

Is Hijab a Fashion Statement? A Study on Bangladeshi Muslim Women

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Abstract: Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to investigate, whether hijab is a fashion item or not for the Muslim women of Bangladesh.

Design/ methodology/ approach: This study collected the data from the primary source. The respondents were the women who wearhijab. In total 250 respondents were interviewed to perform the research.

Findings: Thefindings of the study reveals that, the Bangladeshi women wear hijab mostly for religious purpose. The respondents identified fashionas secondary purpose to wear hijab.

Practical implications: The study outlines the thinking of Muslim women toward hijab in Bangladesh and it will help the professionals from fashion industry and related sectors to know about the women consumer behavior for formulate strategies accordingly.

Originality/ value: As an emerging phenomenon, there are few studies on hijab fashion but not much in Bangladesh. This report tried to analyze the individual thoughts about hijab.

Keywords:Hijab, Women 's clothing, Muslim women, Fashion item, Consumer behavior.

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I. Introduction

Muslim religion is one of the ancient religion in the world and has grown rapidly (Dagkas & Benn, 2006). There are various styles of Islamic clothing accepted in different cultures around the world. According to the Holy Quran it is mandatory for a Muslim woman to cover herself from strangers and distant relatives with the veil or hijab; the covering includes the hair, arms, bosom, feet and other parts of the body(Abdullah, 2006). Clothing for the Muslims women is both sensitive and concerned topic for all over the world. Based on the principles of modesty, different society and regions adopted different clothing for the Muslims. The basic Islamic principle of modesty women's clothing in public, should cover the whole body (Boulanouar, 2006).

Hijab is an Arabic word; meaning of this is 'covering'. The word 'hijab' has come from the root word 'Ha-Ja-Ba' meaning to cover up. Simply, hijab means headscarf that is worn by Muslim women to cover the head and neck. Hijab can be referred by various names, mostly common of which is a veil or a headscarf. According to different dictionaries and in the holy Quran, the meanings of hijab are: a thing that prevents, hinders, debars, or precludes; a thing that veils, conceals, hides, covers, or protects, because it prevents seeing, or beholding. Hijab is one of the iconic identity of Muslim women which symbolizes the modesty and privacy (Rita, 2017). Wearing hijab shows the cultural and religious value of Muslim women (Khalid & Akhtar, 2018). As Muslim consumer it is not expected that consumer consume products only for their satisfaction, their ultimate aim is to satisfy their creator Allah. Besides this it is possible for Muslim women to be fashion conscious within the boundary of Shariah(Fatema & Islam, 2014).

Bangladesh is a moderate Islamic country and wearing hijab is not a compulsory issue for the Muslim women. For long since, in the Bangladeshi religious and cultural diversity hijab is a dress code for Muslim women. Here, in Bangladesh, it is also seen as both a matter of style and religious observance. The Muslim perception towards Hijab has been gradually affected by fashion trends. A Muslim woman can actually observe the Islamic law on dress code while enjoying hijab fashion beauties (Mulali, 2009). With the expanding global fashion industry, hijab has adopted many fashions, trends, styles, labels, brands, etc. Essentially, hijab is never a statement of fashion but rather an act of obedience as distinctly defined in the Qur'an and Sunnah(Gökarıksel & Secor, 2009).

In the recent decades, the number of hijab users has increased all around the world and hijab has become a new trend in fashion line. As a result, the true meaning of hijab is diverted. And it is not acceptable that a Muslim woman wear hijab for fashion. But it does not mean that all women wear hijab for fashion item. Some adopt hijab for religious purpose again some espoused it for family force and there are so many other reasons for the hijab adoption. For this purpose, many research works on hijab already been done in Malaysia, Iran and some other countries of outside Bangladesh. But there are a few works have been done on hijab adoption in Bangladesh. Among these, especially no work has done to examine whether hijab is a fashion item or not. This study examines the question as to whether Hijab is fashion or a religious obligation. And it also has explored the real purpose of wearing hijab in Bangladeshi Muslim women and their thinking about hijab.

II. Objective of the study

The general objective of this study is to find out whether Bangladeshi Muslim females wear hijab for religious purpose or fashion purpose. For the purpose of explore the general objective the specific objectives are:

- to find out the forces which influence to wear hijab; and
- to understand whether hijab is a fashion item or not.

III. Literature review

Grine and Saeed (2017) conducted a study titled, "Is Hijab a fashion statement? A study of Malaysian Muslim women". The major finding of the study stated that, for the purpose of religious obligation the Malaysian Muslims adopt hijab instead of fashion statement. The main drive for the research was to identify the changing trend of adopting hijab in Malaysian landscape. Subsequently, another research conducted by Hassim, Nayan, and Ishak (2017) in the Malaysian landscape on "Hijabistas: An Analysis of the Mediation of Malay-Muslims and Modesty". The findings of this study identified that, the increasing phenomenon of wearing hijab is integrated with transnational flows of global media. And right now with the free flow of information technology and extensive media attention influence the trend. Again, Latiff and Alam (2013) did a research in the similar field, where they explore the impact of media to wear hijab. From their findings it can be say that, media is fully utilizing their tools in influencing women to wear hijab.

On the other hand, Mahmood (2011) argued that Muslim scholars, both in the past and in the current time, as well as sociologists see Hijab as assurance for the wholeness of women and a protection from sexual exploitation. Hamdan (2007) for instance reports that westerners view Hijab as a symbol for women's suppression, although many women wear Hijab by their own choice and with pride. In contrast, some sociologists identify Hijab as an aspect of opposition to Western denitions of modernity (Gole & Göle, 1996; Mernissi, 1991).

Khalid and Akhtar (2018) did a study to identify the major 'Factors Influencing Fashion Consciousness in Hijab Fashion Consumption'. The findings of the study clearly stated that, the newer form of media i.e. internet, advertisement, fashion shows and bloggers etc. play a significant role in hijab fashion consumption all around the world. In line with the similar study, Latiff and Alam (2013) examine and question the purpose and awareness of Hijab fashion. In their study they quantify that media commercializes Hijab fashion to move forward in fashion line. They further extend their comment that, Muslim women are still held within the Islamic regulations as far as styling up fashion is concerned. In contrast, Tarlo (2010) conducted a study on 'Hijab online: the fashioning of cyber Islamic commerce'. The study reveals that, there is a relationship between beauty and modesty, fashion and faith among hijab users. Rita (2017) further extend the idea by marking the idea that, society influence the most to wear hijab. Hassan and Harun (2016) further identified that, dressing style, fashion motivation, fashion uniqueness and sources of fashion knowledge positively influence fashion consciousness and indirectly influence hijab fashion consumption.

Fatema and Islam (2014) conducted a study on "A conceptual framework on the study of trends of Islamic fashion and clothing practices amongst young Muslim female in Bangladesh". This study explores that it's possible for Muslim women to be fashion conscious within the Shariah boundaries in the context of Bangladesh. In countries like Algeria, Egypt, and Turkey, Hijab continue to be used as a symbol of freedom from colonial oppression (Al Guindi, 1981; Çinar, 2005; Fanon, 1965). Some use it as a symbol of freedom, while others use it as a symbol of suppression. Hessini (1994) presents several examples of Muslim women in Morocco who choose Hijab with persuasion instead of tradition or culture. For them it is an expression of identity.

Based on the previous literature reviewed it is clear that there are many works on hijab in Malaysia, Iran, and some other countries especially Muslim majority countries all over the world. But there are not much work on hijab in Bangladesh. Among the works that has done in Bangladesh, there are no work to examine whether hijab is a fashion item or religious obligation for Bangladeshi Muslim women. That's why taking this as a gap of the research, the field was being selected to address the issue.

IV. Methodology of the study

Research Nature: The current research is an exploratory research in nature. Exploratory research simply explores the research questions, leaving room for further research. This research is an examination into a subject in an attempt to gain further insight.

Research Type: The research type is quantitative. Quantitative research is an inquiry into an identical problem, based on testing theory, measured with numbers, and analyzed using statistical techniques.

Data Sources: The study collected the data from the primary source. The respondents were the women who wear hijab, provided the required data of this study.

Questionnaire Design: The items in the questionnaire were constructed after reviewing the relevant literatures. A clear and simple questionnaire translated into ordinary Bangla, and briefing the contents and purpose of the survey, influenced the respondents for providing data.

Sample Plan: The study was concerned about those women who wear hijab. The respondents were students, teachers, housewives, and women of other professions who wear hijab.

Sample Size: A sum of 250 women were interviewed to collect data. The sample size decision was based on cost and time consideration.

Data Analysis: To compute data, measure data reliability, and check the relationship between variables, Statistical Program for Social Scientists (SPSS 20.0) was used. Besides, to test the hypothesis of the study, here are used t-test analysis technique, and used correlation and regression to identify the relationship among variables.

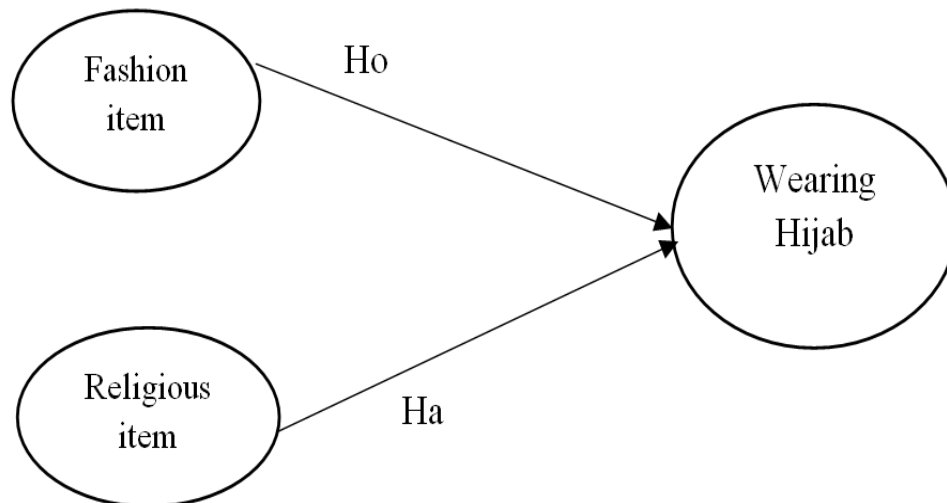
V. Conceptual Model and Hypothesis

This exploratory study attempted to find out that whether hijab is a fashion item or not for Bangladeshi Muslim women. This research draws upon previous studies on Hijab, religion, and fashion. It is founded that Hijab behavior is influenced by religion and fashion trends also (Grine & Saeed, 2017).

Human moral misprision is often the result of the effects of environment and social agents including parents, teachers, friends or peers (Grine & Saeed, 2017). Human learning happens in a social environmental setup by observing others. Hijab might also be learnt in a specific environment of religion or fashion according to the personal beliefs and consequently Hijab behavior occurs according to the belief learnt from family and social environment (Grine & Saeed, 2017).

For conducting the study the following model has been set and based on the model the hypothesis has been developed.

Figure: Conceptual Model



So, the hypothesis are:

Ho: Hijab is a fashion item for Bangladeshi Muslim women.

Ha: Hijab is a religious item for Bangladeshi Muslim women.

VI. Results and Discussions

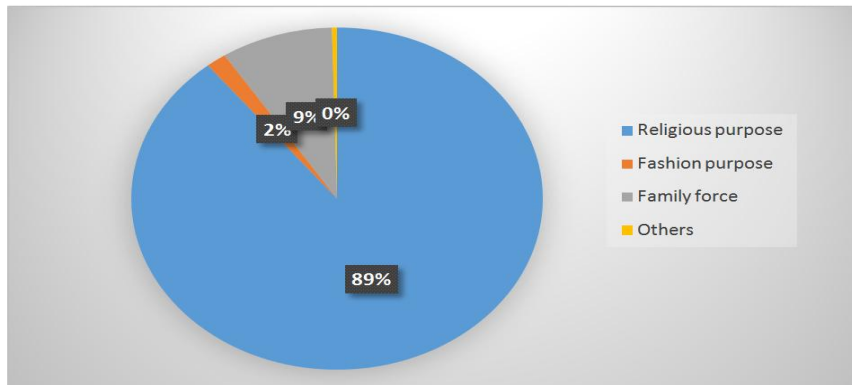
Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Valid %
Age	Less than 15	30	12
	15-25	163	65.2
	25-35	35	14
	35-45	13	5.2
	More than 45	9	3.6
Educational qualification	Less than secondary	43	17.2
	Secondary	36	14.4
	Higher secondary	66	26.4
	Graduate	82	32.8
	Post Graduate	23	9.2
Marital status	Married	64	25.6
	Unmarried	186	74.4
Current occupation	Student	199	79.6
	In employment	26	10.4
	Businesswomen	1	.4
	Housewife	23	9.2
	Others	1	.4

Source: Calculated from original data.

The demographic characteristics are shown in Table 1. From the survey analyzed, the majority ages of the respondents were 15-25 (65.2% of the respondents) and the majorities' educational qualification was bachelor's degree (32.8%). Most of the respondents were unmarried (74.4%). On the other hand the occupation of the majorities' were student (79.6%).

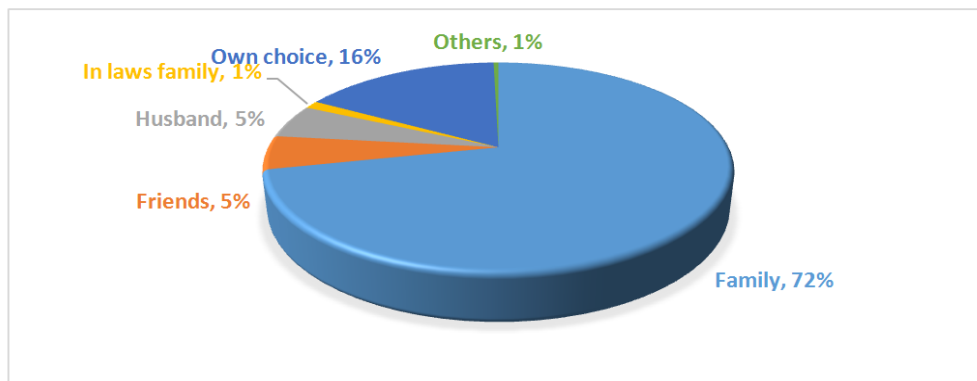
Figure 1: Purpose of wear hijab (PWHIJAB)



Source: Calculated from original data.

From the above figure it is shown that among 250 respondents 89% wear hijab for religious purpose, only 02% wear for fashion purpose. On the other hand 09% women wear for family force.

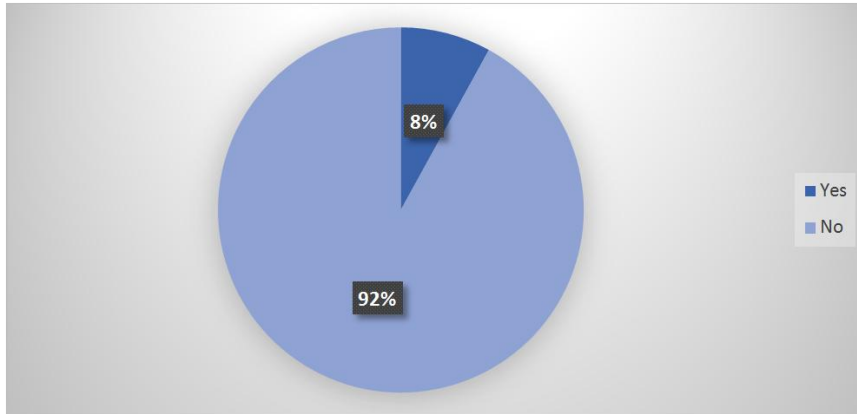
Figure 2: Influences to wear hijab (IWHIJAB)



Source: Calculated from original data.

From the Influences to wear hijab (IWHIJAB)figure it is seen that among 250 respondents 72% were influenced by their family, 05% were influenced by their friends. Among the 250 respondents 05% were influenced by their husbands and 01% were influenced by in laws family. On the other hand 16% respondents wear hijab from their own choice.

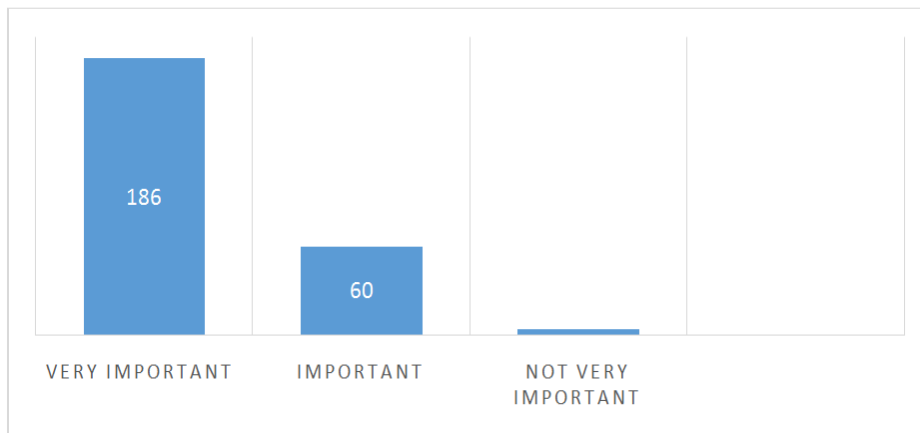
Figure 3: Fashion item (FITEM)



Source: Calculated from original data.

From the Fashion item (FITEM)figure it is founded that among 250 respondents 08% think that hijab is a fashion item and the other hand 92% think that it is not a fashion item.

Figure 4: Importance of hijab in Islam (IMPORTANCE)



Source: Calculated from original data.

From the Importance of hijab in Islam (IMPORTANCE) figure it is founded that 186 respondents think that hijab is very important in Islam.60 respondents think that it is important and on the other hand only 04women think that hijab is not very important in Islam.

Correlation:

Table 2:Correlation Analysis

		WHIJAB	SMODESTY	RMEN	FITEM	IMPORTANCE
Wear Hijab	Pearson Correlation	1	.163*	.043	-.215**	.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010	.502	.001	.129
	N	250	250	250	250	250
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

Source: Calculated from original data.

From the above table we see that the calculation of Pearson correlation has been used to examine the relationship between dependent variable and each independent variable. From the table it is also seen that, four variables SMODESTY (.163), RMEN (.043), IMPORTANCE (.096), FITEM (-.215) are significantly correlated with WHIJAB.

Regression model:

The coefficient of Determinants (R^2)

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.276 ^a	.076	.061	.061

a. Predictors: (Constant), IMPORTANCE, SMODESTY, RMEN, FITEM

Source: Calculated from original data.

The coefficient of correlation (R) measures if there is a significant relationship between the four independent variables with the dependent variable, the value of R is 0.276 which proved that the relationship among the independent and dependent variable is not strong. The (R^2) measures how far the ability of a model in explaining the variation of the dependent variable. The value coefficient of determination (R^2) implies that 07% of the variation who wear hijab are explained by the variation in the IMPORTANCE, SMODESTY, RMEN, and FITEM. The observed R suggests that the multiple regression line fit the data reasonably.

Anova:

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.076	4	.019	5.044	.001 ^b
	Residual	.920	245	.004		
	Total	.996	249			

a. Dependent Variable: WHIJAB
b. Predictors: (Constant), IMPORTANCE, SMODESTY, RMEN, FITEM

Source: Calculated from original data.

The table shows that the p-value is .001(<.05). Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis at 05% level of significance. It means that the IMPORTANCE, SMODESTY, RMEN, FITEM, are significantly affect the respondents who wear hijab.

t-test:

The t-test is used to determine wheatear there is a partial effect of each independent variable to the dependent variable.

Table 5: t-test

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.046	.036		29.456	.000
	SMODESTY	.029	.011	.156	2.532	.012
	RMEN	.005	.009	.037	.600	.549
	FITEM	-.048	.015	-.206	-3.289	.001
	IMPORTANCE	.007	.008	.052	.816	.415

a. Dependent Variable: WHIJAB

Source: Calculated from original data.

The above table shows that the SMODESTY and FITEM have partially significant effect on respondents who wear hijab and RMEN, IMPORTANCE are not partially significant effect on respondents who wear hijab.

Findings

From this study it is found that hijab is not a fashion item for Bangladeshi Muslim women. Though some use it for fashion purpose, but the majority wear hijab for religious purpose. Muslim women can be fashion conscious but they should maintain Islamicshariah. So the professionals from the fashion industry and related sectors should be conscious to attract their target segment as the Muslim women of Bangladesh are more conscious about their religion rather fashion.

VII. Conclusion

The escalation of Islamic consumerism from halal products and services to Islamic compliance lifestyle and fashion apparels is increasing with increasing trend of Islam as a religion. Keeping pace with this, the growth of hijab fashion becoming a lucrative sector worldwide. To conduct this study a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from hijab wearing women as a religious obligation and Hijab as fashion statement and questionnaires were distributed in different areas, universities, schools, colleges in Bangladesh. The study found that Hijab perceived as religious obligation instead of fashion statement by the Bangladeshi Muslim women. As Bangladesh is a moderate Muslim majority country, the Bangladeshi Muslim women are maintaining their religious identity. It is also found that, the Bangladeshi Muslim women are welcoming towards Hijab fashion but it does not change the perception of Hijab as religious obligation.

From the study it was found that Bangladeshi Muslim women are so much conscious about hijab fashion. Though nowadays hijab has become a trend, but they don't compromise with their religion. They don't take hijab as a fashion item. Besides this some of the respondents wear hijab as a fashion item but the majority said that hijab is a religious obligation. And as a Muslim country it is not expected that girls wear hijab for fashion.

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