

# Interpersonal Perception of Veiled Woman

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**Abstract**— More and more women cover their body and face when they are in public places. This practice is a part of conformity to the Islamic law, according to those who wear veil. However, some other people are opposed to the argument that covering face or wearing a veil is an obligation. To make things worse, veiled women are often facing scrutiny or even stigma either being a part of a terrorist group or being difficult and secretive among neighbors [1]. This study examines interpersonal perception of veiled woman in their community. The method of the research is descriptive qualitative analysis through interviewing two women: one wears *jilbab* not veil, and the other one does not wear *jilbab*. The study uses theory of process of impression formation by Jalaluddin Rakhmat which consists of stereotyping, implicit personality, and attribution [2]. The research reveals that veiled woman is stereotyped as introvert and solitaire. Implicit personality is shown by the informants' thoughts that veiled woman is obedient, submissive, pious. Attribution is divided by two parts namely causal attribution and honesty attribution. Results of causal attribution is that veiled woman is highly influenced by her husband's command or environment while honesty attribution is that veiled woman just wants to express her freedom of wearing any form of clothes. The study concludes that cultural background, experience, and environment affect impression formation.

**Keywords**—veiled, interpersonal perception, impression, stereotype, implicit personality, attribution

## I. INTRODUCTION

Most of moslem women have been wearing headscarf although there are few sources regarding the total number of women wearing it. Historically, women wore headscarf to show piety and for safety reason [3]. Nowadays, headscarf has been a part of daily clothes for Moslem women. Some of them even leverage their performance through covering their face which is called veil. They come to the decision of wearing veil due to their committed attendance in weekly Islamic studies. So, environment and peers play an important role in shaping their mind. Not to mention, the women's husband who instruct their wives to wear a veil. In strict Islamic law, husband's wish is the wives' command. Wives must be obedient towards what their husbands are saying. In other discussions, not many people see women wearing veil the same way. Veiled women are often facing tough judgment from other people. They are dealing with stigma as being introvert and secretive, unwilling to socialize with other members of the community except their veiled peers [4]. Therefore, the research explores how interpersonal perception of veiled women occurs, such as stereotyping,

implicit personality theory, and attribution. So, this study weighs in the perceiver's thoughts.

## II. METHODOLOGY AND THEORY

### A. Methodology

The research uses qualitative methodology. Creswell pointed out that *qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem* [5]. Therefore, this study aims to describe perceivers point of views of veiled woman they know. I have interviewed two women for data collection. One wears headscarf with initial CR and is friends with a veiled woman with initial A. The other one does not wear a headscarf with initial LZ who friends with a veiled woman initial B. So, both know and have interacted with at least one veiled woman.

### B. Theoretical Framework

I use theory of impression process by Jalaluddin Rakhmat. This theory derives from interpersonal perception process. Interpersonal perception specifically discusses human as an object of perception. Perception is an experience of object, events, or relations obtained from concluding information and interpreting messages [2]. Factors that influence perception are personal and situational elements. Experience, motivation, and personality are some aspects that influence personal factor. Experience comes from everyday circumstances that a person faces. Motivation is a constructive process which includes biological motive, reward and punishment, characteristic, and perceptual defence [2]. Personality in interpersonal perception perspective is when a person projects their negative personality into others'. When a person has a strong self-acceptance, he/she tends to be more careful towards others. In contrast, when a person is rather hard and like to project himself towards others, he/she are apt to have blur understanding of other people. Verbal description, procsemic, kinesic, facial, paralinguistik, artifactual are some factors that affect situational element of interpersonal perception. Human wants to show the best of themselves. Therefore, there is a process of impression formation that occurs. Stereotyping, implicit personality, and attribution are parts of impression formation process. Stereotyping develops when a person has categorized his/her stimuli into narrow elements. For example, Javanese people are all obedient,

soft, and submissive; they will do whatever their superior instructs them. Implicit personality is when a person becomes judgmental towards others but does not express it to them. For example, if one sees a woman with short, she will be judged as rebellious. Attribution is a process of concluding motive, meanings, and characteristics of others through explicit behavior [2].

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The stereotyping results reveals that a veiled woman seems brave. CR who wears headscarf stated it while informant LZ who does not wear headscarf said that veiled women are often critical towards those who do not wear headscarf or similar clothes just like her. CR says about her friend A who wear a veil “veiled women are no different from us, they act like us, think like us. However, they are much braver because having decided to wear a veil is not easy, it is a bit complicated. So, they are brave enough to differ from others. LZ says “I do not care what people wear. However, I feel that a veiled woman is a bit judgmental. It happened when I was in a mall wearing a knee-length dress, there was a veiled woman who looked at me so intensely as if she were judging me for wearing rather sexy clothes. I could feel it because her eyes could not take off me.”

Implicit personality results more from LZ rather than CR. LZ said about her friend B who wear a veil that there was something strange with her friend because she could be very chatty, candid even vulgar and aggressive when she is not around her family. LZ said that it occurred most of the time when her husband is out of town and when her kids are at school, she would talk a lot on whatsapp group although noone replied and the group consists of male and female members. She could even talk openly about how she missed being intimate with her husband which for some it is inappropriate to share such story. Nevertheless, whenever her husband is around, she could be very quiet and did not talk on the group chat. CR has different opinion about her friend A. CR feels that A is fanatic towards her spiritual teacher – *habib*. A even openly blocks people from getting closer just to take a picture with *habib* with no apparent reason. She also criticizes a woman who brings her kid along into the study or *pengajian*.

The results of attribution show that the veiled women’s decision to cover her face comes from their husband. CR concludes that this decision must be from the veiled woman’s husband or her peers. CR also thinks that veiled women have similar personalities just like those who do not wear a veil. They like to gossip, to hang out with friends or to eat just like us. They are just normal people. LZ also thinks the same way as CR. A veiled woman is just like any other woman. What makes her stand out is her veil not personality. Her decision to wear a veil could be from her spouse mostly, then from her friends.

Stereotyping. Our mind has already made categories of personalities so when we meet a new person, we try to put her/his personality based on our new experience into the respective category. The category that we have already made is based on our past experiences. This is when confirmation bias takes place [6]. We tend to seek truth for things we already feel true. Our judgment is also physical appearance driven; meaning we would think that a veiled

person must be religious and calm; cannot be too critical of others. Besides, stereotyping can also happen when the people who are stereotyped are considered only from reduced label [7]. For example, every veiled woman looks quiet and pious.

Implicit Personality Theory. Each of us has a tendency to be an amateur psychologist. We like to judge people from the way they look, the way they talk, and so on. This is parallel with the definition of implicit personality theory by Omarzu and Harvey which states that *Implicit personality theory is a set of beliefs that an individual hold about how personality traits are manifested in behaviors or about how personality traits predict behavior* [6]. Basically, first impression matters. People also feel comfortable to communicate with others who are already familiar with. Therefore, self-disclosure occurs in small group of people like in whatsapp chatting platform. This change of behavior could be taken differently by perceivers who have already stereotyped the person. Some people also prefer to talk behind the person in fear of future conflict because some may perceive questions as allgedment, and they do not want to hurt others. So, it is safe to talk indirectly.

Attribution is a process of making conclusion based on people’s behavior. Causal attribution is what made a person does such behavior, what the rational or who influences the one’s behavior. Honesty attribution is often more into an expression of the person. Omarzu and Harvey stated that *attribution is inferring causality or responsibility process for events observed in the social or physical world* [6]. People are prone to easily jump to conclusion because inadvertently, stereotyping has led into it. Attribution are often guided by stereotyping in the events where there are hints to a behavior especially with our quick attributional goals [8]. However, there are two important segments when people attribute. First, assurance of no external elements influencing one’s behavior. Second, expectation of one’s behavior [9]. These mean that attribution should be made clear and fair. Human is like two sides of a coin so judging others should also base holistic.

### IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, people perceive others differently. Personal and situational factors play an important role in shaping interpersonal perception. Through broad minds and thoughts, one can accept and understand each other regardless their choice of clothes. Wearing a veil or not, we are just a human being, either wanting to express ourselves in a certain way or following our religious belief. The wish to present our best will be our priority when making impression. Each of us will have stereotyping, implicit personality, and attribution towards others. The management of those elements is, therefore, necessary because it all influences how we communicate with others.

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