

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2015.019.062](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2015.019.062)

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PREVALENCE OF SOCIAL ANXIETY IN FEMALE STUDENTS WHO VEIL IN UNIVERSITIES: EVIDENCE FROM PAKISTAN

Abstract:

It is commonly perceived in many countries that there is an element of social anxiety attached to females who wear the veil. The veil, head scarf, voile (French) refer to a piece of cloth that is used to cover the head so that one's hair is not visible; while some wear along with it a long coat referred to as abayah or jalbab to cover the whole body. Research on the link between veil, social anxiety and university female students is limited and at the same time important as the factors may restrain student participation and affect the quality of their social and academic life. This study aimed at exploring the general trends of social anxiety in female university students observing the veil in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. A survey research method was employed to explore the prevalence and trend of social anxiety in female university students by collecting the data from 32 private and public degree awarding colleges and universities spread all over the country. The questionnaire had two sections: first was the demographic section and the second section had the Social Anxiety Scale (2012) developed by Bhamani and Hussain This was sent country-wide through post and email where secondary data collectors facilitated in collecting the data. Nonrandom purposive sampling was used with the intent to include only female students, ensuring that they wore the veil as defined in the research. In all, the questionnaire was distributed to 3000 female students out of which 1601 forms were returned. The scale has 15 items on a four anchor Likert scale, falling under three factors: (a) perceived self, (b) perceived social image, and (c) perceived peer response of self-image. Descriptive data analysis was used using SPSS version 17 and frequencies were taken out to explore the level of anxiety in the overall sample. The findings projected that there was a very low and almost non-significant level of social anxiety in female students who wear the veil. The conclusion of this study was drawn to provide a better understanding of the social development trends of female university students observing the veil and a sounding board for those who consider this Islamic attire as one of the important factors in building up the anxiety level in university students.

Keywords:

female university students, self- image, social anxiety, veil