

# Prohibition of Women Wearing Hijab in Work (Descriptive Study of the Prohibition of Women Wearing Hijab in Work in Surabaya City)

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## Abstract

This research focuses on the phenomenon of women who are required to remove their hijab due to job demands in Surabaya City. Discrimination in work requirements that mandate removing the hijab has caused controversy to this day. Many still consider that companies or workplaces do not tolerate women who are Muslim women wearing hijab, arguing that their work environment is a public place, not a mosque where hijab must be worn in the office or while working. The main objective of this research is to understand the factors that influence women's decisions to remove their hijab when working and to identify the impacts of women's decisions to remove their hijab. The method used in this research involved interviewing several selected sources to delve deeper into the decisions made. This research also used literature analysis and library studies relevant to the latest research developments. This research uses alienation theory proposed by Karl Marx. The research results show that factors such as social pressure, perceptions of professional image, and company policies affect these decisions. The impacts vary, including changes in coworker relationships and changes in women's identity.

**Keywords:** Discrimination Against Women, Unveiling (Removing Hijab), Employment

## 1. Introduction

The ban on hijab-wearing women in employment has become a controversial debate issue in various parts of the world, including in Surabaya city, Indonesia. The hijab is a religious symbol and identity for most Muslim women, but several companies and employment sectors in Surabaya have implemented policies prohibiting the use of hijab in their work environments. This raises various questions regarding individual human rights, religious freedom, and workplace discrimination.

The hijab is not only used as self-identity as a symbol of the Muslim religion, but the hijab is a necessity for Muslims (Arafah, 2019). However, there are several things that require female workers to remove their hijab due to job demands they are currently pursuing. In today's era, the use of hijab has begun to be widely recognized by Indonesian society. Women, especially Muslim communities, have begun to realize their obligation to wear hijab (Wibisono et al., 2020). Many hijab trends, from models and forms of hijab, have been circulating on social media. Types of hijab have also become diverse, from children's hijab to adult hijab.

Wearing hijab is the right of each individual to wear hijab; some want to use hijab just to look fashionable and follow trends, and there are also those who wear hijab based on their heart's instinct moved by their Creator. It can be taken from the example that humans have freedom in choosing and acting based on responsibility for what has become their choice or their actions. The use of hijab is also symbolized as part of faith and piety to Allah SWT, which becomes a choice for every Muslim woman. Freedom in religious matters is a human right for everyone, where Indonesia itself has the principle of belief in the one and only God as the first principle (Hakim, 2022).



The hijab itself is a condition that attracts attention for further research. Many pros and cons exist regarding the use of hijab, whether it is considered an obligation or the right of each Muslim. The hijab itself is a phenomenon that is not far from its close relationship with existing history, religious obedience, or in the form of measurements and conflicts that exist in each individual. The hijab is a basic symbol as a Muslim woman who is likened to a sign of faith and obedience they hold to Allah SWT. From the perspective of hijab, it is also intended to guard the gaze of those who are not mahram and to cover the body curves so as not to arouse the lust of men who see it.

If viewed from history, the struggle of a woman is not easy because they have to experience many life problems and often experience discrimination because many consider them terrorists and strange. Every Muslim woman certainly has the right to wear hijab according to the religion they follow. That woman should also have the right to get a job. Unfortunately, nowadays many workplaces and companies prohibit employees or workers from wearing hijab for Muslim women. Specifically in Surabaya city itself, which is the second largest city after DKI Jakarta, many companies open vacancies for women but with the condition of removing hijab while working, arguing that the workplace is a public place, not a special place for wearing hijab.

This makes Muslim women, especially those who already wear hijab, become torn; they may work as long as they remove their hijab, but outside working hours they are allowed to wear their hijab again when working hours are finished. Many women feel difficulty when applying for jobs where companies and workplaces give qualifications for non-hijab women (Riano, 2018). Many companies give reasons for not allowing hijab-wearing women because company owners who are mostly non-Muslims or foreign nationals who hold high positions in a company or workplace. And if there are employees who insist on working while wearing hijab, it includes violating an SOP in a job that has existed from the beginning.

This case is included in discrimination of rights for Muslim believers who in the Al-Quran itself are required to wear hijab. But even so, it does not rule out the possibility that female workers are forced to remove their hijab while working because of demands that must be obeyed with the reason that finding work is currently very difficult and economic factors force female workers to do so. Not only that, there are several other reasons applied by some companies that make policies prohibiting wearing hijab because of the factor that they do not want any religion to dominate in their workplace and want to be neutral.

The incidents described above often cause these female workers to receive unpleasant treatment and experience gender discrimination. Female workers, although they have carried out their work and followed every rule, sometimes receive wages that are relatively smaller than men. It is not surprising that there are still many companies or workplaces that still hold firmly that the job description received by men is also more than women (Purwasih, 2013). Judging from several existing cases, it turns out that there are also men who are prohibited from performing Friday prayers and sometimes women are also forced to abandon their prayers because of work demands that are not yet finished. Many examples that have been explained above can illustrate the discrimination by workers and the prohibition rules for wearing hijab during working hours.

From the phenomenon that has occurred, this is a form of discrimination against female workers who should have the right to wear hijab, but that right is taken away when they carry out the work they do for professionalism in working (Sugianto & Rahmat, 2021). Also, that condition falls into religious discrimination that does not free other religions to carry out their obligations in wearing their hijab. The ban on wearing hijab in work is a complex and relevant issue. Surabaya as one of the second largest cities has diverse layers of society with various cultures and religions. The existence of a ban on wearing hijab in work can be considered a violation of women's human rights.

Previous research conducted by Sari (2014) explains and examines violations of rights against Muslim women to get equal rights in working. This research uses descriptive qualitative research to achieve more actual and detailed results where researchers conduct observation methods, interviews, and library studies to obtain accurate information from source. Previous research conducted by Herawati (2011), she uses rights and religion in her research focus contained in the Al-Quran. The type of research conducted is qualitative research using interview methods and field observations with women who work removing hijab in the Surabaya area.

The next research by Firdaus & Nurchayati (2021) conducted with qualitative research using interview methods and field observations to meet sources with face-to-face approaches with random pattern systems, while in the current research to be implemented uses descriptive qualitative methods with several selected sources. This research is also taken from Karl Marx's theory that defines religion with the class system in society. According to Karl Marx, religion here is merely an illusion. Karl Marx views religion as a form of "alienation" or separation of humans from their true essence. According to Marx's thinking, religion becomes a tool to divert human attention from material reality and social inequality that exists in capitalist society.

Marx argues that religion can become a form of opium for the people, something that provides temporary comfort but actually causes greater unhappiness and inequality. Marx considers that economic and social inequality that exists in capitalist society creates dissatisfaction, and religion plays a role in maintaining that status quo by offering hope for happiness in the world after death. Therefore, Marx argues that to overcome religious alienation, more fundamental social change must occur (Hana & Sriariandini, 2023). He proposes that only through social revolution and structural changes in society can humans achieve liberation from alienation, including alienation caused by religion (Afifa & Kusnarto, 2022). In Marx's thinking, the long-term solution is to create a society where resources and power are distributed more fairly, so that humans can achieve their full potential without depending on religion as an escape from difficult social reality.

The solution to the contradiction where there is solidarity in class juxtaposed with social integration indicates that legitimizing wealth and compensating for poverty and as religion that functions to unite society including in expressing different class interests. In this religious alienation, it has a basic nature that has no happiness where it is always related to material economics and religion. The absence of religion here is a sign that it becomes an illusion that the condition of happiness is real. The existence of demands as something used to abandon illusion (Azahraa et al., 2022). This research aims to deepen a phenomenon that occurs regarding the ban on hijab-wearing women in employment in Surabaya city. By conducting more detailed analysis, this research seeks to understand the background, impact, and legal and social implications of this ban on Muslim women in Surabaya.

## 2. Methods

In every research, it is inseparable from the method that researchers will use to support the research process to achieve planned research. This type of research is qualitative research where this research is more directed and closer to respondents. Qualitative research is a research method used to understand and explain social phenomena or human behavior through in-depth analysis of non-numerical data, such as text, images, sound, or interviews. The main purpose of qualitative research is to explore deeper understanding of how and why people act, think, or feel something in a certain context.

Qualitative research methods about the ban on hijab-wearing women in the workplace in Surabaya city can include several aspects, such as:

- a. Interviews with hijab-wearing women: This research can include in-depth interviews with hijab-wearing women who have experienced bans or discrimination in the workplace. They can be asked to share experiences, views, and impacts of the ban.
- b. Field observation: This research conducts direct observation at various workplaces in Surabaya city or through individuals face-to-face or via online if respondents are unable to attend. This field observation activity aims to observe places where women are prohibited from wearing hijab and why workplace owners implement policies to remove hijab during working hours.
- c. Document analysis: This research can also involve document analysis, such as company regulations, HR policies, or recorded discrimination incident reports in the workplace.
- d. Literature Study: This research would not be complete if researchers did not search for previous research sources to compare or update subsequent research as references and existing observations. The results of this qualitative research can help provide a more complete picture of this problem and understand the reasons behind the ban and its impact on women who wear hijab in the workplace in Surabaya city.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Results

Every Muslim woman certainly has the right to wear hijab, which is an obligation for Muslims. Here women also have equal rights in terms of employment. But in today's era, there are still many companies and workplaces that prohibit employees from wearing hijab. Before applicants work at that place, they are already informed that in working later, applicants or those who are already working are required to remove their hijab and given the opportunity to wear their hijab again when working hours are finished.

There are several reasons why workplace owners do not allow women to wear their hijab: the job owner is a non-Muslim owner. The owners do not want their workplace to highlight that the Muslim religion is more dominant, and by removing hijab, they believe that the workplace is neutral and public. Besides that, there are other reasons such as the purpose of work to maintain existing goods and production cleanliness.

##### 3.1.1. The Sociological Meaning of the Hijab in the Context of the Sociology of Religion

In the context of sociology of religion, hijab has a broader meaning than just physical clothing worn by some Muslim women. This includes various aspects involving symbolism, identity, and gender roles in Islamic society.

- a. As Religious Symbolism: Hijab is a symbol of obedience to Islamic teachings. It represents a Muslim woman's commitment to cover her awrah according to religious teachings. In Muslim society, hijab can also be a sign of identity and religious belief.
- b. Muslim Woman Identity: Hijab also reflects the identity of a Muslim woman as an individual who follows Islamic principles. This can create a sense of unity and solidarity among Muslim women who wear hijab, as well as distinguish them from non-Muslim individuals.
- c. Gender Role: In sociology of religion, hijab is often analyzed in the context of gender roles in Muslim society. This reflects social and cultural rules that regulate women's roles in Islamic society. Hijab can be used as a tool to measure the level of role and influence of women in various social and cultural contexts.

### 3.1.2. Factors Influencing Women's Decision to Remove the Hijab

Someone's decision, including women who choose to remove hijab at work, can be influenced by various very individual factors. Some factors that might influence this decision include:

- a. Job requirements: Some women may feel that certain jobs or industries require them to remove hijab to carry out their duties more easily. This is what makes hijab-wearing women have to remove their hijab for job needs.
- b. Pressure from superiors or work environment: Results from in-depth interviews with several informants found cases where women may feel pressured by superiors or coworkers to remove hijab to fit company culture or certain work environments. This creates pressure from work that forces women to remove their hijab.
- c. Social pressure: Women can also experience pressure from social environment, family, or friends who encourage them to remove hijab to be more "modern" or "more socially accepted."
- d. Individual freedom: There are still several workplaces that accept hijab-wearing women, but some women may choose to remove hijab because they feel it is a choice more suitable to their personal identity or beliefs.
- e. Professional demands: Some jobs may have special requirements, such as security, that make wearing hijab impractical.

Religious discrimination occurs here because of rules implemented by workplace owners who do not allow their employees to wear hijab during working hours. This established rule actually violates the religious rights held by Muslim women. They are required not to wear hijab. This discrimination experienced by workers mostly experiences religious minorities (Sari, 2014).

Based on the conditions experienced by these female workers, it is concluded that they feel they do not get happiness and feel uncomfortable while working because of the demand to remove hijab and they do not know how long this policy will continue. But what can they do when economic factors make them persist to earn income. In the end, female workers must persist even with policies to remove hijab, not knowing when that policy will stop or might still exist until next year.

Alienation itself here according to Karl Marx is an essential action. Therefore, workplace parties use their employees as tools used for personal gain only. This condition makes women feel they experience minorities in their environment because of actions from workplace owners who make rules prohibiting hijab during working hours. However, many of them still maintain their hijab by wearing it again when working hours are finished because the prohibition on wearing hijab is only applied during working hours.

### 3.1.3. Implications of Unveiling (Hijab Removal)

The ban on women wearing hijab in the workplace in Surabaya city or any workplace can have several significant impacts, including:

- a. Discrimination: Such bans can be considered forms of discrimination against religion and religious freedom. This violates human rights that protect freedom of dress and religion.
- b. Career Hindrance: This ban can hinder the career advancement of women who choose to wear hijab. They may not have equal opportunities for promotion or getting certain jobs.
- c. Gender Inequality: Such policies can also strengthen gender inequality in the workplace by giving different treatment to women based on their religious beliefs.
- d. Conflict Potential: This ban can trigger conflicts between workers and management, as well as affect work climate and inter-employee relationships.



- e. Bad Image: Surabaya city and workplaces that implement such bans may get a bad image in the eyes of society, both domestically and internationally, because they are considered not supporting religious freedom and tolerance.

There is one fundamental thing for Muslim women to wear hijab, which is a form of obedience and faith to their Creator, in other words, obedience in maintaining modesty and honor so that they remain polite and do not expose body parts that can invite lust from others. If traced from historical facts about freedom in wearing hijab, it turns out it is not as easy and beautiful as imagined. Many Muslim women need struggle if they want to wear hijab in public places.

Every woman, especially Muslim women, has the right to wear hijab according to the teachings of the religion they follow, namely Islam, and that woman should also have the right to get a job. Unfortunately, nowadays many workplaces and companies prohibit employees or workers from wearing hijab for Muslim women (Pertiwi & Asnawi, 2022). Specifically in Surabaya city itself, which is the second largest city after DKI Jakarta, many companies open vacancies for women but with the condition of removing hijab while working, arguing that the workplace is a public place, not a special place for wearing hijab.

This makes Muslim women, especially those who already wear hijab, become torn; they may work as long as they remove their hijab, but outside working hours they are allowed to wear their hijab again when working hours are finished. Many women feel difficulty when applying for jobs where companies and workplaces give qualifications for non-hijab women. Many companies give reasons for not allowing hijab-wearing women because company owners who are mostly non-Muslims or foreign nationals who hold high positions in a company or workplace. And if there are employees who insist on working while wearing hijab, it includes violating an SOP in a job that has existed from the beginning.

This case is included in discrimination of rights for Muslim believers who in the Al-Quran itself are required to wear hijab. But even so, it does not rule out the possibility that female workers are forced to remove their hijab while working because of demands that must be obeyed with the reason that finding work is currently very difficult and economic factors force female workers to do so. In addition, there are other reasons, namely the company leader is a non-Muslim, so the hijab ban is implemented so that there is no emphasis on certain religions.

### 3.2. Discussion

Basically, women who wear hijab while working are only carrying out an obligation from their religion as Muslim women. Workers who are taught to wear hijab whether outside or at home wear hijab. However, when they work, they are forced by job demands where there are policies that do not allow wearing hijab during working hours. These female workers reluctantly do it because they also need the job because in today's era finding work is very difficult and only at the place where they work are they accepted even though there are conditions that require removing their hijab.

Viewed from the religious side, this act is something that does not reflect Muslim women, but what can they do if they do not work, they cannot meet their life needs. Digging deeper, the main factor of female workers removing hijab is not far from economic factors; they are forced to remove their hijab because the economy they are experiencing is unstable, which ultimately makes finding work very difficult and many company qualification requirements do not wear hijab. Workers have tried to apply for positions that allow wearing hijab, but they are not accepted for work. And the salary offered is quite large, making women not mind if they have to remove hijab only during working hours.

In conditions like this, conclusions can be drawn from the theory proposed by Karl Marx about alienation with discrimination problem limitations that existing regulations make hijab-wearing workers get different treatment from other workers who are non-Muslims. The existence of the

implementation of prohibiting wearing hijab in the workplace makes women feel alienated by themselves, which can be concluded as:

- a. Female workers understand the rules implemented by the company that there is a prohibition on wearing hijab during working hours. Workers are also informed when applying for jobs that the company implements these rules.
- b. There are other reasons why companies prohibit female workers from wearing hijab, one of the reasons being that the workplace or company owner is a non-Muslim and the owner does not want their workplace to be dominated by such things, so removing hijab is implemented because the workplace or office is a public place visited by many layers of society.
- c. Actually, in removing hijab, female workers feel that it is uncomfortable because going from wearing hijab to suddenly removing hijab is considered a big sin, but what can they do when that rule is implemented and when working hours are finished, female workers are allowed to wear their hijab again.
- d. Viewed from the side of citizens' rights, this condition is actually an action that does not appreciate religious diversity, but the workers themselves have no form of resistance because they consider that it will harm them, namely being terminated from work or having their employee wages cut.

#### 4. Conclusion

This research shows that the ban on hijab-wearing women in the workplace in Surabaya City has complex impacts. Although some companies may implement this policy based on company regulations or certain safety reasons, there is significant disagreement from society and human rights advocacy groups. In many cases, the hijab ban is considered a violation of religious freedom and individual women's rights to dress according to their beliefs. This can create discomfort, tension, and inequality in the work environment.

In this case, the Surabaya city government can also emphasize policies in every workplace and workplace owner that hijab-wearing women also deserve equal treatment and there is no discrimination as well as find solutions to every existing problem. The conclusion of this research shows the need for better dialogue and understanding between companies, society, and government to find fair and inclusive solutions regarding the ban on hijab-wearing women in the workplace in Surabaya City. This can lead to better policies that consider individual rights and promote diversity in the work environment.

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