

Hijab, religiosity, and mental health in Muslim women in the United States

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Despite the emerging field of mental health research in Muslim populations, previous studies have reported conflicting findings regarding the connection between psychological well-being and explicit religiosity (i.e., visibility of Muslim women via *hijab*, headscarf and loose fitted clothing) for those living in predominantly non-Muslim countries. The purpose of the current study was to quantitatively explore the relationship between *hijab* and mental health of Muslim women in the United States. A total of 50 Muslim women (25 *hijabis* and 25 non-*hijabis*) completed a battery of scales measuring their depressive symptoms, anxiety, self-esteem, and various aspects of their religiosity. No significant group differences were found between *hijabis* and non-*hijabis*. However, more frequent wearing of loose fitted clothing was associated with higher mental well-being. Although no group differences were found between natives and migrants, older age at time of immigration to the United States for migrants correlated with lower reports of depression and anxiety. While self-reported religiosity had strong negative correlations with depression and anxiety, it was uncorrelated with frequency of *hijab*. Thus, regardless of *hijab* frequency, religiosity appears to be a worthwhile variable for investigation as a potential buffer against psychological distress. Hierarchical linear regression analyses indicated that frequency of loose fitting clothing incrementally predicted psychological well-being above and beyond age, migrant status, religiosity, and *hijab* frequency. Future implications of these results are discussed in terms of culturally sensitive support for both *hijabi* and non-*hijabi* Muslim women living in the United States.