

# Thinly Veiled: The effect of religious veiling on perceptions of intimate partner violence



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**BACKGROUND:** Nearly half of Muslims surveyed in a recent Gallup poll indicated that they had been the victim of religious prejudice within the last year, more than followers of any other major religious group (Gallup, Inc., n.d.). It is not only overt hate crimes, but also microaggressions that factor into feelings of discrimination (Nadal et al., 2012). Furthermore, while intimate partner violence (IPV) remains an enduring problem in America (Smith et al., 2017), and has been especially investigated in minority communities (Ellison et al., 2007), the intersection of microaggressive stereotypes about Muslim-American women, particularly those who veil, and perceptions of IPV has been left largely unexplored by the literature. The aim of the present study was to examine that intersection to better understand how stereotypes about religious veiling affect perceptions of partner abuse. It was expected that participants would be more likely to envision a veiled woman in an IPV scenario.

## METHODS

1. Recruited undergraduates ( $N = 55$ ) for pilot at PNW SLAC, followed by full replication at large regional university.
2. Randomly assigned to read a vignette describing either a healthy relationship or a violent one.
3. After reading, participants were forced to choose which woman (*right*) reflected the woman in the story.
4. Demographic was also collected.

## RESULTS

- Pilot indicated a slight difference in target selection within the IPV condition.
- Participants in the healthy condition overwhelmingly selected the non-veiled woman (34.50%,  $N = 19$ ) over the veiled woman (12.70%,  $N = 7$ ),  $\chi^2 (N = 55) = 4.50, p = .03$ .
- Full replication did not reproduce findings; participants in the healthy condition ( $n = 59$ ) were not statistically more inclined to select the veiled woman (23/49, 39%) than the non-veiled woman (19/49, 32.2%), a non-statistically significant difference in proportions of 0.68,  $p = .442$ .

## DISCUSSION

Results fail to confirm the hypothesis that veiled women are seen as more likely to be involved in IPV relationships than non-veiled women, contrary to data collected in the pilot. Possibly the first study was in error; alternatively, populations across the two campuses may differ in exposure to students with hijabs, knowledge of Islam, or salience of race and ethnicity during the years the study was completed.

# People are just as likely to envision veiled women in healthy romantic relationships as non-veiled women.



Targets presented to participants asked to read vignettes depicting healthy or violent relationships. Participants disproportionately selected the non-veiled woman when envisioning a healthy relationship.

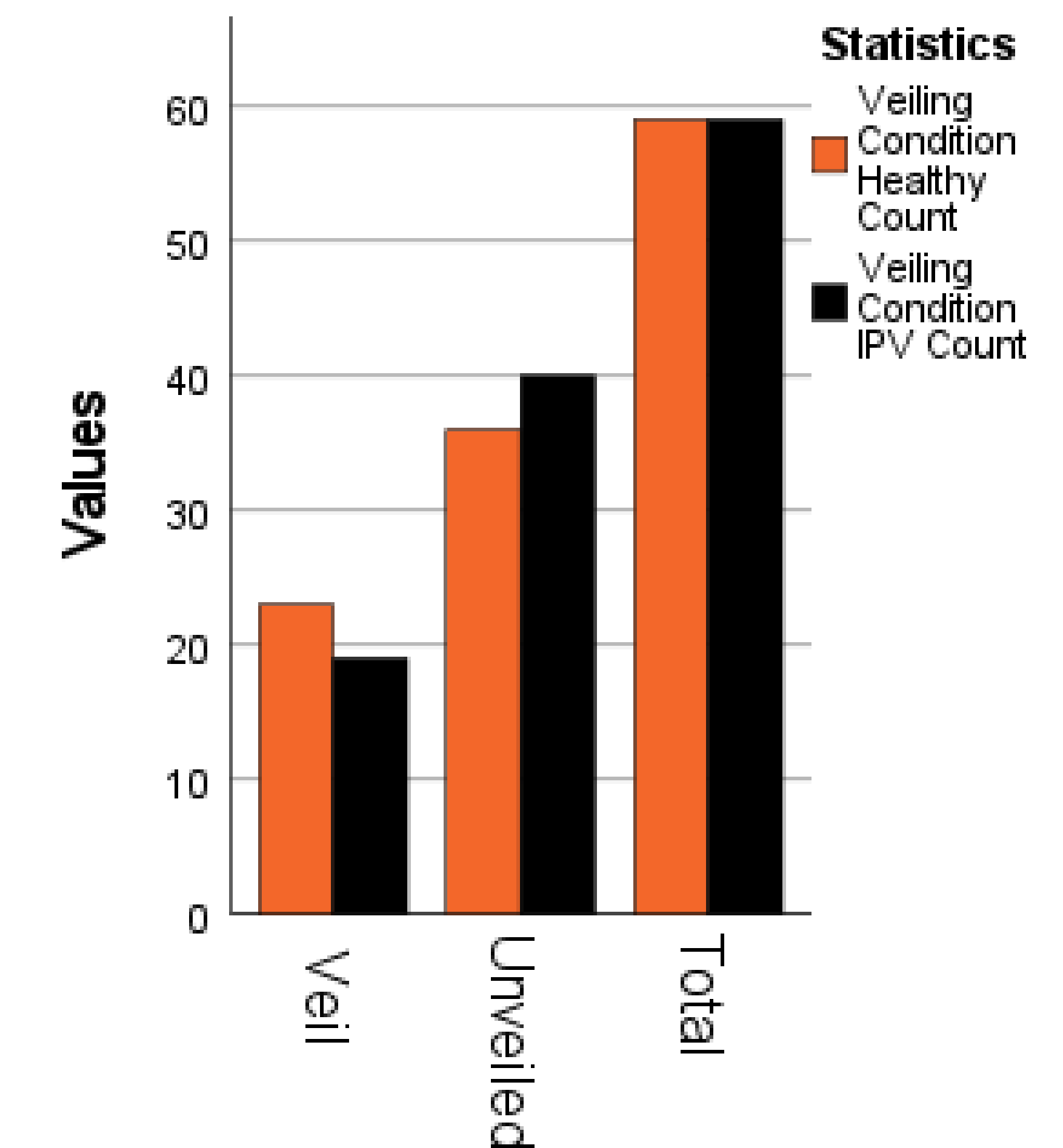


Veiling Condition	Calm	Count	Which image most likely represents Lila in the story?		Total
			Veil	Unveiled	
Calm			23	36	59
		Expected Count	21.0	38.0	59.0
		% within Veiling Condition	39.0%	61.0%	100.0%
IPV		Count	19	40	59
		Expected Count	21.0	38.0	59.0
		% within Veiling Condition	32.2%	67.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	42	76	118
		Expected Count	42.0	76.0	118.0
		% within Veiling Condition	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%

	Value	df	Chi-Square Tests		
			Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.591 <sup>a</sup>	1	.442		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.333	1	.564		
Likelihood Ratio	.592	1	.442		
Fisher's Exact Test				.564	.282
Linear-by-Linear Association	.586	1	.444		
N of Valid Cases	118				

118 participants were randomly assigned to read a short vignette depicting a relationship suggesting intimate partner violence ("IPV") or a calm communicative partnership ("Calm"), 59 participants in each intervention. The test of two proportions used was the chi-square test of homogeneity. After reading the vignette, participants were asked to assign one of two images of a woman as the likeliest to represent the woman in the vignette they read. At the conclusion of data collection, 23 participants (39%) in the Calm condition selected the veiled woman as likely representing the woman in the story compared to 19 participants (32.2%) in the IPV condition, a non-statistically significant difference in proportions of 0.68,  $p = .442$ .

The difference between the two independent binomial proportions was not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in perceptions of IPV between veiled and unveiled women.



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