



## **HIJAB: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE USE AND ADVANTAGES OF HIJAB AMONG FEMALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN PAKHTUN SOCIETY**

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**Abstract** Studies on veiling and its observance mostly focus on dichotomous discourses of male jurists and religious opinion-leaders; contents and objectives of all such discussions remain sermonising and chastising women. Such discourses, thus, tend to neglect and override women's perceptions, experiences, and viewpoint regarding veiling observance. This paper evaluates the perception of female university students of a university towards wearing *hijab* (Islamic head covering). Data was collected from a random sample of two hundred and thirty-five female student respondents studying at Kohat University, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (formerly NWFP of Pakistan). The sample included female students with face covered and face revealed. The study was designed to explore whether female students' perception of *hijab* as a social obstruction or as an assurance to freedom. Do the *hijab* wearing women find themselves less prone to harassment as compared to those who do not observe *hijab*? More importantly, is *hijab* a cultural or a religious obligation? Finally, do women decide themselves to veil or not to veil? In any case, what are the gains and losses?

*Keywords:* Hijab, veiling, purdah, Pakhtun society, Hijab and education