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5th International Conference on Research in Humanities, Sociology and Education (RHSCE'16)
International Conference on History, Politics and Global Economic Issues (HPPEL-16)
&
International Conference on Business, Economics and Corporate Social Responsibilities (BEC3R-16)

Nov. 29-30, 2016 London (UK)

Editors:
Prof. I. N. Shonin
Prof. Dr. Shinji Norihito

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Hijab and Its' Challenge for Changing New Lifestyle of New Muslim Women

Suraya Sintang, Khadijah Mohd. Hambali@Khambali, Masliah Sabdin, Nur Sardinah Khair

Abstract—Hijab significantly addresses one of the religious practice and religious identity for Muslim women either those who are born Muslim or new Muslim. The new Muslim women adopt new style of identity markers by changing new lifestyle through wearing hijab. It is also a form of new bodily practices and new forms of behaviour that the new Muslim express themselves as an observant and practising Muslim. However, the journey towards changing lifestyle through wearing hijab is not an easy task for new Muslim women as there are some kind of adverse reaction from family, friends and work colleagues. In this article an attempt is made to present the daily life experience of new Muslim women from diverse cultural background who take on hijab not only as a challenge for their religious practice but also as a way for expressing commitment to strengthening their Islamic identity. The method used is qualitative approach through discourse analysis by examining the extract of personal interview with new Muslim women living in majority non-Muslim countries in Britain and America and the majority Muslim country in Malaysia. The study concludes that the new Muslim women across boundaries of nation in any environment they are living at, most likely would come across the similar challenge of life experience when they took hijab as a progression of their religious practice and a permanent announcement to the outside world of the religious identity.

Keywords—Hijab, Religious Identity, Religious Practice, New Muslim

I. INTRODUCTION

CONVERT to Islam commonly renegotiate not just their religious identity but also many aspects of their cultural, social and gender identities. Changes are manifested in very practical and concrete ways, for example in the form of new bodily practices and new forms of behaviour. The changes involve various aspects of identity formation such as changes in national, racial and ethnic identity, the adoption of new styles and language and other identity markers in terms of dress, names and circumcision\(^1\). In the context of dress particularly the changing lifestyle in wearing hijab, it involves the process of transition in the post-conversion period whereby the new Muslim women gradually learn how to adopt a new style of wearing dress in accordance to Islamic law of conduct.

The change in dress is usually the most visible sign of change of all, and therefore the one that elicits the reaction from non-Muslim. It is also often associated of the integration process for new Muslims who accepted as a member of Muslim community.

This paper deals with the experiences of new Muslim women in facing the challenge from family members in decisions of choosing the new lifestyle of wearing hijab. The research question to be answered is how does the new Muslim women themselves as an individual of observant and practising Muslim as well as expressing commitment to strengthening their Islamic identity. The method used for data analysis is a qualitative approach through discourse analysis by examining the extract of interview of new Muslim women living both in the environment of majority Muslim in Malaysia and majority non-Muslim countries in Britain and America. The rationale behind studying those living in former environments is to look at the similarities and differences the challenge that they face on the acceptance of new Muslim family of origin when they choose hijab as a new lifestyle in conversion to Islam. The preliminary study shows how the new Muslim women in the challenging circumstances, they still strongly stands and commitment on wearing hijab as they believe the hijab is a step towards being an observant and practising Muslim.

The Origin of Hijab

The most obvious identification of the Muslim (Muslima) is certainly the covering of the head and the whole body with a veil. The first and foremost notion concept hijab is literally a veil or partition, to separate humankind, or the world, from God\(^2\). There and hijab are often used interchangeably, but the latter encompases women’s behaviour/attitude, and the former does not reveal the intricacies of the practice. This paper will explore the intricate of the practice. This paper also found that a viable feature of the hijab is modesty. This paper also found that a viable feature of the hijab is modesty. This paper will explore the intricate of the practice. This paper also found that a viable feature of the hijab is modesty. This paper will explore the intricate of the practice. This paper also found that a viable feature of the hijab is modesty. This paper will explore the intricate of the practice. This paper also found that a viable feature of the hijab is modesty.