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Correspondence

Hijab and hair loss: a cross-sectional analysis of information on YouTube

Dear Editor,

Hair loss affects 40% of females before the age of 50.¹ Interestingly, women may experience hair loss secondary to their religious or cultural practices.² One example is Muslim women who wear the hijab, a cloth used to cover their hair, around male non-family members.³ Hijab-associated hair loss is a phenomenon that we have noted anecdotally posed by patient-physician discussion in clinic. Although the hijab itself does not cause hair loss, the specific manner in which the hijab is worn and hairstyle used underneath may contribute to secondary causes of hair loss. Information surrounding this topic is commonly sought out online through social media, especially YouTube, given the restrictions of in-person gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, there is a gap in the literature examining the educational materials on YouTube regarding hair loss and hijab. The purpose of this study was to examine hijab and hair loss content on YouTube in order to assess what patients are learning.

The authors reviewed the first 30 videos on YouTube resulting from a search on "Hijab Hair Loss" with relevance setting in a private window as 90% of viewers do not scroll past this.⁴ Videos that were duplicates, non-English, or not relevant were excluded. Content creator demographics and video content were collected.

After screening 30 videos, 27 met the inclusion criteria, with a combined total of 17,158,078 views. One hundred percent of the videos were created by non-dermatologists. Stratified by content, 15 videos (56%) exclusively discussed hair care, 10 videos (37%) were personal anecdotes with hair loss and hair care, and two videos (7%) demonstrated different ways to tie the hijab. While hair loss etiologies were not specified, the three most commonly discussed factors were increased tension on the hairline ($n = 12$, 67%), hair care negligence ($n = 4$,

Table 1 Factors contributing to hair loss in women who wear a hijab based on YouTube videos by non-dermatologists

Contributing factors	Videos, n = 18 (%)
Tension on hairline secondary to bun or ponytail	12 (67)
Decreased motivation for haircare	4 (22)
Tension from tight-fitting hijab	3 (17)
Exposure of hair to heat	3 (17)
Accumulation of sweat	2 (11)
Postpartum hair loss	2 (11)
Excess stress	1 (6)
Medication side effects	1 (6)

22%), and decreased "breathability" of the scalp ($n = 3$, 17%) (Table 1). Many videos emphasized that it is the manner in which the hijab is worn, not the hijab itself, that may contribute to hair loss. Therefore, the most common hijab-styling recommendations were implementing protective hairstyles ($n = 13$, 52%), maintaining moisture with hair oils ($n = 13$, 52%), and deep conditioning treatments ($n = 12$, 48%) (Table 2). Interestingly, none of the videos recommended consulting with a dermatologist for evaluation and treatment.

There is a large demand for information about hijab and hair loss on YouTube, as the videos had a total of 17,158,078 views. The videos did not provide a comprehensive overview of all hair loss etiologies associated with the hijab, as the majority alluded to traction alopecia and seborrheic dermatitis flares. Interestingly, the recommendations provided were anecdotal in nature, and no references were provided. Content creators can improve their videos by providing references so that viewers can learn more if desired. Additionally, the recommendations were varied and not targeted at specific hair loss etiologies, which can reduce their utility. Viewers should be encouraged to consult with dermatologists, as individual cases of hair loss can be complicated and may require extensive workup, examination, and even biopsies. Misconceptions surrounding dermatologists on social media may be a deterrent for patients who do not understand their value for treatment of hair loss.⁵ Despite this, dermatologist representation on online platforms such as YouTube


Table 2 YouTube hair loss treatment recommendations for women who wear a hijab by non-dermatologists


Recommendations	Videos (n = 27) (%)
Use protective hairstyles under hijab such as loose braids, ponytails, or looped buns	13 (52)
Apply hair oils to ends of hair to regain moisture	13 (52)
Use deep conditioning treatments to moisturize brittle or dry hair	12 (48)
Refrain from frequent shampooing to minimize damage to hair	10 (40)
Use different hijab and pillowcase materials, such as silk, to decrease friction on hijab	9 (36)
Abstain from tying hair in rubber bands and use soft coil hair ties instead	6 (24)
Remove hijab when permitted to allow hair to rest	5 (20)
Distribute tension on the hairline and alter hair part regularly	2 (8)
Increase dietary vitamin D intake	2 (8)

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should be increased given that patients are seeking information online on this topic.

Study limitations include the cross-sectional design, YouTube content turnover rate, and small sample size. Nonetheless, this study provides useful insight into content that patients are learning about hijab and hair loss online. Although YouTube is not the ideal information source, it is important to encourage dermatologists to create relevant and accurate content online, as this topic is a highly searched area of concern among women who wear the hijab.

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