

# What Does “Unveiling” Unveil About Iranian Society? Before and After the Women, Life, Freedom Movement

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## Abstract:

The enforcement of mandatory hijab regulations in post-revolutionary Iran, which began after the Islamic Revolution of 1978, gave rise to movements advocating for hijab autonomy over the past decades. The nature of these movements, focusing on the freedom to choose whether to wear or not wear the hijab, brought forms of resistance in Iran's sociopolitical landscape. However, a significant aspect of women's resistance remained largely unexplored: the domestic struggle to redefine family perspectives on hijab. Hidden from view are the daily battles each woman wages to assert her sartorial rights before stepping outside. This research aims to shed light on the experiences of women interviewed by Radio Marz in the 2018 episode "Hijab in Families," with explicit authorization for analytical purposes. Furthermore, this study comparatively analyzes the narratives of 14 women from the subsequent January 2023 episode, "The Unveiled," which aired three months after the assassination of Mahsa Amini. This study reveals a nuanced narrative highlighting two suppressive levels aiming at the freedom of women when they boldly remove the veil or decide not to wear hijab completely: the domestic level reveals the internal authoritarianism of parents and male members of the family, and the society level reveals the pervasive culture of body-shaming that unveiled women confront. Through a comprehensive analysis of these narratives, this research concludes that the struggle for women in Iran is not only a result of state power but is also influenced by lower hierarchical, domestic, and societal pressures. This research enhances our understanding of the multifaceted challenges that women in Iran face in their pursuit of sartorial autonomy and self-expression. By bringing these experiences to the forefront, this study aims to stimulate broader discussions about gender dynamics, agency, and cultural transformation.

**Keywords:** Hijab, body politics, domestic violence, Iran, women's autonomy