



## Challenges of Veiled Woman in Society

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### Article Information:

Received November 17, 2019

Revised December 28, 2019

Accepted January 20, 2020

**Keywords:** *Veiled woman, society, phenomenology, Miles and Huberman's, thematic analysis*

### Abstract

This research aims to analyze the challenges faced by women who wear the veil in society. This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, research data was taken through direct interviews with ten informants. All interview data was then analyzed thematically using Miles and Huberman qualitative data analysis. Research findings show that there are four challenging factors faced by women who wear the niqab, namely i) maintaining consistency in wearing the niqab, ii) difficulty in carrying out activities, iii) not getting permission from parents, iv) getting ridiculed by society. The results of this research can be used as initial data for subsequent researchers in studying different issues related to this problem as well as various other issues that are relevant to this context.

## INTRODUCTION

Discrimination against those who wear the niqab in Indonesia has become a topic of discussion and consideration for the government and the state, with the Minister of Religion's argument regarding the prohibition of the use of the niqab in government agencies. For Indonesian society today, the veil is not something new, because Indonesian society is a society where the majority of the population is Muslim. So it is not uncommon to find women who wear the veil in their daily lives and activities. However, society's perception of Muslim women who wear the veil is often seen as an attitude of fanaticism towards religion and it is not uncommon for them to be associated with radical Islamic groups (Cahyaningrum & Desiningrum, 2018; Sartika & Yusuf, 2020). Many Muslims in Indonesia adhere to certain ideologies so that even though they are fellow Muslims, they will be different if they adhere to different beliefs, both in their clothing and the way they socialize in social life (Wahidah & Nuranisah, 2020).

Women in Islam are commanded to stretch their head scarves over their entire bodies. This is explained by Allah in the Quran surah Al-Ahzab verse 59. This is the basis used by Muslim women to wear the hijab or cover their private parts. There are differences in responding to each verse in the Quran, as well as restrictions on the private parts of Muslim women. Apart from the hijab, some Muslim women also wear the veil as a form of obedience to religious teachings (Sari et al., 2014). The choice to wear a veil requires thorough preparation in this day and age (Juliani, 2018). It cannot be denied that the pros and cons of limiting or prohibiting the veil in public spaces occur in various modern countries, including Indonesia (Maizuddin & Suarni, 2019; Nurmiati, 2020).

The strategies for dealing with stigma used by women who wear the veil are classified into two, namely internal stigma by ignoring and accepting the negative views of the surrounding community, and external strategies by providing explanations as

### How to cite:

Sabrina, R., Najmah, L., Afrina, M. (2020). Challenges of Veiled Woman in Society. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research of Higher Education*, 3(1), 9-15.

### E-ISSN:

2622-741x

### Published by:

Islamic Studies and Development Center Universitas Negeri Padang

clarification and getting involved in activities with the surrounding community (Ramdani & Aswar, 2020).

In Indonesian society, the use of the veil is still labeled with a negative view, the decision to wear the veil for Muslim women is not an easy decision. Apart from that, the obligation to cover the private parts that is generally accepted by the majority of Muslims in Indonesia is the hijab. The veil is still a form of clothing that is rarely used. A Muslim woman who wears the veil naturally becomes different and belongs to a small minority of Muslim women (Briliana & Mursito, 2017).

The veil is a form of identity possessed by women, the identity and characteristics of veiled women tend to be responded to negatively by society in the form of ostracism or rejection of their existence (Fauzan, 2018; Muna, 2020). In the end, this reality is less in accordance with the principle of freedom for Muslim women to wear the clothes they want.

The rise of the veil phenomenon has become an interesting study in the academic world. Previous research has studied the veil from various perspectives, including from an Islamic legal perspective (Yulikhah, 2017; Faida et al., 2020; Fitri & Jayanti, 2020; Oktaviani, 2020). A cultural perspective and a psychological perspective (Wahidah & Nuranisah, 2020). In facing different views and the stigma of the veil, women who wear the veil need to adapt to maintain their identity during the learning process at college. For this reason, adapting to the existing environment and culture during the learning process can be a challenge for women who wear the veil in bridging their identity and the values they adhere to so that they need to negotiate their identity (Inayah & Abdi, 2018; Bahfiarti, 2020).

As the author has stated in the background section of this article, the use of the veil in Indonesia is still very much a minority (Wekke & Rusdan, 2017; Afifah, 2019). So many people still think badly of people who wear the veil, and it is not uncommon for people to accuse women who wear the veil as terrorists and are associated as members of fundamental and fanatical religious organizations (Danial, 2019). The discussion regarding the causes of the emergence of negative stigma towards niqab users, the impact of negative stigma towards niqab wearers, and efforts to deal with negative stigma towards niqab wearers among people have been studied by previous researchers.

Research related to the issue of the challenges of women wearing the veil in society has been widely studied by previous researchers such as (Haris, 2015). However, the researchers above only focused on the ways in which women who wear the veil face negative stigma and the obligations of women who wear the veil in Islamic boarding schools. The difference in this research focuses on the challenges faced by women who wear the veil in society. Regarding the issues raised by the author in this research, they must be studied and researched within the framework of enriching the literature and exploring the style and diversity of Islamic groups in society.

## METHODS

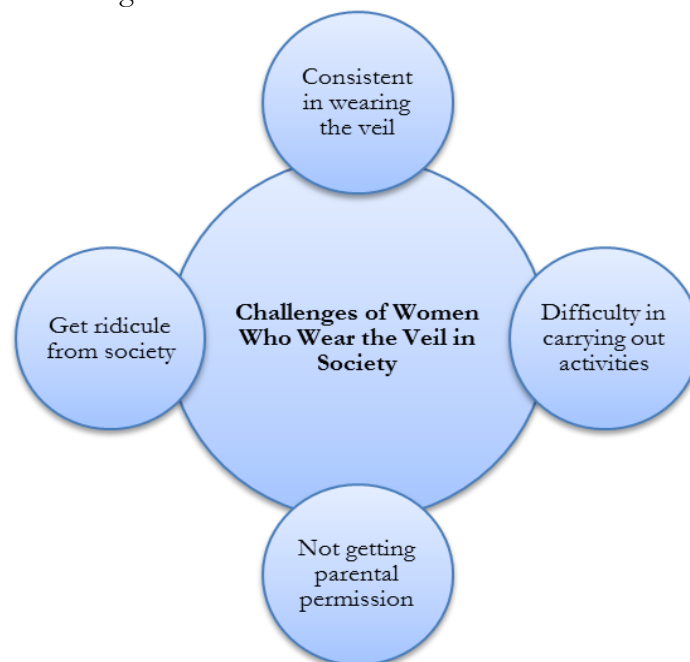
This research data uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach (Engkizar et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2018). The informants for this research were ten people (veiled women) who live in the city of Padang, West Sumatra. The author decided to use the technique purposive sampling. The selection of informants refers to four criteria, namely having the competence to understand well the problems being researched, still being active in the field being researched, having time to provide information to researchers, and being honest in providing information according to data and facts that occur in the field (Engkizar et al., 2018; Kasmar et al., 2019).

Next, research data was collected through direct interviews with the ten informants using a set of interview protocols. Each individual informant was interviewed repeatedly to strengthen the interview data. All interview data was then analyzed thematically. According to Terry, (2017); Clarke & Braun, (2018); Herzog et al., (2019); Sivakumar, (2020) thematic

analysis is a technique in research for analyzing interview results so that they can be seen clearly and are easy for readers to understand. The analysis technique in this research is Miles and Huberman analysis, namely an analysis technique consisting of data collection (data collection), reduction (data reduction), data display (data presentation), and conclusions (drawing conclusions).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the author's interviews with ten informants, the results of the research analysis of the challenges of women who wear the veil in society show four factors of challenges faced by women who wear the veil, namely i) maintaining consistency in wearing the veil, ii) difficulties in carrying out activities, iii) not getting permission from parents, iv) get ridiculed by society. To make it easy to understand the findings in the author's research, they are displayed as shown in figure 1 below:



**Fig 1. Challenges of women wearing the veil in society**

To make it more interesting, below the author will describe excerpts from interviews with informants based on the interviews as explained above. The description of the interview that the author presents is in the form of a quote from a short statement from the informant when the interview was conducted. Although the interview quotations were conveyed by the informant in slightly different language, the aims and objectives were more or less the same.

First, maintaining consistency in veiling. This theme was stated by informants 1, 3, 6,7 as in the following interview excerpt:

*.... At that time I didn't wear the veil to school but outside of school I still wore the veil. After graduating from high school I determined myself to be consistent in wearing the veil... (I-1), .... when I feel my faith is dropping or weak due to Satan's temptation, I will immediately strengthen my heart by remembering Allah, and that is not an easy thing (I-3), ....what makes me consistent in wearing the veil is because women are a slander for men... (I-6), .... the most important challenge for me is istiqamah, because in my place there is a very small minority of women who wear the veil, so it takes a strong determination to always wear the veil (I-7).*

Second, is discomfort in carrying out daily activities. This theme was stated by informants 2, 4, 5, 10 as in the following interview excerpt:

*....when I first started wearing the veil I felt awkward eating out because it was difficult to eat and in the end I learned and finally now I am getting better at doing it...(I-2), ....when I was wearing the veil I had some difficulty eating, carrying out activities outside the home but I learned from someone who was used to wearing the veil so I now follow how he does activities outside the home...(I-4),*

*....when I'm outside the house, it's a little difficult for me to carry out activities, such as when I want to go by motorbike, so it's a bit difficult (I-5), ....sometimes I'm too lazy to leave the house because it's a bit complicated and interferes with my activities, so I just stay at home more often...(I-10).*

Third, not getting parental permission. This theme was stated by informants 3, 5, 8 as in the following interview excerpt:

*...before deciding to wear the veil, I first asked my parents for permission, but I didn't get support from them because they were afraid that I would be ostracized in society. So when I go home I don't wear a veil but I wear a mask...(I-3), ....I wear the veil because I hope for blessings from Allah, even though I have difficulty convincing my parents to wear the veil, I still wear the veil at home...(I-5), ....When I first started wearing the veil, I was scolded and didn't get permission from my parents, because they thought I had joined a heretical sect, but thank God, as time goes by, I now have my parents' permission (I-8).*

Fourth, is getting ridiculed by society. This theme was stated by informants 2, 4, 9 as in the following interview excerpt:

*....In my hometown it is still rare for people to wear the veil, so when I return home I will be called a terrorist, a ghost, and I have even been pelted with stones by people I don't know...(I-2), ....before I wore the veil I easily got along with other people. However, after I took the veil, I limited myself to socializing and was more selective and chose my friends. but on the other hand, I was also shunned by many of my friends (I-4), ...before I wore the veil, I was said to be a fashionable child, but when I decided to wear the veil, many people around me ostracized me (I-9).*

Wearing a veil among people who do not wear the veil is a challenge in itself. A view will lead to an action that is in fact in accordance with the thought that is believed, as explained by Richard Nelson-Jones (2011), that humans are given the tendency to think rationally or irrationally. When someone thinks rationally, the consequences in the form of behavior displayed are also rational. Vice versa, if someone has irrational thoughts, the behavior they display is also in line with their thoughts. Likewise, a person's actions towards women who wear the veil also depend on their view of the veil itself, a person's view of the veil wearer.

The experience of the informants above when dealing with the public seems to be a common experience for women who wear the veil, as experienced by a veil wearer. Information 1 revealed her experience when she had worn the veil. There are many negative views and responses towards her wearing the veil in society, such as being shouted at by thieves and having drink bottles thrown at her. However, from a positive aspect, he was also offered a job.

Sahar Al-Faifi, from Cardiff, a woman wearing a niqab, shared her experience with BBC News, that she sometimes received verbal abuse from other people because of her choice of hijab. "A week ago someone abused me and said 'you are an ugly terrorist' when I tried to park my car near where I live," he said. "Two years ago, as I was passing from one department to another at Heath Hospital, someone passed by and said 'don't cut off my head, you ISIS'. It's quite painful to hear. This public view is triggered by many factors, including the mass media which views niqab wearers negatively, as expressed by [Khibany & Williamson, \(2008\)](#) in the case of the British media, according to their research, media opinion continues to express hatred towards women who wear the niqab. This is reinforced by [Piela, \(2017\)](#) that in the 2006-2008 period, the British media tended to report the views of groups that opposed the niqab. But the voices of women wearing niqabs are ignored. The mass media's mode of guiding public opinion according to [Mahmudah, \(2017\)](#) is by framing the debate in a certain way, where those in power are more dominant in voicing their views against the use of the veil in public.

Proves this where former British prime minister Tony Blair called the veil a 'sign of separation'; Culture Secretary Theresa Jowell described it as 'a symbol of women's subjugation to men'; and Harriet Harman, a minister at the Department of Constitutional Affairs, said she wanted to end the niqab as an obstacle to full equality. Mass media opinion and collaboration with power can lead to feelings of hatred and misperceptions towards the

veil and veil wearers. From this research, another factor also emerged that causes society's negative response to women who wear the veil, namely because society lacks an understanding of the religious nature of the veil for Muslim women, especially with mass media propaganda that sporadically views the veil as something negative.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research above, it can be concluded that there are four challenges faced by women who wear the veil in society. There are four factors that face the challenges faced by women who wear the veil, namely i) maintaining consistency in wearing the veil, ii) difficulties in carrying out activities, iii) not getting permission from parents, iv) getting ridiculed by society. So being a woman who wears the veil is not that easy if you are in an environment where the minority wears the veil. Women who wear the veil must persevere and be firm in facing various obstacles and challenges. So wearing a veil will not prevent women from carrying out activities like other women who do not wear the veil.

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International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research of Higher Education

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