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Research paper

Exploring the concept of pride from the perspective of Muslim women

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Abstract

In today's fast developing and modern world, Muslim women are faced with so many challenges, especially, when it comes to their attire, faith, and pride. The Hijab, in particular, has become quite a controversial topic in recent years, putting Muslim women in the spotlight about their choices of clothing. This paper discusses those factors, extracted from the review of extant literature, which tend to constitute and form the pride of a Muslim woman in today's time and age. It also highlights the role these factors play in enhancing one's self-worth. In-depth review of the literature revealed that good and respectable job, sound education, the performance of Hajj or Umrah, and Hijab (covering of head and body) are the main sources of pride for them. Furthermore, this study proposed a conceptual model to be considered for future empirical testing. Lastly, conclusion was drawn based on the review.

Keywords: *Muslim Woman; Pride; Hijab; Islam.*

1. Introduction

Displaying pride becomes quite significant when an individual wants to maintain or enhance their social status (Buechner, Maier, Lichtenfeld, & Elliot, 2015), which is considered as one of the most important factors for human fitness. Sometimes, individuals experience this feeling when they achieve something extraordinary than normal people, or when they are bestowed with something that holds importance in their lives. These feelings, therefore, enhance their self-confidence which holds value for others, and which automatically gives them a feeling of respect and enhanced social status in the eyes of people around them (Diener, Kanazawa, Suh, & Oishi, 2015). Thus, an increase in these feelings leads to a behavior that generates the emotion of pride (Buechner et al., 2015; Hart & Matsuba, 2007). Similarly, displaying of non-verbal expression of pride may be used as an extra perk along with the verbal expressions in order to enhance social status and acceptance in the society.

The main objective of this paper is to extract those factors from the literature that constitute pride for women, especially Muslim women. However, before pursuing the aforementioned objective, it is reasonably important to note that while referring to pride for Muslim women, it does not mean arrogance, superciliousness, and ego as some people sometimes take pride for (e.g., Dillon, 2007; Lewis, 2000). Rather, it is defined as something that a person experiences after achieving something important that is highly valuable and that enhances one's self-worth and confidence (see e.g., Tracy & Robins, 2007). Moreover, researchers also argue that pride is a broad concept to be considered as a single and unified construct and it is better to explore more dimensions of pride (Ekman, 2003; Lewis, 2000; Tracy & Robins, 2007). This paper, therefore, attempts to explore the most agreed upon dimensions of pride, especially from the perspective of Muslim women.

2. Literature review

The dictionary meaning of pride is to realize one's self-worth and to get a feeling of honour. One can enhance self-worth or experience the feeling of honour when (s) he achieves something that is highly valuable in life. According to Evans and Kelly (2002) and Smith (2005), pride in women is an indispensable quality that helps them to come out classy, sophisticated, and confident. Different people have different perceptions on the concept of pride. For example, some people pride is their ego (Dillon, 2007; Lewis, 2000); for some people, it is their self-respect, attitude, and their ability to hold ground and stick to their opinions (Tracy & Robins, 2007), while others may include materialistic things such as a new house, a big car, and a latest phone (Piff, 2014). However, to instill pride in oneself on the basis of temporary and fleeting things is nothing but foolishness because it is perishable in nature. Specially, as a Muslim, it is important that we establish the boundaries of what counts as a source of pride for us. According to one of the hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih al-Muslim: Harithah bin Wahab Reported:

I heard the messenger of Allah, Prophet (pbuh) saying:

"Shall I not inform you about the people of Jannah? It is every person who is modest and humble (before Allah), a person who is accounted weak and is looked down upon but if he abjures Allah, Allah (SWT) will certainly give him what he desires. Now shall I not inform you about the inmates of hell? It is every violent, impertinent and proud man."

This Hadith clearly states that any person who has even a morsel of pride within themselves will be barred from the gates of heaven and doomed to a life in hell. This is because Allah has strictly forbidden the concept of pride in Islam as it tends to eat away a man's soul, sometimes even alienating him from the people he loves.

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Thus, the concept of pride in this particular paper is not in line with any of the above-mentioned factors. It is an explanation to why a Muslim takes pride in whatever he/she is able to achieve in this world and why they begin to hold on to their faith more staunchly after making an achievement. Subsequently, there are many things in life after the attainment of that which tends to become a source of pride to the Muslim women. However, some of these things are discussed in the following section:

1) Good and Respectable Job

According to Lance et al. (1995), individuals arrive at the stage of job satisfaction and experience pride in what they do when they compare the discrepancies between what they need and want from a job as compared to what they are getting from a job. When the individual seems to get exactly and much more from their job, it is at that time the individual can say that they have a good and respectable job in which they find pride.

When any young individual finds their first paid job, it serves as a thing of pride to them and holds a great significance in their life. Even the part-time job pay of many young graduates serves as an independent source of income to them. They do not need to depend on their parents for their pocket-money or before buying their necessities. Earning their own income gives them the taste of managing their own expenses without depending on their parents (Kaiser, 2007; Lee, 2012; Clark et al., 1996). Yap and Konrad (2009) postulates that when an individual finds a good and respectable job and starts to earn, they knowingly or unknowingly share the expenses of their parents. Therefore, they assume an adult position in the house which serves as a matter of pride for both the children and parents. Furthermore, getting an essence of a paid job can serve as a primary means for individuals to create an adult identity (Wright et al., 1995; Phelan, 1994).

Young Muslim women strive to work in any organization or in any company where they would find respect while having a protected environment around them (Yap & Konrad, 2009; Tracy & Robbins, 2007). Additionally, a good job is very important for a young Muslim woman in recent times because it serves as a source of aid for her family whether she is married or unmarried. With economic crisis providing setbacks on a regular basis, it becomes really difficult for an average man to take care of his family all alone. In such an event, if a woman has a good job, it can really help turn matters around and stabilize their situations. Lee (2012), Majid (2002), Ruby (2006), and Malik (2010) suggests that taking care and helping one's family can be a source of pride for a young Muslim woman as these two things are the parts of our duties whether she is a mother, a daughter, a wife or a sister.

2) Good Education

Weiss and Melling (1988), Blackmore (1996), and Angel (1988) suggest education as the process of learning and attaining knowledge with the help of a coach or teacher in order to gain information about various things. Here, we can get to know a lot about a person by the educational background that he/she has received. It not only makes an individual well-learned, it also helps their self-awareness and enables them to acquire the liberty of taking their own decisions and making their own choices without second guessing themselves (Dale et al., 2002; Villenas, 2001; Bradley, 2003). It also supports people in developing their own understanding about the society and enables them to cultivate their own perceptions of whatever happens around them. Basically, it gives them the alternative of free thinking and allows them to form their own opinions because the entire education experience plays an important part in improving the mental maturity of an individual (Graham, 1978; Horsman, 2000; Kerber, 1976; Turner, 2002).

According to Turner (2002), Loscocco (1990), and Angel (1988), the concept of a complete education, especially in today's world, is the one that is considered to be very important. Consequently, an individual is not viewed as a complete one and may not be ranked in a respectable position in the society until and unless he/she has a minimum of a graduate degree. Also, a person cannot hope to get a good job or have a secure future if he/she does not have a well-rounded education (Weiss & Melling, 1988; Villenas, 2001; Bradley, 2003). In such an event, the attainment of proper education tends to become a matter of pride for the individuals that are lucky enough to achieve it. People who go to Ivy League universities like Harvard, Yale, Cornell, or the likes are bound to be proud of their educational background, since these colleges are very particular about whom they accept. Therefore, the fact that they had an opportunity to study at one of the big colleges instantly becomes a matter of pride (Turner, 2002; Shields, 1975; Horsman, 2000; Nussbaum, 2001).

3) Performing Hajj & Umrah

Allah (SWT) had declared performing Hajj and Umrah as an obligatory duty on every Muslim (Bazz, 1996) as is evident from the following hadith. Prophet (SAW) said:

"The performance of Hajj one in a lifetime is a duty and if one does it more than once, it is a voluntary act"

However, according to abu Hurairah, it is desirable to perform Hajj or Umrah often when it is convenient for a Muslim. Prophet (SAW) said:

"To perform Hajj and Umrah serves as an expiation for the sins committed between them and the reward for Hajj Mabrur accepted is nothing but Paradise".

Handerson (2011), Denisova (2010), Shariati (2014), and Baz (1996) suggests that undoubtedly, the objective for Hajj is to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) in order to make one's journey to the next life pleasant and blissful. While here, it is very important that an individual spends as much time to stay close to Allah asking for his blessings and forgiveness as much as they can and do everything possible to gain his pleasure. Muslims should try their levels best not to have any worldly interest in performance of Hajj or Umrah (Albughuli, 2011; Qodir, 2013; Blenart, 1989; Cohen, 1972; Gnoth, 1997; Crampton, 1979). According to Beard and Ragheb (1983), Blernat (1989) and Dann (1977), people who go to perform Hajj for the sake of pleasing Allah and gaining HIS favors rather than for the sake of convincing other people that they are good Muslims tend to take pride in the fact that their heart is clean and the strength of their faith needs to be displayed only for Allah and no one else.

From the very first time an individual makes up his mind to go to this holy place, Satan begins to corrupt his heart. This journey, although beautiful and full of blessings, is very difficult to perform. Therefore, it becomes significant that a pilgrim should embellish himself with patience and moderation (Baz, 1996; Jafari, 1987; Huybers, 2003; Guth & Tagiuiri, 1965; Cohen, 1972; Gnoth, 1997; Qodir, 2013; Hodge, 2002; Dann, 1977). Having said that, when a pilgrim performs this hard journey with all his might without letting Satan to deviate him from his path, it is considered by them as a matter of pride and delight.

4) Hijab

According to Karam (1998), Ahmad (1992), Ahmad (2011) and Majid (2002), Hijab primarily is the symbol of decency and morality among the Muslim women. The Quran states that it is wajib (compulsory) for the Muslim women to guard her modesty as she is seen as the one main preserver of the honor and respect of the family. Therefore, the Hijab serves as the catalyst by which women can magnificently carry out this role as ordered by Allah through His messenger, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Apart from the Hijab fulfilling all the orders given by Allah to guard the modesty of the Muslim women, it also forces the men to no longer see women as a piece of meat but rather as a figure of intelligence and high morality. A famous and influential Muslim speaker, Amr Khalad, states that the hijab underlines the fact that:

"Islam… made the beauty of women of a higher value in men's eyes by providing

Protection [in the form of hijab] to that beauty from uncontrolled lusts and desires, and instead ordering men to respect greater the inner beauty of her soul. Thus, the real value of women is associated with the degree of her bashfulness and her abidance by it" (Khalad "Al-Hijab).

Allah (SWT) mentions about Hijab and veiling in the Quran and states:

"Do you Prophet, say to your spouses and your daughters and the women of believers, that they draw their outer garments [jalabibhun (plural of the Arabic word: jilbab)] closer to them; that will (make) it likelier that they will be recognized and so will not be hurt. And Allah has been Ever-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful" (TMQ, 33:59)".

Many Muslim women are also of the view that Hijab is a significant part of the Islamic obligation and is primarily worn to show ones' obedience to God (Karam, 1998; Ahmed, 2011; Kahf, 2008; Malik, 2010). According to Karam (1998), Ruby (2006), Afshar (2008), Moghamdam (2001) and Moosa (2010), Muslim women of today continue to portray Hijab as an icon of unity among Muslimahs, thereby continuing to display the individuality and authenticity of their culture and religion. Additionally, Hessini (1994), Karam (1998), Ahmad (1992), and Zuhur (2008) suggested that many Muslims also believe that the Hijab is not only a part of a religious legacy that has been passed onto them, but is also something that tends to define their personality and identity. In a similar manner, Jan and Abdullah (2015) uniquely related hijab to fashion. Their detailed review of the literature revealed many factors that a Muslim woman considers as fashion and one of these factors are hijab. In 1920, many Muslim feminist additionally suggested that the Hijab not only helped the women to shape their personality, but it also empowered them to be treated equally as men which facilitated them to no longer judge women based on their physical but rather their mental features (Majid, 2002; Malik, 2010; Taylor, 2008; Shaheed, 2008; Sidani, 2005; Ruby, 2006). This empowerment helped the Muslim women to gain their self-confidence which aided them in coming out of their sphere and helping the society by availing opportunities that were previously not even an option for them (Moghadam, 2001; Moosa, 2010; Zuhur, 2008; Malik, 2010).

The Quran gives men and women complete freedom of defining their individuality. Therefore, this is the reason why women feel comfortable in believing that they actually have a free choice when it comes to practicing Hijab. Although Hijab is also symbolic as a sign of purity and ethics (Afshar, 2008; Karam, 1998), it has been stated that holding such notions about Hijab portray the women as someone who easily conform to the societal expectations. Therefore, those who easily accept what the society hands down are highly respected, which in turn gives them power even if it is just representational (Hessini, 1994; Ruby, 2006; Kahf, 2008).

3. Proposed model

The review of the existing literature brought up four main constructs related to Pride for Women, namely: Good & Respectable job; Good Education; Performing Hajj/Umrah; and Hijab (See literature review). These facets, as emerged from the literature, are also measured carefully by the author in assembling the planned model for "Pride for Muslim Women". In the projected Model (see Figure 1), the four main constructs are treated as independent variables. All these independent variables are supported by the literature and they testified to have positive effect on the Women's Pride.

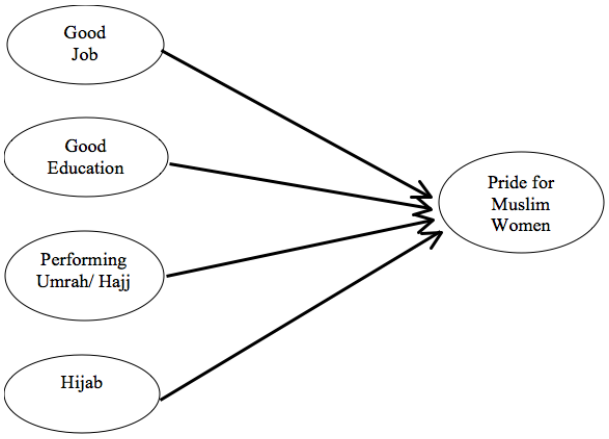

Fig. 1: Proposed Conceptual Model.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, an average Muslim woman faces challenges today in every step of her life. She needs to perceive whether the environment she resides in is Islamically friendly in almost every aspect of her life in order to keep her faith strong. In such a situation, all the constructs discussed above became a major source of pride for Muslim women as it helps in preserving their faith and gives them a sense of respect and individuality. They feel pride in practicing Hijab and in being a good Muslimah or obtaining good education and performing Hajj/Umrah not only because it is an obligation upon them by Allah (SWT), but also because it is a part of their identity as a Muslim. Therefore, the reason for taking pride in all these things is not the fact that we are able to achieve them with our own might. It is based on the fact that we were considered lucky enough by Allah (SWT) to have all those blessings bestowed upon us. The Quran gives men and women complete freedom of defining their individuality, which is why women feel comfortable in believing that they actually have a free choice when it comes to taking up any good and respectable job that they feel comfortable with or practicing Hijab.

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