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Application of Agreement Indices in Investigating the Multifarious Aspects of *Purdah* (Veil) in the Modern-day Scenario

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Since long the concept of Purdah is in practice in the Muslim world as well as other cultures. The nature and observance of Purdah may vary concerning time and space in the context of different socio-cultural understandings and preferences. Here, the researchers investigated the different aspects related to the concept of Purdah and its observance in Pakhtun culture district in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Methodology: For the very purpose, the information was obtained from the community having diverse backgrounds like lawyers, politicians, intellectuals, community leaders, and literary persons. Their responses were analyzed via a quantitative research approach.

Findings and Conclusion: The study findings revealed that Purdah is both a social and religious obligation in Pakhtun society. The practice of Purdah is also attributed to the subjugation and segregation of women from mainstream society. Due to the waves of modernization, the form of veiling has been altered to a greater extent. It has also been noticed that Purdah is also practiced for the sake of fashion. On the other hand, they perceive it as a source of empowerment for females.

Keywords: *Purdah* (Veil), Islam, Modernization, Fashion, Empowerment, *Pakhtun.*

Introduction

Ni'mah (2021) has identified two central drives of practicing *Purdah/Hijab*, or the *Jilbab* as a religious and aesthetic appearance. *Purdah* is the customary segregation and seclusion of females from unfamiliar men and the world's outdoor homes (Papanek, 1971; Anderson, 2005). In a bodily logic, Purdah denotes the covering of the female's body along with shawl / Dupatta or headscarf. In an ethical and societal context, it denotes the implementation of high values and morals of chastity on females and making them submissive to males. Besides, strengthening this argument from the command in Surah Ahzaab and supportive Hadith (the sayings & traditions of the last Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him),

female have adopted numerous types of headcovers in modern times, like the headscarf or *Hijab* (Europe), *Burqa* (Afghanistan) and a shawl or/and *Chador* practicing in Pakistan and Iran (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010).

The practice of *Purdah* confines a female's mobility outside her home, maybe a dangerous example of extremely segregated structures of sex-role distribution nonetheless displays many central features in mutual with other cultures. The practice of purdah is linked to status, social distance, interpersonal reliance, the separation of work and the upkeep of ethical values (Papanek, 1971). Number of researchers like Smith-Hefner (2007), Ahmadi and Yohana (2007), Dewi (2012), and Ramadhini (2017) pointed out the religious dimensions of wearing the Hijab by elucidating that how people see the clothing as a theological obligation (Siraj, 2001) for Muslim women. On the contrary, scholars such as Istiani (2015) and Rofhani (2017) underscored the aesthetic aspect of the veil, as people consider it as a style that may imply social class and depicts other dimensions of distinctiveness.

There is extensive divergence regarding what Islam needs on head casing (Murphy, 2006). Various segments consider that observance of Purdah is obligatory (e.g., Maududi & Al-Ash'ari, 2001 and Abbasi, 2009). As per their understanding, there are explicit instructions in Qur'an and Hadith concerning Purdah. Whereas, differences in opinions exist amongst Muslims regarding their covering their face appearances and covering the head. On the other hand, Khan and Farooq (2001) and Ghamidi (2009) pointed out that the Holy Quran does not mark clear orientation to the covering of the head, and commands for face covering are only specific to time and situation. The Holy Qur'an has concentrated on adornment and modesty, hitherto stressed clothing of piousness at a similar time (Quran, 7: 26).

To believers of Allah (Muslims), it is a sign of unpretentiousness, while some feminists and Europeans perceive it as a symbol of females' substandard status and subjugation (Golnaraghi & Mills, 2013; and Murshid, 2005). Many intellectuals have confronted the production of the veil as repression. As pointed out by Clark (2007) that the *veil* is eventually a sign; it liberates, empowers, oppresses, as per the cultural make-up, custom, and the female uses cloth (veil) on her head. Moreover, Cole and Ahmadi (2010) recognized that females espouse *veil* due to spiritual duties assigned by religion and their parents' expectations and outlooks (Istiani, 2015 and Rofhani, 2017). Being Muslims, they, too, practice Purdah as a mark of distinctiveness and unpretentiousness. Jones (2005) proclaims that wearing *Hijab* is their individual preference. Kopp (2005) and Droogsma (2007) established that *the Hijab* describes Muslim individualities, executes a conduct check/regulator, struggles with sexual objectification, has sufficient money, extra esteem, safeguards close relatives with family, and runs freedom.

In many cultures, the practice of secluding females has been witnessed, usually by the elite class; the practice has been more predominant amongst the Muslim populace of North Africa, Asia, Middle East, and certain castes of Indian Brahmin (White, 1977). In the context of Pakistan's social fabric, both social and cultural connotations are associated with the practice of *Purdah* (Imran and Iqbal, 2019). The socio-cultural hindrances exist in Pakhtun culture in the shape of gender discrimination, biases, and misinterpretation of the observance of *Purdah,* etc. (Imran et al. 2010). Historically, in Muslim societies, Purdah was a sign of affluence (see also El Guindi, 1999; Shah & Bulatao, 1981).

The use of *burqa* may be attributed to two factors: either people may easily recognize it as a symbol of status who differentiate them from those who are not the wearers (lower classes) or due to the family's compulsion for availing permission to leave their homes. Both of the factors are vital (Shaheed, 1989; Imran & Iqbal, 2019; and Imran et al. 2020). Social prestige is associated with *the burqa* due to its use by the affluent classes. With time, by accepting females' stretched space, the necessity for this movable solitude among wealthy urban families may have vanished (Shaheed, 1989).

While the stern face is covering or *Niqab* leftovers comparatively occasional in maximum Muslim states, the modest *Chador* (or headscarf) has made a theatrical rejoinder in current decades as both a communal symbol of devoutness and, in numerous circumstances, a style announcement. For instance, in the Egypt 1970s, headscarves were put on mostly by rural womenfolk. Nowadays, on the boulevards of Cairo, at

least 80% of females shield their hair. Some disciplinarians, though, endeavor to apply it compellingly (Gah, 2009).

The modern tendencies had followed in the late 19th century in Egypt, Indo-Pakistan, Ottoman Turkey, Syria, and other Muslim nations (Khan, 1972). Strict limitations and prohibitions regarding the observance of the veil have been questioned and, therefore, undisturbed in certain Muslim states, and, as the thirties of the 20th century rejected firstly in Kemalist (Turkey) and subsequently in a few other areas. Though, in a number of Muslim states including Pakistan, it exists to date. Even womenfolk in those Muslims republics that were not under foreign rule (like Turkey, Iran and Egypt) used the attire of European countries (Maududi & Al-Ash'ari, 2001).

In Pakistan, the disagreement between act and expression is established in the fundamentalist(s) instance, chiefly the womenfolk. Whereas calling for severe gender exclusion, fundamentalists (women) have gradually progressed away from backup womanly seclusion. In the previous ten years, the fundamentalist appeal for females to stay in the house excepting for crises has set the way to asking segregated job spaces to permit millions of womenfolk to catch work in 'Islamic' circumstances. This drastic alteration has taken place so steadily that it has been failed to notice to date (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1988). The veiled female is not a uniform entity; instead, there is a variety. There are certain women who, when taking off their veil, show up stylish and close-fitting clothes underneath. In public, their style and make-up are more creative and subtle. They formulate different methods to tie headscarves, presenting hair underneath colorful mufflers. A rare segment of Pakistani society guilt females for espousing Hijab: just as a style, and that they use attractively adorned *Abayas* and headscarves (Hassan, 2013).

Research Objectives

The study was carried out in the context of achieving the following research objectives:

1. To unearth the understanding of the study respondents concerning the observance of Purdah in the target area.
2. To probe the impact of the modernization on the observance of Purdah.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Whether female observe Purdah from theological or aesthetic standpoint?
2. Whether modernization has changed the meaning and practices of Purdah?

Research Methodology

This study is mainly quantitative wherein, the following steps were involved while conducting the study by the researchers in the study locale.

Sampling Procedure

A stratified random sampling technique was chosen by the researchers for data collection. The stratified random sampling technique is considered as most suitable for obtaining consistent and reliable data. The potential sample was taken out from the different stakeholders in district Swat composed of politicians, literary persons, lawyers, community leaders, and intellectuals respectively.

Besides, for conducting such a nature of research studies, Roscoe (1975) pinpointed that a sample size not below 30, and not above 500 is adequate for obtaining the results and interpretations. As per the analogy of the Roscoe (1975), sample size was restricted to 250 using quota sampling, giving equivalent representation to Tehsils and study participants, whereas the required data was collected via using a multistage sampling procedure from 07 Tehsils of district Swat from the aforementioned stratum randomly. While executing the three stages multistage sampling procedure; the researchers chose quota

sampling, purposive sampling to interview the sampled groups, and at the end used stratified random sampling to analyze the data, obtained through the stratified procedure.

The Tool of Data Collection

In the research process, obtaining relevant and authentic data is a very vital step. The researchers tend to choose an accurate approach based on its appropriateness and practical relevance for ensuring data collection on factual grounds. In this study, the researchers used a comprehensive questionnaire for obtaining more relevant and precise data.

Data Analysis

The collected quantitative field information was analyzed at different levels through SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists); include univariate level, agreement indices, descriptive statistics, and reliability analysis.

Univariate Analysis

The use of univariate analysis which expounds a single variable (Canova et al., 2017) is very pivotal. In univariate analysis, the frequency distribution along with percentage of each data class has been calculated as per the following analogy.

% of a data class = f/N * 100

In the above formula, f represents the frequency of the data class, whereas, N indicates the number of observations in the data set (Kothari & Garg, 2019).

Agreement Indices

For better measurement of the respondents' responses, the following scale is considered as appropriate; hence the researchers used agreement indices for this purpose;

Scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
-2.0	-1.0	0.0	+ 1.0	+2.0

The above mentioned 5-point scale allows both kinds of answers, i.e., positive and negative, reflecting the agreement and disagreement (Miah, 2016).

Reliability Analysis

Concerning the role of reliability analysis in research, Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) highlighted that reliability depicts the level of trustworthiness and authenticity of the research tool of data collection regarding its outcomes. In this study, for checking the reliability of the research instrument, the researchers executed pretesting as assuming a research tool without judging its reliability. In addition, with the help of Cronbach Alpha (α), internal consistency of the scale items was measured through calculating reliability coefficients.

The following formula Cronbach Alpha (α) was used as given by Cronbach (1951):

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \overline{C}}{(\overline{v} + (N-1) \cdot \overline{C})}$$

The above formula indicates that N depicts the number of components (items or test lets), $\overline{v}$ stands for the average variance, and $\overline{C}$ means the average of all covariances between the components.

The reliability analysis of the study resulted in a 0.81 value of Cronbach's Alpha (α), which is very suitable as 0.8 is considered as a good score value in research practice.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion unit cover univariate analysis, agreement indices, and descriptive statistics of all research items used in the study. The detailed results and necessary discussion are stated in the following lines.

Univariate Analysis

The univariate analysis encompassed the frequency distribution depicted through a table and its required relevant explanation(s).

Table 1: *Frequency Distribution of the Respondents Perception regarding Observance of Purdah (Veil)*

S.#	Statements / Attributes	Response in Frequency						
		SA	**A**	**N**	**D**	**SDA**	**Total (AI)**	*f*
1.	Patterns/styles of observing Purdah have been changed into a modern one.	125(50)	108(43)	6(2.4)	7(2.8)	4(1.6)	250(1.372)	
2.	Purdah is still considered as one of the most integral parts of *Pakhtun* culture.	131(52.4)	95(38)	12(4.8)	2(0.8)	10(4)	250 (1.34)	
3.	Purdah is one of the religious obligations.	147(58.8)	83(33.2)	15(6)	2(0.8)	3(1.2)	250(1.476)	
4.	In the present day, Purdah is practiced as a source of fashion.	91(36.4)	86(34.4)	45(18)	24(9.6)	4(1.6)	250(0.944)	
5.	Observance of Purdah is a cultural practice.	81(32.4)	101(40.4)	37(14.8)	22(8.8)	9(3.6)	250(0.892)	
6.	Purdah is both a cultural and religious obligation.	112(44.8)	106(42.4)	18(7.2)	5(2)	9(3.6)	250(1.228)	
7.	Buddha gives females more strength and freedom (empowerment).	109(43.6)	91(36.4)	32(12.8)	9(3.6)	9(3.6)	250(1.128)	
8.	Purdah is a source of women's suppression and subjugation.	69(27.6)	96(38.4)	44(17.6)	21(8.4)	20(8)	250(0.692)	
9.	Purdah can be practiced in its proper form in today's modernized world.	112(44.8)	72(28.8)	35(14)	23(9.2)	8(3.2)	250(1.028)	
10.	A woman prefers to wear/use *Abaya* instead of *Burqa*.	97(38.8)	123(49.2)	19(7.6)	7(2.8)	4(1.6)	250(1.208)	

Source: Field survey, 2019

Note: Data/information in the above parentheses reflects the percentage of the concerned responses.

Denotations

SA: Strongly Agree.   A: Agree.   N: Neutral.   D: Disagree.   SDA: Strongly Disagree.

The literature review depicted that Purdah is an integral part of Pakhtun's life. Table No.01 shows the frequency distributions of the impact of modernization on *Purd*ah (veil) in Pakhtun society in district Swat, Pakistan. The frequency distribution of each statement/attribute of the variable, as mentioned earlier, is stated in the upcoming lines. Upon the response to the statement that pattern/styles of observing Purdah have been changed into a modern one, 125(50) respondents strongly agreed, 108(43) agreed, 6(2.4) remained neutral, 7(2.8) disagreed, and 4(1.6) strongly disagreed. Besides, regarding the statement that *Purdah* is still considered as one of the most integral parts of *Pakhtun* culture, 131(52.4) respondents were strongly agreed, 95(38) were agreed, 12(4.8) remained neutral to the above statement while 2(0.8) disagreed and 10(4) were strongly disagree. Further, the response of the respondents to the statement that Purdah is one of the religious obligations was answered as strongly agree by 147(58.83), agree by 83(33.2), neutral, i.e., 15(6), disagree, i.e., 2(0.8) and strongly disagree, i.e., 3(1.2).

Simultaneously, 91(36.4) were strongly agreed with the statement that in the present day, Purdah is practiced as a source of fashion, whereas 86(34.4) were agreed, followed by 45(18) remained neutral while 24(9.6) were disagree and strongly disagreed, i.e., 4(1.2). Also, 81(32.4) respondents responded as strongly agree to the statement that observance of Purdah is a cultural practice, 101(40.4) were agree with this statement, followed by 37(14.4) who remained neutral, while 22(8.8) response has disagreed and 9(3.6) strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 115(46) respondents strongly agreed with the statement that Purdah is both a cultural and religious obligation, while 112(44.8) agreed with this statement, 106(42.4) remained neutral, whereas 18 (7.2) disagreed, and 5(2) responded as strongly disagree. Moreover, 109(43.6) responded as strongly agree to the statement that Purdah gives females more strength and freedom (empowerment), while 91(36.4) agreed, 32(12.8) were neutral, 9(3.6) disagreed, and 9(3.6) strongly disagreed. When responding to another statement, i.e., Purdah is a source of women's oppression and subjugation, 69(27.6) response strongly agreed, 96(38.4) responded as agree, 44(17.6) remained neutral whereas 21(8.4) opined as disagree and 20(8) depicted as strongly disagree. A statement concerning that Purdah can be practiced in its natural form in today's modernized world, 112(44.8) respondents strongly agreed, 72(28.8) agreed, 35(14) were neutral, whereas 23(9.2) disagreed, and 8(3.2) strongly disagreed with the statement. Upon the response to another statement that women prefer to wear/use *Abaya* instead of *Burqa*, 97(38.8) respondents strongly agreed, 123(49.2) were agreed, 19(7.6) remained neutral, 7(2.8) disagreed and 4(1.6) strongly disagreed. Also, the overall result of Agreement Indices (AI) revealed the agreement of sampled respondents regarding the observance of *Purdah.*

Descriptive Statistics ($\bar{x}$, Sd.) and Reliability Analysis

Table-2: *Showing the Descriptive Statistics ($\bar{x}$, Sd.) and Reliability Analysis of the Data*

Variable	Number of Items	Mean (S.D)	Cronbach's Alpha
Changes in Observance of *Purd*ah (Veil)	10	4.1580 (0.8925)	0.81

The above table-02 depicted the descriptive statistics ($\bar{x}$, Sd.) and the data's reliability through Cronbach's Alpha. The total items in the questionnaire, i.e., 10, revealed the Mean as 4.1580 and Standard Deviation as 0.8925, while the value of Cronbach's Alpha has been disclosed as 0.81, respectively.

Agreement Indices

Table-3: *Respondents' Agreement on Multifarious Aspects of Purdah (Veil)*

Agreement	Responses	Index Value
Strongly Disagree	80	
Disagree	122	
Neutral	263	1.1308
Agree	961	
Strongly Agree	1074	

Total	2500

Source: Field survey, 2019.

Table-3 displays the results of sample respondents' agreement responses to the notion of whether *Purdah* (veil) has been affected due to the modern-day trends? In the study survey, the proposition that was put to the response from the respondents was "Impact of Modern-day Trends on the observance of *Purd*ah." In this regard, the respondents were asked to respond whether they agreed to it, according to the five-point Likert Scale.

After getting the responses of the sampled respondents, the index value is calculated as:

$$\text{Agreement Indices (AI)} = \frac{(2*1074)+(1*961)+(0*263)-(1*122)-(2*80)}{2500}$$

AI= 1.1308

The value of the agreement index is 1.1308 (I>0), meaning that the multifarious aspects of *Purdah* have been affected due to the modern-day emerging trends. This shows that people are inclined toward accepting change in one way or the other. Due to modernization, the role of media, education, and urbanization are considered of immense importance in changing people's mindsets toward their customary practices and traditions.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the pattern/styles of observing Purdah have been changed into a modern one. It was observed that *Purdah* is still considered as one of the most integral parts of *Pakhtun* culture. It was also noticed that in the present day, *Purdah* is practiced as a source of fashion. A woman prefers to wear/use *Abaya* instead of *Burqa.* Besides, observance of *Purd*ah is considered as a cultural practice as well as a religious obligation. Moreover, *Purd*ah is associated with women empowerment, which gives more strength and freedom to excel in their lives. Contrary to it, it was also depicted that *Purdah* is a source of women's oppression and subjugation, which hinders their ways of moving ahead on the socio-economic ladder in Pakhtun society. Apart from the waves of modernization, the natural form of *Purdah* exists even in today's modernized world.

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