

Incidence of hair loss concerns in women who wear the hijab: an exploratory survey

Keywords: alopecia, general dermatology, hair loss, hijab

The hijab is a religious head-covering worn by many Muslim women around the world from various cultural and racial backgrounds. Although approximately 40% of American Muslim women wear the hijab, there is a gap in the literature regarding alopecia among women who wear the hijab.¹ This is not due to an apparent lack of interest in the topic, as Shareef et al. have showcased that YouTube videos that focus on the hijab and alopecia have amassed over 17 million views. These videos discuss individuals' experiences and possible factors that are believed to contribute to their own alopecia, including tension on the hairline secondary to putting their hair into buns and ponytails, decreased motivation for haircare, and accumulation of sweat, among others.² This suggests that while the hijab itself may not contribute to alopecia, certain factors associated with how one wears their hijab may contribute to alopecia.^{3,4} The current study aims to understand the hijab-wearing practices of Muslim women and identify factors that could contribute to alopecia to better address the concerns of women who wear the hijab and provide future interventions.

An online survey was developed on RedCap and distributed to Hijabi women through mosque group chats and social media (Supplementary Table, <http://links.lww.com/IJWD/A49>). The study was determined to be exempt by the institutional review board. Prior to the administration of the survey, participants were informed about the expected duration, the ability to withdraw participation at any time throughout the study, and the confidentiality of all records. The survey consisted of 13 questions regarding hair loss and hair care practices. A total of 186 responses were collected with a response rate of 71.8%. Average age of participants was 37 ± 12.4 years old. Of respondents, 67% have worn the hijab for 10+ years and 45.3% wear the hijab for 6 to 10 hours a day. A majority of women reported wearing their hair in a bun (64.7%) and applying a "normal" amount of tension on their hairlines (66.3%). There was variation in the type of hijab material women reported using; however, the most popular materials were cotton (32.2%), chiffon (27.8%), and jersey (15.6%) and 57.4% of women reported wearing a hijab undercap most of the time. Most women received their information about haircare from social media (52.7%), the internet (47.3%), and friends (45.1%).

While 65% of respondents reported that they worried about alopecia, only 37.4% reported that they had noticed alopecia. Concerns of alopecia were unrelated to the number of years or

hours in a day one wore the hijab. Of those who noticed alopecia, 64.7% of women reported trying to treat it. Common treatments included the use of vitamins (68.2%), hair oils (86.4%), and decreasing tension on the hair (70.5%) with varying reported levels of effectiveness in reversing and preventing alopecia.

The results of the study demonstrate that many Hijabi women have concerns about alopecia. As the data show, most women receive information about haircare and hair loss from social media, which indicates that there is a need for dermatologists and health care professionals to provide inclusive health education to this population. This study also revealed hijab-wearing practices, such as hairstyles worn, materials of hijab used, and hours in the day worn, which can be used to tailor educational materials and interventions toward hair loss concerns in women who wear the hijab.

Conflicts of interest

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Study approval

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Author contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to this publication. M Hasan, LCH, and M Helm contributed to the project design, data collection, and writing/editing of this manuscript.

What is known about this subject in regard to women and their families?

- There is currently a gap in the literature regarding alopecia and the hijab; however previous studies have shown that women are interested in this topic and have viewed YouTube videos that pertain to hair loss and the hijab.

What is new from this article as messages for women and their families?

- The current article hopes to bridge this gap in the literature by discussing the attitudes of women wearing the hijab and their hijab-wearing practices.

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Supplementary data

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found at <http://links.lww.com/IJWD/A49>.

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