

# Challenges Muslim Women and Converts Faced in Wearing Hijab

Dr. Ramatu Ussif<sup>1</sup>, Rafatu Ussif<sup>2</sup>, Umar Yussif<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Anadolu University, Graduate School of Social Sciences, Department of Business Administration, Eskişehir, Turkey

<sup>2</sup>University of Cape Coast, Faculty of Education, Department of English, Cape-Coast Ghana

<sup>3</sup>University for Development Studies, Faculty of Mathematical Science, Department of Computer Science, Navrango, Ghana

Email: ramatussif@gmail.com / ramatuussif@anadolu.edu.tr<sup>1</sup>, rafatussif@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>, Yussif15@gmail.com<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** The issue of "hijab" (veil/Islamic dress) has of late become another controversial issue of discussions and facing numerous challenges in the world, especially in western societies. As the "hijabis" increased in the world, so as the challenges, discrimination, and racism to them towards their religious obligations, rights, and freedoms also increased. This article assessed the challenges that Muslim women and converts faced in wearing hijab with focused on issues in line with discrimination, hatred, and negative perceptions about women in the hijab. The challenges usually come from family & friends, at the workplace, and in the public. The study again concentrates on the difficulties Muslim women face and how the challenges can be minimized if not eradicated. Relevant literature in several studies was reviewed on the subject matter which helps come up with the vivid challenges born Muslim women and converts go through in the public, with their family & friends, at the workplace and market and indicates also, how the challenges would be minimized by offering some remedies. The findings of the research create awareness about Islam and Muslim Islamic dress, contribute to the understanding of Islamic cultural, social, religious, and the hijab, and it again provides an understanding of what Muslim women go through daily worldwide and how to manage the situation. We conclude that Muslim women across the world must be allowed to observe their rights by having the freedom to religion and worship. These would bring peace, loving, understanding, cooperation, and respect among all religions. Finally, the study recommends that all stakeholders should help solve the challenges "hijabis" faced worldwide.

**Keywords**— Islam, Muslim women hijab, Converts, Challenges, Racism, and discriminations.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Muslim women's hijabs differ from each other. Covering of the head, hair only, and the covering of the entire body including ears, neck, etc. the "niqab" that also covers all parts of the body including head except for the eyes. This paper just discusses the challenges of hijab/veil covering by the Muslim women and the converts but not the "niqab". Recently, hijab issues by Muslim women have been receiving much attention in the societies, among scholars, and by the western media. The reason for some of these much attention is the increasing number of Muslims and the fast-growing Muslim number in western societies (Darraj, 2011; Moors & Tarlo, 2013). Islam is fast growing and the fastest-growing religion in the world, and the population of the Muslims worldwide represents 23% of the world's population (Alvi, 2003). In the next 20 years, the population of Muslims was estimated to increase to 2.2 billion by 2030 from 1.6 billion in 2010 (Albrecht, Jacobs, Retief, & Adamski, 2015). About half of the Muslim population are living in western societies and non-Muslim Countries. Some of the places are: USA, UK, France, and half of the population living there are Women. (Pew Research-Center, 2012). Some people in Western societies treat women in the hijab as a sign of oppression of Muslim women (Ruby, 2006). The converts to Islam not only renegotiate their religion and identity but also other aspects of their life like gender, cultural, and social identities. Several changes are manifested in "hijabis" concrete and practical ways such as new behaviour and bodily practices that are new. These changes involve different aspects of forming identities like changes in national, language, cultural, name, social, ethnic identity, racial, new styles, dress, and circumcision. For example, with the dress, the new Muslim change her lifestyle in wearing the hijab by the law of conduct of Islam. Due to these challenges Nazma Khan, founded the world hijab day on 2nd February every year to educate and resolve some challenges and to address challenges women in the hijab faced worldwide. (World Hijab Day Organization).

## Background of Hijab-Wearing

Veiling is a sacred practise that has existed among people since time immemorial. Throughout history, researches indicate veiling has been used by Persian, Mesopotamian, and ancient Egyptian, Hellenic, and Byzantine civilizations for different purposes and in different styles (El Guindi, 1999; Heath, 2008). For several decades, the wearing of Hijab has existed and is a sacred practice of the women for a longer time. From history, there is evidence of covering the hair or veiling which has been used by the ancient Egyptians, Persians, Arabians, Hellenics, Mesopotamians, and the Byzantine civilization in a different form, styles, and purposes (El Guindi, 1999; Heath, 2008). In religions like Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism veiling is a very common practice among men and women. Every religion, culture, and region uses similar veil but in different ways, with different meanings and on different occasions (El Guindi, 1999; Heath, 2008; Killian, 2003).

## The Religious Requirement for Wearing Hijab / Evidence in the Qur'an

Hijab is a cultural and religious symbol, especially for women believers. In Islam, Muslims believe that women wearing hijab are their religious rights and obligations. In the noble Qur'an, there is a direct commandment and ayahs for women prescribed covering their hair and neck. In Suratul An-Noor, ayah 31 (Chapter of the light, verse 31) Allah "subhanahu waata'ala" stated that:

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا  
يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى  
جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يَبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ

“And tell the women believers, not to higher their gaze looking at things that are forbidden/haram, and that, their private parts should be protected from sexual acts that are illegal, and their adornments not to be shown off, except that part which is an apparent example the eyes for the necessity seeing the way, or the hands' outer palms, or one of the eye, or to dress with hijab, like the veil, head cover, gloves, and apron, etc. and their veils are drawn all over their faces, bodies, necks and the bosom ("juyubihinna") and for their adornment not to be revealed except to their family thus, to their husbands, fathers, fathers-in-law, sons (....)” Qur'an chapter 24, verse 32).

One may say or conclude that there is no mention of hair covering in this ayah and that is when the understanding is based on the English translation only. This ayah can be based up and understood by taking the following phrases one by one. For instance, the believing women, lowering their gaze and protecting their private parts, the women not to display their beauty, and to cover all over their body, face, neck, hair, ear, chest. All these are examples of using the hijab to cover the women.

### The Believing Women

Under this part of the ayah, the Almighty Allah directed the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to "tell the believing women" to lower their gaze. This is to all women who believe and not the prophet's wives alone or the time of the prophet only. Some are of the view that the ayah is referred to as the prophet's wives and not all Muslim women. We should remember, the address is "the believing women". Like the below ayah indicating all that exist in the world (human, jinn, etc.).

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

“And We sent you (O Muhammad PBUH) not but a mercy for the “Alamin” thus, humans, jinn and all in existence)” (Qur'an 21 V:107). The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent to humanity as mercy in the world not just to some people. Aside, the Suratul Al Noor, the other Surahs, and verses in the Qur'an that explain this further are: Suratul al-Ahzab, verse 59 & 53. The first surah entreates women to conceal their bosoms and adornments while the second surah to the wives and daughters of the Prophet Muhammad and wives of his followers. The third verse of the hijab in the Qur'an said, men while in the prophet's home, are instructed to communicate with his wives from back/behind a curtain. Women are to wear long dresses while in public for recognized and molestation avoidance.

The above surahs indicated that the usage of Hijab/veil by Muslim women and the believers of the Islamic Religion started since time immemorial. The increase in a number of the hijabis and the rate at which women of other faiths are converting to Islam is the problem and reasons why most of the women in hijab are discriminated against and racism everywhere at the same time been attacked and suffering hate utterances. There should be an end to hijabophobia for hijab women to be free worldwide especially in western societies.

### The Problem Statement

All over the world, especially in western societies, women born Muslims and convert Muslim women who use the hijab as their way of dressing faces serious challenges, attacks, racism, discrimination, and outright rejections with family, friends, in schools, workplace, and the public. This research investigates some of the challenges faced by Muslim women wearing a hijab, do converts feel been discriminated? Is the attacks, hatred, racism, and negative perceptions and utterances from family members who are not Muslims, friends, or the public? What are the causes of this hijabophobia and what is the solution to it? The above were some of the knowledge gaps motivating this article.

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of this article found out what are the main challenges Muslim women and converts faced in wearing a hijab. Specifically, the entire paper focused on:

- Investigating the effects of Muslim women wearing the hijab
- Assessing the motivation of Muslim women in wearing the hijab
- Expatriates the solutions to the challenges of wearing hijab (hijabophobia)
- Examining the significance of women in hijab-wearing

### **Research Question**

The main research question is: what are the challenges Muslim women face in wearing hijab?

Specifically, the article seeks answers to the following questions:

- Does wearing hijab have any effects on Muslim women?
- What is the motivation behind Muslim women wearing the hijab?
- What are the solutions to the challenges of wearing hijab (hijabophobia)
- Is there any significance with Muslim women wearing the hijab?

## **2. RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW**

Review of literature is very important in all researches to provide the readers with a better understanding of the subject matter. This study was built on related literature reviews especially on the experiences of Muslim women in western society. The review is theoretical and empirical. Thus, through terminologies definition and what people's experiences are on the hijab challenges from other studies.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terminologies used in the article were explained below to help readers with a better understanding of the subject matter.

#### **ALLAH**

Allah is the only one God for the Muslim. HE is the sole God, He has no partner, He has not given birth and they have not given birth of Him. The supreme of all and the creator of all things. "He is the sole God, the eternal and the uncreated creator of mankind and the universe" (Netton, 1997, p.30-31).

#### **The Hadiths**

Hadiths are the teaching and words of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. "It is a collection of written formal narrative accounts of the Prophet Peace & Blessings of ALLAH be Upon Him (PBUH) words/deeds" (Skreslet, 2008, p.50).

#### **The Hijab**

The term "hijab" in Arabic means "barrier" or "screen". This Hijab is a word from Arabic "hajaba" meaning not to be seen (hide/conceal) from view. Hijab simply means "modest dress". According to El Guindi, (1999, p.157), the hijab is from the root h-j-b, whose verbal meaning or form "hajaba" was translated to mean veil, to cover, seclude, to conceal, to mask, to screen and to form a separation. Hijab is also known commonly as a scarf that is used to cover the neck and the hair in the English language (Tashkandi, 2014). Hijab again is referred to as a form of covering used by Muslim women to cover the whole body, face, head, and neck.

#### **Hijabophobia**

Hijabophobia is a kind of religious, social, and cultural discrimination and hatred against Muslim women who wears the hijab or covers with the veil. According to Ayhan Kaya, Islamophobia in the world is mixed with hijabophobia. As part of Islamophobia is the discrimination against women, hatred, racism and hate speeches (Salifu and Ussif, 2019).

### **Islam**

Islam is total submission Allah's (S.W.T) will. "A divine religion/deen of Muslims to submit to Allah and His revealed guidance for man, which seeks peace and teaches mercy" (Al- Sheha, 2011b, p.38).

### **Muslim**

A Muslim is a person who believes in the teachings of Islam and the oneness of Allah. "Somebody who practices the "deen" Islamic religion."

### **The Qur'an**

The book of Muslims which contains 114 suras that were revealed to Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W) in the Holy month of Ramadan. "Muslims' holy book from which foundation of Islam / Islamic religion" is built (Skreslet, 2008, p.49).

### **The Sunnah**

The followers/supporters of Prophet Mohammed's teachings are called the Sunnis. "It is the precedent or the behaviour, way of life of the Holy Prophet Mohammed peace be upon Him and in Islamic Religion it is the second resource" (Skreslet, 2008, p.50).

### **An Empirical Review of Literature**

In some secular states, public schools gave students the rights and opportunity to wear hijab making them engaging in their religious diversity, and this helps reducing hatred, discrimination, antagonism, prejudice, incitement towards violence, and racism. Again, it helps to reduce the religious conflicts in the world.

Mahmud and swami (2010), researched the topic: religious attire affects perceptions of attractiveness. Muslims Men and non-Muslims were surveyed by the researchers in Britain on the effects that hijab has on men's intelligence and perceptions of attractiveness in the country. It was revealed from the findings that, the women who wear the hijab are lower-rated for both intelligence and attractiveness. The results of the study were attributed by the researchers to negative perceptions among the western religious markers.

A qualitative study was conducted in 2008 by Mahfoodh's) on the practice of hijab among Arab Muslim girls who are between the ages of 9-12 in Michigan and Bahrain. The study emphasizes the great differences in the individual interpretations of the Muslims and the non-Muslim hijab-wearing contexts. Because the hijab is part of Bahrain's norm, the girls are trained very early to see the hijab their rite to passage to adulthood. That is the hijab been worn by the Women is viewed and equated with good morals, goodness, upright while non-hijab wearing women are considered to be less "Muslims" (Mahfoodh, 2008).

A study conducted by Witkowski (1999) on the "perceptions of hijab among Lebanese and Kuwait women". He found out from the study that, Kuwait women are less western as compared to Lebanese women because the Kuwait women were likely to wear full hijab/ Islamic dress without makeup and jewellery while Lebanese women are more likely to wear hijab with jewellery and makeups. In the study, wearing Islamic dress (hijab) was positively correlated to higher religiosity and the wearing of jewellery and cosmetics is negatively correlated to higher religiosity. It was further revealed in the study that, Arab women who wore the hijab are perceived to more family-oriented, very traditional in both their gender and social relationships. More patriotic, submissive to their husbands, possibly more virtuous, and communal. While non-hijabis/ women in western attire are perceived to be materialistic, physically fit, individualistic, career-oriented, gender activist, and possibly very self-absorbed.

### **Ramadan Hijab Challenges and Benefits**

The world hijab day organizations came up with an idea to organize and support a 30 day Ramadan hijab. A lot of challenges came with this day but it is a good idea because, it brought so many advantages to the wearers of the hijab, potential wearers, people of other faiths join the hijabis and it creates more awareness and gives knowledge on the hijab worldwide. The following are some of the benefits of the 30-day hijab challenged organized:

- It creates more awareness surrounding/about the hijab.
- It brings communications and opens up a way for dialogues for the non-hijab users both Muslim and non-Muslim.
- It creates awareness about the World-Hijab-Day and the organizers' plight against hatred, discrimination, prejudice, hates speeches, bigotry, attacks, and religious hatred.

- It motivates Muslim women who do not wear the hijab to try it for a while to see if they want to or are ready to take the hijab step.
- It gives some non-Muslims chances to try the hijab for several days, not just a day.
- It can help the organizers to raise funds for charity (the World Hijab Day Organization).
- It promotes the hijab and tolerance promoting. The more individuals join, the more hijab is seen world-wide, and the more it brings about tolerance.
- Hijab education is promoted through that. Thus, for those wearing the hijab and for those questioning the hijab.
- This is an experience that will go above/beyond the 30 days of Ramadan either spiritually or Islamic ally the participant will be experiencing it alongside their journey.
- This challenge will make a sense of purpose for the participant of it and then also a sense of achievement when it is completed.
- The participants in the program get the opportunity to meet and interact with new people. When dialogues are open, new connections and friends may be formed.
- It involves the show of solidarity to the "hijabis" across the world
- For the Muslims taking part in the program, it helps reap spiritual rewards (thawab) for their support and charitable efforts.
- To some of the participants, being in a hijab/veil can give them more self-respect, dignity, regardless of their religion.
- It can help the participants feel being closer to their creator/God, regardless of their religion.
- The more and more the movement gets the bigger or greater impact it will have worldwide. That is promoting a good idea of religious tolerance even further.
- Hijab wearing allows the people to be more focused on themselves rather than how they look, it makes the individuals take a deeper concentration and a look into themselves.
- It allows non-Muslim women to see what the Muslim women in the hijab go through regularly/daily.
- This challenge never showing nor proving that you are the best, or a 'good Muslim' or a true believer, or 'purer and closer to your God than others' but rather, it is a Ramadan challenge that is providing an opportunity for everyone whether Muslim or a non-Muslim to join in for their reasons regardless of religious affiliations. Ramadan is partly about making changes, and facing challenges and making sacrifices throughout the month for regard from Allah the creator.
- The challenge can empower women: Deciding to participate in the program can empower you as a woman knowing very well that, you are helping in promoting and supporting other women's choices.

(Assessed on May 14, 2018)

### **The Challenge Women in Hijab faced from Family and Friends**

The situation of born Muslim women is very different from Muslim converts. Their experiences vary based on the circumstances and situations they found themselves: It could be from wearing the hijab/veil, the long Islamic dress called the "abaya", the names some of them bear, or the conversion. Studying the experiences of the convert's challenges of hijab-wearing as their personal choices and the commitment to religion reveals more different situations as compared to a born Muslim. With the born Muslim women is a simple generation that is passing on from one to the other. According to zebiri, the converts who are residing in a non-Muslims societies/environment may be prompted to a serious consciously Islamic identity because they are forced to define or explain themselves very clearly in their responses to the questions they were asked concerning the Islamic religion by some curious non-Muslims. Again, the converts are different from the born Muslims because the converts were not born and raised in a Muslim home nor family. They were rather brought up in a non-Muslim home. So their cultural backgrounds and ethical values are not linked or associated with Islam. The lack of parochial forms of Islamic Religion. The lack of knowledge and understanding of some of the basic concepts of Islam and they need to be taught. They have a gap that needed to be caught up in Islam. From the beginning, they have a challenge but can cope with time.



It is therefore very challenging for converts choosing Islam than a born Muslim because the converts cannot change their family and the cultural way they were brought up. Converts cannot run away from their households, family, and friends immediately they become Muslims in hijab and is a challenge in the choice of this new path of life and a journey as a practising Muslim till death while the other family members are not Muslims and they know nothing about Islam. The converts lack the socialization from a Muslim home from infancy and this makes them exposed to the impact of a dominant culture in society. Converts with a new prescribed dress of hijab is also a challenging issue. The change in lifestyle and the way of dressing all would be new to their families and difficult to cope with the family.

A study was conducted by Zebiri in Britain, where he interviewed new Muslim women. He asked them: is there anything difficult or challenging in their transition to becoming Muslims? Thus, in terms of implementing new behaviours, dressing, cultural practices, or giving up at a point. Most of the respondents mentioned the five 5 daily prayers as a difficulty and acclimatizing the situation of the hijab also as a difficulty. One of the interviews narrated that: three 3 years after her conversion to Islam, her family still do not speak to her and could not tell whether or not still they wanted to talk to her. She further stated that she was an adored only daughter in the family that is close-knit extended family but now could not attend any of her family gatherings because her parents refuse to see her in the hijab and she has noticed that, their role as far as the family is concerned as changed. This indicated that the hijab has become a social barrier to different religions in family relations.

Na'ima conducted a study in Britain on hijab and from her findings on the study, it was revealed that the new Muslim women/converts after adopting the hijab/veil mentioned that, one of the very challenging aspects of the religion as a Muslim woman is the veiling. The difficulty with this are many she indicated: example, how you view yourself, how other people view/see you, the way you are been treated by other due to the hijab, the perceptions surrounding hijab-wearing, how to deal with challenges of how people see the hijab users differently. The bellow cases were illustrated by Na'ima:

When I became a Muslim and was using my hijab, "my family were saying, since the time she accepted Islam and started practising, she only let go of herself. The Islamic dress (Abayah) was not fitting her at all. She was rather fitting the "abaya" all the above utterance harm her self-esteem and always made her resentful to her hijab and abaya"

My conversion to Islam brought a lot of surprises to my family and friends. Before I fully accepted Islam, I was free with my university secretary and when she started seeing the changes in me she could not believe it and was full of surprise. I told her my decision to change religion and I started replacing my Afro-print head wraps with a black hijab and she was wow, oh, but I see you be so colourful, vibrant, having fun, full of life why all this she asked? For were all the things that she thinks I am no longer. I tried to explain to her why my conversion and covering but all in vain, she just cannot understand and deal with it. She sees me in an unhappy mood, under a very dark fabric and it is ok with me.

Anway researched the American new Muslim women and he found out that, the family of a convert was reasonably receiving her calls though they hate the idea of her conversion until she started using the hijab at that time the family attitude change. The changes in the lives of converts choice to a particular way of dressing and using hijab is a destructive one and it also leads to family relationships broken. To most family members and relatives, the change in a dress is the hardest thing they can accept when their daughter embraced Islam. It seems most family choice hijab and the Islamic dress as the extreme statement. They could not withstand their daughters in the black abaya or the hijab.

Haifa (2006) in a study stated clearly that, the converts who wear the hijab face lots of challenges and difficulties. Hijab wear by them brings family opposition, outside rejection, and also hostility within the family. It may sometime jeopardize relationships, family ties, and friendship. Which are already not in good terms due to conversion. To attest to the above, Anway study in the United States of America on new Muslim women demonstrated the following:

"I have concluded my mind to become a Muslim and my family, relatives, and a friend are made clear by my decision. The born of contention is the change in the Islamic dress and hijab. That is a continuous remembrance to them and it brings embarrassment to them. I think if I am a Muslim and not covered nor dressing Islamically, I could have accepted it readily".

"After my conversion to Islam, I have regular activities to do and follow to express my belief which I had. The challenges were tough for me. It was very difficult for me to pray during classes or work hours. When I changed my dressings: using hijab, long dresses, I lost many friends. A lot of family members shun me and some concluded that I will be burned in hellfire".

Choosing the hijab as a Muslim woman has a lot of challenges and prejudices out there. I could not hold a meeting publicly with people at the job place.

Due to my hijab, I have been openly discriminated against and I have been denied many jobs because of my veil and way I dress. All the same, I am very grateful to my hijab. I am grateful and honoured to represent Islam, be an ambassador of Islam in a powerful way, and to be recognized as a Muslim woman any time I venture out.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This article used secondary data and review the literature for the study. The research objective was to obtain the challenges that Muslim women and converts faced in wearing a hijab concerning western societies. It focused on the meaning and treatment of the women in respect to hate, discrimination, rejection, etc. This issue of hijab drew our attention by the beginning of bigger research on the lives of these Muslim women when we realized that, many women are been maltreated and discriminated against across the world. Several kinds of research were reviewed on the views of Muslim women and converts on this subject matter. This is an instrumental study which was expanded to different literature of Muslim women's wearing of the hijab, to understand a wider range of experiences. The information was sourced from the journals, articles, books, and the internet for more understanding of the subject matter.

### 4. FINDINGS

#### Solutions to Hijabophobia

Hijabophobia or the hate, discrimination, and the negative perceptions about Muslim women and converts in hijab from the reviewed literature can be solved when the below factors are taken into consideration:

- Hijabis should surround themselves with the individuals who support the decision.
- Like other social movements used social media to address their issues and challenges example, gender inequalities, so as the Muslim women and converts can do the same in the societies.
- We the Muslim women and the supports of the hijab can create a Facebook group or Whatsapp group and use social media to share our expectations, experiences, and doubts.
- The innocent and haters must be made to understand that, just as Allah ordered fasting and prayers, He also ordered the wearing of the hijab and the hijab women are only obeying their creator's order and not what they want and only good comes out of it.
- The men are also not let out in the order of ALLAH. Men are asked to lower their gaze. This is because Allah is very merciful and He equally loves His creations.
- It is compulsory and mandatory for oneself to cover/dress modestly in Islam. Pleasing the Almighty Allah the creator is far better than to please His creations. As Muslim women, we keep our hijab for one and only one reason. That is for ALLAH.

#### Hijab Covers Hair/Body Not Brains

Hijabophobians must be made to know that the Muslim women's hijab is a protector, a cover, or a screen that prevents the women from harassment and all sought of negative attacks. Women who wear the hijab never care about the style of their hairs but rather worry about the people they meet day in day out in high schools, workplaces, colleges, universities, at home, public, etc. Most women in the hijab feel insecure, doubts, fear and this is due to the kind of treatment and oppressions they receive from non-believers. It is very important for converts and Muslim women in the hijab and all potential hijabs users to prepare their minds ahead, read and listen to other people's experiences and what was done to overcome those issues, problems, and challenges.

#### Hijab likely Questions

Hijabis should prepare themselves for annoying questions and how to respond to such questions peacefully and well mannered. The way the questions are answered speaks volumes of them and who they are. Hijabis should be a good example of Islam. Some of the expected questions include:

“Are you not hot?” or “How do you feel, less beautiful or more, more attractive or less?” why covering yourself under this weather? Some will even tell you that, your “Imani” is measured by your intention not what you wear. Wearers of Hijab must be an ambassador of Islam. While some of the askers are genuine people wanting to know and are willing to learn, others just ask to annoy the users. So we must have in mind and not give annoying answers since we might not know. Our actions speak louder as compared to our words and so must be tolerant and easy-going when answering questions concerning our hijab. Some of our responses can make others starting using hijab or convert to Islam. There are many examples of hijabis who succeeded in their work and are role models and the epitome of success. A woman covering her head does not mean she has covered her brains.

#### Significance of the Study

Every research has significance and purpose for which it is conducted. The study of Muslim women in Hijab is not an exception. It was realized that the study on hijab helps as indicated below:

- The study was beneficiary to women wanting to start hijab (potential-hijab-wearers)
- The challenges “hijabis” faced with their family/friends were known and necessary measures taken towards protecting them.
- Policymakers befitted from this study of women hijab challenges
- The study offers Muslims and non-Muslims experiences on Hijabphobia
- Non-Muslims got the opportunity to partake in the 30-Day-Ramadan-Hijab-Challenge and they have a feel of what Muslim women are going through.

## **5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Discussion**

In the Muslim communities, “hijabis” are rated high in terms of perceived personality, morality, character, cultured, physical appearance, and personal attributes of Muslim women. While in the western societies Muslim women who wear the hijab are rated low, as villagers, uncivilized, anti-cultural, not modernized, and fake, etc. Converts faced rejections from their family/friends who are non-Muslims and born Muslims also face challenges with both their friends Muslims who do not use hijab and some non-believers. It is not easy with “hijabis” in the world especially those in western societies.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, the wearing of hijab which is the prescribed dressing as indicated by the teachings of Islam is seen as strange life and religious identity which differs from western lifestyles. The converts are discriminated from their family members because before they were both not covering their hairs and now the families feel uncomfortable with the new change of dress and veils. Hijab wearing is also an important aspect of life and part of the Muslim women's religion. All Muslim women worldwide must be allowed to observe their rights by having the freedom to religion. There is a serious and far gap between the new Muslims and their families. The relationship is not like before the conversion. The mingling around each other is now difficult. The hijab-wearing create a social gap between the converts and their family due to a difference in religious practices/afflictions. Therefore chosen to wear a hijab is an endless struggle and facing reality as a new and continuous path of life. We believe it is not about Muslim women and challenges, it is also really not about hijabs, masjids, Islamic centres, religious relics, etc., but it is fundamentally of “deen-ul Islam” itself. Islam is far growing and making more impact on people's lives worldwide. Hence Hijabophobia all over but interestingly, Islam would never change.

### **Note**

“Women in the pre-Islamic times that is the “jahiliya period” were already using the veil in covering their hairs, as it was a customary law throughout history in various religions and cultures”.

“Life is too short. We Muslim women must do hijab as is prescribed in our religion “deen”. We should not let the day of our death be the very first day we are covered. If you don't cover, you will be covered. We must do it now. Jannah is forever”.

### **Recommendations**

- The study creates awareness about Islam and veil/hijab
- The study contributes to an understanding of cultural, social, religious, and the hijab
- It also gave a clear understanding of what “hijabis” go through worldwide.
- It recommended that all stakeholders should help solve the challenges “hijabis” faced.

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