



Global Education – Learning Emphases

- Identity and cultural diversity
- Social justice and human rights
- Peace building and conflict resolution

THE HIJAB: FACTS, MYTHS AND REALITIES

by Ross Mackay, Goulburn High School

*Muslim girls at Istiqlal Mosque Jakarta
Photograph by Henrik Hansson. Source: Wikimedia Commons*

The Hijab: Facts, myths and realities

Facts, myths and realities

The Hijab is one of the most recognisable symbols of the culture of Islam. It is also one of the most controversial with calls by many people to have it and associated garments banned. But what is it really?

Hijab is the practice of dressing modestly in public and around non-family members. According to the Qur'an, both men and women are required to dress and conduct themselves modestly. The Qur'an never explicitly requires women to cover their heads or faces. It states "that they (women) should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear." (Qur'an 24:30-31) There are similar instructions for men.

It is important to remember that the practice of covering a large portion of a person's body (and face) is simply a common sense approach to clothing given the area of the world from which the practice originates, being West Asia and North Africa. Many non-Muslims in these parts of the world, such as Jews wore similar clothes.

For most Muslim women, the practice of Hijab is not perceived (understood) as a restrictive practice, rather it is a merely a part of their religion and culture.



*Indonesian school students wearing a variety of hijab styles.
Photograph courtesy of Ross Mackay*

The Hijab is often portrayed in western media as a means of controlling women. In some places this is true however for the majority of Muslim women it is a matter of choice. Islamic school students in Australia have stated that they choose to wear hijab, not because their family makes them, rather they do it because their friends do it much like other girls might follow a similar trend with their hair. In places where the practice of hijab is enforced as a means of controlling women, it is more often a reflection of patriarchal (male dominated) society rather than the result of Islamic religious requirements.

Interestingly in many Islamic cultures, the hijab has become a fashion item for women. A young Islamic woman said that western women and girls have pretty hair and they (Islamic women) have pretty hijabs. In this respect, the wearing of a fashionable hijab is at odds with the apparently intended purpose of wearing the hijab in the first place. (In Java, there is a monthly magazine that presents new ways to wear the hijab and new styles. The aim is to frame the face.)

What can be said is that the Hijab is a result of the culture in which it is worn. It varies from place to place and over time.



*Left: Muslim women by Islamic dress code wearing hijab and niqab.
Photograph courtesy of Petar Milošević. Source: Wikimedia Commons*

The Hijab: Facts, myths and realities

Read the following article and answer the questions below about hijab and the wearing of it.

ANGER OVER SCANTILY CLAD FOREIGNERS

The Sydney Morning Herald, Traveller June 18, 2012

A Twitter campaign that links foreigners dressing in skimpy clothing to sexual assault is stirring controversy in Abu Dhabi, as a proposed law to enforce a dress code in public places in the United Arab Emirates gains momentum.

Two Emirati women started an online campaign, [UAE Dress Code](#), last month, but came under criticism after linking revealing clothing and sexual assault.

One of the women behind the campaign, Asma Al Muhairi, 23, told Abu Dhabi newspaper *The National* she regretted the tweet, but stood by her views.

“A guy might not rape a woman who is dressed like that but it will make him sexually charged and he might rape another,” she said.

The campaign calls on visitors to respect the culture of the Muslim country by not dressing provocatively in public places.

“Travelling around the world let u experience the diff cultures. #UAE has its own & no one has the right to change it,” read one recent tweet.

RESPECT THE COUNTRY THAT WE LIVE IN & PROTECT ITS VALUES AND CULTURE, BY WEARING DECENT AND MODEST CLOTHING.



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES DRESSCODE

Image from the UAE Dress Code Twitter account – <http://twitter.com/UAE DressCode>



A campaign against foreigners revealing too much flesh in public is gaining momentum in the United Arab Emirates. Photo: AFP

Despite having only 2091 followers at the time of writing, the campaign has drawn attention from media organisations and the government.

Last week, a proposed law on enforcing a dress code from Federal National Council (FNC) of Abu Dhabi received backing from the Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development, Dr Al Owais.

If a federal law was passed, it would apply to all of the United Arab Emirates, including the tourist mecca Dubai.

Dubai FNC member Hamad Al Rahoumi put forward the law and argued that guidelines were not enough.

“If these policies have no law behind them, then how are they (offenders) punished?” Mr Al Rahoumi told *The National*. “In some countries they do not allow a face veil or a headscarf. We must also have laws to organise our dress code here.”

Emiratis are traditionally conservative. The overwhelming majority of local women wear the full black veil, revealing only their hands and face, while most men wear the traditional white cloak known as the “thawb.”

But they are also a minority in their own country. According to latest government estimates, only about 11 per cent of the UAE’s 8.2 million population are Emirati nationals.

Local psychologist Nadia Bouhanad says the Twitter campaign reflected a “a fear by Emiratis that they might lose their social values.”

The Hijab: Facts, myths and realities

One campaign supporter, who identified himself as Ibn Thaleth, insisted the campaign was not an attack on foreigners in the UAE.

“They (foreigners) are allowed to do all sorts of things that we don’t agree with,” Ibn Thaleth said. “We are not against them ... We are just asking them to show our culture a little respect.”

Alcohol, though forbidden in Islam, is readily available throughout the year in bars, clubs and restaurants attached to hotels in most of the UAE.

Pork is also sold in supermarkets in a separate section marked “for non-Muslims only.”

The Twitter campaign’s logo – a red circle with a black, short-sleeve, knee-length dress – is widely recognised in the UAE. It is the same image posted on signs in malls urging women to “please wear respectful clothing.”

Several tourists and expatriates have run afoul of conservative rules in the UAE in recent years.

In 2010, a British couple was arrested and sentenced to a month in jail for [kissing in public in Dubai](#).

In 2009, an Australian man was arrested for allegedly saying “[What the f---?](#)” to a plainclothes police officer who grabbed his arm at Dubai Airport. He was forced to remain in Dubai for months before being let go with a fine.

In the most prominent case, a British couple were jailed for three months in 2008 after having drunken sex on a public beach.



*Shopping malls throughout the UAE display dress code posters.
Source: Wikimedia Commons*

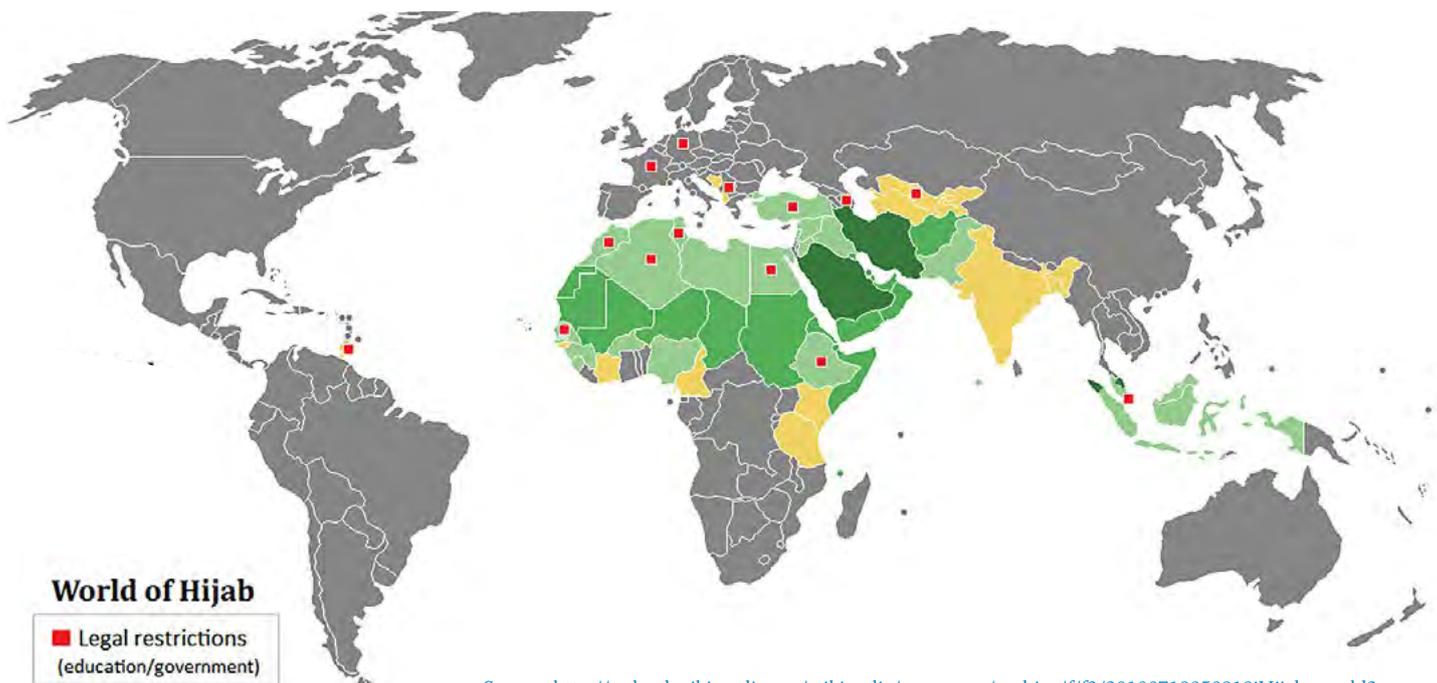
Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/travel/travel-planning/travel-news/anger-over-scantily-clad-foreigners-grows-in-uae-20120618-20izo.html#ixzz3BTjsTCYO>

Task

- What is the purpose of the campaign?
- Was the campaign started by men or women?
- What does the psychologist suggest is the concern of Emiratis?
- Do you believe it is appropriate to respect a local culture by following its dress code such as is suggested? Explain your answer.

The Hijab: Facts, myths and realities

World map of hijab



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/archive/f/f2/20100719050918!Hijab_world2.png

World of Hijab

■	Legal restrictions (education/government)
■	Quite Common (worn by some women)
■	Common (worn by many women)
■	Prevalent (widespread in society)
■	Mandatory (obligatory by law)

Task

- Use an atlas to help you name the countries from the map
- Create a table (as below) and list the countries according to their significance for hijab.

Legal restrictions	Quite Common	Common	Prevalent	Mandatory
France	India	Algeria	Mali	Aceh (Northern tip of Sumatra)



Somali young women performing the traditional dhaanto dance-song in Jubaland

The Hijab: Facts, myths and realities

Newspaper article – An Australian example

The Daily Telegraph – Sunday 13 April 2014

in our community



Aida Zein, who is nominated for the Daily Telegraph's Champions of the West awards, at her shop Ninety9 in Punchbowl. Picture: Justin Lloyd

Aida has the head for a fashion statement

ANDREW CARSWELL

WHEN lawyer Aida Zein made the bold decision to wear a hijab every day, it wasn't the probable leery reaction from colleagues or clients that concerned her.

Nor was it any fear of being viewed differently, with eyes of misunderstanding, or worse, inherent ignorance.

It was a question of fashion.

The hijab wasn't exactly causing finely-coiffured fashion doyens to drop their jaws in wonderment and bellow superlatives. The Islamic head covering certainly wasn't gracing the covers of faddish hipster magazines or fighting for space on bare mannequins in fashion house windows.

In Aida's mind, it just wasn't that stylish.

If she was going to wear it, religiously, the hijab was going to get a makeover.

The mother of four turned her skills into making a design and paid a seamstress to turn her creative blueprint into a work of art. And the leering began, but not the type expected.

"People started stopping me in the street and asking me where I get my clothes. They were impressed. I thought, 'Well, I could do something here,'" she said.

Ms Zein now has two stores in the Bankstown-Punchbowl area selling her unique, modish but modest Islamic fashion, a label she is planning to showcase to the world.

This winter she will launch her latest Eid range of winter-spring clothing, to coincide with the celebrations following Ramadan.

Task

Read the article and answer the following questions:

- What lead Aida to set up her own shop?
- This article challenges the stereotype of poorly educated 'closetted' women with no choice being forced to cover themselves. Discuss with the class the implications of this case study.
- Is Aida an exception to the stereotype? If so, in what ways?
- What role does the media play in modifying attitudes to the wearing of Hijab?
- Student should collect their own media pieces for discussion

The Hijab: Facts, myths and realities

Different Islamic Garments

Task

- Find pictures which match each description.
- List the areas of the world where each one originates.

<p>The niqab is a head covering worn by Islamic women in many parts of the world. It is identifiable by the facial covering with an uncovered opening for the eyes.</p>	
<p>The chadour is an outer garment worn like a cloak by women in Iran. Is is a semi-circular piece of material that is body length. It is tossed over the wearers head and held closed at the front.</p>	
<p>The abaya “cloak”, sometimes also called an <i>aba</i>, is a simple, loose over-garment, essentially a robe-like dress, worn by some women in parts of the Islamic worls including in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. It covers the body only.</p>	
<p>The burqa is an outer garment worn by women in some Islamic traditions to cover their bodies whe in public. It is a single piece of material that covers the entire body with a semi-transparent piece for the eyes, It is most commonly associated with the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan.</p>	

Niqab image: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Muslim_women_in_Yemen.jpg

Chadour image: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Women_in_shiraz_2.jpg

Abaya image: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Islamic_Clothing_Abaya.jpg

Burqa image: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Burqa_Afghanistan_01.jpg

Newspaper article – Hijab fashion

The Sydney Morning Herald –
Life and Style Section, Sunday 27 April, 2014

MEET THE HIJABISTAS



Muslim women are no longer invisible beings behind their veils. With the emergence of a new wave of fashionistas, they are expressing their individual fashion flair, writes Zohra Aly

The image of the modern Muslim woman is changing fast, fuelled by the rise and rise of the hijabista phenomenon. No longer resigned to wearing plain and shapeless coverings in sombre shades, Muslim women who choose to “assume hijab” – to dress modestly according to their religion – are now expressing themselves in fashions that are creative without compromising modesty.

The word hijabista hasn’t made it into the dictionary yet, but it exists in the lingo of

Left: Fashion statement: Zulfiye Tufa dresses modestly as a way of expressing her internal beliefs. Photo: Armelle Habib

Muslim fashion blogging. The fusion of the words “hijab” and “fashionista” took root when young women – inspired by catwalks, the high street and fashion magazines – tweaked the fashions of the day into hijab-friendly clothing.

In May last year, US-based trend-forecasting firm Trendera listed hijab fashion bloggers in their weekly round-up of six trends to watch. However, Mariam Sobh, a Chicago-based journalist, spotted the fashion niche long before that. In 2007, Sobh launched her website, Hijab Trendz, to blend catwalk looks with Islamic dress codes. Currently, her Facebook page has more than 800,000 followers.

Faith and fashion blogs have spread rapidly since then, followed by everything from basic hijab styles to “date-night outfit” tutorials on YouTube and online shopping sites for Muslim-friendly clothing, hijabs and accessories.

Aquila-style.com has a string of high-profile hijabistas as columnists. The online magazine was started in 2011 and is published in English and Indonesian. Malaysia’s *Hijabista* magazine was launched in 2012 and hijabistas.net is a website that keeps readers informed about modest fashion events, bloggers and designers.

The Hijab: Facts, myths and realities

MEET THE HIJABISTAS

Ascia AKF calls herself a “Kuwaiti-American hybrid, turban-tying blogger/designer” on her Instagram account, which has more than 720,000 followers. Dian Pelangi is a young Indonesian fashion designer and blogger with half a million followers on Instagram.

The hijabista trend has influenced the way Muslim women view themselves, and also how they are viewed by the world. Susan Carland, a Muslim sociologist at Melbourne’s Monash University, explains how, by using sites like Instagram, Facebook and Tumblr, young women have a heightened awareness of each other’s activities. They are then able to provide grassroots support for the trend, bypassing the older, traditional gatekeepers of their community.

“The argument that fashion and hijab can’t co-exist isn’t a well-thought-out argument,” says Carland. “Fashion is a societal norm, and the belief that Muslim women exist outside the societal norm is idiotic. Muslim women wearing hijab have always created trends of wearing the hijab within their community.”

In Arabian Gulf countries, where the majority of women cover themselves routinely, *abaya* (long black robes worn over clothing) and *shayla* (scarf) styles, and the conventions of draping them, are constantly evolving. “That is fashion, but it is also hijab,” says Carland.

For hijabistas, long skirts, harem pants or even skinny jeans are paired with tunics, blazers and trench coats. Scarves come in different shapes and in myriad fabrics, colours and prints. Bling is added with accessories ranging from dainty diamonds to hijab tiaras.

Enjoy layering? Just blend different-coloured fabrics and lace on top of each other and the term “layer cake” takes on a whole new meaning. If a woman decides to wrap the hijab around her head, turban-style, a “turbanista” is born.

For Muslim women, the question, “To veil or not to veil?” has been replaced by, “How do I veil? Let me count the ways.”



Tasneem Chopra. Photo: Armelle Habib

Name: Tasneem Chopra

Age: Early 40s

Occupation: Cross-cultural consultant

Home: Melbourne

Personal style: “I like to wrap my hijab like a turban around my head because it suits the frame of my face and adds to my height. It’s secure, effortless and less cumbersome because there are no pins involved. I also find this complements both the tribal and vintage styles I channel through my outfit choices. I like to fuse elements that complement my personality and fashion preferences. I also like to adapt my style to the seasons, so in winter I wear a lot of black with bright accents. In summer I prefer pastels and florals; in spring, bright colours and in autumn, mellow hues. I like to blend my inner Kenyan with my vintage diva! I don’t conform to current trends if I don’t like them or they don’t flatter my build.”

The Hijab: Facts, myths and realities

MEET THE HIJABISTAS

Feelings about hijab: “I started wearing the hijab when I was 18. I disagree with those who say you can’t wear hijab and be fashionable. The fact we use modesty to describe only fashion is problematic. If we put all our modesty eggs in the dress basket, then we overlook the thousands of Muslims who don’t wear hijab, yet still exemplify modesty through conduct, speech and interaction with others.”

Where I shop: “I buy clothing online or from boutiques such as Ishka and Tree of Life. I enjoy blending patterns and textures. I’m not a big fan of mass-produced store clothing. I prefer to compose my own outfits from varied outlets and to mix and match with a vengeance.”

Attitude to fashion: “Fashion doesn’t define modesty, people do.”



Wiwid Howat. Photo: Nick Cubbin

Name: Wiwid Howat

Age: 25

Occupation: Fashion designer and blogger

Home: Sydney

Personal style: “My hijab style is a blend of modern and Indonesian. I experiment with scarves to create different styles, but I also love adding wide-

brimmed or cowboy hats, and flower headbands. My wardrobe is funky-feminine, futuristic and quirky. I like to mix and match Western pieces in shocking colours influenced by my Indonesian heritage. I’ll partner skinny jeans with blazers, blouses and midi skirts with sneakers, or white short skirts with jeans and a beanie. I own several pairs of heels and wedges in a range of colours, florals and polka dots. I have five pairs of sneakers, mainly Converse or Doc Martens, and they are a mixture of plain and floral. I prefer sneakers over heels, anytime.”

Feelings about hijab: “As a practising Muslim woman, I believe the hijab is compulsory, not only because it’s what Islam prescribes, but also to create an intimate relation between myself and God. As long as we follow the Islamic rules of appropriate dress, like no transparent or tight clothing, fashion is not a taboo.”

Where I shop: “I don’t believe in buying only expensive brands for a modest and honest representation of my personality. So while I shop at Forever New, Zara and Mango, I also pick up budget pieces from department stores. I buy modest fashion from Hijab House, Indonesian designers and the Melbourne label Yes Ummi, for which I often model. I also design for my own label, WiwidHowat.”

Attitude to fashion: “Fashion changes but style endures.”

Name: Zulfiye Tufa

Age: 24

Occupation: Pharmacist/designer/stylist

Home: Melbourne

Personal style: “For work, I keep my hijabs simple but chic. For special occasions, I love to style headscarves by layering different colours, fabrics and lace. Lately, I like rocking a messy bow-tie hijab, and am also obsessed with extending one side of my scarf to create instant elegance. I never stick to one style - I enjoy switching things around, depending on my mood.”

Feelings about hijab: “I don’t think fashion and Islam are mutually exclusive. It comes down to how you define fashion. Today’s fashion industry largely

The Hijab: Facts, myths and realities

MEET THE HIJABISTAS

promotes the sexy image of a woman. I don't follow the stereotypical sense of fashion because I don't like how it objectifies women. Instead, I see fashion as a medium of expressing my internal beliefs, so I aim to dress modestly. That is my fashion statement. I design most of my wardrobe by drawing inspiration from fashions that are already trending. On my Facebook page, thehijabstylist, I offer to hijabify any outfit, which is basically my way of making them more modest while still maintaining the same element of style."

Where I shop: "I like variety, so I shop everywhere, from shopping centres to markets and boutiques. There is no particular shop that caters for modest fashion, so I'm always mixing and matching pieces. It also allows me to find unique ways to express my style. I don't have a favourite store, but having said that, I can't pass a Forever New without going in."

Attitude to fashion: "Oscar Wilde said it best: 'You can never be overdressed or overeducated.'"

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/meet-the-hijabistas-20140422-3722p.html#ixzz3BdrhaneZ>



Zulfiye Tuja. Photo: Armelle Habib

Task

- Students are to read the article
- List aspects that surprise you. Explain why?
- Did this change how you felt about women who dress differently to you?