EXPERIENCES OF BELONGING AND ISLAMOPHOBIA AMONG HIJABI MUSLIM COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract

Students from marginalized religious backgrounds face myriad challenges on college and university campuses, and negative effects are especially pronounced for Muslim students. Wearing hijab can put college students at a greater risk of marginalization amidst a climate of Islamophobia. Although there is a growing body of research on Muslim college student experiences, there is a more limited exploration of hijabi students' experiences. In this exploratory online survey study (n=41), we sought to understand experiences of belonging and Islamophobia among hijabi Muslim students across the United States. We adopted a critical quantitative approach, specifically interested in the connection of hijabi students' sense of belonging, social adjustment, and experiences of microaggressions to their adherence to the Islamic dress code, membership in a Muslim student organization (MSA), and identifying with a minoritized racial group. We found that more modest dress was associated with lower perceived support from peers and faculty, while reported microaggressions were negatively related to faculty empathy. The strongest effects were involvement in MSA on social adjustment, and having a white identity on perceived faculty support. This study contributes to our understanding of the role of student affairs professionals, faculty, and higher education administrators in supporting hijabi students to succeed as their whole authentic selves.

Integration and feelings of belonging among students in higher education are important for student persistence (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For minoritized college students, feelings of belonging help predict persistence (Patten & Rice, 2008; Tinto, 1994) and academic success (Gummadam et al., 2016; Walton & Cohen, 2011). Marginalized populations, however, may struggle with developing a strong sense of belonging in their educational institution (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Walton & Cohen, 2011). Students from marginalized religious backgrounds face myriad challenges on college and university campuses, including exclusionary campus climates (Mayhew et al., 2014), bias incidents and microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2012), and feelings of confusion and uncertainty (Bowman & Small, 2012). For example, the dropout rate of students from minoritized religious groups is higher than Christian students, the privileged group in the United States (Patten & Rice, 2008). These effects are especially pronounced for Muslim students: The majority of U.S. college students (54%) believe Muslims are not accepted on their campuses (Rockenbach et al., 2014). Negative stereotypes against Muslims impact campus religious climate and worldview diversity (Rockenbach et al., 2017). In the five days following the 2016 presidential election, over 60 anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant incidents were reported at universities (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016), while faculty noted Islamophobic incidents on campus and Muslim students' feelings of vulnerability (Miller & Pouraskari, 2019). Recent anti-Muslim incidents at universities around the United States have included anti-Muslim statements on social media from professors (Flaherty, 2018), invitations to anti-Muslim speakers on campus (Roll, 2017), and silence from university administrators amidst Trump-era Muslim ban policies (Whitehead et al., 2019).

Muslim women who wear traditional head coverings reveal their faith through their appearance, making them more vulnerable to outward discrimination than Muslims across gender identities who do not wear a head covering (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009). There are a variety of forms of hair coverings, head scarves, and veils that are used across cultures and can depend on personal preferences (Bucar, 2017; Göle, 1996; Seggie & Sanford, 2010). We recognize these important personal and cultural variations but use the Arabic term hijab (Bucar, 2017) as an umbrella term for these types of hair coverings in this paper. The hijab uniquely situates intersectionality around ethnicity, race, gender, and religion (Karaman & Christian, 2020; Selod, 2019). Hijabi women in western countries face challenges compared to other religious populations as a result of misrecognition, discrimination, and exclusion (Bigger, 2006), stemming from their visibility as Muslim (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Asmar et al., 2004; Ramarajan & Runell, 2007). For hijabi college students, these challenges may be heightened as they experience prejudice and discrimination on campus, which can affect their lives academically and socially. Hijabi students have reported differential faculty treatment, which may result in lowered expectations, academic struggles, or dropping a class altogether (Asmar et al., 2004). Hijabi students may also deal with isolation or lack of engagement from their fellow students (Seggie & Sanford, 2010). Muslim students may feel a burden to positively represent their entire religion to disprove harmful stereotypes (Foster, 2021; Whitehead et al., 2019). All of these challenges can shape hijabi students' sense of belonging and add to a climate of Islamophobia on college campuses.

Although there is a growing body of research on Muslim college student experiences broadly (e.g., Cole et al., 2020; Foster, 2021; Gao, 2018; Whitehead et al., 2019), there is a more limited exploration of hijabi students' experiences explicitly. Our study examined the experiences of hijabi Muslim students, particularly feelings of adjustment, belonging, and instances of Islamophobia in U.S. higher education. Specifically, we explored the relationship of these experiences to students' ad-

herence to Islamic dress code, including wearing hijab. This study contributes to our understanding of the role of student affairs professionals, faculty, and higher education administrators in supporting hijabi students in building community, navigating Islamophobic incidents, and succeeding as their whole authentic selves.

Literature Review

Islamophobia and Microaggressions in Higher Education

The term Islamophobia has been defined among scholars as hatred or fear of Muslims and those who look like they are Muslim (Quraishi, 2005; Zine, 2003) and has evolved from referring to individual levels of hatred or dislike to include racism and violence against Muslims at both individual and systemic levels (Cesari, 2011; Hussain, 2015; Love, 2017). Sheehi (2011) elaborated, classifying Islamophobia as an ideology formed by a culture implying a set of fixed beliefs which influence and inform governmental policies, social norms and practices, media, and political discourse. Love (2017) highlighted how Islamophobia mirrors other types of racism as a multifaceted means to subordinate a marginalized group and maintain a status quo of privilege and power.

In higher education, a system situated in Christian hegemony (Bowman & Small, 2012; Mayhew et al., 2014), Islamophobia can manifest interpersonally and structurally. Muslim students are often more likely than other students to feel discriminated against because of their religion or ethnicity by faculty, peers, and administrators (Foster, 2021; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Shammas, 2017; Steele et al., 2023). Muslim students are reluctant to report discrimination they experience because of the social cost, being viewed as oversensitive or making trouble (Miller & Kaiser, 2001; Shammas, 2017). Structurally, institutions have not always supported Muslim students through bias incidents, particularly amidst backlash and policy change following events like 9/11, the 2016 election, and implementation of Muslim ban policies (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Foster, 2021; Steele et al., 2021; Whitehead et al., 2019). Institutions may not have structures like support services, mosques or interfaith centers, trainings and workshops, or religiously-minded policies to effectively aid marginalized students (Cole et al., 2020; Mayhew et al., 2014). A lack of Muslim staff and faculty on campus can also contribute to a lack of support and feelings of invisibility (Seggie & Sanford, 2010). The cumulative impacts of discrimination and harassment can manifest in fear and anxiety (Foster, 2021; Whitehead et al., 2019), disruptions to routine (Allen, 2014), jeopardized self-esteem (Gao, 2018), and health issues (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2013).

Meaning of the Hijab

Wearing a hijab or veil is a practice that started before Islam in ancient societies such as Mesopotamia where covering the head and face signified free and respectable women from enslaved women and prostitutes (Ahmed, 1992; Walther, 1993). There is some disagreement among scholars about whether covering was required only for the prophet's wives or all Muslim women (Tariq-Munir, 2014). Gradually, the hijab has spread in the whole Muslim community, mostly for its ties to the elite culture in the early Christian centuries (Ahmed, 1992). During the Islamic revival movement of the 1970s, women chose to cover as a political statement to resist Western cultural and military invasions (Guindi, 1999; Hirschmann, 1997). For some, the hijab is about privacy and protecting oneself from the public eye (Hirschmann, 1997), or commanding respect for their character and not their appearance (Read & Bartkowski, 2000). While only a few Muslim-majority countries require women by law to cover themselves in public, women may feel social pressure to cover (Afshar, 2008). Ultimately, wearing hijab is a religious and cultural custom and has differences in practice among varying cultures and countries (Read & Bartkowski, 2000; Reese, 1998).

Sense of Belonging and Social Adjustment

Feelings of community connection and belonging are crucial to college student success (Gummadam et al., 2016; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1994; Walton & Cohen, 2011). Hijabi women have reported misperceptions and being misunderstood by the campus community regarding their hijabs (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010). Two-thirds of the Muslim participants in Asmar et al.'s (2004) study reported feeling like they did not belong on campus. Hijabi students face difficulties adjusting to their institutional environment (Rangoonwala et al., 2011). They may experience a lack of awareness about their identity, with their hijabs either being called cute or exotic or being deemed a symbol of inferiority toward men (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010). Hijabi women experience a unique gendered racialization stemming from problematic narratives about being un-American or terrorists requiring surveillance (Karaman & Christian, 2020; Selod, 2019). Muslim women may feel pressure to conform to dominant cultural norms around dress, dating, and expression (Mir, 2007). Some Muslim women may ultimately feel pressure to stop wearing hijab altogether (Peek, 2003). The feelings of misunderstanding, suspicion, and fear can culminate in social isolation and alienation (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010).

These challenges to belonging can make community all the more important for Muslim students. For some students, finding a Muslim student group, like a Muslim Student Association (MSA), may help achieve that sense of belonging (Foster, 2021). Other Muslim students may build connections through social action and protest, creating safe spaces for worship, developing coalitions with other religious groups on campus, or partnering with Muslim groups in the local community (Whitehead et al., 2019). Some students may gain comfort and confidence in deepened connection to their faith in the midst of discrimination (Foster, 2021). As religious identity became central to Muslim students' sense of self, solidarity and group consciousness emerged (Peek,

2005). These findings related to Muslim college students complement existing scholarship on students who identify as Buddhist (e.g., Sharma & De Alba, 2018), Hindu (e.g., Kurien, 2005), and Sikh (DeVere, 2020), emphasizing the importance of intersecting identities, navigating bias incidents, and building community connections across religious groups. An institution that prioritizes religious diversity training, equitable policies, and interfaith engagement may help create the type of environment that can enhance a sense of belonging among hijabi students and other marginalized groups (Cole et al., 2020; Coley et al., 2022).

The Current Study

The hijab can have varied personal, religious, and cultural connections for individuals. Wearing hijab, however, can put college students at a greater risk of discrimination, violence, and microaggressions amidst a climate of Islamophobia. This marginalization can impact students' well-being, mental health, academic performance, and safety. Hijabi students can also be socially isolated from their peers, searching for an all-important sense of belonging to their community and institution. In this exploratory study, we sought to understand experiences of belonging and Islamophobia among hijabi Muslim students through two specific research questions:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between hijabi Muslim students' level of adherence to Islamic dress code and their sense of belonging, social adjustment, and experiences of microaggressions?
2. How does membership in a Muslim student organization or identifying with a minoritized racial group relate to hijabi Muslim students' adherence to Islamic dress code, sense of belonging, social adjustment, and experiences of microaggressions?

Methods

We adopted a critical quantitative approach

(e.g., López et al., 2018; Stage & Wells, 2014) in this study by focusing specifically on the experiences of hijabi Muslim students and using the lens of Islamophobia to develop the study instrumentation and interpret the findings. In line with the tenets of a *QuantCrit* approach (Gillborn et al., 2018), we acknowledge that Islamophobia is not easily quantified, that numbers are not impartial, that gender and racial/ethnic categories are not natural nor given, and that data are not self-explanatory. Further, we acknowledge that hijabi Muslim students experience gendered racialization at the intersection of their nationality and culture, their bodily signification, and their religious expression (Karaman & Christian, 2020). However, we believe that statistical analyses can play a role in efforts toward fostering more equitable and just higher education environments for marginalized groups, including hijabi Muslims. While we do not examine intersectionality via statistical methods in this study, we attend to diversity within the hijabi Muslim population and conceptualize categories in terms of power and inequality (Cole, 2009; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016).

Our team is composed of higher education researchers who study and advocate for marginalized and minoritized groups in American college settings. (Pouraskari) identifies as a spiritual woman who wore a hijab in her country of origin. Her dissertation work forms the basis of this study. (Dika) identifies as a humanist white woman and helped guide the critical quantitative approach to the study. (Fankovich) is an agnostic white cisman who has helped lead interfaith efforts on college campuses and has a passion for research and practice centering critical perspectives and worldview, religion, spirituality, and secularism.

Participants and Sampling

The target population of this study was hijabi Muslim college students, meaning those who identify as Muslim, wear the hijab that covers the hair and/or face and were enrolled in degree-seeking programs at the undergraduate level in baccalaureate degree granting institutions in the United States. Potential participants were required to meet those specific criteria, and there was no restriction based on citizenship. Recruitment was primarily carried out electronically via email, Facebook, and Instagram, both by targeting Muslim student affinity organizations and by snowball sampling.

The final sample for this study included 48 hijabi women, ranging in age from 18 to 30 years old. Detailed demographic information about the women in the sample is shown in Table 1. Many indicated they had been wearing a hijab since elementary school years (37.5%), and another plurality had begun wearing it in high school (25%). While the racial and ethnic identities of the participants were diverse across the sample, a plurality (43.75%) identified as white Middle Eastern, and around 30% identified within one of the Asian subgroups (mainly Indian or Southeast). In terms of educational background, the majority of participants had at least one parent who had completed a college degree (67.4%), and a majority had completed all of their schooling in the United States (70.8%). One student identified as international and did not complete any previous schooling in the United States. While students indicated studying in various regions of the country, several were located in institutions in the Southeast (46.81%), with a significant majority (81.6%) at public institutions. The participants were enrolled across a diversity of majors; however, there was a significant concentration in majors that would be considered STEM, e.g., biological sciences, physical sciences, engineering, health professions (72.92%). A majority of the women indicated being involved with their campus Muslim Student Association (MSA; 70.8%), most frequently as a member (50%), with ten women (20.8%) indicating leadership in their MSA.

Instrumentation and Variables

Participants completed an online survey through SurveyShare, which included questions about their demographic background, their dress and grooming, and their experiences of social adjustment, sense of belonging, microaggressions, and hostility on college campuses. The survey instrument was composed of items and scales from existing measures, as well as items adapted and created by the researchers to align with the study's unique purpose. The full survey instrument is detailed in Pouraskari (2020). Descriptive statistics for all scales are shown in Table 2.

Adherence to Islamic Codes of Modesty

We modified the Adherence to Islamic Standards of Dress Scale (Rangoonwala et al., 2011) for use in this study. The original summed scale included eight items referring to dress and grooming style while at school or workplace, each scored on a four-point frequency scale. For our study, we added three items to include additional dress and grooming behaviors (wear colorful clothing, use eyeliner, use nail polish) that represent a more Western dress code for women. Prior to creating a scale score, we removed one item (wearing a niqaab) due to lack of variance. The final scale had 10 items, creating a variable with a theoretical range from 10-40, and acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's α=0.76).

Social Adjustment

We used the social adjustment subscale of the adjustment scale developed by Kaya and Weber (2003) to measure perceived social adjustment in this study. The original subscale includes seven items scored on a seven-point agreement scale. We removed the item referring to a roommate, for a total of six thematically cohesive items. The scale score was created by summing the items (range 7-42), and scores showed evidence of good internal consistency (Cronbach's α=0.87).

Sense of Belonging

To measure sense of belonging, we used Hoffman et al.'s (2002) Sense of Belonging Scale (SBS). The instrument has 26 items, scored on a five-point scale. Five factor scores are created as mean scores of the associated items (range 1-5): perceived peer support (eight items), perceived classroom comfort (four items), perceived faculty support/comfort (six items), perceived isolation (four items), and empathetic faculty understanding (four items). We used the five individual factor scores as measures of sense of belonging in this study, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients (ranging 0.77-0.92) showing good internal consistency.

Islamophobic Microaggressions

While there has been some qualitative research on experiences of Islamophobic microaggression and hostility for Muslims (Nadal et al., 2012), and for hijabi Muslims specifically (Wazni, 2015), there are no published instruments to measure microaggressions experienced by Muslims in the United States. Thus, the researchers consulted the aforementioned qualitative research, popular media, as well as existing instruments to measure microaggressions and hostility experienced by LGBTQ students (Woodford et al., 2015) to develop an exploratory measure of student experiences of Islamophobia on campus. The instrument included a total of 49 Islamophobic experiences, including 34 individual microaggressions, six hijab-related microaggressions, and nine experiences of hostility and violence, rated on six-point frequency scale. We created mean scale scores for individual microaggressions and hijab-related microaggressions, and the scales showed acceptable internal consistency (.96 and .67, respectively) and face validity. Due to little variance in experiences of hostility, we elected not to include it in the study. See Pouraskari (2020) for detailed description of item wording and response categories.

Data Analysis

We conducted a missing value analysis, which indicated that the only variables with missing data were social adjustment and the two microaggressions scales (6 cases, 12.5%). Little's MCAR test determined that the values were missing at random ($p>.05$) thus we elected to use listwise deletion given that the complete cases could be considered a random subset of the full data and would permit comparability to future analyses (Little & Rubin, 2002). The final analytic sample was n=41.

To examine the relationship of modesty to belonging, adjustment, and experience of microaggressions, we used Pearson correlation (r). To determine differences in modesty, sense of belonging, social adjustment, and experiences of microaggressions based on involvement in MSA and racial/ethnic identity, we calculated t-tests and effect sizes (Cohen's d). Effect sizes provide an estimate of practical significance and permit comparability across studies (Lakens, 2013). All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS 27. Correlation coefficients (r) were evaluated at the 0.05 statistical significance level ($p<.05$), while strength of the relationships was evaluated as weak/small (between -0.3 and +0.3), strong (less than -0.7 or greater than +0.7), and moderate (between -0.3 and -0.7 or between +0.3 and +0.7). Cohen's d effect sizes were interpreted as small (d = 0.2), medium (d = 0.5), and large (d = 0.8) based on benchmarks suggested by Cohen (1988), considering the novelty of our findings and lack of comparable literature.

Results

For the first research question, we were interested in the nature of the relationship between hijabi Muslim students' level of adherence to Islamic dress code and their sense of belonging, social adjustment, and experiences of microaggressions. Coefficients and statistical significance for each relationship are shown in Table 3. Modesty had moderate and statistically significant negative correlations with perceived peer support and perceived faculty support ($p<.05$). Correlations of modesty with all other variables were negligible ($p>.05$). When looking at correlations among the belonging, adjustment, and microaggressions variables, there were moderate to strong positive relationships among peer support, faculty support, class comfort, and faculty empathy ($p<.05$-$p<.01$). Isolation had a moderate negative correlation with both peer and faculty support ($p<.05$-$p<.01$). Individual and hijab-related microaggressions were strongly and positively correlated ($p<.01$). Experiences of individual and hijab-related microaggressions had moderate negative correlation with faculty empathy $p<.05$-$p<.01$).

For the second question, we wanted to understand the connection of membership in a Muslim student organization or identifying with a minoritized racial group to hijabi Muslim students' adherence to Islamic dress code, sense of belonging, social adjustment, and experiences of microaggressions (Table 4). When examining effect sizes based on involvement in MSA, there were moderate positive effects on social adjustment (d=.60) and perceived peer support (d=.53). Not being involved in MSA has a small effect on class comfort (d=.35) and on isolation (d=.35). Having a white identity had a large, statistically significant positive effect on perceived faculty support (d=.74), and a moderate positive effect on other perceived supports (peer support, class comfort, faculty empathy; d=.41-.53). Interestingly, having a white identity also has a small effect on individual microaggressions (d=.27). Identifying as a minoritized racial group has a small effect on social adjustment (d=.20), but also isolation (d=.24).

Discussion

Hijabi Muslim students in our study reported lowered feelings of value and belonging to the university community. Specifically, hijabi participants who had higher levels of adherence to Is-

lamic dress codes and modesty experienced lower feelings of support from peers and faculty. Having higher levels of adherence to Islamic dress code was linked to a lower sense of belonging among participants, adding to a feeling of being "other," which has been reflected in previous studies (Abu-Ras & Suarez, 2009; Allen, 2014; Nayak, 2017; Syed & Pio, 2010). Contributing to the diminished sense of belonging are participants' various experiences with Islamophobic messages and challenges from their peers and faculty. The results showed a wide range of microaggressions experienced by hijabi women. Actual physical assault was the only item that none of the participants reported experiencing; however, one participant was threatened to be beaten up, four participants reported their hijab was pulled by a stranger, and three had their personal belongings damaged or destroyed by strangers because they knew they were Muslim. These results are aligned with previous research (Nadal et al., 2012; Read & Bartkowski, 2000; Seggie & Sanford, 2010) that overt hostility and violence against hijabi Muslim students were not commonly reported; however, participants were stared at, discriminated against, and received negative messages because of their Muslim appearance.

Stretching beyond the challenges with belonging and Islamophobia, our study also highlighted key connections to engagement in student organizations and intersecting social identities. Rangoonwala et al. (2011) found that wearing the hijab helped Muslim women to find each other on campus and have their own community. We did not explicitly explore relationships among hijabis; however, participants did note the importance of their religious identity as well as the value of connections to other Muslims in organizations like MSA. Students who engaged with these groups reported higher social adjustment and peer support. Our study also builds on the crucial connections to intersectionality for hijabi Muslim women (Karaman & Christian, 2020; Love, 2017; Selod, 2019), with students identifying in minoritized racial groups experiencing greater isolation and challenges with social adjustment. While our sample was somewhat limited in size and representation of hijabi Muslim students from more marginalized communities, our findings were fairly consistent with previous qualitative research and quantitative survey studies about Muslim students and students of color (e.g., Asmar et al., 2004; Cole & Ahmadi, 2010; Jasperse et al., 2012; Seggie & Sanford, 2010; Walton & Cohen, 2011). Students in minoritized racial groups experienced less faculty support than their white counterparts. Previous scholarship has emphasized race and/or ethnicity as part of the bias incidents experienced by Muslim college students (Karaman & Christian, 2020; Love, 2017; Steele et al., 2023), and our study builds on the important connection to intersecting marginalized identities Muslim students of color may have to navigate.

Implications for Practice

Student affairs professionals, faculty members, and higher level administrators have a powerful opportunity in helping support hijabi Muslim college students. First, practitioners can recognize and name the challenges for Muslim students on their campuses around belonging, Islamophobia, and support. Staff and faculty must also acknowledge the heightened risk for hijabi students, in particular displaying their religious identity outwardly. It is critical for college and university campuses to create space for students across worldview, religious, spiritual, and secular identities. For some campuses, resources like an Interfaith Center or Office of Spiritual Life may already exist. At other colleges, staff and faculty may need to advocate for the development of such spaces or strategize ways to incorporate vital student support into other departments (e.g., Multicultural Center, Office of Identity and Engagement). Whether space, programming, and resources are explicitly part of student affairs professionals' jobs, practitioners can advocate for equitable spaces (e.g., prayer and reflection rooms, women's-only fitness facilities), resources (e.g., connections to community Mosques

or other religious sites), policies (e.g., easy to navigate holiday accommodations), and programming (e.g., interfaith dialogues, holiday celebrations).

Additionally, student affairs professionals can help make connections for students to organizations like MSA that may already exist on campus or support student leaders in developing a new organization if one does not exist. Staff in departments like student conduct or residential life can ensure that bias incidents against Muslim students are validated and transparently addressed, recognizing the heightened risk and potential hesitancy to report for this marginalized group. Practitioners centering identity and equity work should highlight the myriad identities hijabi Muslim students are exploring simultaneously, creating opportunities for students to delve into their worldview, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and more. On campuses where identity-based offices may be separate (e.g., Women's Resources Center, Asian American Cultural Center), explicitly reaching out to hijabi students is key in developing connections and a sense of belonging. Ultimately, upper level administrators, in conjunction with faculty and staff, must ensure that worldview, religion, spirituality, and secular identities are supported through equitable policies, named as part of campus-wide diversity efforts, and backed by financial and personnel resources.

Directions for Future Research

Although there is a growing body of scholarship about Muslim students' experiences on college campuses (e.g., Cole et al., 2020; Foster, 2021; Gao, 2018; Whitehead et al., 2019), the research centering hijabi students is limited. For example, exploring hijabi students' experiences with various student affairs functional areas (e.g., housing and residential life, career centers) would reveal more nuanced and actionable information to improve services. Additionally, examining hijabi Muslims experiences in student leadership positions would help draw further connections to student organization involvement or illuminating

experiences while navigating highly visible roles (e.g., orientation leader, residential assistant). Although our study centered students' experiences, there is a critical need for greater understanding of hijabi staff and faculty experiences on campus. Future research can build on exploration of intersectionality, more explicitly examining identity experiences related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other social identities. This study also points to a need for exploring the nuances of other religious and secular group experiences (e.g., Sikhism, Judaism), particularly with visible markers around dress, hair, or head coverings.

Conclusion

Hijabi Muslim college students face Islamophobia and lack of belonging on college campuses. The visibility of the hijab and students' adherence to Islamic dress code can heighten these concerns for students. For staff, faculty, and administrators, validating these challenges, advocating for equitable change, and taking direct action can enhance support for hijabi Muslim students in their campus communities. Implications for Research and Practice

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Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n=48)

Characteristic	Categories	n[1]	%
Primary Ethnicity	Black/African American	7	14.58%
	White European	--	--
	White Middle Eastern	21	43.75%
	White North African	--	--
	Asian-Southeast	5	10.42%
	Asian-Indian	9	18.75%
	Multiracial	--	--
Education in United States	Elementary school (ages 6-11)	35	72.92%
	Middle school (ages 12-14)	38	79.17%
	High school (ages 15-18)	46	95.83%
	All levels	34	70.83%
Parents Have College Education	Mother only	7	14.58%
	Father only	7	14.58%
	Neither	15	31.25%
	Both	17	35.42%
	Did not report	2	4.17%
International Status	Yes	--	--
	No	47	97.91%
Region	New England	7	14.89%
	Mid-East	8	17.02%
	Great Lakes	--	--
	Plains	--	--
	Southeast	21	43.75%
	Rocky Mountains	--	--
	Far West	--	--
Institution Type	Public	39	81.25%
	Private, not religiously affiliated	5	10.42%
	Private, religiously affiliated	--	--
Academic Major	Arts & Humanities	5	10.42%
	Biological Sciences, Agriculture, & Natural Resources	16	33.33%
	Physical Sciences, Mathematics, & Computer Science	5	10.42%
	Social Sciences	6	12.50%
	Business	--	--
	Education	8	16.67%
	Engineering	--	--
	Health Professions	11	22.92%
	Other majors, undecided, undeclared	--	--
Involvement in MSA	Yes, member only	24	50.00%
	Yes, leadership position in the organization	10	20.84%
	No, not a member or a leader	14	29.16%

[1]Values under five are suppressed to avoid potential identification.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Scale Scores (n=41)

Continuous Variables	Description	Mean	SD	Range
Modesty (adherence to Islamic dress code) (α=0.81)	Sum of 10 items (adapted from Rangoonwala et al., 2011); four-point rating scale (1=never to 4=all of the time)	28.78	4.62	19.00-36.00
Social adjustment (α=0.87)	Sum of 6 items (Kaya & Weber, 2003) seven-point rating scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree)	18.46	6.18	4.00-28.00
Sense of belonging (Hoffman et al, 2002)	five-point rating scale (1=completely true to 5=completely untrue)			
Peer support (α=0.92)	Mean of 7 items	3.96	0.93	1.86-5.00
Faculty support (α=0.87)	Mean of 6 items	4.01	0.82	1.60-5.00
Class comfort (α=0.96)	Mean of 4 items	3.79	1.16	1.00-5.00
Isolation (α=0.77)	Mean of 4 items	2.92	0.86	1.25-5.00
Faculty empathy (α=0.92)	Mean of 4 items	3.85	1.02	1.00-5.00
Individual microaggressions (α=0.96)	Mean of 34 items coded on six-point rating scale (1=never, 2=very rarely, 3=rarely, 4=occasionally, 5=frequently, 6=very frequently)	2.32	0.97	1.03-5.23
Hijab-related microaggressions (α=0.67)	Mean of 6 items coded on six-point rating scale (1=never, 2=very rarely, 3=rarely, 4=occasionally, 5=frequently, 6=very frequently)	2.01	0.87	1.00-4.17

Table 3

Correlations[a] among Modesty, Belonging, Adjustment, Microaggressions, and Identities (n=41)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Social adjustment	--									
2.	Peer support	.215	--								
3.	Faculty support	-.089	.726**	--							
4.	Class comfort	-.083	.342*	.537**	--						
5.	Isolation	-.235	-.444**	-.316*	-.214	--					
6.	Faculty empathy	-.199	.484**	.762**	.539**	-.062	--				
7.	Modesty	.121	-.341*	-.328*	-.296	.240	-.159	--			
8.	Individual microaggressions	.178	-.236	-.304	-.105	.056	-.322*	-.066	--		
9.	Hijab microaggressions	.216	-.158	-.271	-.069	-.046	-.418**	-.080	.865**	--	
10.	MSA involvement	.257	.229	.028	-.151	-.154	-.086	-.015	.039	.130	--
11.	Marginalized racial identity	.102	-.204	-.354*	-.205	.120	-.264	.175	-.138	-.052	.213

[a] Correlation coefficients are point biserial between binary and continuous variables, and Pearson between continuous variables.

*$p<.05$. **$p<.01$. ***$p<.001$

Table 4

Effect Sizes of MSA Involvement and Marginalized Racial Identity on Belonging, Adjustment, Microaggressions, and Modesty (n=41)

Variable	MSA involvement Cohen's d (group effect)	Marginalized racial identity Cohen's d (group effect)
Social adjustment	0.604 (MSA)	0.199 (MRI)
Peer support	0.534 (MSA)	0.406 (white)
Faculty support	0.064 (MSA)	0.739* (white)
Class comfort	0.348 (non-MSA)	0.409 (white)
Isolation	0.354 (non-MSA)	0.237 (MRI)
Faculty empathy	0.196 (non-MSA)	0.533 (white)
Individual microaggressions	0.089 (MSA)	0.271 (white)
Hijab-related microaggressions	0.297 (MSA)	0.101 (white)
Modesty	0.034 (non-MSA)	0.347 (MRI)

* $p<.05$ for t test