



Glass Ceiling For Women Who Wear Hijab

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Abstract

Islam, the second largest religion has given the honor to women and directs them to cover themselves properly while interacting with Na-Mahrams. Previous researches shows discrimination towards Hijabis (a woman Covering of head and shoulder including neck properly as an expression of Islamic modesty) in different aspects. There are different managerial practices to eliminate discrimination but it is a hidden barrier that cannot be beaten. After the event of 9/11, it is observed that Muslim women wearing hijabs and Muslim men with beards face problems at the workplace even in Muslim countries too. The research is conducted to find glass ceiling for women who wear Hijab (Independent Variable), for obtaining job, career growth, and social discrimination (Dependent Variables) at organizational network. The study is conducted through judgmental sampling. 220 Muslim working women (100 Hijabis and 120 Non Hijabis) were contacted through questionnaires on likert scale. The results were analyzed by regression testing to find the relation between the variables. The study proved beneficial findings that almost there is no job opportunity for women who wear hijabs, some of them got jobs but they face social discrimination in the workplace. Those who got jobs and show their best does face glass ceiling in their career growth. Study shows that there is a need for greater awareness toward appearance in the workplace. Organizations must ensure that their recruitment and corporate culture should be free from biasness towards hijab-wearing women.

Keywords: Hijab, Social Discrimination, glass ceiling, competitive market



Introduction

In 1986 the word glass ceiling appeared in Wall Street Journal to counter the barriers which are faced by women in organizations (Ghorbani & Tung, 2007). Vertical segregation of women hinders women's advancement in organizations called the glass ceiling (Abbas, Abbas & Ashiq, 2021). Today in a dynamic environment and in globalization, organizations are facing workplace diversity management issues such as race, gender, age, and religion (Reeves, McKinney, & Azam, 2013). Now in such a situation, it is very important to find the causes and consequences of the glass ceiling.

In the last few decades increasing female labor force participation is increasing and playing a vital role in reducing poverty, sustaining economic growth, and supporting women's independence (WTTC, Driving women's success, 2019). In ILO Global Report (2017), 3 billion people are employed worldwide, while 1 billion are composed of the female labor force. Thus, women in the world are getting better education and serving at different levels and in different industries (Jamali, et al., 2005).

Religion plays a very important role in one's life and its significance cannot be ignored in the workplace (Smith, Caputi, & Crittenden, 2012). Today in the world, there are different believers who follow their religion with different practices. Today Islam is the second largest religion. Followers of Islam are called "Muslims". As the ratio of working women is increasing day by day all over the world, alike Muslim women (Muslima) are also coming out of their houses and playing a vital role in different sectors of the economy.

Different religions have different presentations and attire to express their faith and beliefs in Islam, Muslima must cover their body properly with loose clothing and "Chadar" in front of the "Namahram".

These are precautions given by Islam for the safety of Muslima. This Hijab shows affiliation towards religion and then one's faced discrimination at the workplace on the basis of religion. (Reeves, et al., 2013).



A Muslim woman wears Hijab to fulfill the religious requirement. It is religious attire to express their identity as Muslima. After 9/11 Muslims are facing great social issues and discrimination all over the world even in Muslim countries too (Ghumman & Jackson, 2009). Now there is a need to find out whether is glass ceiling exists for women who wear Hijab or not.

Problem Statement

The existence of glass ceilings in organizations for women who wear hijabs even has the required education, talent, and job fit.

Background, Objective, and Significance of the Study

The word Islam is derived from the Arabic language which means “submission to the will of God in all aspects of life”. The Quran (i.e., the words of Allah) and the Sunnah (i.e., The Practices of the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W) which he demonstrates in his life), are the key sources for Muslims and they have to follow these in their real life to get success in this world and the world hereafter (Mellahi & Budhwar, 2010).

Islam does not prohibit women to work if she is in need. She can support financially her family but she has to follow some rules when she is coming out of his house for any purpose either to get an education or to do a job or business or to play any positive role in society. Those rules can be understood by following verses from the Holy Qur’an and Ahadith.

As we all covered our precious things alike Muslim is very precious to Allah and Islam that’s why she is instructed to cover herself.

It is observed that after 9/11 Muslims are facing great social issues and discrimination all over the world even in Muslim countries too (Ghumman & Jackson, 2009). So today this is a need for management to understand and encounter this great issue that if a man has a beard and a woman with Hijab should not face discrimination inside the organization for their religion and they can practice religion easily (Mellahi & Budhwar, 2010).



It is very important for management to study Islam & application of managerial policies associated and what are their organizational outcomes and their significance for the workplace. The commitment, loyalty, and efficiency of the employees are affected by Biasedness in recruitment and promotion opportunities at the workplace (Abbas, Abbas & Ashiq, 2021). Islam has 1.5 billion followers worldwide and it is second great and its popularity is increasing speedily. (Mellahi & Budhwar, 2010)

Literature Review

“Religion is for people who are Afraid of Going to Hell” Vine Deloria

From the above quote, we can understand the importance of religion in one life and cannot deny its role in the workplace too. It is very important to find out that is there any discrimination against employees on the basis of religion or not. There were different research works to find out the does discrimination exist in the workplace which includes gender discrimination and discrimination on the basis of different factor like race, age & religion. In different studies, it is found that men and women both are discriminated against in the workplace on a different basis. Women are facing a glass ceiling in the workplace. The study of the glass ceiling is a tool to check Hijab’s glass ceiling beliefs by establishing social support mechanisms and strategies with a supportive work system and work environment. Hence, human resource management functions such as promotion, training, and hiring will be easier and clearer. (Eslam A. Fathy, Heba A. El-Kareem, 2020).

In 1986 the word glass ceiling appeared in Wall Street Journal to counter the barriers which are faced by women in organizations (Ghorbani & Tung, 2007). The ceiling is an obstacle to upward advancement, (Singh and Malhotra, 2017) glass refers to invisible barriers or obstacles which are not apparent (Prasad, 2018).

Today, in the era of globalization and in a dynamic environment, organizations are facing workplace diversity management issues such as race, gender, age, and religion (Reeves, McKinney, & Azam, 2013). There is a need to understand that is an employee discriminated against on the basis of religion. If yes then it is important for today’s employers that they must



take some preventive measures to eliminate this discrimination and adapt some policies to allow one employee to practice religious beliefs. (Reeves, et al., 2013).

Discrimination on the basis of religion means one employee or applicant is treated unfavorably only due to his/her religious beliefs. (Reeves, McKinney, & Azam, 2013). Religious discrimination cases are reported from all over the world but after 2011 in the USA the percentage, of cases reported, rise dramatically. A large number of cases are related to Muslims. (Reeves, et al., 2013). Different previous researches have explored court cases and most of them showed that in the USA religious discrimination complaints are higher than in other countries. They are not ready to tolerate and entertain Muslims. (Ball and Haque, 2003; Mujtaba and Cavico, 2012).

Generally, women and especially Muslims make significant complaints against unfair and unequal treatment and debarred working environments. As we know that religion is a complex issue as these are set of beliefs. Religion beliefs are acquired property and have a dynamic nature unlike race disability gender and etc. (Reeves, McKinney, & Azam, 2013)

Reeves, examined the Hijab and the decisions of Muslim women when they face discrimination at the workplace due to their appearance. They define Hijab (covering the head, neck, and shoulder properly) as an expression of Islamic modesty. Many Muslims, who wear hijabs, observed and faced negative experiences of intolerance and discrimination. There are many factors from which one is a fear of interpersonal discrimination.

According to Pew Research Center, Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2011, today, in the world Islam is the second great religion and in 2030 the Muslim population in the USA will be dramatically doubled as compared to 2011. In such conditions after 9/11 a large number of cases reported by Muslims that they are discriminated against at the workplace as extremists.

Today, in the workplace Islam is growing in representation but about its practices and effects on lives are very less known. (Ball and Haque, 2003). It is also found that Islam is misunderstood by workers in the workplace. (Reeves, McKinney, & Azam, 2013)



Therefore, the Hijab too, and because of this misunderstanding the ones faced religious discrimination.

Women are facing a glass ceiling in organizations especially those who wear hijabs facing different factors of discrimination. Due to these reasons, even having the required education, talent, and job fit, it is difficult for them to survive in the workplace.

Now in such a situation, it is very important to find the causes and consequences of the glass ceiling, especially for women wearing Hijab (i.e. working Muslims). It is very important for management to study does Islam & application of managerial policies associated and what are their organizational outcomes and their significance for the workplace (Mellahi & Budhwar, 2010).

MMC (Muslim Majority Countries) international hubs of business are in the Continent of Asia, Africa, and Europe (Syed & Ali, 2010). The Muslims are not only in MMC but in non-Muslim countries like India, Russia, and others that have thick populations i.e. 1/5 about 300 million of the total Muslim population. So today this is a need for management to understand and encounter this great issue that if a man has a beard and a woman with Hijab should not face discrimination inside the organization for their religion and they can practice religion easily (Mellahi & Budhwar, 2010).

In 2004, a Home office citizenship survey was conducted in the UK in which it is observed that women with Hijab face social discrimination inside the organization.

Nowadays, there are different organizations, professions, and jobs, which required specific appearance standards. Especially female workers received a professional makeover. Consultants create a look for each female worker and these workers are expected to create an image. Present workplace norms include dress and appearance codes. Female employees and applicants are judged on appearance. Currently, women are used as appealing objects and sexualized beings. (Brower, 2013).

No one is ready to accept an Islamic religious identity and due to this factor today Muslims are facing challenges in employment. (King, and Ahmed, 2010). It is a law that one will not be



discriminated against on the premise of gender, faith, disability, color and etc. at the time of employment decision at the workplace. However, researchers have proved that discrimination cannot be eliminated. (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, and Dovidio, 2005). This type of interpersonal behavior gives a challenge and it is difficult to recognize, evaluate and eliminate. (Dipboye & Colella, 2005).

Previous studies have shown that Muslims are discriminated against at workplaces in the USA and Great Britain. (Sheridan, 2006). Uncommonly women, who are practicing Islam, are vulnerably discriminated against at the workplace as they are easily identifiable because of their appearance. (Allen, and Nielsen, 2002).

In the survey it is found that after 9th September the indirect discrimination against Muslims at the workplace has increased by 82.6% and overt discrimination also increased for them by 76.3%. (Sheridan, 2006).

Another study, related to Muslim workers in Britain, found that religious discrimination against Muslims is higher than other types of discrimination in the workplace. (Sheridan, 2006). Further studies proved that those Muslims who are easily identifiable as Muslim are vulnerably dealt with at the workplace. (Allen, and Nielsen, 2002). Women are easily identifiable as Muslim because of their attire (i.e. Hijab) and face greater challenges and experience discrimination on this basis. (Allen, and Nielsen, 2002).

Muslim job applicants, particularly female job applicants, faced significant interpersonal discrimination when their attire shows affiliation toward religion. (King & Ahmad, 2010). she faced extraordinary negative interpersonal behavior (e.g. discourtesy, bitterness &, etc.;;) at the workplace. The managers gave less time to listen to them carefully and do not support them. This finding shows that when a women wear Hijab, she faced problems to avail of job opportunity and later faced social discrimination at the workplace comparatively much higher than another stigmatized group. (King & Ahmad, 2010).

It is clearly observed that Muslim men are more badly treated as compared to Muslim women when they appear as Muslim. Muslims face discrimination in every type of job. (Ghumman & Jackson, 2010).



From the above literature review, we can conclude that Muslim women who are wearing hijabs are facing discrimination all over the world, whether they are working on the root level or at the managerial level. They are discriminated against due to their attire and appearance which shows affiliation and interest towards their religion worked on it and found Muslims especially Hijab are discriminated. As different researchers e different reasons for it e.g.; in western countries, people are afraid and have the perception that Muslims are terrorists and extremists. For many, the Hijab workers are a threat that they will transmit their religion to them and to their families. (Golnarangi & Mills, 2013). As dress code is also discussed that found that Women are more careful about their attire and look as compared to men. (Kanter,1977). We can also find that now a day in society some jobs and professions required a very pleasant personality to get business like receptionist, secretary, the personal assistant of managers and directors, sales representative, beautician and etc. as these all are using women as sexual objects to run their organization effectively and efficiently. In such conditions, it is important to find that women who wear Hijab discriminated against because they wear hijabs or not.

Researchers from all over the world are working on Muslim workers in the workplace with different aspects after the event of 11th September many cases were reported and different laws are passed to ban veiled and Hijab but unfortunately it was not studied in Pakistan and no proper research work is done on Muslim working women especially those who are wearing Hijab only because of a fear of Allah and their believe in Islam.

Reeves analyzed, in their studies, the decision of Muslim women to wear a Hijab using qualitative methods to find the result. My focus is that if one Muslim woman is wearing Hijab then what is the behavior of the employer and how is she dealt with in organizational culture?

Research Methods

Primary data is collected through a survey from the target population i.e.; working women wearing hijabs and do not wear hijabs. They were enquired about the status of the Hijab with reference to organizational social-cultural behavior with them by the researcher itself.

A judgment sampling technique for the purpose of data collection was applied as the list of respondents is not specified, information could be collected from 220 working women, who are



conveniently available to provide it, who were requested to fill out the questionnaire all over Pakistan as well some were asked from UK, UAE, Oman, and USA.

The sample size is 100 working women who wear hijabs and another 120 working Women who do not wear hijabs.

To facilitate the primary data collection, a structured questionnaire was developed so as to confer considerable for the study. The questionnaire was divided into 2 parts.

The reliability statistics of the questionnaire as per Cronbach's Alpha value resulted as 0.730, which means the response from the survey is 73% reliable.

Discussion and analysis

The results of this study presented that a glass ceiling exists for women who wear hijabs in terms of obtaining employment and social discrimination but do not have any problems in career growth. However, if we observe society today, then we can find different practices, practiced by Muslims at the workplace. Some prominent practices are (i)one who wears modern dresses like sleeveless dresses without dupatta , paints with short tops with deep neck and etc. (ii) One who wears only shalwar kameez and takes only piece of cloth to fulfill the formality of a Dupatta (iii) One who wear only shalwar kameez and taking proper dupatta but not covering head at workplace(iv)One who wear shalwar qameez , different modern cloths and taking scarf to cover head at workplace but it does not show modesty but give a different look which make their personality appealing(v)One who wear only shalwar kameez and taking proper dupatta and covering head at workplace as their organization required this dress code(vi)One who wear only shalwar kameez and taking proper dupatta and covering head at workplace and using Chader to cover their selves while coming to workplace. Women who wear hijab face additional barriers other than job tension.

King & Ahmed also discussed in their studies that manger does not give time, do not entertain, and do not listen to the Hijabis as compared to others. Now the Hijabis are only entertained in that organizations where Hijab is a dress code of the workplace but if it is not then they are facing problems in obtaining jobs in case found to face social discrimination at the workplace if



they are welcomed in the organization with an open heart then there is no problem in their career growth. My observation realized that this is the case for only that organization which are Islamic based and have hijab as a dress code. We can take the example of Islamic banks and educational institute which are Islamic.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The main purpose of this study was, to explore the job opportunity for women who wear hijabs, the level of their growth at the workplace, and their social status of them at the workplace. Previous studies I Pakistan also examined the experience of Hijabis who are job seekers in often face discrimination in the recruitment process because of employers' biases and prejudices towards them.

In order to collect primary data, a questionnaire was designed to obtain all the required information from the working women whether they wear Hijab and or Not. Thus, using judgmental sampling, a total of questionnaires were distributed and the responses were used for data analysis purposes through SPSS 17.0 software. Statistical analyses involving regression analysis were performed to test the hypotheses and to find out if the glass ceiling exists for women who wear hijabs in obtaining employment, in career growth and do they face social discrimination within the organization. However, the result of the analysis indicated that they face difficulties in obtaining employment and also they are socially discriminated at the workplace but do not face difficulties in career growth.

There is a need for greater awareness and sensitivity toward religious and cultural diversity in the workplace. Employers must take necessary steps to ensure that the recruitment process should be free from biases towards hijab-wearing women.



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