

## **The Behaviour of Public and Press towards Burqa: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis**

Saqlain Hassan

Assistant Professor

Qurtuba University of Science & Information Technology

[dr.saqlainhassan@gmail.com](mailto:dr.saqlainhassan@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Clothing helps people to publicly manifest their religious or cultural identity. In the Islamic world, Burqa is considered a garment of modesty both in the religious and cultural contexts. This corpus-assisted discourse study aims to find out the behavior of the press and the actual Burqa users by analyzing the corpora of Pakistani and British newspapers through the Sketch Engine software and field surveys in the form of audio interviews and questionnaires with the help of the Grounded Theory and Thematic Analysis. This study looks at different forms of collected data to drag out the image of the Burqa created by the press and used by its actual users to show their distaste for the cultural-cum-Islamic Burqa such as the *Shuttlecock*. The current study takes into account both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms to triangulate the findings retrieved from the analysis of the newspapers discourse; which is mainly based on retrieving the keywords in context, their collocates and concordances and the field surveys; which will be analyzed with the help of coding process. A conceptual framework has been designed for the current study using the principles of the Grounded Theory and Thematic Analysis to categorize the important themes. The analysis of the current study will also reveal the future of Burqa or Purdah garments in the Pashtun culture. This contrastive analysis sheds light on the reasons why females in the Pashtun community are divided on the use of the Burqa and explains why some Pashtun women prefer to continue wearing it.

*Keywords:* Burqa, Shuttlecock, Paronay, Pashtun, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## **The Behaviour of Public and Press towards Burqa: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis**

This study is a corpus-assisted discourse study of corpora containing newspaper texts, audio interviews, and questionnaires to observe the behaviour of public and press towards the burqa. Burqa is a garment used by Muslim women to uphold their religious and cultural identity around the globe. Moreover, people can be identified and distinguished by the way they practice their cultures. Banks et al. (1989, p. 28) define culture as a combination of “symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies”. They further elaborate their definition by describing the essence of a culture, which “are not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. People within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways”. In a slightly different approach, a culture can be described as a combination of both explicit and implicit patterns established by our ancestors and acquired by our more recent predecessors in a similar form or with slight or heavy changes; ideally, in this scenario, every person should be free to construct his/her social identity by practicing his/her culture in diverse societies (Davis, 1994).

Cultural diversity has been a topic of discussions for decades. Currently, resistance towards cultural diversity can be found almost everywhere in the world, and especially in some countries, biased behavior towards minorities is common. This bias can affect a range of aspects, from color-racism to prejudice and discrimination motivated by ethnicity/nationality and religion. One of the most common problems that minorities face in these countries is hostility towards and criticism of their cultural rituals and style of dress (Raiklin, 1990). As a group, Muslims are frequently targeted for criticism. Traditional Muslim women’s dress, for example, contrasts with norms outside the Muslim world, and is often considered a garment of oppression or submission; it is even perceived as a threat to the liberal values of western societies. For example, this apparent clash with European civilization and cultures has sparked heated debate around Islamic clothing in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and elsewhere.

Regarding this, it is important to note that the issue of gender equality plays a key role in the debate concerning Islamic garments. Garments such as the burqa, hijab or headscarf are understood to symbolize the oppression of women in some Islamic cultures, associated with patriarchal attitudes. Muslim garments are understood as threatening women’s freedom and right to self-expression, and opposing the codes of an open society (McGoldrick, 2006; Gintsburg & Breeze, 2022). Various studies have been conducted on controversies surrounding Muslim garments around the world: for example, a study by Breeze (2013, 2014) discusses the framing of Muslims in the British press and discusses the media representation of the burka/burqa – one of the distinctive Muslim purdah garments that can be seen in different parts of the United Kingdom, which was one of the hotly debated topics in the British press in the 2000s. Controversies of this kind have resulted in burqa bans in several European countries; for example, there are now seven EU countries, namely Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, and Latvia, which have banned the wearing of burqa in public places.

From the Muslim perspective, Latif and Zainol (2013, p51) explain that wearing a burqa is not an obligation in Islam but “it is an act of obedience that is defined by Quran and Sunnah”. It is understood as an act of obedience that Muslim women show towards their God, which provides a powerful reason for their resistance towards those bans. In this understanding, burqa

wearers just want to live with what they believe their God would be happy with. It is undeniable that the Quran<sup>1</sup>, Sunnah<sup>2</sup>, and Hadiths<sup>3</sup> greatly influence the lives of Muslims around the world. Their desire for Jannat<sup>4</sup> compels them to stick to a culture of *Haya* (an Arabic word that means shame: *Haya* refers to something that needs to be in the circle of religion and culture, which can be someone's body, behavior, way of living, etc.), which according to sacred Muslim scriptures is a quality, "a jewel of Muslim women". *Jewel* in this context means beauty or something that looks precious. The Quran says in Surah Al-Ahzab Verse 59:

*O Prophet (PBUH)! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of believers to draw their cloaks all over their bodies. That will be better, that they should be known, so as not to be molested*

At the same time, the Muslim world itself is vast and diverse, extending from Mongolia or Indonesia to Morocco, Nigeria to Iran or Chechnya, and coexists with many different cultures and traditions. To come closer to understanding what Muslim dress means, it is important to examine not just the precepts of the Quran or the rather general stereotypes that have filtered through to the West, but to look at how this cultural tradition is lived and experienced in a particular society at a particular time. The present study will focus on one cultural group in the Muslim world, namely the people of Pashtun ethnicity who inhabit the mountain areas in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan and neighboring parts of Afghanistan. Practicing *Haya* is common in Pashtunwali culture (Toor, 2010). Women are considered a key to this code, because in Pashtun society, honor is still attached to how the women of a family behave inside the walls of the home and outside in public. If a woman's behavior is liberal, it is considered a dishonor to her family, and the "*Haya*" tradition is still acknowledged as the heart of honor in Pashtun society (Alaoui, 2011). However, although religion and culture are obviously bound up together, people of Pashtun ethnicity/culture often say, "we are Pashtuns first then Muslims" (frequently heard by researcher), and in some contexts practicing *purdah* in this area is considered more cultural than Islamic.

The current study will be looking at corpora in the Pakistani press and interviews with people living in Pashtun areas in order to obtain a triangulated view of how the media portray the burqa culture and what the actual burqa wearers believe and feel about this situation. Are women free to choose how they dress? Do women feel that their freedom is limited by the burqa, or do they really consider that they enjoy full freedom while wearing the burqa? The next section of this paper discusses the methods and materials which are used to analyze the collected data.

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<sup>1</sup> Quran: is the holy Islamic book revealed upon the prophet Muhammad in Saudi Arabia in 7<sup>th</sup> century. The Quranic verses are the sayings of the God.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunnah*: are the actions performed by the prophet Muhammad.

<sup>3</sup> *Hadith*: are the sayings of prophet Muhammad. Hadiths are considered to be the secondary most important guidelines after Quran that must be followed by all the Muslims.

<sup>4</sup> *Jannat* is an Arabic word which is known as *Paradise* or *Heaven* in English.

## Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The current study is analyzing corpora of audio interviews, questionnaires and newspapers texts. This study uses corpus-assisted discourse analyzing techniques to analyze newspaper texts to observe the behaviour of the press towards burqa. Corpus-assisted discourse study is a blend of both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms that uses modern software/s for texts mining and applying discourse analysis or critical discourse analysis theories to the results of the quantitative analysis to extract the important findings (Batool, Majeed, & Zahra, 2019). This study also follows the coding techniques described by Glasser and Strauss (1967) for the analysis of audio interviews and questionnaires designed to learn more about the public attitudes towards burqa. For this purpose, the researcher decided to complement his text analysis with two different field activities: interviews and questionnaires. All these activities were undertaken in the Pashtun belt of Pakistan called Khyber Pakhtunkhwa KPK. The interviews and questionnaires explore the attitudes of burqa users in the Pashtun belt of Pakistan towards burqa. A corpus of Pakistani newspapers in English, Pashto and Urdu was constructed to research press attitudes in Pakistan as a whole towards Islamic garments, focusing especially on burqa. Here I briefly discuss the methodology used in collecting and analyzing data in the light of previous studies. To obtain a rounded view of social attitudes, the researcher used a blend of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies during the current study which according to Smith (2001) is the “multiplicity of meanings, representations, and practices”.

### Methods and materials used to analyze the newspaper corpus

This first part of my study focuses on the representation of burqa in the popular press of Pakistan. Following Baker (2006), Baker et al. (2008), and Partington et al. (2013), a collective corpus of seven Pakistani newspapers (Urdu, English, and Pashto: 2005-2018) was collected from Lexis Nexis where possible, but also from the Internet sites of specific newspapers (since Lexis Nexis does not always give access to all the newspapers in languages other than English.) The search terms burqa, blue burqa, shuttlecock, and black burqa were used to retrieve the articles in Pashto, Urdu, and English-language newspapers.

**Table** Error! No sequence specified.

#### *Description of Corpus divided into Sub-corpora*

SN	Name of the newspaper	Tokens
1	The Dawn	296,566
2	The Nation	318,370
3	The Express Tribune	294,804
4	The Frontier Post	148,089
5	Daily Jang	52,580
6	Daily Pakistan	27,823
7	BBC Pashto	29,341

All the articles that contained the discussion of burqa were retrieved and saved in different folders with their respective dates and year of publication. The corpora consisted of

articles from Urdu, Pashto, and English languages and all of the articles were saved as separate sub-corpora in PDF form. Table 1 above shows the details of the entire newspapers' corpus

### **Methods and Materials Used to Collect and Analyze Interview Data**

The involvement of actual populations is considered an important phase of qualitative research. Miles and Huberman (1994) explain that observing and talking to participants is one of the four main pillars of a qualitative research project. Similarly discussing the advantages of observing the research population in the field using qualitative methodology, Creswell and Garrett (2008) stated that analyzing the research subjects in the real place where the problem has been happening helps the researcher to identify the core of the problem and the situation of the subjects facing the problem. In order to find out local people's discourses about and attitudes towards the burqa in the Pashtun belt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, the researcher opted to use interviews with burqa wearers obtained face-to-face.

The main research tools a researcher can adopt during his/her data collection process are interviews and direct observation. If, as in many cases, there is no chance of direct observation, then the best alternative is face-to-face interview. As Douglas et al. (2006) explained, interviews should ideally be conducted in the original setting because interviews are designed to provide authentic, contextualized information about the issue in its origin. In this way, the researchers will come closer to the phenomenon under study. Also, the interviewee will feel more comfortable and may have more freedom to "reflect and reason on a variety of subjects in different ways" (Folkestad, 2008). For this purpose, the present researcher designed a semi-structured interview following the methodology described by Woods (2011), bearing in mind that the researchers should let the interviewee speak more, but should encourage them to keep to their main topic.

This study was designed to involve local people in discussing the issue of the burqa, which was in itself a challenging problem. It is difficult to involve illiterate Pashtun women in a discussion, as it seems strange to them, because nobody has ever discussed such things with them. In this study, they even questioned the interviewer: "why you are asking me such an irrelevant question?" However, the most serious problem was how to access the Pashtun women in Pakistan, because it is not possible for a male to talk to females in private or in public. Therefore, on the suggestion of Professor Elena Semino (University of Lancaster) it was decided to use the help of female collaborators (XYZ, 19; ABC, 17; TBA, 16) for conducting interviews, because in this way there would be more openness in the conversations. The collaborators were told about the research plan, research population, and the target group. The research population was comprised of both literate women and women who had never attended school.

### **Methods and Materials used to collect and analyze questionnaires**

After the completion of interview phase, researcher decided to take advantage of what he had learnt to conduct a field survey using a questionnaire, with a view to obtaining greater triangulation (Clarke et al., 2003). To ensure accurate results, the researcher tried to involve the actual users of burqa, which meant that a relatively small population size could be contacted. However, it is likely that this is sufficient for the conclusions to be generalized (Musolff, 2017). In the survey, 35 female students and 4 female teachers took part. Three different schools (Al-

Hamra Girls School & College, Talash English Education Academy, and Community Development Public School & College) were selected and the questionnaires were distributed by the female collaborator team among their female students and staff. The instrument was a mixed questionnaire that comprised both open-ended and closed-ended questions (Bird, 2009), in which all the questions predominantly addressed the topic of the use of the burqa – in order to learn more about public attitudes towards this Islamic-cum-cultural garment in Pakistan.

### Conceptual Framework for Analyzing Data

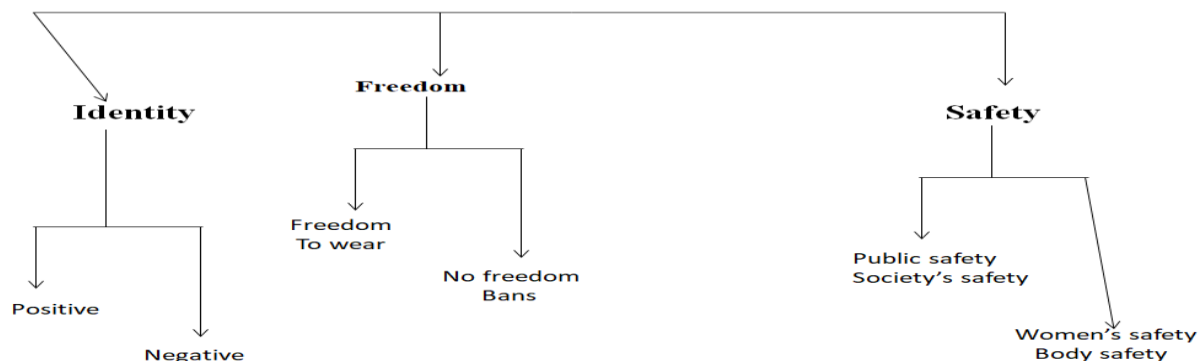
The current study analyzed corpora of Pakistani (English, Pashto, and Urdu) newspapers using the software Sketch Engine (Kilgariff et al. 2014). For each of the five Pakistani newspapers – The Dawn, The Nation, Daily Pakistan, The Express Tribune, and the Frontier Post – a separate corpus was created which was retrieved from LexisNexis and the websites of the newspapers concerned; for the non-English news sources namely BBC Pashto and Daily Jang, the material was collected directly from the websites.

The conceptual framework designed to conduct and analyze the interviews was developed using the principles of grounded theory and thematic analysis (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). The coding and categorizing process described by Glasser et al. (1967) helped the researcher in the current study to analyze the data, and assign the different themes he found in the interviews to categories in a reiterative process of reading, re-reading and coding. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the main advantages of thematic analysis are to allow the researcher to identify and report themes that emerge within the data, rather than imposing predetermined categories on them.

The framework that emerged from the open coding process, following the principles of thematic analysis (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Braun & Clarke, 2006), comprises three major and six sub-categories. This framework enabled the researcher to compare the attitudes of the press and the public. Figure 1 shows the structure of this framework:

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual framework of categories*

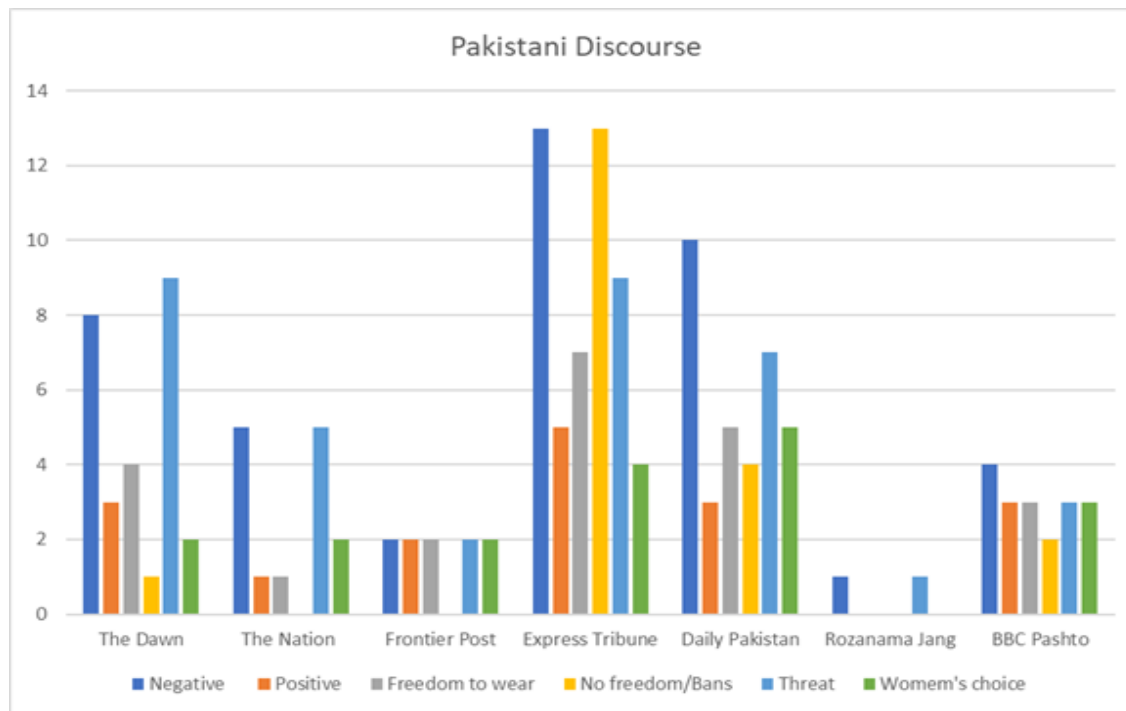


## Results

Figure 2 shows the findings from the analysis of the newspaper corpora through the Sketch Engine software using the framework from Fig. 1. All the following results were retrieved from the analysis of the keyword *burqa* and its concordance lines in each newspaper's corpus. Figure 2 shows the statistics from the open coding and category assigning process. The concordance lines were coded and the representations matching the above-mentioned categories were recorded and compiled. The patterns in the Pakistani press were recorded separately for each newspaper. Figure 2 is based on a reading of the frequently occurring collocates to the  $\pm 5$  (five words both to the left and right) of the node word "burqa". The selected words had to have some relation with the categories mentioned in figure 1 above:

**Figure 2**

*Statistics of Pakistani Newspapers' findings*



### Pakistani Newspapers (2005-2018)

Pakistani newspapers in their reports associate the burqa mainly as an Afghan and Pashtun cultural garment:

*Women wearing the Afghan-influenced burqa, more commonly known as the 'shuttlecock burqa'. The black burqas have nothing to do with **Pakhtuns'** culture but their dominance increased when the Taliban banned the wearing of Paronays leaving this (black burqa) as a more practical alternative, at least in the urban parts of the northern areas. (The Dawn, 25 April, 2014).*

Pakistan is a multi-cultural country. Sindhi, Balochi, Punjabi, and Pashtunwali are four major cultures practiced by more than 170 million people in Pakistan. This complex hierarchy of cultures leads to conflicts between their practitioners. Anti-Pashtun jokes in Punjab and anti-Punjabi jokes in Pashtun-dominated areas are common in Pakistan. Similar features can be found in all types of media dominated by the people of one of these nations/cultures. In Pakistan, media is mostly controlled by the Punjabi or Sindhi broadcasters. For this reason, Pashtun jokes are common in the media. Everything related to Pashtuns is a part of the jokes around the country, for example, “*Naswar*” or snap; Pashtuns in Pakistan are known by the people as *Naswar* addicts and short tempered. In particular, the “blue burqa/shuttlecock” is generally referred to as a Pashtun dress. This current study identified high negativity associated with Pashtuns and their cultural garments in Pakistani press, and they are often associated with terrorism and violence. In fact, the burqa itself is perceived as a threat to society, since it is blamed for increasing the risk of terrorist attacks and suicide bombings:

*Nine martyred as burqa-clad terrorists storm Peshawar Agriculture Training Institute.* (The Express Tribune, 01 December, 2017).

It has been a common trend since 9/11 that this religious-cum-cultural garment “burqa” has been under discussion, and considerable negativity has been attributed to “burqa” because of its misuse by terrorists and criminals for targeting their targets, thereby endangering innocent people. In addition, the association of burqa with terrorism has created an environment of insecurity among different nations, which is why the burqa has been banned in different countries:

*Residents in Urumqi have been banned from wearing the burqa in an effort to curb increasing terrorism. The restriction came as China stepped up curbs on religious clothing amid increasing nervousness about extremism. Beijing blames separatists for several deadly bomb and knife attacks that have killed hundreds of people over the past two years or so* (The Express Tribune, 13 January, 2015).

At the same time, the blue burqa is also considered a cage and a garment that goes against women’s freedom. This is associated with traditional attitudes in the Pashtun areas, and is linked with other limits to social freedom. In the following example, the supposed “obligation” to wear a burqa is associated with “the Taliban’s oppressive social codes”:

*“Women are forced to wear burqas. In recent years, the Taliban’s oppressive social codes have not been enforced in many areas, as the Taliban tried to win popular support. Women cannot leave their houses without wearing the traditional head-to-toe blue burqa and must be accompanied by a male relative.”* (The Nation, 14 October 2015)

However, the Pakistani press also draws the reader’s attention towards modern trends in Pashtun society. The love for modern-day purdah garments is gaining popularity among the new generation, especially in the bigger cities. Here, young girls consider the blue burqa as an old-fashioned garment causing suffocation; for example:



*When females wear the blue burqa, you can't distinguish if she is a 12-year-old child or a 60-year-old grandmother, I do not like bold fashion statement but I can't deny enjoying the flexibility of having some fancy work with colourful stones or threads on my burqa," says Marium her green eyes gleaming at the talk of fashion. "All my friends at school wear it (black burqa). How will we carry our school bags in the other (blue) one?" she asks rhetorically. "We can either handle that or we can handle ourselves. (The Dawn, 25 April 2014).*

On the other hand, the media controlled by Pashtuns seemed more positive towards burqa. Negative collocates were low in Pashtun newspapers such as the *Frontier Post* and *BBC Pashto*. The *Frontier Post* discussed the ongoing significance of the burqa culture in Afghanistan:

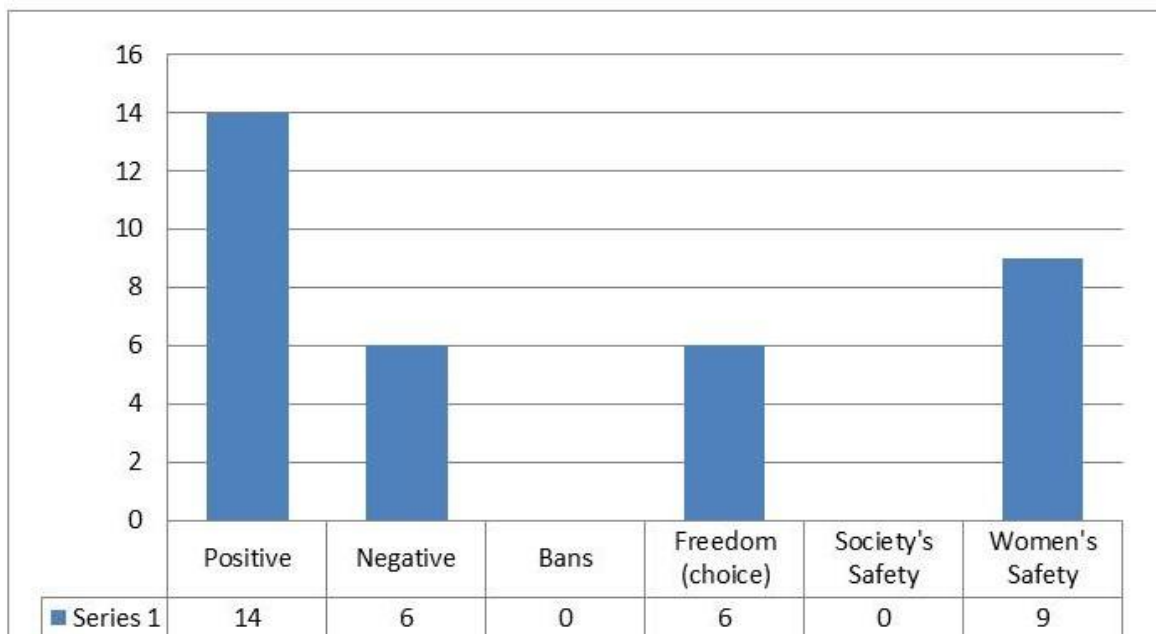
*If wearing a burqa, for example, is a sign of women's imprisonment or lack of freedom, it is still worn all over Afghanistan. Neither the Taliban increased the number of women in burqa nor did the US invasion reduce its use (The Frontier Post, 22 September 2011).*

### Interview Analysis

This phase of the study is important because it considers the voices of the actual burqa users to know their stances on the use of the burqa. The results are based upon 20 field interviews with Pashtun women from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Figure 3 below shows the statistics for all the responses, after classification and analysis:

**Figure 3**

*Statistics from interviews with Pashtun women*



As shown in figure 3, 14/20 responses are positive and consider the burqa to be a cultural symbol of Pashtun and Islamic identity. This study identifies several factors contributing to their positive attitude:

- A. **Cultural bonds:** Pashtun people share great affection for their cultural norms and that is why some of the interviewees considered wearing a burqa, and especially the shuttlecock, an honor which is considered an important pillar of their *Pashtunwali* culture. For example, interviewee (16) says “*if you want to be respected by your family, husband, and society, you must wear a shuttlecock*”. Another interviewee (12) says “*A burqa is a garment that honors our family among the others in the society*”. Similarly, a 75-year-old interviewee says, “*Shuttlecock is an honor and a fashionable burqa is a fashion and beauty*”. Interviewee (6) says “*I am a widow and a poor lady; I should follow what is there in the culture I can’t go against it*”.

Moreover, treating burqa as a religious garment is a common practice among Pashtuns in the Pashtun belt of Pakistan and Afghanistan:

- B. **Religious motivation:** Religious feeling also accompanies cultural bonds in the journey of obedience. Not only the religious women and the women with less education show more love for the burqa, but also the educated class of the society consider burqa as a good garment because it is Islamic. For example, interviewee (1), who is a madrassa student, says “*Quran says ‘women should cover their bodies properly’*”. In addition, Muhseera Khan, a 13-year-old girl says, “*I have to wear a burqa because in my school and madrassah purdah is mandatory and I think it is more Islamic too*”.
- C. **Body’s safety:** The issue of protecting the body in public places is broadly discussed among the interviewees. They considered burqa to be one of the best garments that can prevent them from being seen by strangers in public places and streets. For example, interviewee (7) says, “*I wear the black burqa because in this way I am following the Pashtun culture and also honoring my family in the society by protecting my body and face not being seen by strangers*”.
- D. **Honoring husband and family:** The fact of women wearing a burqa matters for men in Pashtun society, because men think that if the female members of their families are seen with bare faces in the streets or markets, it will bring shame to them. This is one of the main reasons why women in these areas wear burqas. Similarly, the examples show how women are coerced by their male family members; for example, interviewee (16) says “*My husband says ‘if you want me to be respected by the others in the society, please stick to your burqas and do not show them your faces’*”. Interviewee (2) says, “*My husband says to me if you are dying you must die wearing a shuttlecock*”. Likewise, the madrassah teacher says, “*My husband wants to see me in a shuttlecock and it makes him happy*”. These women seemed to accept this social convention, and the tone of their responses did not suggest a strong desire to resist.

However, there were some interviewees (6/20 negative respondents) who seemed dissatisfied with the use of burqa. They were mostly educated women and for them freedom of choice was more important than following others blindly. For example, *Azra Khalil*, a graduate in the field of Arts from the University of Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, says, “*I don’t care if someone has dirty eyes, why should I cover my body for that?*” Similarly, other examples like

her show that the educated women in Pashtun society look at their religion in a different way – as a religion that provides equal opportunities to both men and women. They prefer to use the Paronay (a Pashtun cultural dupatta or a scarf). For example, interviewee (18) says,

*Yes, Islam tells us to do purdah but Paronay can also hide our body too, and Islam also allows us to choose whatever we want.*

In addition, their dislike of burqa and especially the shuttlecock was associated with lack of comfort the burqa provides. This is confirmed by the use of certain metaphorical words to describe burqa or shuttlecock as an identity-less and freedom-less garment; for example, the phrases “*cage-with two telescopic holes*” (interviewee 2):

*Naa! da ghata burqa zama na da khwakha da kho sama daroben wala pranja vi*

*No! I don't like this big burqa (shuttlecock) it is like a cage with two telescopic holes*

Another metaphor was the “*tandoor*”, meaning the burqa as a garment full of heat which is unbearable mostly in the summer time (interviewee 4). Similarly, 6/20 interviewees (shown in figure 6.15) consider the shuttlecock to be a burqa that causes headache, heavy-headiness, and breathing difficulties:

*Ala toba! Da shuttlecock missal kho sama da tandoor/tanoor day. Zama pake saa Bandigi”*

*OMG! A shuttlecock is like a hot burning Tandoor. I suffocate in it*

### **Questionnaires Analysis**

The following figure 4 illustrates results of questionnaires administered to Pashtun women to find out about their attitudes towards burqa. This study found mixed responses towards this garment, as shown in fig 4:

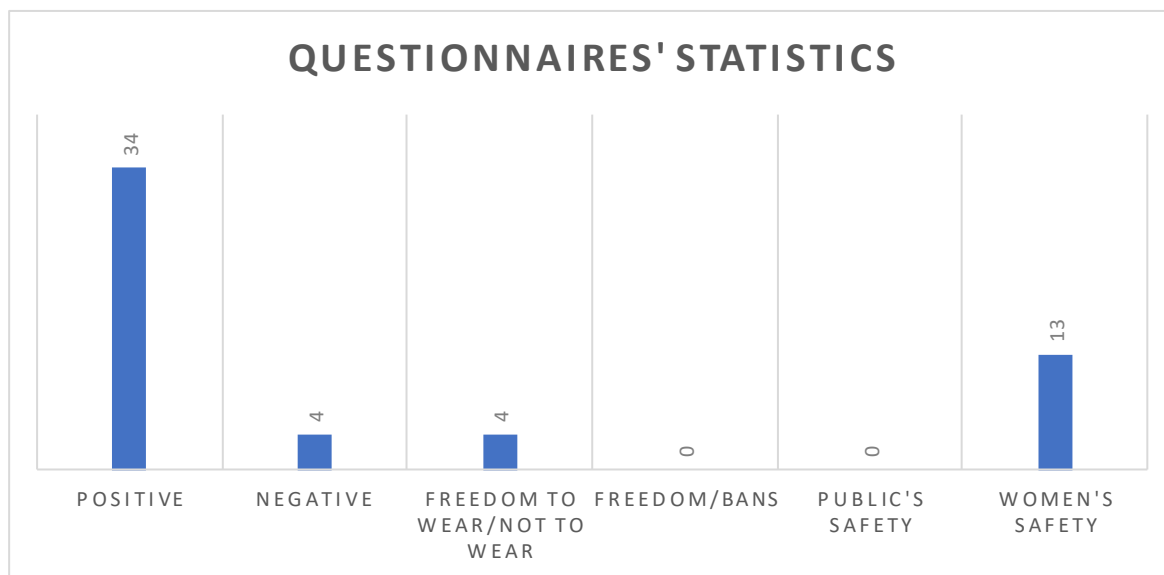
As shown in the figure below, the responses towards burqa are more positive in this local community. This positivity can be seen in two different categories: first, they are positive in concerning burqa as an Islamic identity garment and second, they emphasize the use of burqa to avoid people's eyes in public. Almost all the participants considered burqa as an Islamic identity garment or a good garment for the body's protection. Their positive attitude was mainly influenced by their Islamic and cultural background. Their responses show that they were not forced to wear burqa but they evolved this affection by seeing their elders and following what they are taught in the Islamic Madrassahs. We may note that these respondents were younger than those in the interview study, since most of them were still at school, and so their positive attitude may also reflect a lack of experience.

However, there is an inevitable negativity emerging gradually in members of the educated class of Pashtun society, as can be seen in some of the negative responses towards burqa. For example, one student (26) prefers a *Paronay* over a burqa, and says “*I don't like burqa but like to wear a Paronay which gives me more freedom*” because she thinks of the burqa

as a sort of cage that is against her freedom. Similarly, another student (28) says “I like to wear a Paronay because then I can show my clothes to my friends, burqa gives no freedom”. She is more concerned about the freedom to reveal her identity to her fellow classmates. Furthermore, another student (11) writes “I don’t like to wear a burqa because I live in Islamabad where nobody wears it”. This student lives in the capital of Pakistan (which is a modern city) where people do not wear burqa, and she is more concerned about the freedom of choice either to wear a burqa or not – due to the lack of cultural and religious restrictions in big Pakistani cities, the people are allowed to do things according to their own choices. So, in spite of being a part of what is going on in her surroundings, she prefers not to wear a burqa.

#### Figure 4

Results of the questionnaire with Pashtun women



In addition, one of the teachers expressed the same stance concerning lack of freedom in burqa. She thinks that it is the Paronay that provides her with more freedom in doing her daily work in comparison with an enveloping burqa. Collectively, four questionnaires are filled in by the female teachers, who are all mature and well educated. The teachers seem more modern than their students, and they consider Paronay or black burqa as the best Purdah garment. All of the teachers prefer either Paronay or black burqa as the garment of their choice, and that might provide a reason to encourage the students to wear modern burqas.

#### Discussion

The traditions are changing with time and certain factors are contributing to people’s choices. This study found a negative attitude both in the media and in public stances towards Islamic and cultural garments such as burqa. The negative media trails and the media coverage of the modern fashion industry are somehow responsible for the attitudes found in younger Pashtun women’s attitudes. This study found that in comparison with those women who have never attended a school or who do not watch TV, women who are involved in getting education and

who are aware of the modern world through social and electronic media had a soft spot for the modern, less-concealing garments. All traditional garments are praised by those who prioritize cultural and religious influences, and most of these are women from remote areas and local Islamic scholars. By contrast, the women from cities, educational institutions, and rich families avoid the use of all types of traditional garments. Last but not the least, Pashtun culture is gradually leaving its roots and soon the world will see a modern Pashtun culture which will allow women to choose what they wear.

After analyzing a huge corpus and coding each representation, this CADS study found high negativity towards female Islamic dress, particularly the burqa. The press in Pakistan used certain words that conveyed high negativity such as: *burqa-clad bombers*, *suicide attackers*. The reports in the Pakistani press betrayed an anti-Pashtun bias. The burqa was considered a helpful weapon for terrorists in planting suicide bombers, since burqa is the best garment for terrorists to cross army check posts, especially in the operation-stricken zones of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan. Moreover, Punjabi newspapers in particular seemed more negative when it came to the discussion of Pashtun-representative *shuttlecock* burqa, which is considered a garment that helps terrorists and one that is imposed on women against their free will. The press generally represents burqa as a garment imposed on women.

The analysis of all these interviews revealed a strong difference of opinions among the literate and less literate respondents. Interviewees connected to the educational fields seemed discontented with the traditional, religiously imposed garments such as the shuttlecock burqa. They preferred the use of Paronay, or at least a fashionable black burqa. They considered the shuttlecock, in particular, as a garment of suffocation. Moreover, women from big cities who had no formal education also considered big burqas to be a strange form of dress. For them, a shuttlecock burqa is understood as a garment only to be used in villages. However, the villagers, the religion-oriented people, and the female who had never attended a school considered burqa as a part of their Eman (religion/beliefs). They considered shuttlecock as one of the best body-concealing garments. Most of the village women use burqa to please their males, to evade the male gaze, and to get respect in society. They decide not to go against the norms and values of their culture in order to prevent the violence that will arise if they resist. Very religious women consider the use of burqa as a mandatory practice. They justify the use of burqa by giving examples from Quran and Hadiths, as for them the reward in paradise is more important.

Finally, the analysis of the questionnaires data revealed that most of the respondents (35) considered the fashionable black burqa as their favorite burqa: this is a garment of their own choice which is also an Islamic garment. Most of their responses have a common sentence: “*I like to use a fashionable Burqa because it is Islamic*”. Only five considered the shuttlecock as the best concealing garment.

This contrast in the responses of Pashtun young girls was unexpected, because from an Islamic point of view covering the whole body is important and there is no place for any type of fashionable garment that attracts strangers. But the respondents in the current study preferred the fashionable burqa or *Paronay* to be a full concealing garment like the shuttlecock (which is considered more Islamic and cultural by female Islamic scholars). This contradiction is interesting and leads the researcher to the conclusion that their choices may be mainly governed by the fashion shown to them through the electronic media, especially Indian TV dramas (the

researcher is informed by his collaborators). Most females in Pakistan love to watch Indian dramas and they consider Indian cinema the arbiter of their modern choices as shown by Ali, Khalid, and Hassan (2015, p. 171) in their study that the surge of Indian influence in the mainstream media of Pakistan has rigorously affected the language and dress of Pakistani females.

### **Conclusion**

This corpus-assisted study was designed to observe the attitudes in Pakistani media towards the cultural-cum-religious garment “burqa” by analyzing a corpus of Pakistani English, Urdu, and Pashto newspapers. In order to get a clear overview of stances towards burqa, this study also observed the behaviour of actual burqa users by analyzing a set of interviews and questionnaires conducted in Pakistan. This study found certain interesting comments, both from media and the actual users of burqa, that somehow makes this cultural garment controversial in non-Pashtun parts of the country as far as the media propagation is concerned: for example, Pakistani newspapers (both Urdu and English) are constantly relating “burqa” with terrorism and depicting it as an instrument against women’s freedom.

However, the second section of the study which was designed to observe the behaviour of actual burqa users has found differences between the behaviour of females when defining burqa: for example, the females who are literate or are still in the process of acquiring education consider burqa as a “garment of choice”, while the Madrassa-going students consider burqa especially the “Shuttlecock” as a garment of great honor protecting their Eman/Haya. On the other hand, there is also a difference in the definition of burqa for women living in cities compared with those living in villages; for example, the females living in cities consider burqa as a “garment of suffocation”, “a cage”, and “a hot tandoor”, while the females living in villages consider using burqa as protecting/following their families’ values/traditions and their husband’s honor in society.

It is clear from all these points that the trends are changing in Pakistani society and different factors are contributing to this gradual change – such as the role of the media which has been constantly deploying negativity against this cultural garment. In addition, the role of Indian dramas cannot be underestimated (Ali, et al. 2015) as the interest of Pakistani females in watching Indian dramas has changed their way of life and choices. Moreover, urbanization is also playing a special role in changing people and their cultures, because the cultures in Pakistani cities are different from those followed in the rural areas. Educated females in Pakistan are less receptive to the use of burqa and this might be because of social pressure encountered in their workplaces.

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