. The findings of this study show that social treatment is influenced by people's knowledge of religious rules regarding the wearing of the veil. The political treatment is the attitude of the state that protects its citizens to practice their religious beliefs. Urban communities are more tolerant of veiled women than rural communities. Social treatment of veiled women is more based on the culture of Indonesian women's dress. Changes in social treatment experienced by veiled women because they display good morals (attitude), thus changing the negative view of the veiled woman.

Keywords: Veiled women, sociopolitic, human rights

INTRODUCTION

Despite the growing religious sentiment surrounding the veil's use for women, social and political advancements also provide women who wear it more room. Until now, local and international communities have stigmatized women who wear the veil. (Bjoernaas, 2015) Nonetheless, the intention to take off the niqab is not deterred by the deeply held beliefs of those who wear it. Some nations even have laws expressly pertaining to the Niqab. For instance, the usage of niqabs is forbidden in France and Belgium because it goes against the idea of cohabitation. (Paul, 2024). Recent data, however, indicates that women wearing veils interact socially with the community. The state and the community have accepted them sociopolitically. Every citizen is entitled to follow their own religion.

Studying how religion is used in society for example, a lady who considers wearing a veil to be a divine command—is a crucial topic to pursue. Nevertheless, research on the application of the veil has primarily addressed state laws that forbid its usage thus far. (Paul, 2024) The niqab law put forth by Siv Jensen, the head of Norway's right-wing Progress Party and self-described feminist, was also examined in another study. Jensen cited the niqab as proof of Islam or "creeping Sharia" in 2009. She is the politician from Norway most known for exploiting anti-Muslim sentiment. (Bjoernaas, 2015).

Generally speaking, women's veil wearing, which began as a religious practice, has evolved into a social and political issue. Researchers have yet to conduct comprehensive studies on the veil's use. Costello and Ahmed have pointed out the several purposes that the veil suggests, such as matters of religious and secular identity, and they have disclosed how the veil has been used to restrict rights that are often expansive. (Costello & Ahmed, 2023) Pazhoohi explores how community size influences perceptions of the importance of the veil in seven Muslim countries, controlling for participant gender, the importance of religion, and income. (Pazhoohi, 2024)

Thus, by specifically examining the socio-political process of veiled women, this study seeks to close the gap in earlier research. The purpose of this study is to present a case for the importance of religious implementation in gaining state support. When the government enacts a law that forbids its citizens from donning the veil, Muslims who wish to do so face persecution. As a human right, women who wear the veil wish to express their religious views. We discovered that veiled women were able to establish their social and political positions during Palangka Raya. This is due to the fact that the veil is not prohibited by Indonesian law. Regarding societal development, the attitude displayed by veiled

Therefore, the aims of this study were to: (1) Examine the social evolution of women's veil use during Palangka Raya; (2) examine the political evolution of women's veil use during Palangka Raya. Since these veiled

women actually wish to follow their own religion, it is possible to learn about the changes in how they are treated both socially and politically through these two factors.

Use of the Veil from the Perspective of the Sociology of Religion

The veil, which includes women concealing a portion of their body—such as the head, face, or complete body with specific clothing or material, is an old custom that has been supported by religious beliefs, social conventions, and legal frameworks. It has assumed many different forms throughout history and throughout countries. (Pazhoohi, 2024) According to sociology, a woman's decision to wear a veil in accordance with her religious convictions is significantly impacted by the political climate of the nation in which she resides. (Paul, 2024) For example, Fathzadeh (Fathzadeh, 2022) demonstrates how political circumstances affected Iranian women's ability to wear the niqab after they immigrated to Norway. racial experiences that influenced them to control their personal looks and attire in accordance with Norway's dominant fashion standards.

In popular and political climates, arguments for social cohesion (or living together) are often used to justify bans on Islamic veils. For example, the social cohesion argument was widely used in parliamentary debates leading to bans on Islamic veils (such as the burqa or niqab) in France and Belgium. (Paul, 2024) Other empirical evidence from a number of studies in various countries shows that the practice of wearing the niqab is based on their religious beliefs. Most Muslim women who wear the Islamic niqab in many European countries do so voluntarily as part of their religious beliefs. For these women, the practice of wearing the veil is associated with their modesty because they sincerely believe that wearing the niqab is the only way in which a decent and God-fearing Muslim woman should appear in public. (Brems & et al., 2014; Gulik, 2009)

However, the veil is frequently seen as a conscious rejection of European ideas of citizenship and a sign of a refusal to engage in the nation's shared collective identity, which shuns symbols of counter-majoritarian, individual identities. As a result, veiled women are criticized as reluctant or resistant minorities within the state's constitutional effort and are perceived as missing the qualities of loyalty required for full membership in the relevant political group. (Costello & Ahmed, 2023)

Women who wear the veil in a power dynamic with their parents face social control and discrimination because of their characteristics in the familial setting. In the meantime, societal verbal abuse of veil-wearing women continues in public spaces. In this instance, a lady wearing the veil is subjected to verbal abuse not only because she is a woman who is deemed inferior in a patriarchal society but also because she wears the veil. In this instance, women who wear the veil also face discrimination in both public and private settings. (Iqbal, 2023)

Gender and sex affect Iran's repressive and disciplinary control mechanisms, which are also implemented through micro-social interactions and organizations including universities, schools, and businesses. Participants are forced to balance two opposing subjectivities due to conflicting standards of modesty vs. beauty and femininity. (Fathzadeh, 2022) This complex relationship implies that the veil's dynamics are greatly impacted by the social and cultural context, particularly the urban-rural split, in addition to being a question of personal or religious preference. (Pazhoohi, 2024)

Wearing the Veil as a Human Right

One of the human rights is the freedom to practice one's faith. Political factors influence the state's stance on recognizing religious standards around the wearing of the niqab. There are a number of reasons why some nations, including France and Belgium, have laws that forbid wearing the veil. (Paul, 2024)

Berg and Lundahi talk about how the secular state deals with the hurt caused by people having to give up a piece of their religious identity in order to fit in. Once upon a time, cherished ideals like democracy, modernism, secularity, and human rights explicitly included racial thinking. (Berg & Lundahi, 2017)

The introduction of new prohibitions in Switzerland and France, along with the rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union in the joint cases C-804/18 and C-341/19, have reignited the debate in 2021 regarding the areas in which Muslim citizens of Europe are permitted to wear the religious veil. Costella and Ahmed look at the European Court of Human Rights' case law regarding the veil. They contend that by restricting Muslim women's ability to create their identities via independent activity, the veil prohibition reduces their potential to actualize themselves as citizens. (Costello & Ahmed, 2023)

However, the European Court of Human Rights ought to have conducted a more comprehensive analysis of the pertinent issues in order to decide whether the ban was justified under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, instead of giving the French and Belgian authorities such a broad scope of appreciation. This would be consistent with the S.A.S. dissenting judge's ruling that "it remains the duty of the Court to protect a small minority from disproportionate interference," even though a state may have a broad scope of appreciation. (Paul, 2024)

The Struggle for Recognition by Society and the State in the Practice of Wearing the Veil

In the current political environment, the niqab has garnered a lot of attention both domestically and internationally. Prohibitions of the niqab are frequently justified by arguments for social cohesiveness, or cohabitation. For instance, in the parliamentary discussions that resulted in the banning of the veil in France and Belgium, the case for social cohesiveness was frequently made. (Paul, 2024)

Is social cohesion—or cohabitation—a strong enough justification or argument to forbid wearing the veil in public? Many people believe that because the veil conceals the face, it should be illegal to wear it in public. This is because it hinders or promotes social cohesiveness. Legislators in France and Belgium have cited the promotion of social connection or cohesion as a reason for passing anti-veil legislation. (Paul, 2024)

The Progress Party, under Jensen's leadership, has spearheaded the discussion about veiling prohibition in Norway for more than ten years. The belief that diversity will unnecessarily accommodate Muslim culture and religion is at the heart of the party's legislative plan. The Progress Party supports France's desire for an ethic of assimilation and views the veil as a barrier to the development of an equitable citizenry, in contrast to Norwegian political parties that promote a multiculturalist ethic. Members believe that multiculturalism undermines national identity and encourages women's subjugation. The party contends that Muslims are a hindrance to social harmony because they are predisposed to conflict and terrorism. (Bjoernaas, 2015)

Lastly, Costello and Ahmed contend that the recognition of veiling as a choice protected by the right to private and family life, as well as the application of a stricter scrutiny of the justifications provided by states under Article 8(2) ECHR, are justified by the ECtHR's own jurisprudence and the relationships between individual autonomy, identity, and veiling. (Costello & Ahmed, 2023)

METHOD

Two factors led to the selection of the study's topic: the use of religion in a sociopolitical setting. First, the growth in terrorism among Muslims, who may become targets of extremist acts, is a major cause for concern. Second, the rule of law, which forms the cornerstone of the state, safeguards citizens' freedom to practice their faith and beliefs. As such, it may be viewed as a socio-political advancement that promotes the use of religion in a way that respects human rights.

The major data used in this qualitative study came from interviews and observations. In order to have a general idea of how Muslims practice their faith and beliefs, observations were made by looking at how women who wear the niqab interact with one another both on and off campus. Palangka Raya was selected as the primary focus of this investigation, as was previously noted. Selected socio-political features and experiences wearing the niqab were investigated through interviews. Data from interviews was gathered directly.

Purposive sampling was used to choose nine informants in order to prevent sample bias. Informants were chosen on the basis of their varied origins, familiarity with veiled women, and implementation of the veil by Muslim women. This made it possible for us to locate reliable informants in Palangka Raya. The informants' identities are concealed in order to protect their privacy.

Twenty informants participated in in-depth interviews. Through data reduction, display, and verification, primary data such as narratives and observations of sociopolitical interactions—were examined. Triangulation was used to test the data's validity, with a particular emphasis on the social and political facets of the niqab-wearing custom during Palangka Raya.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

We identified several issues and solutions that enabled the veiled women in this study to move towards sociopolitical change: (a) implementing religious teachings and beliefs, (b) ridicule and dissemination of public opinion, (c) discovery of human rights, (d) increasing knowledge through religious studies, (e) socializing inclusively, and (f) being accepted socially and politically. Each life event is described below in the sociopolitical context in which it plays a key role in the phase of her life.

Survival stage

In the narratives of the interviewed participants, one of their initial experiences in Palangka Raya was when they practiced their religion and beliefs in the form of wearing a veil. Although some participants had previously worn the veil in their home areas, for most of them, their experience with wearing the veil began in their home areas. In general, their narratives show the consistency of wearing the veil everywhere, as well as a quick awareness that practicing religion and beliefs is a form of obedience to God. The following interview excerpt from P6 describes how she first started wearing the veil:

I come from Buntok, Central Kalimantan. I wear a veil, but my friends respect me. I think it depends on our behavior. Some of my teachers wear veil. I have worn veil since 6th grade. I am from an Islamic boarding school in Bati-bati, South Kalimantan. In Islamic boarding schools, wearing a veil is mandatory.

Like P6, most participants wear the niqab with student status. Most of the participants come from the regions, for example, Sampit, Buntok, Muara Teweh, and Murung Raya. They have a strong commitment to wearing the niqab. In all these issues, the participants' narratives are in line with previous research regarding the reasons for wearing the niqab because of obedience to God. (Brems & et al., 2014)

In general, those who participated in this study viewed the law of wearing the niqab as merely sunnah, but they were very strong in their commitment to wearing the niqab. For that reason, they chose to survive when there was verbal harassment. Although one of them complained about the verbal harassment, most participants did not identify the experience described above as something negative at the time but rather tolerated it or even adapted

socially. The tendency to forgive people who mocked them is exemplified in the following interview excerpt with P18:

I wear a veil, but I am still teased by male friends. Even though most of them already have wives. I am sad; they think that I wear this veil and want to be polygamous. In addition, when walking in the middle of a crowd, they often shout ninjas.

Often, veiled women remain in a state of resistance. Many participants feel better about their social situation because they feel that this situation has improved compared to their previous conditions in their hometowns. This situation shows that at this time, many veiled women are not aware of the treatment they experience. Upon arriving in Palangka Raya, they attend college without feeling their conditions as something unfair; in fact, with their status as immigrants, they feel that these conditions are something appropriate and even positive. This condition, we call the resistance stage. The participants' narratives about the implementation of wearing the veil articulate the belief that everyone gets what they deserve and deserves what they get. Only one of the participants expressed a resistance attitude from the beginning towards unfair social conditions (a situation that is understandable from her experience before moving to Palangka Raya), but she was unable to articulate socio-political actions to fight against unpleasant treatment until she became part of the community.

Adaptation stage

Unpleasant verbal harassment was a characteristic of the early experiences of the interviewees in Palangka Raya, leading to adaptive beliefs and behaviors. After some time, they began to correctly identify these experiences for what they were, although this did not necessarily lead to disappointment. The forms of treatment identified in their narratives were mainly in the context of the sociology of religion. Adaptation experiences were the ones most remembered by the participants, perhaps because, for most participants, they occurred while they were wearing the niqab and, moreover, represented a situation that was particularly vulnerable to unpleasant treatment.

Participants were very sad about the experience of psychological treatment by the community, such as verbal teasing or body language. These experiences are reflected in P13's narrative: I wear a veil. But I am often mocked by society. Shouted as ninjas. I am sad, but this is my religious belief that I must maintain. In response to these experiences, interviewees mentioned strategies such as crying, reciting the Koran, and seeking social support. In the absence of a support network, they often chose to adapt to the marginalizing social environment, as P11 explains in the following quote: I am an alumnus of Ustadz Yasin's Islamic Boarding School in Palangka Raya. Although I wear a niqab, I am friends with other friends who do not wear niqab. Finally, my friends respect me.

This behavior can be considered an adaptation stage where they begin to understand that they are being treated unfairly. Additional evidence of this situation can be found in the way they socialize with friends who do not wear the niqab. They take advantage of their difficult situation to gain recognition from society.

Pre-defense stage

In the participants' narratives, the progression to the pre-survival stage was triggered primarily by what we might call the discovery of their rights. Two interviewees mentioned the antecedents of pre-survival thinking as their experiences in their home areas as students. However, initially, the majority of participants considered themselves as subjects without rights. However, different experiences in their new places of residence challenged this perception. The informants discovered their rights as religious adherents in two main ways: (a) by experiencing fair social conditions; and (b) thanks to the legal protection provided by the state.

Regarding the first path to discovering their rights, it is important to note that, although veiled women often experience unpleasant social conditions, many eventually discover their identity as Muslims. However, in some cases, they were explicitly informed of their rights. The following quote illustrates one of P2's positive experiences: I wear a veil in Palangka Raya. But when I'm in my hometown, I change to a mask. This is a suggestion from my lecturer.

These experiences prompted informants to reflect on their past adaptive behavior and to rethink the inevitability of the injustices they experienced. As previously found by Costello and Ahmed (Costello & Ahmed, 2023), Participants in our study reported that, after some time living in Palangka Raya, they became more inclusive in relation to social and political relationships. They sought out more inclusive places to study Islam, including religious studies that would allow them to be accepted socially and politically. This learning was mentioned in the narratives of women who wore the niqab at least during their stay in Palangka Raya. After gaining knowledge, their changing perspectives led to the hope that their religious practice situation would improve. However, these hopes were often not met.

It is not uncommon for women who wear the niqab and have faith to continue to experience social relationships in which they are still treated as objects. However, our interviewees reported an increased awareness of their rights as religious citizens in Indonesia, a situation that is often accompanied by offers of better conditions.

The women interviewed in our study also found their rights in practicing their religion and beliefs because the state gives its citizens the freedom to practice their religion and beliefs. The informants opened themselves up to socializing with the community, especially as a response to the social conditions that marginalized them. After

initial socializing, some of them became interested in academic activities that offered them the opportunity to learn more about national and state life. This will be discussed in more detail in the next stage.

The experiences described in the pre-survival stage show that contact with new living situations and the area of origin is very important in encouraging to develop a deeper understanding of injustice and to understand alternatives to adaptation. This discovery leads them to their social environment to mingle with the wider community by showing good attitudes or morals.

Defense stage

The discovery of rights opened the gateway to a new stage characterized by a more active search for information about rights. A moral-based approach to reframing their experiences in a sociopolitical context. This approach helps them see that their role as members of society and citizens can be handled through Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, policy reform, and collective action. Interviewees told how they became convinced that visual harassment could be changed through "behavior." According to P9:

My friends praised us who wear the niqab. They said, Masyaallah ukhti, you are truly a pious woman.

They came to understand that the situation they were facing was unfair, and this in turn gave rise to feelings of sadness, anger, and rage. These latter feelings were mentioned by the interviewees as the main experiences that led them to adopt a moral approach to their situation.

Recognition stage

Interviewees identified their experiences as engaging in socio-political action designed to promote their rights as part of their current role. This can be considered an indicator that a person or group has been socio-politically accepted. In this study, this recognition behavior has several different forms. Depending on the intensity of social interaction, they can act as informants.

Attitude is very dominant in gaining socio-political recognition. In such cases, participants feel they can commit intensely to wearing the niqab. However, they still contribute socio-politically. Ultimately, their commitment to wearing the niqab also includes acting as good citizens. This allows them to transform their sadness and moral reflection into behavior and also strengthens their sense of nationalism.

Socio-political developments drive the motivation of the interviewees in this study to persist in their commitment to maintaining their beliefs, which involves a continuous movement between the stages of survival and the stages of socio-political recognition, in an interactive process. The participants understood that this process is an ongoing process with no end in sight, as most are still far from being achieved, and new goals continue to emerge. Therefore, when asked what made him persist in his commitment to implementing religious rights, P15 answered: I wear a veil, and I come from Murung Raya, Central Kalimantan. Now I live in Palangka Raya. I wear a veil because, according to my belief, Muslim women must cover their auras.

In the case of the use of the niqab, the fact that they engage in social-political interactions is extraordinary. The limitations they face in terms of introducing their identity to the public sphere are a difficulty for them. As Kaushik Paul said (Paul, 2024), veiled women cannot really show their identity when living together in society. However, our data shows that they have their own way so that they can be recognized by the environment where they live.

Finally, this study demonstrates the importance of a human rights-based approach in how veiled women understand injustice and how they behave towards defensive actions. According to Watts et al., a rights-based perspective frames social injustice as rooted in the deprivation of human or constitutional rights. Our findings suggest that socio-political processes designed to promote social political development in this population should adopt a rights-based approach and include strategies to disseminate information about their rights.

Although we have presented the results as a journey from the stage of survival to the stage of recognition, our study also shows that different veiled women may begin the path of acceptance from different starting points. Furthermore, some do not reach the stage of recognition. As we have reported elsewhere, some veiled women are able to engage in socio-political interactions. Thus, the socio-political development of this population is not as linear as the theoretical framework proposed by Watts et al. suggests. However, we find the socio-political development framework useful for understanding the generalizability of the path followed by most participants.

This study has several limitations. First, this study was conducted only on campuses around Palangka Raya. Further research could involve educational institutions, Kesbangpol, and TNI/POLRI institutions. Thus, the experiences of veiled women who are committed to practicing their religion and beliefs can be explored. Second, due to the retrospective nature of the life history method, people interpret their experiences some time after the event and perhaps from the position they have gained since then. Therefore, we recommend that future research use a long-term qualitative model to analyze each experience carefully. In addition, the participants in our sample were selected purposefully. Although the use of purposive sampling is common in qualitative research, it does not provide information about the perceptions of non-respondents, namely veiled women who are socially isolated. Future research should address this shortcoming. For example, interviewing veiled women who are not in college and have no (or little) knowledge can provide a better understanding of veil use. Most importantly in this regard is the situation of non-permanent veiled women, who are not represented in our sample.

Despite these limitations, our study provides a set of analytical categories and adopts a developmental approach, allowing researchers to follow the life stories of Veiled Women, from their initial social entry to their commitment to religious beliefs. Insights from this study can shed light on the process of self-organization and can guide social interventions aimed at promoting socio-political development among Veiled Women and other oppressed groups.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion is intended to help the reader understand why your research should matter to them after they have finished reading the paper. A conclusion is not merely a summary of the main topics covered or a re-statement of your research problem, but a synthesis of key points. It is important that the conclusion does not leave the question unanswered.

Tips: (1) State your conclusions clearly and concisely. Be brief and stick to the point; (2) Explain why your study is important to the reader. You should instill in the reader a sense of relevance; (3) Prove to the reader, and the scientific community, that your findings are worthy of note. This means setting your paper in the context of previous work. The implications of your findings should be discussed within a realistic framework, and; (4) Strive for accuracy and originality in your conclusion. If your hypothesis is similar to previous papers, you must establish why your study and your results are original.

For most essays, one well-developed paragraph is sufficient for a conclusion, although in some cases, a two or three paragraph conclusion may be required. The other important things about this section is (1) do not rewrite the abstract; (2) statements with “investigated” or “studied” are not conclusions; (3) do not introduce new arguments, evidence, new ideas, or information unrelated to the topic; (4) do not include evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper.

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