

## DICHOTOMY BETWEEN HIJĀB AND NIQĀB IN ISLAM

Sulaiman Sheu Adua

Department of Religions, History and Heritage Studies  
Kwara State University, MALETE.

+8039112665

sulaiman.sheu@kwasu.edu.ng

### ABSTRACT

*Islam has strongly emphasized on the concept of decency and modesty in the interaction between members of the opposite sex with definite dressing code. Almighty Allah instructs Muslims to care for their nudity in order to defend their religious dignity. This manuscript discovers that there are different forms of cloth that Muslim women wear, which can be classified as Islamic dress. Hence, the two most focused pieces of clothing under the Islamic dressing etiquette with which this study is concerned are the Hijab and the Niqab. Meanwhile, the study focuses on the dichotomy between the term and contextual meaning of Hijab and Niqab under the light of Quran and Sunna of the prophet SAW as well as the opinion of Islamic scholars.*

**Keywords:** Islam, Hijab, Naqab, Dressing code

### INTRODUCTION

Islam is a complete way of life that contains every aspect of life, which designed by our Creator to advance happy, healthy communities and ease the path to eternal bliss in Paradise in today's society modesty is seen as a sign of weakness or insecurity but this is not the case in Islam where modesty is seen as a sign of respect for oneself and others Muslim scholars unanimously agreed that fulfilling the conditions of the dress code is an obligation on all Muslim men and women. They have based these conditions on evidence found in the Quran and the Sunnah.

According to Encyclopedia of Islam, the term Hijab or veil is not used in the Qur'an to refer to an article of clothing for women or men alone, rather it refers to a spatial curtain that divides or provides privacy. In this wise, Al-Qur'an instructs the male believers (Muslims) to talk to wives of Muhammad behind a Hijab and then. Hijab (staying behind the partition) was the responsibility of the men and not the wives of Muhammad. Meanwhile, Hijab as an integral part of everyday appearance and life of most Muslim women all over the world has been synonymous with Muslim women for quite some time.

Consequently, the instruction of Hijab in the Quran, which was specifically directed to the wives of Muhammad, was later generalized, leading to the segregation of the Muslim men and women. This implies that, the modesty in Qur'an concerns both men's and women's gaze, gait, garments, and genitalia. The clothing for women involves Hijab and Khimar over the necklines and Niqab or Jilbab (cloaks) in public so that they may be identified and not harmed. Hence, the guidelines for covering of the entire body except for the hands, the feet, and the face, are found in texts of Fiqh and Hadith that are developed later.

Therefore, the concept of Hijab and Niqab was recommended for the Ummah of the prophet (SAW) to save guard their nudity against lewdness and to protect modesty. However, the modest dress for woman is the practicability of *Hijab/Niqab* but there are controversies among the Ulama on the exact ambit of the Hijab. Although, there is consensus among all the

Islamic Ulama that all matured female should cover the whole body with a loose long, not decorated not perfumed, not transparent, not resembles men's and disbelievers clothes, especially when to appear in front of a (Gairu Mahrim) strangers or out of marital bond.

In a distinguish view, the Niqab and Hijab are two different kinds of clothing that are available to Islamic women. Meanwhile, a Niqab is a segmented part of Hijab and cover only the face. It is a form of a veil that covers the face including the ears and the hair but Hijab actually refers to the rules of covering up. In addition, the word Niqab is used to refer to a veil that covers the head and face. However, Hijab means "cover," "drape." or "partition:" but the word Niqab means veil covering the lower face up to the eyes. The general term Hijab in the present day world refers to the covering of the face by women. Meanwhile, the specific nature of the dress involved can vary considerably among different schools of legal interpretation, sects, and cultural backgrounds.

The study agrees that the word Hijab is the act of covering up but is often used to describe the headscarves worn by Muslim women. These scarves come in many styles and colours. The type most commonly worn in the Nigeria covers the head and neck but leaves the face clear. Whereas, the Niqab is a veil for the face that leaves the area around the eyes clear. However, it may be worn with a separate eye veil. It is worn with an accompanying headscarf.

However, some scholars argue that Quran chapter 24 verses 30-31 teaches etiquette for male and female interactions, where khumur is mentioned in reference to the clothing of Arab women in the 7th century, but there is no command to actually wear them in any specific way.

Meanwhile, the traditional Muslims and Salafis argue that the garments known today as Jilbab and khumur are the very garments demanded by the Qur'an. However, Qur'an translators and commentators translate the Arabic into English words with a general meaning such as veils, head-coverings and shawls.

The Sunni scholars opine that, Muslims have recognized many different forms of clothing as satisfying the demands of Hijab but the debate focuses on how much of the male or female body should be covered. To this effect, Sunnis recommend that women wear loose clothing that is not form fitting to the body either modest forms of western clothing (long shirts and skirts), or the more traditional Jilbab, a high-necked loose robe that covers the arms and legs or Khimar a scarf or cowl that covers all but the face is also worn in many different styles.

Meanwhile, the Qur'anic legislation regarding women is to protect them from inequities and vicious practices (such as female infanticide, unlimited polygamy, or concubinage, etc.) which prevailed in the pre-Islamic Arabia. The aims of this paper is not only to refute the insinuation of non-Muslims on the status of Islamic injunction towards Hijab and Niqab that Muslims woman was greatly afflicted in two ways which were the main source of different evils, sufferings and injustices that happened to her during history. But also to examine the significance of Hijab and Niqab as a remedy to the widespread of raping, incest and sexual harassment.

## Definition of Term

The etymological deduction of the word Hijab was emanated from the word 'hajaba' which literally has different meaning such as: {*Hajb*} to veil, cover, screen, shelter, seclude, (from), to hide, obscure (from sight), to make imperceptible, invisible, to conceal, to make or form a separation (a woman), to disguise, masked, to conceal, hide, to flee from sight, veil, to veil, conceal, to cover up, become hidden, to be obscured, to vanish, to become invisible,

disappear from sight, to veil, to conceal, to withdraw, to elude perception.

Literally, *Hijab* means "a veil," "curtain," "partition" or "separation." In a meta-physical sense, *Hijab* means illusion, or refers to the illusory aspect of creation. The most popular and common meaning of *Hijab* today, is the veil in dressing for women. It refers to a certain standard of modest dress for women. Technically, the Hijab/Niqab can further denote any head, face or body covering worn by Muslim women that similarly conforms to a certain standard of modesty. It can also be used to refer to the seclusion of women from men in the public sphere, or it may embody a metaphysical dimension Al-Hijab refers to "the veil which separates man or the world from Allah". Therefore, Hijab is a veil traditionally worn by some Muslim women in the presence of adult males outside their immediate family, which usually covers the head and chest. The term can be referred to as any head, face or body covering worn by Muslims women that conforms to a certain standard of Islamic modesty. Hijab can be used as a cloth worn by Muslim women as a symbol of modesty and privacy. Hijab can also be used to refer to the seclusion of women from men in the public sphere, or it may denote a metaphysical dimension for example referring to "the veil which separates men from man or the world from God". Therefore, the word Hijab means "curtain," but many Muslims interpret it to mean simply "headscarf." These scarves cover a woman's head and neck while leaving the face clear. They come in a variety of colors and styles, and Muslim women who choose to wear them often begin around puberty, though there is no set age. On the other hand, Niqab is a headpiece, specifically a traditional type of covering in the form of a veil that covers the face including the ears and the hair. Sometimes, even the neck and chest area are also covered by this piece. The design of this veil involves an opening for the eyes for vision. The Niqab can also feature a scarf or extra flap of cloth.

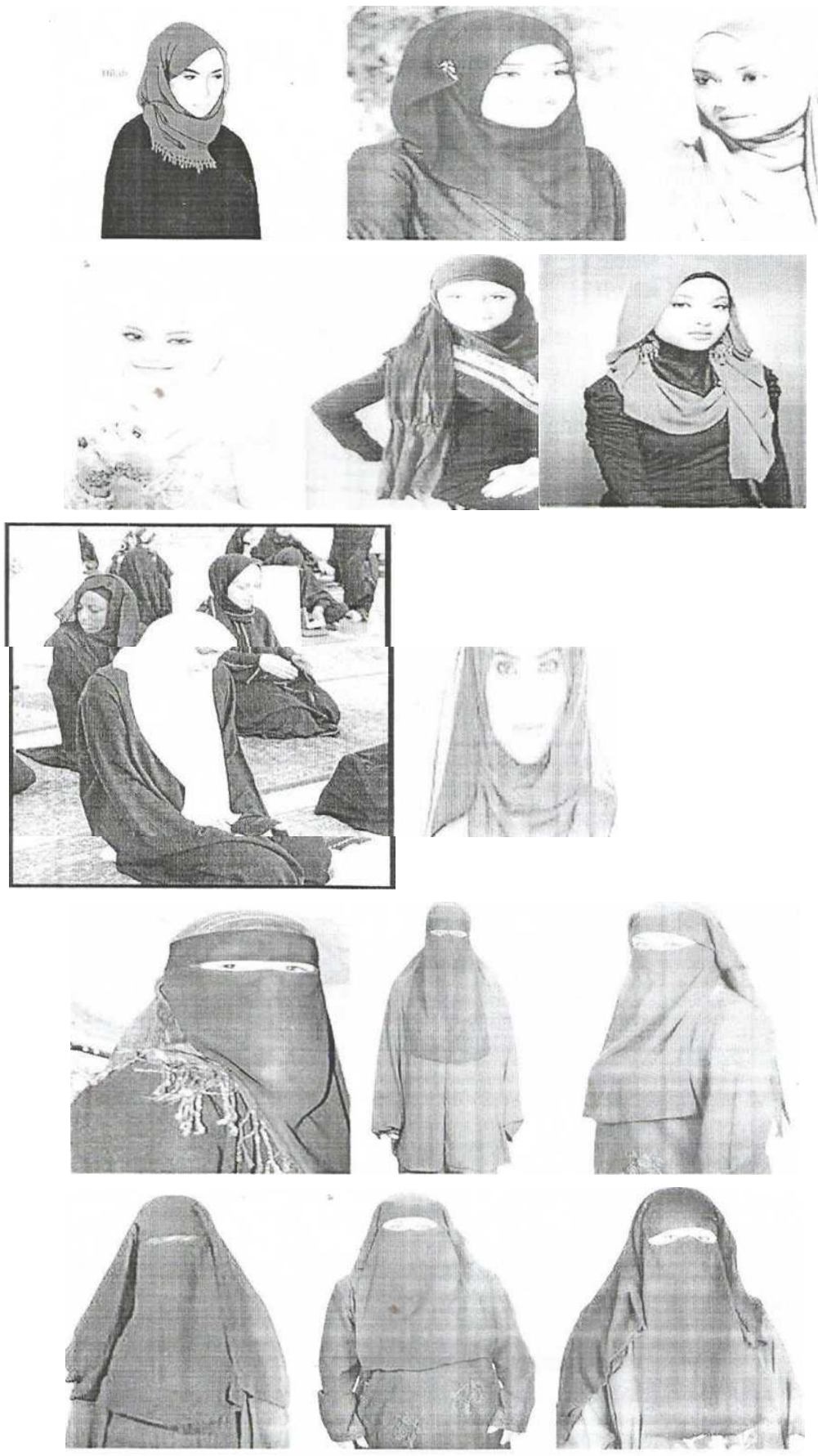
The Niqab is an Islamic face-covering for women that veils almost her entire face and hair down to the shoulders. However, Niqab is a part of the Hijab used by traditional Islamic women's clothing. This Niqab is recognizable because of the slits that reveal only a woman's eyes. Usually black, spartan, and designed to efface personality and physical suggestions, and it is part of a full-body covering favored where the influence of fundamentalist Islam, or Salafism, is more pronounced.

### **The Dichotomy between Hijab and Niqāb**

Hijāb- as shown earlier refers to the act of covering up, but it normally refers to a type of headscarf worn to cover the head and chest. Commonly worn in the West some part of Cultivist milieu. Meanwhile, the Hijab comes in different colours and covers the hair but leaves the face open. Therefore, the term "Hijab" was originally anything that was used to conceal, it became used to refer to concealing garments worn by women outside the house, specifically the headscarf or veil as on next page in group of figures.

Niqab on the other hand, is a veil that covers the face and entire head but with a place cut out for the eyes. Niqab is a veil that is tied on at the bridge of the nose and falls to cover the lower face. Below are the examples of Niqab

However, Niqab and Hijab are two different kinds of clothing that are available to Islamic women. Islamic women wear these cloths as a form of protection and act as a sign of modesty. The Niqab can be attached or tied to the woman's head by laces or by clips, since Niqab cover the face alone and not the rest of the body, they are worn together with Khimar and some sort of head covering as well as an abaya (an *abaya* is a robe-like garment that covers the body of a woman, usually from the shoulders to the feet).



Source: <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-niaab-2353520>

In this framework, Hijab can also be used to refer to any head, face or body covering worn by Muslim women or men that conforms to a certain standard of modesty). On the other hand, Niqab refers to not only the piece covering the face, but the entire ensemble worn along with the face covering. Meanwhile, this researcher discovers that the concept of Hijab more than covering just the head and hair. Some of the women in this study assert that the Hijab means more than simply the attire worn; it is the act of modesty in terms of behaviour that along with wearing the Hijab. Some also consider the Hijab to represent all forms of dress.

### Confusion between Niqab and Burqa

The Niqab is similar in some respects but not identical to the Burqa as common in Afghanistan or the *chador* favored in Iran and known as Eleha in Yoruba Muslim culture.

However, many people confuse Niqab with Burqa. A Burqa is the most concealing form of headscarf, it is a one-piece garment that covers the entire face and body, leaving only a small mesh window for the eyes. The Burqa differs from Niqab in style but is often confused with the Niqab. A Niqab covers the face but leaves the opening around the eyes free. Women will sometimes wear a Niqab with a separate eye veil or an accompanying headscarf.

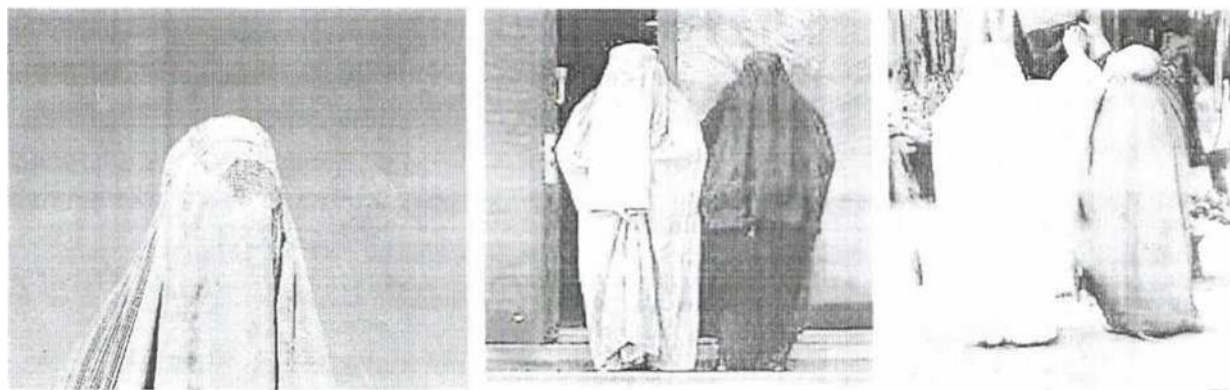


Figure 2. A woman wearing Burqa

### Confusion between Hijab and Khimar

Khimar; Khimar", in contemporary usage, has come to mean a piece of cloth that covers the head, or headscarf, but the term in Arabic means "a covering of a thing" or "anything by which a thing is veiled or covered", not specific or restricted to a head covering of a covering of the hair. Below are the example of Khimar which shows according to cultural style:



Figure 3. The Example of Khimar Cultural Style

However, the fact remains that Islam's aspiration for protecting Muslim women through shaping a special dress for her shows Islam's honor and respect for her and her dignity, cleanliness and purity. This study perfectly clarified the difference between the Hijab and Khimari- as well as the confusion between Niqab and Burqa adopted by Islam as a protective shield for woman against aggression and attacks against her dignity by the followers of sick inclinations.

### **Significance of Hijab and Niqab According to Quran and Sunna**

The teaching of Islam does not only safeguard itself with heavenly manual which is Quran and the authentic Hadith of the prophet SAW but also places a very premium on manners that the prophet (SAW) and his companions lived their life as the best examples for Muslim to imitate in all spheres of life. This implies that failure to emulate the prophet SAW and his companions tantamount to evil doing so it is advisable that everyone should follow his guidance through his sayings, deeds and his tacit approval to protect their self in the society.

Meanwhile, the concept of Hijab and Niqab in Islam does not connote male domination of female or subordination, that both genders are dignified and are trustees of Allah (SWT) on earth. Men and women have the same religion, moral duties and responsibilities. They will face the consequences of their deeds, that justice is genderless. In some Arabic-speaking countries and Western countries, the word Hijab primarily refers to women's head and body covering, but in Islamic scholarship, Hijab is given the wider meaning of modest, privacy and morality. Therefore, Hijab is the Islamic dress code for Muslim women. wherein the whole body, except the face, hands and feet should be covered. The dressing should not be very tight such that it reveals the body figure and the scarf should cover the chest area as well. The Hijab is worn by Muslim women and is compulsory for them to wear it. in the presence of men other than their husband or father.

Despite the same Qur'anic obligations being issued for men and women, rules regarding dress developed so that men were to cover from their navels to their knees, whereas a women were to cover all their bodies except what was essential, that is, the hands and face.

The significance of the word Hijab as a definition within and Islamic context, it is correct for us to say; Islamic veil includes both men and women; but its essence differs in the form that preserves morals, protects virtue and respects woman in daily life. Islam has nothing to do with imprisonment, or preventing woman from exercising her natural right and there is no insult or degradation for woman in its criteria and schemes. The Qur'an lays down the principle of the law of modesty. In *Surah 24: An-Nur: 30 and 31* modesty is enjoined upon both Muslim men and Muslim women.

Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them. Lo! Allah is aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent. and to draw their veil over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husbands' fathers, or their sons or their husbands' sons, or their brothers or their brothers' sons or sisters' sons, or their women, or their slave or made attendants who lack vigour, or children who know naught of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn unto Allah together O believers, in order that ye may succeed. Pickthall: Quran 24:30-31

In the first command was given to Muslim men that they should not lustfully look at women (other than their own wives); and in order to prevent any possibility of temptation, they are required to cast their glances downwards. This is known as "Hijab of the eyes".

Meanwhile, in the second verse a similar command as given to the men in the previous verse regarding "Hijab of the eyes" was directed to women. After the command on "Hijab of the eyes" the verse describing the dress code for women.

Muslim women are enjoined to "draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty," except in the presence of their husbands, other women, children, eunuchs, and those men who are so closely related to them that they are not allowed to marry them. Although a self-conscious exhibition of one's "*zeenat*" (which means "that which appears to be beautiful" or "that which is used for embellishment or adornment") is forbidden, the Qur'an makes it clear that what a woman wears ordinarily is permissible. Another interpretation of this part of the passage is that if the display of "*zeenai*" is unintentional or accidental, it does not violate the law of modesty. However, many scholars interpret the *Khimar* in the verse as the same term for Hijab. *Niqab* and *Jalabib* in the other verse which means a loose outer garment because the meaning of *Khimar* and the context in which the verse was revealed clearly talks about concealing the head and then using the loose ends of the scarf to conceal the neck and the bosom. According to their opinion, it is absurd to believe that the Qur'an would use the word *Khimar* (which, by definition means a cloth that covers the head) only to conceal the bosom with the exclusion of the head! It would be like saying to put on your shirt only around the belly or the waist without covering the chest!

The purpose of ayah (24:31) is to hide the Muslim women's body except *Ma dhahara minha* (the face and hands). It is obvious that this purpose cannot be served if the dress is thin enough so as to reveal the color of the skin or the shape or beauty of the body. This is explained by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh): "In later (generations) of my ummah there will be women who will be dressed but naked. On top of their heads (what looks) like camel humps. Curse them for they are truly cursed." In another version he added that they "will not enter into paradise or (even) get a smell of it."

Although this verse is directed in the first place to the Prophet's "wives and daughters." there is a reference also to "the believing women." Hence, it is generally understood by Muslim societies as applying to all Muslim women. According to the Qur'an, the reason why Muslim women should wear an outer garment when they go out of their houses is so that they may be recognized as "believing" Muslim women, and differentiated from street-walkers for whom sexual harassment is an occupational hazard. The purpose of this verse was not to confine women to their houses, but to make it safe for them to go about their daily business without attracting unwholesome attention. By wearing the outer garment, a "believing" Muslim woman could be distinguished from the others. In societies where there is no danger of believing Muslim being confused with others, or in which "the outer garment" is unable to function as a mark of identification for believing Muslim women, the mere wearing of the outer garment would not fulfill the true objective of the Qur'anic decree.

The Qur'an advises women in *Surah 24: ayah 31*, to cover their "adornments" from strangers outside of the family. In the traditional and modern Arab societies. Women at home dress quite differently compared to what they wear in the streets. In this verse of the Qur'an. It refers to the institution of a new public modesty, rather than veiling the face. Meanwhile, some scholars argue that Quran 33:33 of Suratu'l Ahzab teaches that the best way for women to observe Hijab is to stay in their homes not to come out without a valid necessity, observing Hijab in this manner is known as *Hijab Bil-Buyut* (observing Hijab by way of staying home).

And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance: and establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity: and obey Allah and His Messenger. And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye members of the Family, and to make you pure and

spotless. *Yusuf AH: Quran 33:33*

There are many ahadith of the prophet SAW that discuss about Islamic etiquette on how responsible Muslim should protect their nudity. This include;

Narrated Safiya bint Shaiba (*Radhiallaahu Anhaj* "Aisha (*Railluallaahu Anha*) used to say: "When (the Verse): "They should draw their veils over their necks and bosoms," was revealed, (the ladies) cut their waist sheets at the edges and covered their laces with the cut pieces. *Sahih Al-Bukhari Volume 6, Book 60, Hadith # 282.*

It was also Narrated by Umm Salamah, Ummul Mu'minin (*Radhiallaahu Anha*): When the verse "That they should cast their outer garments over their persons" was revealed, the women of Ansar came out as if they had crows over their heads by wearing outer garments, *Abu Dawood Book 32, Hadith # 4090*

Furthermore, Narrated Aisha, Ummul Mu'minin: (*Radhiallaahu Anha*) who said. "The riders would pass us while we were with the Messenger of Allah (*Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam*). When they got close to us, we would draw our outer cloak IVom our heads over our laces. When they passed by, we would uncover our faces. *Abu Dawood Book 10. Hadith # IH29.*

Another Hadith read thus. Narrated Urn 'Atiya (*Radhiallaahu Anha*) We were ordered by Rasulullah '(*Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam*) to bring out our menstruating women and veiled women in the religious gatherings and invocation of 'Muslims on the two 'Eid festivals. These menstruating women were to keep away from their Musalla. A woman asked. "O Allah's Apostle ' What about one who does not have a veil (*the veil A the complete cover with only one eye or' tw'o eyes showing*)!" He said, "Let her share the veil of her companion." *Sahih Al-Bukhari Volume 1, Book 8, Hadith # 347*

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The term Hijab and Niqab, includes not only dress and covering the body, hut methods of behavior before members of the same and/or opposite sex. promoting privacy for females and prohibiting loose intermingling between males and females, and thereby encouraging modesty, decency, chastity and above all, respect and worship of Allah. Minor differences exist among the scholars regarding the actual number of the requirements because of varying methods used by them in codifying. The ones mentioned here represent the ones agreed upon by the overwhelming majority of scholars and are all solidly backed by firm evidence taken from the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the practice of the Sahabah (the Companions).

This study examining the dichotomy between Hijab and Niqab and perspective of Muslims scholars on the concept with its significance. Therefore, the paper concludes that the issue of women's dress has been extensively discussed in the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet SAW and yet no uniform consensus opinion has ever been reached on the interpretation of die Qur'anic verses on Hijāb/Niqāb.

There are those who agree that women must cover their bodies completely, leaving only eye open. In the same vein, there are those who believe that a woman's dress is significance only to protect her nudity and integrity. Another argument spreads that, Hijab and Niqab is for die protection and privacy of women while others maintain that, it is symbolizes woman's relegation to a private world where they are passive and invisible. In this regard, this paper relegation that, women dress should not be such that it attracts men's attention to the woman's beauty and must cover the whole body except for the areas specifically exempted.



## REFERENCES

- [1] Abdalati, H. (2007). *Islam in focus*. Great Britain; Diwan press.
- [2] Abdullah, A. R. (n.d.). *Islamic dress code for women*. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Research Division Darussalam.
- [3] Aisha, F.H. (1986). *Wives of the Prophet (SAW)*. New Delhi: Taj company.
- [4] Akanbi, A.A (2004). *Gender and Islam*. Nigeria: Ganasau ventures.
- [5] Albani, M. N. (2009). *Hijdb al-mar'ah al-Muslims Jil kiluh wa-Suunah*. New Deli: Goodwords Books.
- [6] Al-Kanadi, I. (1978). *The Islamic ruling regarding women dress according to the Qur'an and Sunnah*. Saudi Arabia: Abul-Qasim books store.
- [7] Cyril, G. (1989). *The concise encyclopedia of Islam*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.
- [8] Esposito, J. (2003). *The Oxford dictionary of Islam*. USA: Oxford University Press.
- [9] Gholan, N. (1988), *Culture of nakedness and cultural nakedness*. USA: Mahjuba.
- [10] Jackson, K. E., & Monk-Turner, E. (2015). The meaning of Hijab voice of Muslim Women in Egypt and Yemen. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 16(2), 30-48.
- [11] Jamal, B. (1980). *Women & men dress in Islam*. Croatia: The Islamic Education & Services Institute.
- [12] Tariq-Munir, E. (2014). *The dynamics of wearing hijab for Muslim American Women in the United States*. USA: Iowa State University.
- [13] Young, S. V. (2008). *Islamic identity in the Islamic Society of Boston*. Boston: Boston University.