

## Hijab and Its Implications for the Moral Uprightness of Muslim Women Globally

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### **Abstract**

*Descent dressing is a cardinal aspect of culture and religions globally to enhance dignity and safeguard one from molestation as well as command respect. The hijab derived from the Arabic root h-j-h may meaning to cover or shield symbolizes a spiritual bond between Muslim women and God to live a life of decency and self-respect. It is a significant aspect of Islamic religious practice and Muslim women's identity, particularly in relation to modesty, faith, dignity, morality, and social belonging. Rooted in Islamic teachings concerning modesty and decency, hijab is widely understood as an outward expression of religious commitment and obedience to God. However, its significance extends beyond physical appearance to include values such as chastity, humility, self-discipline, dignity, responsible behaviour, and spiritual consciousness. This study examines the Islamic theological and scriptural foundations of hijab and its significance in promoting modesty and moral uprightiness among Muslim women. It further assesses the implications of hijab for women's character, dignity, identity, behaviour, and spiritual development across diverse cultural and social contexts. The study also explores the challenges, perceptions, and varied experiences associated with the hijab, including social acceptance, discrimination, identity negotiation, personal agency, and communal expectations. Furthermore, it considers the contribution of hijab to the moral and social well-being of Muslim women globally. The study argues that while hijab may serve as an important expression of faith, modesty, dignity, identity, and spiritual commitment, moral uprightiness should be assessed not solely by outward appearance but also by intention, character, conduct, and ethical relationships. It concludes that understanding hijab requires sensitivity to Islamic teachings as well as the diverse cultural, social, and personal contexts in which Muslim women practise and interpret it.*

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### **Introduction**

The hijab which is the total covering of the sensitive part of the female body except the face eyes and hands is a significant aspect of Islamic dress and religious practice, particularly in discussions concerning modesty, faith, identity, and moral conduct among Muslim women. Rooted in Islamic teachings on modesty and decency, the hijab is understood by many Muslims as an outward expression of obedience to God and commitment to religious values. Its meaning, however, extends beyond clothing; Islamic morality also emphasizes qualities such as modesty, chastity, dignity, humility, self-discipline, and righteous conduct. Consequently, the wearing of hijab is

often regarded as one component of a broader moral and spiritual framework through which Muslim women seek to express their faith and uphold Islamic values.

Globally, the implications of hijab for the moral uprightness of Muslim women are interpreted within diverse cultural, social, legal, and religious contexts. For some Muslim women, hijab strengthens religious identity, provides a sense of dignity and belonging, and serves as a personal commitment to modesty and obedience to Islamic teachings. At the same time, moral uprightness cannot be determined solely by outward appearance, since Islamic ethics places considerable emphasis on intention, character, behaviour, and one's relationship with God and others. The discussion of hijab therefore requires a balanced consideration of both its external religious significance and the internal moral virtues it is intended to represent, while recognising the varied experiences and interpretations of Muslim women across different societies.

The study explores the Islamic theological and scriptural foundations of hijab and its significance in promoting modesty and moral uprightness among Muslim women. It also seeks to assess the implications of hijab for the character, dignity, identity, behaviour, and spiritual development of Muslim women across different cultural and social contexts. Furthermore, the study explores the challenges, perceptions, and diverse experiences associated with hijab and considers how it contributes to the moral and social well-being of Muslim women globally.

### **Concept of Hijab in the Islamic Community**

The concept of **hijab** in the Islamic community extends beyond a particular item of clothing to encompass principles of modesty, decency, dignity, privacy, and appropriate conduct. In an expanded form, Hijab is not limited to the use of non-transparent clothes to cover the sensitive/sexually induced part of the female body, but it includes the way she walks talks, behaves and relates with people. In addition to the aforementioned, in line with Allah's injunction, the purpose of hijab is to safe guard her from molestation, to cover shame and to appear decent and worthy of respect and also as indication of the consciousness of Allah.

The Qur'an discusses modesty in passages such as Qur'an 24:30–31 and 33:59, which are commonly regarded as important scriptural foundations for Muslim dress and behaviour. Contemporary scholarship notes that terms such as *hijab*, *khimar*, and *jilbab* are related but are not always identical in their linguistic or interpretive meanings. Safitri and Nurmiah (2024) argue that hijab should be understood holistically as having moral, social, and spiritual dimensions rather than merely as a physical covering. Similarly, Ismiya Begum (2024) describes hijab as a practice connected with modesty, dignity, ethical conduct, and spiritual identity. Thus, within the Islamic community, hijab is commonly understood as an outward expression of an individual's commitment to Islamic principles of modesty and religious obedience.

The meaning and practice of hijab, however, vary across Muslim societies because religious interpretation interacts with culture, history, social expectations, and individual circumstances. While some Muslims regard hijab primarily as a religious obligation, others also understand it as an expression of Muslim identity, personal conviction, dignity, and belonging. Recent research shows that religious communities and social norms can significantly influence women's decisions concerning hijab, demonstrating that its practice has both personal and communal dimensions (Shin et al., 2024). At the same time, Islamic discussions of hijab emphasise that modesty should extend beyond external appearance; it should be accompanied by appropriate character, behaviour, and ethical conduct. Consequently, the concept of hijab in the Islamic community is best understood as a multidimensional practice involving clothing, modesty, identity, spirituality, morality, and social responsibility.

### **Islamic theological and scriptural foundations of hijab and its significance to Muslim women.**

The Islamic theological foundation of **hijab** is closely connected with the Qur'anic teachings on modesty, dignity, chastity, and righteous conduct. Although the term *hijab* can have broader meanings in the Qur'an, contemporary discussions of Muslim women's dress commonly relate it to the Qur'anic concepts of *khimar* and *jilbab*. Two central passages are Qur'an 24:30–31 and Qur'an 33:59. In Qur'an 24:30–31, both men and women are instructed to exercise modesty, including lowering the gaze and guarding sexual propriety. In contrast, women are instructed to draw their coverings over their bosoms. Qur'an 33:59 instructs the Prophet to tell believing women to draw their outer garments over themselves when going out. Recent Qur'anic scholarship identifies these passages as important scriptural foundations for Islamic teachings concerning hijab and modest dress (Safitri & Nurmiah, 2024; Begum, 2025). It indicates that hijab should not be understood merely as a piece of clothing but within the wider Islamic theological framework of obedience to God, modesty, dignity, and ethical behaviour. Muslim and Rahma (2024), in their study of Qur'an 33:59, likewise demonstrate that the verse remains central to contemporary discussions of the requirements and meaning of hijab for Muslim women.

The significance of hijab for moral uprightness lies particularly in its relationship with the broader Islamic virtue of *haya'* (modesty). Modesty in Islam involves not only bodily covering but also appropriate speech, behaviour, intentions, interpersonal relationships, and self-restraint. Consequently, wearing hijab is expected to be accompanied by moral conduct rather than treated as an isolated outward practice. Safitri and Nurmiah (2024) argue that the Qur'anic understanding of hijab encompasses moral, social, and spiritual protection and is associated with dignity, ethical interaction, personal identity, and piety. Similarly, Al Gifari and Salman (2025) describe the hijab as having a pedagogical and character-forming dimension, arguing that contemporary interpretations continue to link it to the development of ethical and moral qualities. Begum (2025) also identifies hijab as a multidimensional spiritual, social, and ethical practice associated with modesty, dignity, and responsible conduct. Therefore, within Islamic theology, hijab can contribute to moral uprightness when it is understood as part of a comprehensive commitment to modesty, self-discipline, dignity, obedience to God, and responsible relationships with others. Recent scholarship also cautions against reducing hijab to external appearance alone, since its moral significance is strengthened when outward modesty corresponds to inward character and ethical behaviour.

### **Implications of hijab for Muslim women**

#### **1. Promotion of Modesty and Moral Discipline**

Hijab can encourage modesty, self-control, and disciplined conduct among Muslim women when it is understood as part of the broader Islamic ethic of *haya* (modesty). Rifaannudin and Rahmah (2023) associate hijab with the formation of Muslim women's behaviour, particularly through expectations of modest conduct and responsible interaction. Thus, hijab may function not simply as clothing but as a visible reminder of moral responsibilities.

#### **2. Strengthening Religious and Personal Identity**

Hijab can serve as an important expression of Muslim identity and religious commitment. Danil, Effendi, and Syarosy (2025) found that, among Indonesian Muslim women, hijab was understood as a symbol of spiritual identity, self-protection, and identity negotiation within a multicultural society. Similarly, research among Muslim women in Western contexts shows that hijab can

become an important means through which women negotiate religious belonging and personal identity.

### **3. Enhancement of Dignity and Self-Respect**

For many Muslim women, hijab is associated with dignity, self-respect, and the desire to be recognised beyond physical appearance. Recent research describes hijab as a site of dignity, agency, and resistance, particularly among Muslim women negotiating their identities in predominantly secular institutions (2026). It suggests that hijab can provide women with a sense of confidence and a visible expression of personal religious conviction.

### **4. Influence on Behaviour and Social Conduct**

Hijab may influence behaviour by creating an expectation that outward modesty should correspond with appropriate speech, interpersonal relationships, and ethical conduct. Rifaannudin and Rahmah (2023) specifically examine the relevance of hijab to the formation of Muslim women's behaviour. However, hijab should not be treated as automatic evidence of moral superiority, since character and moral uprightness depend on broader patterns of intention, conduct, and ethical responsibility.

### **5. Strengthening Spiritual Commitment**

Hijab may contribute to spiritual development by serving as a continuing reminder of religious commitment and obedience to God. Danil, Effendi, and Syarosy (2025) found that Indonesian Muslim women associated the hijab with spiritual strength and religious identity. In this sense, hijab can become part of an individual's daily religious practice, reinforcing faith consciousness and encouraging consistency between religious convictions and everyday life.

### **6. Negotiation of Social Belonging and Cultural Identity**

The implications of the hijab differ considerably across cultural and social contexts. Shin, Lew, and Seo (2024) found that religious organisations and subjective social norms influenced hijab practices among Muslim women in Indonesia, demonstrating that both community expectations and personal convictions shape women's experiences of hijab. In Western societies, the hijab can similarly serve as a means of negotiating belonging, visibility, and religious identity.

### **7. Exposure to Social Challenges and Discrimination**

Although hijab can strengthen identity and spirituality, it may also expose Muslim women to stereotyping, discrimination, social isolation, and pressure. Khan (2025), studying Muslim women students in Delhi, found that hijab could become a visible marker of "otherness" and that some hijab-wearing women experienced discrimination and social isolation. Research on Muslim women in France likewise shows that hijab can make religious identity highly visible in professional environments, requiring women to negotiate perceptions of authenticity and social acceptance.

## **The challenges associated with the hijab**

### **1. Religious and Social Discrimination**

One of the major challenges associated with hijab is discrimination based on visible religious identity. Because the hijab makes Muslim identity immediately recognisable, women who wear it may experience stereotyping, exclusion, verbal harassment, or unequal treatment. Hodge, Zidan,

and Husain (2024) found that Muslim women in the United States who wore the hijab more frequently were more likely to report religious discrimination. Similarly, Khan (2025) found experiences of stigmatisation and "othering" among hijab-wearing Muslim women students in Delhi.

## **2. Workplace and Career Challenges**

Hijab can create difficulties in employment, recruitment, promotion, and workplace relationships, particularly where organisational cultures do not adequately accommodate religious dress. Research in Saudi Arabia indicates that different forms of hijab can influence women's employment experiences, career advancement, and workplace communication. At the same time, stereotypes may restrict opportunities for women who wear more visibly religious forms of dress. In Indonesia, Fitasari and Mas'ud (2023) similarly documented cases in which hijab-wearing employees encountered restrictions concerning workplace dress and career progression.

## **3. Negotiating Religious and Cultural Identity**

Hijab can serve as a means by which Muslim women negotiate their religious identity alongside national, cultural, professional, and gender identities. Baugerud (2025), in a study of Norwegian Muslim hijabi women, found that the hijab could cause women to be perceived as outsiders despite their citizenship and personal identification with Norwegian society. Thus, hijab may strengthen religious belonging while simultaneously creating tensions concerning cultural and national identity.

## **4. Pressure and Expectations from Muslim Communities**

Muslim women may experience pressure not only from wider society but also from family, religious communities, and cultural expectations concerning how hijab should be worn. Research in Saudi Arabia shows that women's hijab choices can involve negotiations between familial expectations of modesty, religious approval, personal preferences, and career aspirations. It demonstrates that experiences of hijab are diverse and that Muslim women do not necessarily interpret or practise hijab in the same way.

## **5. Social Isolation and Psychological Distress**

The visibility of hijab can sometimes contribute to social isolation, loneliness, anxiety, or psychological distress, particularly when women are minorities within predominantly non-Muslim environments. Hashem and Awad (2024), examining Muslim women in the United States, found that being the only Muslim woman in a particular social environment interacted with experiences of discrimination and psychological distress. Khan (2025) likewise identified social isolation and experiences of "othering" among Muslim women students in Delhi.

## **6. Agency, Empowerment, and Positive Religious Identity**

Hijab should not be understood exclusively through the lens of discrimination or oppression. For many Muslim women, it represents personal agency, religious conviction, dignity, modesty, and empowerment. Research among Muslim women in Switzerland found that women understood modest dress and religious identity in different ways, with some viewing them as expressions of personal freedom and psychological strength. Similarly, research on Pakistani professional women found that some women use hijab strategically to manage unwanted attention and exercise agency within workplace environments.

## **7. Diverse Interpretations and Experiences Across Societies**

The meaning and experience of hijab differ considerably across cultural, political, religious, and social contexts. In some Muslim-majority societies, hijab may be regarded as a normal expression of religious and cultural identity. At the same time, in minority contexts, it can become a highly visible marker of difference. Suhendi and Wahyudi (2023) demonstrate that women have diverse motivations for wearing the veil, while more recent research shows that hijab may simultaneously produce belonging, exclusion, identity affirmation, and social negotiation. Therefore, discussions of hijab should avoid treating Muslim women as a homogeneous group and should recognise their different convictions, circumstances, cultural backgrounds, and personal experiences.

## **Contributions of Hijab to Muslim Women Globally**

### **1. Strengthening Religious Identity and Spiritual Commitment**

Hijab can strengthen Muslim women's sense of religious identity and commitment to Islamic values. Recent research by Danil, Effendi, and Syarosy (2025) found that Muslim women understood hijab not merely as a religious requirement but also as a symbol of spiritual identity, personal integrity, and commitment to Islamic values. In this sense, hijab can provide a visible expression of faith and reinforce a woman's sense of belonging to the Muslim community.

### **2. Promoting Modesty and Moral Self-Discipline**

Hijab contributes to the Islamic ideal of *haya'*, or modesty, which involves appropriate dress, behaviour, speech, and interpersonal relationships. Its moral significance, therefore, extends beyond physical covering to the cultivation of self-control and responsible conduct. When understood as part of a wider religious commitment, hijab can serve as a daily reminder of ethical responsibilities and encourage consistency between religious convictions and personal behaviour.

### **3. Enhancing Dignity and Self-Respect**

For many Muslim women, hijab is associated with dignity, honour, self-respect, and freedom to express religious convictions. Recent research on Indonesian Muslim women describes hijab as a symbol of dignity and ethno-religious pride. In contrast, research from 2026 among Indonesian Muslim women scholars at Western institutions identifies hijab as a site of dignity, resistance, and scholarly agency. Thus, hijab can enable women to define themselves according to their own religious commitments rather than allowing their identity to be determined primarily by external perceptions.

### **4. Providing a Sense of Agency and Empowerment**

Hijab can be an expression of personal choice and agency, particularly for women who consciously adopt it as part of their religious identity. Recent research by El Idrissi, Bouzar, and Ghourdou (2025) found that some Muslim women understand hijab as a deliberate practice that strengthens spiritual connection, protects autonomy, and enables them to assert their identity in public spaces. Consequently, the hijab should not be automatically interpreted as a sign of oppression; its meaning must be understood through the experiences and convictions of the women who wear it.

### **5. Strengthening Social and Communal Belonging**

Hijab can promote a sense of solidarity and belonging among Muslim women by providing a visible connection with the wider Muslim community. Danil et al. (2025) found that hijab could function as a marker of Islamic and ethnic identity in a pluralistic society. Such identification can

strengthen relationships with fellow Muslims and provide women with a sense of community, shared values, and collective religious identity.

#### **6. Supporting Identity Negotiation in Diverse Societies**

In multicultural and pluralistic societies, hijab can help Muslim women negotiate their religious, cultural, professional, and national identities. Baugerud (2025), studying Norwegian Muslim hijabi women, demonstrates that hijab can simultaneously become a means of belonging and a site where women negotiate exclusion and racialisation. Similarly, research on Muslim women scholars in Western institutions shows that hijab can allow women to maintain their religious identity while participating actively in academic and professional life. It demonstrates that hijab can contribute to social well-being by enabling women to participate in society without necessarily abandoning their religious identity.

#### **7. Encouraging Social Awareness and Advocacy for Religious Inclusion**

The visibility of hijab can also contribute to wider discussions about religious freedom, gender, inclusion, and social justice. Although hijab-wearing women may experience discrimination and stereotyping, such experiences can stimulate advocacy for more inclusive educational, professional, and public environments. Khan (2025) argues that addressing the "othering" of hijab-wearing Muslim women requires approaches that promote agency and meaningful social integration. Similarly, 2026 research on Muslim women in British public spaces highlights the need for environments that recognise religious diversity and address social and cultural biases affecting Muslim women's safety and participation.

#### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that hijab is an important component of Islamic religious practice and carries significant theological, moral, spiritual, and social implications for Muslim women. Its foundation in Islamic teachings on modesty, decency, dignity, and obedience to God demonstrates that hijab is not merely a matter of clothing but part of a broader ethical framework. For many Muslim women, it contributes to expressing religious identity, modesty, self-discipline, dignity, spiritual commitment, and a sense of belonging to the Muslim community.

The study further concludes that the implications and experiences of hijab vary across cultural, social, legal, and religious contexts. While hijab may enhance confidence, identity, dignity, moral consciousness, and spiritual development, some Muslim women may also encounter discrimination, stereotyping, social pressure, exclusion, or difficulties in educational and professional environments because of their visible religious identity. These diverse experiences demonstrate that hijab should not be interpreted uniformly or separated from the contexts in which Muslim women live. Ultimately, the study establishes that hijab can make a meaningful contribution to the moral and social well-being of Muslim women when understood as part of an integrated commitment to modesty, righteous character, responsible behaviour, and spiritual consciousness. Nevertheless, wearing hijab alone cannot be regarded as sufficient evidence of moral uprightness, since Islamic morality also emphasises intention, character, conduct, and one's relationship with God and fellow human beings. A balanced understanding of hijab should therefore respect its religious significance while recognising the agency, diversity, dignity, and varied experiences of Muslim women globally.

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