

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Experiences of Modesty in Sportswear in Türkiye: A Feminist Perspective on Women's Experiences with Physical Activity

Muzaffer Toprak Keskin¹

¹ Dr, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Faculty of Sports Science, Nevşehir /Türkiye

ORCID: [0000-0001-9439-0094](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9439-0094)

E-Mail: toprakkeskin@nevsehir.edu.tr

March 2025

Volume:22

Issue:2

DOI: 10.26466/opusjsr.1590768

Citation:

Keskin, M. T. (2025). Experiences of modesty in sportswear in Türkiye: A feminist perspective on women's experiences with physical activity. *OPUS- Journal of Society Research*, 22(2), 297-317.

Abstract

This study aims to examine the physical activity experiences of women who adopt a closed clothing style and study at the Faculty of Sport Sciences in Türkiye, a Muslim country with a secular state, from the perspective of Islamic feminism. Using a phenomenological research methodology, individual interviews were conducted with eight women studying at the Faculty of Sport Sciences of a Turkish university. Additionally, sentiment analysis using NRC Emotion Lexicon and VADER tools revealed key emotions such as anger, anticipation, joy and sadness, along with positive, negative and subjectivity scores. These findings highlight the emotional intensity and personal perspectives of the challenges faced by hijab-wearing women in sports. The findings from traditional content analysis show that hijab-wearing women face significant challenges related to clothing, social pressures, religious stereotypes and sports marketing. These challenges emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach in sportswear marketing to address the lack of variety, quality and affordability in hijab clothing. The study suggests that sportswear brands should offer more comfortable and accessible options for hijab-wearing women and stresses the importance of addressing these issues to ensure that these women can fully participate in sports free from social and marketing constraints.

Keywords: Hijab Sportswear, Islamic feminism, Sports economics, Sentiment analysis.

Öz

Bu çalışma, laik bir devlete sahip Müslüman bir ülke olan Türkiye'de, kapalı giyim tarzını benimseyen ve Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi'nde öğrenim gören kadınların üniversite ortamındaki fiziksel aktivite deneyimlerini İslami feminizm perspektifinden incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Fenomenolojik bir araştırma metodolojisi kullanılarak, bir Türk üniversitesinin Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi'nde eğitim gören sekiz kadın ile bireysel görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ayrıca, NRC Emotion Lexicon ve VADER araçlarıyla yapılan duygu analizi, öfke, beklenti, neşe ve üzüntü gibi temel duyguların yanı sıra olumlu, olumsuz ve öznellik skorlarını ortaya koymuştur. Bu bulgular, başörtüsü takan kadınların spor yaparken karşılaştıkları zorlukların duygusal yoğunluğunu ve kişisel bakış açılarını gözler önüne sermektedir. Geleneksel içerik analiziyle elde edilen bulgular, başörtülü kadınların spor yaparken giyim, sosyal baskılar, dini stereotipler ve spor pazarlaması gibi zorluklarla karşılaştığını göstermektedir. Bu zorluklar, spor giyim pazarlamasında başörtüsü giyiminde çeşitlilik, kalite ve uygun fiyat eksikliğini gidermek için kapsamlı bir yaklaşım gerekliliğini vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma, spor giyim markalarının, başörtülü kadınlar için daha rahat ve erişilebilir seçenekler sunması gerektiğini belirtmekte ve bu kadınların spor yaparken sosyal engellerden uzak bir şekilde tam katılım sağlamalarının önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tesettür Spor Giyim, İslami Feminizm, Spor Ekonomisi, Duygu Analizi

Introduction

“Secularism emphasizes not only the separation of religion and state, but also the restatement of religion in proportion to modern sensitivities and forms of government” (Mahmood, 2009, p.837).

Physical activity plays a crucial role in supporting health and well-being, especially for women facing various challenges in their daily lives. However, access to physical activity and opportunities for physical exercise may not be equal for all women due to cultural, religious and social contexts that shape their choices and experiences. One such context is the adoption of hijab, which refers to clothing that covers a significant portion of the body, concealing the skin and shape. Many Muslim women wear hijab as a symbol of modesty and devotion, which is why this style of dress is often associated with Islam (Benn et al., 2013a; Benn et al., 2013b).

The term ‘hijab,’ which means ‘to cover’ or ‘to conceal,’ is often used interchangeably with ‘scarf’ in English and ‘hijab’ in Arabic. The headscarf holds different cultural meanings in various Muslim countries (Hassan and Harun, 2016). Among Muslim women, the headscarf represents both a religious and cultural practice, allowing them to express their identity and spiritual beliefs (Galadari, 2012). In an Islamic context, the headscarf is generally understood as a Quranic command that encourages modest dressing for women. Nevertheless, recent research indicates that Muslim women increasingly embrace the headscarf not only as a religious symbol but also as a fashion statement (Hassan and Ara, 2021). This shift has given rise to modest fashion that adheres to hijab guidelines while enhancing the aesthetics of Islamic clothing and symbolizing the wearer’s identity. Thus, hijab represents an impressive, fashionable style that goes beyond merely covering private areas, reflecting modernity and the ideal personality of a Muslim woman.

Hijab, serves as a multifaceted symbol for Muslim women, encompassing faith, culture, modesty and identity (El-Bassiouny, 2018; Hassan and Ara, 2021; Sheen et al., 2018). Beyond being a mere garment, it expresses religious beliefs and societal

norms (Hassan and Ara, 2021). However, in the face of globalization, it can also be seen as a tool to express freedom and preserve identity (El-Bassiouny, 2018). While some societies perceive it as empowering within patriarchal constraints, others view it as a factor that conceals individuality (Al-Kazi and González, 2018). Research on hijab clothing emphasizes the importance of considering cultural, social and individual factors. The hijab, which evokes multiple layers of meaning encompassing religious rules, societal norms and fashion trends (Almila and Inglis, 2018), plays a role in shaping perceptions of beauty, attractiveness and identity (Wang et al., 2015; Williams and Kamludeen, 2017). However, this role varies across different countries, reflecting diverse social and cultural norms (Hassan and Ara, 2021; Sheen et al., 2018).

The hijab, a symbol of religious identity, modesty and cultural belonging for Muslim women, varies according to the attitudes and approaches of each country and society. While hijab is compulsory in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan, it is partially compulsory in countries like Pakistan, Egypt and Jordan. On the other hand, in countries such as Syria, Türkiye, Kuwait, UAE, Morocco, Sudan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Tunisia, hijab is optional and women can dress as they wish. Regardless of the region or country, women who wear the hijab face various challenges in sports settings due to their religious appearance and other factors, including socio-cultural, financial, physical and psychological reasons (Walseth, 2015). These challenges often include issues related to clothing style, as well as family, community and gender inequality, causing them to struggle with their identity in educational settings (Hamzeh and Oliver, 2012). Although women participate in many different sports in modern Islamic countries (Marwat et al., 2014), there are numerous barriers that prevent them from fully engaging in sporting activities (Knez et al., 2012). One study showed that a woman who wears a hijab while playing sports challenges the societal norms and values (Walseth, 2006).

Based on the verses of Islam, there are certain dress codes for both men and women (Bah-

rainwala and O'Connor, 2019). However, some societies misinterpret these rules and create very different lifestyles (Benn and Pfister, 2013). It is seen that these rules are imposed only on women, giving more freedom and comfort to men (Stride, 2016). From a feminist perspective, this leads to the separation of women from men (Toffoletti K, Palmer, 2017). In addition, women face various problems due to the identities imposed on women by societies, patriarchal social structures, traditional social judgments, assigned roles and other sexist perspectives (Dagkas et al., 2011a; Dagkas et al., 2011b). As a result of all these, sport is perceived as an activity that requires adherence to masculine gender roles.

It is argued that more research is needed to examine how women from different cultures and backgrounds consume sportswear (Hussain and Cunningham, 2023). In this context, this study aims to investigate the physical activity experiences of students studying at the Faculty of Sport Sciences in Türkiye, a Muslim country, who prefer hijab clothing. In an environment where Islam is prominent for many and religious and spiritual aspects are gaining importance, this study aims to address the challenges faced by female athletes who wear hijab in sport settings in the context of Islamic feminism. The women's experiences are evaluated from a feminist perspective in terms of socio-cultural, educational and sportswear marketing.

Islamic Feminism

Islamic feminism is a movement that aims to promote gender equality and justice within an Islamic framework. Research emphasizes the importance of reinterpreting Islamic texts through a gender-conscious lens to challenge patriarchal interpretations and advocate for women's rights (Keddie, 2009; Koburtay et al., 2022). This approach involves critically examining the Qur'an and Sunnah to offer alternative perspectives based on principles of justice and equity (Rabaan et al., 2021). Aims to advocate for a more comprehensive embrace of women's rights by challenging traditional and post-classical interpretations of Islamic texts (Jawad, 2009; Shahin, 2020).

They draw on the principles of equality in Islam to combat patriarchal interpretations of the faith (Al-Sharmani, 2014). It aims to empower women within the framework of Islam, forgetting past gender-biased studies of Islamic texts and challenging misinterpretations (Rabaan et al., 2021). This movement also focuses on reinterpreting Islamic law to promote gender equality and social justice without rejecting it (Hattab and Abualrob, 2023).

Islamic feminism represents an important and evolving discourse within the broader feminist movement, particularly in the context of Islamic societies. This movement aims to create a common space for both men and women, promoting ideals of equality in both public and private spheres (Rua, 2024; Kabir, 2023). It is argued that Islamic feminism transcends geographical boundaries, shaping itself in different cultural contexts and advocating for women's rights based on interpretations of Islamic texts (Vohra, 2023; Badran, 2001). This global perspective highlights the efforts of Muslim women to redefine their roles in society, while also demonstrating the challenges they face from both secular and traditional patriarchal structures (Lazuardi & Shamsu, 2024; Dalaman, 2021). Islamic feminists assert that, when interpreted from a contemporary perspective, the Quran supports gender equality and justice, challenging historical narratives that legitimize the secondary status of women (Constance, 2023; Bakhshizadeh, 2023).

Islamic feminism comprises a variety of perspectives and strategies rather than presenting a homogeneous structure. For example, some activists focus on legal reforms in Islamic law (fiqh) to ensure the recognition and protection of women's rights (Vatuk, 2008; Abdallah, 2010). Others emphasize the importance of education and empowerment, advocating for women's participation in all areas of society, including politics and religious leadership (Lazuardi & Shamsu, 2024; Wahyu et al., 2023). This multifaceted approach allows Islamic feminists to address the specific challenges faced by women in different cultural and social contexts, making the movement both current and adaptable (Fatima et al., 2017; Fuad & Ramadhan, 2023). Islamic feminism reinterprets Islamic texts

to advocate for women's rights and gender equality, challenging patriarchal interpretations that have historically excluded women (Toktaş & O'Neil, 2015; Kabir, 2023). This reinterpretation enables women to reclaim their subjectivity and voice in both religious and social spheres, fostering a more inclusive understanding of Islam that aligns with contemporary feminist ideals (Constance, 2023; Bakhshizadeh, 2023).

Despite these developments, Islamic feminism in Türkiye continues to face certain challenges. The ongoing tension between secular and Islamic feminist ideologies has led to divisions within the feminist movement. While some women advocate for a secular feminist approach, others emphasize the importance of integrating Islamic principles into feminist activism (Dalaman, 2021; Hesová, 2019). This dilemma reflects broader societal debates in Türkiye regarding the role of religion in the public sphere and the pursuit of gender equality. The current situation of women in Türkiye has been shaped by social, cultural and religious dynamics. Islamic feminism addresses this situation by offering an interpretation based on the rights and roles that Islam provides for women. Islamic feminism, advocating for women's active and equal participation in society, calls for greater opportunities for women in human rights, education and the workforce, drawing on the fundamental teachings of Islam. However, women striving to balance traditional values with the processes of modernization sometimes find themselves caught between religious beliefs and societal expectations. Islamic feminism views women's religious identities and social roles as complementary elements and advocates for their empowerment from this perspective. In this context, the women's movement in Türkiye continues to take steps toward resolving the tension between social equality and religious beliefs.

The understanding of Islamic feminism intersects within the field of sport through various publications exploring the relationship between Islam, gender and sports participation. Studies examining the constraints faced by Pakistani female students in participating in sports suggest measures such as introducing sports activities in schools, providing specialized facilities for women and dispelling misconceptions that Islam is against sports

(Ge et al., 2022). This research challenges the idea that Islam is inherently against women's participation in sport (Laar et al., 2022). However, the discourse of Islamic feminism and sport also extends to the experiences of women in different cultural contexts. For example, another study examined how Iranian women negotiate sports fandom and the status of women fans in the sports arena, challenging traditional gender norms associated with sport and masculinity (Toffoletti, 2012). In addition, research on Omani women's participation in sport highlights the call for gender equality based on Quranic interpretations (2022, السناني). Studies have documented the achievements of female athletes, including the first female Olympic medalist in Iran and shed light on the challenges women face due to cultural attitudes, legal restrictions and social stigmas surrounding women's participation in sport (Ziaee et al., 2022).

This study aims to contribute to the literature by examining the challenges women face in sports environments from an Islamic feminist perspective. It is understood that Islamic feminism supports women's right to participate in sports and seeks solutions to the issues faced in this field. Research indicates that the patriarchal structure in Islam restricts women's freedoms and often places them in a limited position due to the obligation of covering themselves. Therefore, Islamic feminism presents a perspective that takes into account both the teachings of Islam and women's right to participate in sports.

Türkiye, as a country with a society that adheres to Islamic beliefs and a secular state structure, emphasizes the importance of the Islamic feminist perspective for women. In this context, examining the status of women in sports environments in Türkiye is of great significance. Given the need to strike a balance between the social structures shaped by Islamic values and the societal and cultural dynamics created by the secular system, the participation of women in sports and the barriers they face in this area hold particular importance. Islamic feminism aims to address both of these contexts by advocating for respect for women's religious beliefs while also supporting their demands for social equality and freedom. Therefore, studying the status of women in the field of

sports in Türkiye is not only an important issue in terms of gender equality but also an essential research topic for defending women's rights in a way that is compatible with religious and cultural values.

Method

Research Design

In this study, phenomenological research method, one of the qualitative research methods and techniques, was used. Phenomenological research investigates people's experiences with a phenomenon or concept by reducing individual experiences to a universal explanation (Creswell, 2013). Participant experiences on the phenomenon in question, "hijab sportswear", are revealed with the help of descriptive phenomenology. Descriptive phenomenology seeks to directly explain participants' experiences. This method delves into the detailed experiences of individuals wearing hijab in sports environments, revealing how these experiences are lived and perceived.

Research Process

The study involved eight female athletes who are students at a Faculty of Sport Sciences in Türkiye. Although these participants specialize in different sports disciplines, they all take courses related to various branches as part of their academic programs. The diverse hijab experiences of these participants across various sports hold significant importance for data variety. All of the participants wear hijab and their style of dress leans more toward fashion and modern trends rather than traditional hijab attire. This fashion-forward approach encompasses hijab styles seen in some other Muslim countries, influenced by a more secular perspective rather than strict dress codes. Despite their fashionable choices, sportswomen still encounter social criticism, influenced by both religious and cultural factors. Data on hijab-wearing sportswomen were collected through face-to-face interviews, recorded using voice recorders. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed and ana-

lyzed using traditional content analysis. The findings were evaluated by the author and two experts familiar with qualitative research methods.

Participants

The participants of the study were selected using a purposive sampling method. In this context, data were collected from students who are both enrolled in the Faculty of Sport Sciences and adopt a hijab style of clothing. All eight participants in the study had different experiences of being a female athlete in sports settings while wearing a hijab. The unique experiences of the eight female participants, who are students in the Faculty of Sport Sciences and participate in various courses, shed light on the challenges, responsibilities and requirements faced by women in Türkiye from both a religious and cultural perspective.

Rather than focusing solely on the individual characteristics of the participants in this section, it may be more informative to discuss the broader context of women choosing to sport hijab in Türkiye. Türkiye, as a Republic, has a secular approach compared to other countries with a majority Muslim population. This allows individuals the freedom to dress according to their own preferences. However, conservative norms persist both politically and socially. This dichotomy creates a "in-betweenness" experienced by women in various settings. However, the patriarchal mentality still persists. Female athletes who choose to wear hijab often adapt to sporting environments by blending fashionable styles with their religious requirements rather than strictly adhering to traditional attire. However, this compromise is not without its challenges in sporting settings due to cultural pressures. The detailed findings section explores these complexities.

Moreover, the individual characteristics of the participants are also important because factors such as the sports they prefer and their socio-economic background can create a meaningful context. The number of athletes who wear hijab varies significantly across different sports and this can influence the reactions they encounter. This study aimed to reach a limited number of female students at the Faculty of Sport Sciences at Nevşehir

Hacı Bektaş Veli University who adopt the hijab clothing style. No specific target number was set for participant selection; instead, eight students who agreed to participate were included in the research. The participants are engaged in different sports disciplines. Participant 1 is involved in volleyball and is a first-year student at the Faculty of Sport Sciences. Participant 2 practices taekwondo and is in her second year. Participant 3 is engaged in basketball, wushu, athletics and volleyball and is a third-year student. Participant 4 is involved in volleyball and is in her fourth year. Participant 5 plays volleyball and is a second-year student. Participant 6 participates in skiing and is in her fourth year. Participant 7 is involved in taekwondo and is a fourth-year student. Participant 8 is engaged in volleyball and is also in her fourth year. Since all participants study at the Faculty of Sport Sciences, they have gained experience in various sports through their coursework. However, when considering their individual interests, volleyball appears to be the most commonly preferred sport. From a socio-economic perspective, all participants come from families with an average income level and were raised in environments that align with the traditional Turkish family structure. In this context, both the academic and social backgrounds of the participants provide a valuable framework for understanding the experiences of female athletes who wear the hijab.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were developed following a detailed literature review on the topic. The purpose of choosing this data collection method is that the structured nature of semi-structured interviews can improve the quality and informativeness of the data collected, leading to robust research results.

The semi-structured interview form is a valuable tool in qualitative research as it offers a flexible yet systematic approach to data collection. This method struck a balance between open-ended explorations and predefined questions about hijab sportswear, allowing for unexpected insights to emerge from the participants. Participants' unique

perspectives and experiences were recorded with a voice recorder and obtained with necessary permissions. The importance of interview protocols that take ethical considerations into account and prioritize the rights and protection of participants was also explained.

In the semi-structured interview form, participants were asked about their initiation into sports, including how they started and whether any factors encouraged them. Regarding the hijab and sports experience, questions focused on how wearing a hijab influenced their ability to engage in sports, whether it played a role in their choice of sports discipline and how it affected the challenges they encountered. In terms of clothing-related issues, participants were asked about the difficulties they faced regarding sports attire, the availability of suitable clothing for hijabi female athletes and how they adapted their outfits. Under the theme of environmental and societal factors, the study explored how family, friends and society reacted to their participation in sports, whether they experienced discrimination in university or school settings and the general societal perception of hijabi female athletes. Concerning gender discrimination in sports, participants were asked whether they had encountered sexist attitudes, if training alongside male athletes was challenging and whether coaches and instructors adopted a specific approach toward hijabi athletes. Lastly, in the section on recommendations and solutions, participants shared their suggestions for reducing the challenges faced by hijabi female athletes, how federations or universities could support them and whether they used sports hijabs produced by brands, as well as their opinions on the necessity of making such products more widely available.

During data collection, face-to-face interviews were conducted in the office of the academic working at the Faculty of Sports Sciences, who is also mentioned in the article. At this stage, to ensure the participant's comfort, no one else was present in the environment and necessary information was provided to relax the participant. It was explained that the information provided by the participants would remain confidential and that no personal details that could identify the participant would be included in the published article. When reaching

out to the participants, information about the study was shared and interviews were conducted with the participant's consent. Face-to-face individual interviews lasted an average of 50 minutes, were recorded and transcribed. In qualitative research, especially in phenomenology, the use of audio recordings helps to understand participants' life experiences and perceptions (Peter et al., 2024). Audio recordings allow for a detailed examination of the data, helping researchers to capture nuances in participants' responses and experiences.

This process typically involves recording interviews or interactions with participants and then transcribing them for analysis. Accurate transcription of the recordings obtained from participants is crucial to maintain data integrity and facilitate in-depth analysis. For this reason, the interviews on the voice recorder were transcribed verbatim and left for the researcher and two other experts to analyze. In this way, by capturing the voices and narratives of the participants, the essence of their hijab sportswear experiences was captured, providing insight into their subjective realities.

With this method, the patterns, themes and meanings embedded in the audio data of the participants' hijab sportswear perspectives, emotions and the meanings they attributed to their experiences could be identified and an analytical perspective was provided in induction. The names of the participants have been changed to pseudonyms to protect their privacy and are presented in the findings section.

Data Analysis

This study analyzed the data using traditional content analysis method. Traditional content analysis is an important and frequently used research technique in qualitative research. The data obtained from the audio recordings were systematically categorized and thematized after being converted into written form. This process involves identifying patterns and themes by coding, categorizing and thematizing the data (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999).

In the case of analysing audio recordings, transcription is a crucial step in preparing the data for analysis and enables researchers to work with the

written text for coding and categorization (O'Brien et al., 2014). The coding process involves assigning labels or codes to text fragments according to their content, which can then be organized into categories (Neale, 2016). In this study, while coding the interviews in the transcribed word file, synchronization was provided with different coloring tools to create different categories for similar codes. For example, it is seen in the findings section that codes such as "opening headscarf, seing hair, uncomfortable clothes" filled the category "Problems Encountered in Hijab Sportswear and the Search for Solutions". Categorization is the process of grouping coded passages into broader themes or categories and provides a more structured analysis of data (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). After the data were categorized, common themes were identified and presented.

Sentiment Analysis

The sentiment analysis process utilized both the NRC Emotion Lexicon and the VADER analysis tool. The NRC Emotion Lexicon provided scores for specific emotional tendencies such as "Anger," "Anticipation," "Disgust," "Fear," "Joy," "Sadness," "Surprise," and "Trust," enabling a detailed analysis of these emotions within the participants' comments.

The VADER analysis tool, known for its effectiveness in measuring emotional tendencies in social media and short texts, was employed to determine the overall emotional tone of Reddit comments. VADER calculated scores for positive, negative, neutral and compound sentiments, along with polarity and subjectivity values for each comment. The compound score represented participants' overall emotional tendency, ranging from negative to positive, while the positive, negative and neutral scores provided a more granular analysis of emotional intensity and orientation. The polarity value indicated the extent to which the comments were positive or negative, while the subjectivity score offered insights into whether participants evaluated their experiences from a personal or objective perspective. The combined use of these two methods enabled a deeper understanding of

the emotional content of the comments and provided a comprehensive perspective on the experiences expressed by the participants.

Results

The findings of this study, which examines the experiences of hijab-clad women studying at the Faculty of Sports Sciences from a feminist perspective in terms of socio-cultural, educational and sports marketing, are organized into five themes. The overview of the themes is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Themes

| Theme | Sum |
|---|--|
| Challenges of Hijab Sportswear: Overcoming Barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Burkini Issue: Swimwear Choices and Barriers</i> <i>Clothing Options for Women Playing Sports: Preventing Clothing from Opening During Movement</i> <i>Problems Encountered in Hijab Sportswear and the Search for Solutions</i> | This theme highlights the challenges that women in hijab face in sports settings and how these challenges affect their performance and overall sporting experience. |
| Untapped Potential: Hijab Sportswear Market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>More Variety and Affordable Options in Hijab Sportswear for Women</i> <i>Enhancing Inclusivity: Expanding Hijab Sportswear Choices for Women</i> | In this theme, we discuss the limited availability of affordable and suitable sportswear options for women with hijab sportswear and the opportunity to target this market segment. |
| Equality in Sportswear: Addressing the Needs of Hijab Sportswear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Impact of Limited Sportswear Options on Performance</i> | The scarcity of options in the sportswear market negatively impacts the comfort and performance of women wearing hijab clothing. This theme highlights the need for more inclusive and tailored solutions. |
| Breaking Stereotypes: Stories of Women Wearing Hijab in Sport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Prejudice and Resistance against Women in Sport</i> <i>Hijab Sportswear Preferences and Challenges of Peer Relationships</i> <i>The Grand Triad: The Intersection of Religious Attire, Sports Performance and Social Acceptance</i> | Here we explore how women face criticism from family, friends and society when playing sports. The theme sheds light on overcoming prejudice and stereotypes. |
| Gender Bias: Men's Comfort in Hijab Sportswear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Criticizing Women in Hijab Sportswear and Gender Norms</i> | Female athletes are often subjected to more criticism than men in sport environments. This theme addresses the inequalities and challenges faced by female athletes. |

Challenges of Hijab Sportswear: Overcoming Barriers

Problems Encountered in Hijab Sportswear and the Search for Solutions: Women face various problems related to hijab sportswear. One of these problems is the problem of veil. The hijab issue is a complex problem and there is no easy solution. By understanding these challenges, it is important to create a more inclusive environment for all athletes. Women express in various ways the physical and psychological discomfort caused by sportswear that is not appropriate for them. The "risk of wearing a headscarf (i.e. the risk of hair coming out of the hijab)" during sports activities is a constant source of anxiety for women, which negatively affects their performance and prevents them from achieving the success they desire. As participants 1, Participant 2 and Participant 7 noted, the headscarf can be a distraction during sports activities. Participant 1 said that her headscarf was constantly untied, which made it difficult for her to focus on her performance. Participant 2 said that she was often faced with the dilemma of whether to fix her headscarf or meet the incoming ball. Participant 7 said that she felt uncomfortable when her hair came out while doing somersaults:

"My headscarf is always getting opened, so I can't get comfortable" (Participant 1).

"When my headscarf is broken, should I fix my headscarf or receive the incoming ball? So, you don't know what to do. While you fix it, you also produce a solution" (Participant 2).

"I get uncomfortable when my hair comes out while doing somersaults" (Participant 7).

The women have found solutions to the problems they have experienced regarding the headscarf, based on their experiences. Some women found better comfort by using bandanas or affordable sports bonnets instead of headscarves. They were aware that this issue was solved by a well-known sports brand, but they had financial barriers in accessing these products. Due to the high cost, women are trying to achieve the comfort they want with sports caps that can be used as an alternative and are more affordable. However, it still emerges from the statements that they cannot solve the problem completely. For example, Participant 3

said that she found a more suitable version of the sports brand's headscarf, but it was still not as good as the original. Participant 4 said that she found bandanas to be more comfortable than headscarves, but she was still worried about them coming off. Participant 8 said that she was always aware of the possibility of her bandana coming off, so she was always thinking about it. These statements suggest that there is still a need for more affordable and comfortable headscarf options for women who participate in sports.

Clothing Options for Women Playing Sports: Preventing Clothing from Opening During Movement:

Another issue that women face regarding clothing is the risk of their loose-fitting garments coming undone during physical activities. Women who prefer modest clothing often opt for loose-fitting clothes such as tunics over leggings, baggy sweatpants, or loose shorts. However, some physical activities can cause their clothing to loosen, revealing their body contours. The reason behind this is that the clothing style they choose may not be suitable for certain sports. As a result, their performance can be negatively affected. Additionally, ill-fitting attire during specific sports activities can lead to psychological distress. For example, a woman wearing a loose dress might feel uncomfortable if it opens up and exposes her body while performing a somersault. These statements highlight the need for more clothing options for sportswomen who wear hijab. These options should be tailored to different sports and designed to prevent garments from coming undone during movement. The following quotes from participants illustrate these problems:

"My dress can be opened up when I do somersaults at the gym" (Participant 2).

"When I dress loosely, I have a hard time doing the movements because my dress is getting opened." (Participant 8).

The Burkini Issue: Swimwear Choices and Barriers: Another problem is related to the burkini worn in swimming lessons. The woman cannot wear swimsuits, so they use burkini in swimming events. However, they state that burkini hinder their physical activities and they have difficulties.

It is seen that when they wear a burkini, they have difficulties in swimming and even the participants who have just learned to swim have swimming phobias due to this difficulty. As swimming for athletes includes competition that requires high performance, more than just being a hobby, women are saddened by being forced and unsuccessful due to clothing. That's why some women stretch their choices about clothes. They perform physical activities by wearing shorts and t-shirts instead of burkini in order to better demonstrate their performance. For example, Participant 7 continued the lessons with shorts and a t-shirt because she failed the lesson when she wore a burkini. As it can be understood from the statements of woman, burkini are not suitable sportswear for them. However, some women continue to use a burkini because there is no alternative swimming outfit suitable for them and they do not look forward to wearing a different outfit because of their preferences. The following quotes from participants illustrate these problems:

"Other women can swim very comfortably in swimsuits and they can cover distance. We can't move faster than they do and it poses an obstacle for us" (Participant 1).

"In my first year, I could not pass the course because I wore a burkini, the next year I passed it with shorts and a t-shirt" (Participant 7).

"I was wearing something long over tights as it was difficult to swim with burkini" (Participant 6).

"I dress how I feel comfortable" (Participant 3).

"Burkini's bonnet stuck to my face when I got out of the water. I developed a phobia of water and failed" (Participant 2).

"It's a problem for me to wear a bodysuit inside a swimsuit instead of a burkini" (Participant 8).

When evaluated under this theme, it is observed that women face many problems related to their clothing during sports activities. The issues arising from clothing not being compatible with the sports discipline both psychologically disturb women and negatively affect their performance. Therefore, women show flexibility by compromising to perform better and feel better about themselves.

Untapped Potential: Hijab Sportswear Market

More Variety and Affordable Options in Hijab Sportswear for Women: The availability of affordable and suitable hijab sportswear for women is limited. This lack of diversity in hijab sportswear options can be a barrier to women's participation in physical activity. Additionally, the high cost of hijab sportswear can create a financial burden for women. The statements from study participants further emphasize these challenges. For instance, Tugba mentioned, 'Clothing for us is scarcely limited and quite expensive.'. Participant 2 expressed that 'our job would be easier if clothes were designed to suit us.'. Participant 3 pointed out that 'a famous sports brand made it, but the price is too high.'. And Participant 4 highlighted that 'there is no variety and it's expensive because it's limited.'. These findings underscore the need for more affordable and inclusive hijab sportswear options for women. Hijab sportswear brands can better support women by designing clothing lines that cater to their needs and making their products more accessible:

"Clothing for us is scarcely limited and quite expensive" (Participant 1).

"You are trying to come up with a solution on your own, but it is a little challenging. Our job would be easier if the appropriate clothes were designed for us. We find a solution on our own and perhaps unintentionally complicate it. You wear it in one lesson, you wear the other in the next lesson, we try to find out which one is suitable" (Participant 2).

"A famous sports brand did this, but the price is too high. Too expensive. There may be more affordable ones, but they are not as beautiful as the original ones... The fabric of the clothes produced by Nike is light. It may cause us to sweat, but it does not show sweat. More comfortable. We can count what Nike has done as support, but the price is too high" (Participant 3).

"There is no variety and it is expensive because it is limited... When it comes to clothes, I don't want to go to fitness. I don't know what to wear. Appearance is very important to me, but there is no variety" (Participant 4).

Enhancing Inclusivity: Expanding Hijab Sportswear Choices for Women: The scarcity of hijab

sportswear options available for women is a significant issue. Participants often find themselves making do with athletic clothing that wasn't specifically designed for their needs, or they end up forgoing hijab sportswear altogether. Several factors contribute to this lack of options, including the misguided assumption that only open-dressed athletes can be considered true athletes and the limited market for hijab sportswear tailored to women. To address this, hijab sportswear manufacturers should prioritize inclusivity in their designs and offer a wider range of options for women:

"There are usually sports clothes for athletes who adopt open dressing style. We make combinations with our own means. It's like wearing a bodysuit under a short sleeve t-shirt" (Participant 8).

"According to the open-dressed athlete, there is no clothing for a veiled female athlete. I think it's limited and almost nonexistent. There is a mentality as if only those who dress openly can be athletes. Does a veiled person do sports? Would a closed athlete wear this? That's why it's not produced" (Participant 4).

"I would also like to wear what suits me, but it is not available. Everything is for open-dressed athletes. When it comes to sports, only tights and bustier come to mind. There is no design suitable for veiled female athletes" (Participant 6).

The study findings highlight the need for more affordable and suitable hijab sportswear options for women. Hijab sportswear brands can support women by designing inclusive clothing lines and making their products more accessible. This approach would help break down barriers to physical activity and promote a healthier lifestyle for hijab-dressed women. Additionally, it's crucial to consider cultural and religious factors that influence women's choices regarding hijab sportswear. Some women may prefer full-body coverage, while others may opt for sportswear that allows more skin exposure. Sensitivity to these factors is essential when designing and marketing sportswear for hijab-dressed women.

Equality in Sportswear: Addressing the Needs of Hijab Sportswear

The Impact of Limited Sportswear Options on Performance: The limited availability of sports clothing for women can significantly impact their comfort and performance. Participants have expressed feeling less at ease and restricted when exercising in long sleeves and a headscarf, especially when compared to men or openly-dressed women who can wear shorts or tights. Additionally, they've noticed increased sweating when dressed this way. Women perceive a disadvantage in sports environments due to the lack of suitable clothing, feeling that they cannot move as freely or perform as well as men or openly-dressed women:

"The outfit I wear is not the same as the outfit a man or an openly-dressed woman wears. They are wearing shorts or tights. It is more comfortable. I'm wearing tights and shorts on it. I need to wear something with long sleeves on top. I should cover my head with a headscarf. The sweat I have at that moment is different. The load on me is more than them. They can move more freely" (Participant 6).

"An openly-dressed person does sports more comfortably. Frankly, this doesn't seem fair to me" (Participant 4).

Based on the data within this theme, it is evident that addressing marketing deficiencies is crucial to resolving the challenges women face with clothing. When designing sports apparel, it's essential to prioritize women's needs. The increasing demand for comfortable and stylish options reflects the desire of these women to participate in physical activities without feeling restricted or uncomfortable.

Breaking Stereotypes: Stories of Women Wearing Hijab in Sport

Prejudice and Resistance against Women in Sport: Prejudice against women in sports is a widespread problem. The participants in this study reported experiencing bias from their families when they expressed interest in participating in sports. This prejudice is based on the inaccurate assumption

that 'veiled women cannot engage in sports.' Unfortunately, such stereotypes can significantly impact women's lives.

The study participants described how family prejudice made it challenging for them to pursue their athletic interests. They felt compelled to prove themselves, often negotiating their sporting activities with their families. This process sometimes left them feeling exhausted and, in some cases, even led to feelings of resentment or hatred toward their families.

However, their stories also demonstrate resilience. Despite the obstacles, these women worked hard to challenge prejudice and pursue their athletic goals. By finding ways to negotiate with their families and proving their abilities, they showed that it's possible to overcome bias and achieve success, even in the face of adversity:

"I wanted to play volleyball and my family was against it. I continued to ignore what was said. To exercise, I got up early in the morning and did sports while everyone was sleeping. In order to demonstrate my success, I constantly tried to prove myself to my family. I started doing muaythai and they were against it. I continued secretly for a while. But I couldn't take the pressure any longer. I started to have a grudge against my family. I did the training in secret to get into the university. I did sports fasting for four hours just because they said you can't stand it while fasting. They said you can't do it, so I always tried to prove myself that I could do it" (Participant 4).

"They said, what does the veiled girl have to do with sports? Yet I continued. This has nothing to do with it. It can be done any way" (Participant 1).

"You're a veiled girl, you can't do that! Don't wear this! At this age, I still hear such statements from my family." (Participant 6).

Women often face criticism from those around them, including family members, friends and especially those who adhere to a more open style of clothing. This criticism can manifest both verbally and nonverbally, ranging from simple disapproval to outright insults. Unfortunately, these critiques are often underlines that women should not participate in sports or that they should adhere to specific dress codes while doing so.

The impact of this criticism on women's lives is significant. Study participants shared how exposure to criticism made it challenging for them to maintain their athletic interests. They felt self-conscious and uncomfortable, sometimes altering their behavior to avoid further scrutiny. In severe cases, such criticism led women to quit sports altogether. This issue is serious because it prevents women from engaging in an activity that can be beneficial both physically and mentally.

Hijab Sportswear Preferences and Challenges of Peer Relationships: Women are also frequently subjected to bullying by their peers, particularly those who adhere to a more open style of clothing. For instance, Participant 3 experienced differential treatment from her friends due to her clothing choices, feeling unaccepted for who she was. Another participant, Participant 7, expressed discomfort with her friends' interference in her life. She boldly asserted, 'This is my life, my body. You can't make me feel bad.' Participant 7 refused to allow her friends to undermine her choices:

"They said you are wearing a headscarf but wearing shorts. They said you are a destroyer of religion. They said that there is no such way of veiling, it is against the verses, etc. They said you have to dress properly while doing sports" (Participant 3).

"The people around me were very obsessed with my dressing style while doing sports. Does this girl dress like this? Does a veiled person do sports? You are a veiled girl; do you have to do sports? Even though I said I didn't care much, I did care a lot. It was bothering me" (Participant 4).

"They say you are a veiled girl, why are you wearing this? Even my best friend says the same. Those saying such things are usually openly-dressed people. This is my life, my body. You can't make me feel bad" (Participant 6).

"They say you are a veiled girl, is this making my life difficult? Instead of wearing it, they say, don't wear a headscarf. What I do is none of your business" (Participant 7).

The Grand Triad: The Intersection of Religious Attire, Sports Performance and Social Acceptance: The study participants expressed feeling pressure to conform to specific clothing norms due to their

religious beliefs. For instance, Participant 6 felt compelled to wear shorts over her overalls to avoid criticism about not covering her upper body. Participant 7, on the other hand, wears leggings, but they feel too tight; she would prefer sweatpants for better comfort during physical activity. Participants 1 hopes for a normalized environment where she can dress without judgment.

These findings underscore the need for greater understanding and acceptance of religious attire in sports. The pressure to conform can negatively impact both comfort and performance. Creating an inclusive environment where all athletes feel accepted, regardless of their religious beliefs, is essential. Additionally, when they must wear tight clothing due to their academic department or physical activity, they feel uneasy about the reactions they receive. Despite this, they recognize the importance of comfort for better performance, even if they fear judgment from others.

"Overalls are worn for skiing. I used to wear shorts over the overalls so they wouldn't say why you don't wear anything on top of it. In fact, when I wear shorts, they stick to my body, but I always felt like I had to wear those shorts. There is a prejudice that you are a veiled girl and cannot dress openly. I want to wear how I want in classes, but I'm hesitant. I have pressure. This pressure exists in the university as well. I am a sports science student. I don't like being judged on this" (Participant 6).

"I wear leggings but they are too tight. But if I wear sweatpants instead of leggings, I have problems in terms of movement. If you do sports, you have to dress comfortably. I can't come here with something baggy" (Participant 7).

"I want our situation to normalize" (Participant 1).

Prejudice against veiled women in sports is a widespread problem. This bias significantly impacts women's lives, making it challenging for them to pursue their athletic interests. Women often face criticism and bullying from those around them, based on the assumption that they should not participate in sports or that they must adhere to specific dress codes while doing so.

Gender Bias: Men's Comfort in Hijab Sportswear

Criticizing Women in Hijab Sportswear and Gender Norms: Women are frequently criticized for dressing too tightly or revealingly in sports settings. These criticisms often stem from religious and social values. However, men are not subjected to the same dress standards:

"I see a lot of men wearing tights, but nobody says you can't do this" (Participant 6).

"I think I am not equal to men" (Participant 1).

When the data under this theme is examined through a feminist lens, it becomes clear that expectations regarding women's dress and behavior in sports settings are often rooted in outdated sexist views. These views perpetuate the idea that the responsibilities attributed to women do not apply to men. As a result, many women feel uncomfortable in these settings and are subjected to harsher judgments than men. This inequality, where women are held to different standards of dress and behavior, can be seen as a form of gender discrimination. It unfairly restricts women's freedom of expression and their ability to participate fully in sport.

Sentiment Analysis Results

Figure 1 sheds light on the complex emotional experiences of hijab-wearing women participating in sports. Among all participants, the emotions of "anticipation" and "trust" stand out as significantly higher compared to other emotions. Anticipation reflects these women's desire to overcome challenges and achieve better conditions in the future, while trust signifies their faith in their beliefs, inner resilience and the support they receive from their surroundings.

The emotions of "sadness" and "fear" are also commonly observed among participants. These emotions reflect the difficulties they face, such as social pressures, the lack of appropriate sportswear, financial challenges and discomfort experienced during physical activities. Additionally, the presence of "joy" to a certain extent indicates that, despite all the obstacles, these women experience some positive moments and occasionally feel a sense of achievement while engaging in sports.

The heightened emotion of "anger" reveals participants' frustration and disappointment in the face of societal stereotypes, limited support and a lack of marketing efforts. This emotion particularly highlights their reaction to the absence of suitable, functional and affordable sportswear designed for hijab-wearing women.

The emotional reflections of the participants align closely with the findings of the study. This emotional analysis helps to deepen our understanding of the challenges faced by hijab-wearing women in sports, not only in physical but also psychological and social dimensions. In this context, developing inclusive policies, improving the availability of suitable sportswear for hijab-wearing women and reducing societal prejudices could help mitigate emotions like fear and sadness while fostering greater feelings of joy and trust.

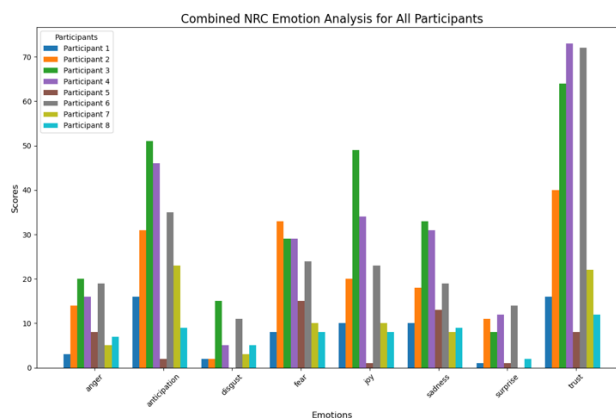


Figure 1. NRC Emotion Analysis Results

The VADER and Subjectivity analysis charts, collectively illustrating the emotional experiences of all participants, reveal a predominant Neutral sentiment across the responses, reflecting a balanced approach to the challenges faced by hijab-wearing women in sports (Figure 2). The high Compound scores highlight the resilience and determination these women display in navigating societal pressures, stereotypes and practical challenges such as the lack of inclusive sportswear. Moderate Positive scores indicate moments of joy and satisfaction, often tied to personal achievements or supportive social environments, as highlighted in the study. On the other hand, the presence of Negative scores underscores the frustrations and emotional toll stemming from systemic

barriers, economic constraints and inadequate sports marketing for hijab-compliant clothing. The Subjectivity scores, consistent across participants, emphasize the deeply personal nature of these experiences, aligning with the study's findings that these challenges are both societal and individual. Together, these emotional patterns reinforce the need for systemic changes to promote inclusivity, such as the development of functional sportswear and policies that support the participation of hijab-wearing women in physical activities.

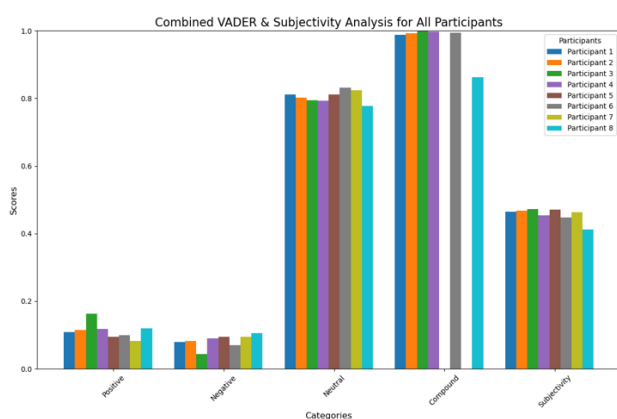


Figure 2. VADER & Subjectivity Analysis Results

Discussions

When examining the distribution of topics in articles related to sports management, it is evident that the most popular subjects include sports marketing, sports consumption, sports participation, sports performance and sports economics (Keskin et al., 2023). However, despite the increasing research on Muslim women and sports, challenges related to culture, religion and clothing persist in sports environments. These difficulties continue to create a dilemma between physical activity and religious commitment, emphasizing the need for further research. Daily modest clothing is not suitable for sports, hindering women's active participation. Studies reveal that Muslim women who embrace their identity often struggle with the conflict between Islamic dress rules and sporting requirements (Senarath and Liyanage, 2020).

The discomfort experienced by sportswomen wearing hijab in sports environments stems from their desire to appear professional and perform well while adhering to their goals (Rose, 2021). The absence of specialized stores for Muslim clothing

necessitates more time and effort for women to find suitable attire for their daily needs (Bachleda et al., 2014). Although some brands have developed comprehensive sportswear for hijab styles, accessibility remains a challenge for women. The lack of a complete alternative in the market means this issue remains unresolved. Research also supports this view, indicating that retailers do not provide a fully compatible hijab that adheres to the fundamental parameters set by Islam. Therefore, there is a need to develop completely compatible hijabs that allow Muslim women to perform better, reduce discomfort and provide appropriate physiological support. This highlights the deficiency in well-known sportswear brands addressing Muslim women (Rose, 2021). Therefore, there is a clear need in sports marketing to address the significant demand for hijab sportswear among Muslim women. Rather than relying on a single brand, multiple brands should engage with this topic to enhance diversity and price options (Segran, 2018). Both religious teachings and sports activities require suitable sportswear for Muslim women (Omar, 2016). The sportswear market has responded by creating products such as hijab swimsuits, hijab tracksuits and hijab leggings. These items are designed with materials and styles that cater to both religious sensitivities and athletic performance (Shafee, 2020). However, this issue remains limited to specific brands and certain sports. The needs of veiled women in sports environments have not been fully met. Sports marketing must address these gaps by making affordable sportswear accessible to veiled women (Keskin and Ulusay, 2023). A study on hijab sportswear found that 34% of participants faced wardrobe challenges (Shafee, 2020).

The fundamental criteria for hijab include covering the entire body except the face, covering the hands and feet, concealing body contours, avoiding imitation of men's clothing codes and maintaining a feminine appearance (Bhuiyan, 2018). However, due to the existing challenges in the hijab sportswear industry and the difficulty in fully addressing women's needs that align with these requirements, female athletes often find their own solutions to integrate into sports environments. To

meet both sports functionality and hijab requirements, women combine layered combinations of men's and women's sportswear (for example, wearing a hat for sun protection) during sports activities. This approach is driven by women's consideration of not only performance and functionality but also affordability when selecting their attire. These factors put women at a disadvantage in sports environments, leading to a demand for hijab sportswear that is both fashionable and adheres to conservative criteria (Rose, 2021). While the Islamic product market has seen significant growth, the lack of professionally designed, affordable hijab sportswear remains a challenge faced by women.

The data indicates that participants demand a hijab sportswear style that meets their needs while also being practical, functional and suitable for sports activities. This finding is essential for major sports brands to consider. Particularly, understanding the experiences and requirements of participants facing issues related to sportswear provides valuable insights. Women who wear hijab often experience physical and psychological discomfort during sports due to the risk of their headscarves coming undone. This situation negatively impacts their sports performance, putting them at a disadvantage and hindering their desired achievements. Although there are limited studies supporting these findings in the literature, one research study demonstrated that different clothing styles (such as hijab or Shalwar Kameez) can hinder Muslim women's participation in certain physical activities (Jiwani and Rail, 2010). Another study revealed that some veiled women prefer to avoid swimming or sports centers due to desires to avoid seeing other men and women's bodies, as well as the use of sticky materials and insufficiently loose mandatory clothing. Some have resolved this issue by purchasing sportswear from sports clubs or visiting Muslim swimming centers, while others continue to avoid swimming or sports clubs (Baharudin et al., 2021). The use of burkinis in swimming is primarily due to the modesty requirements for women. However, burkinis can restrict movement and pose challenges for effective swimming. Some women, despite the differences from traditional swimsuits, prefer wearing shorts

and a t-shirt to enhance their performance rather than using a burkini. Others may develop swimming-related phobias due to the limitations imposed by the burkini. The lack of suitable alternatives for swimwear further complicates this situation. Also participants in studies have expressed feeling restricted and less at ease when exercising in long sleeves and a headscarf, especially when compared to men or openly-dressed women who have the freedom to wear shorts or tights. This disparity in clothing options leads to increased sweating and a perception of disadvantage in sports environments, where women feel they cannot move as freely or perform as well as others (Wibowo et al., 2018). In light of these findings, sportswear, especially swimsuits, should be developed to align with both Islamic clothing specifications, including modest body shapes and standard requirements for sports attire. To effectively address this issue, the necessity of a broader range of options is emphasized (Hassan and Harun, 2016).

Problems have arisen in some Muslim countries, such as less participation of women in public swimming pools or communal areas due to inflexible dress codes (Senarath and Liyanage, 2020). When the findings of this study are evaluated, it supports this research. Women have had many problems with clothing in sports environments, especially in swimming pools. They solved this problem with the flexible dress approach. They came up with a solution to the problem by dressing in a way that would adapt to the requirements of the sports environment. For example, instead of swimming with the burkini in the pool, they were able to perform by swimming in shorts and a t-shirt.

Prejudice against women in sports, especially those who wear hijab, significantly impedes their athletic pursuits. Study participants encountered bias from their families, who believed that veiled women couldn't participate in sports. Despite these challenges, resilient women worked diligently to challenge prejudice and showcase their abilities. However, they also faced criticism and bullying from peers who adhered to different clothing norms. To promote gender equality, it is crucial to create an inclusive environment where women are not judged based on their attire. A

study conducted in Oman, a Muslim country, examines the role of Islam in sports science education for women (Bachleda et al., 2014). It is understood that women in Oman receive training separately from men in sports science classes and are not flexible about clothing (Benn et al., 2013a; Benn et al., 2013b). Türkiye, on the other hand, is not subject to the rules of dress according to many countries such as Oman and Iran, as it is governed by a secular state understanding besides being a Muslim country. Therefore, freedom in clothing and a mixed structure in education are valid for Sports Science students. However, this does not mean that women do not have problems. Tensions persist for women who are caught between modernization and the traditional approach (Benn et al., 2013a; Benn et al., 2013b).

Engaging in sports as a Muslim woman is often perceived as a challenge. Therefore, women who play sports are exposed to many sanctions or harassment (Senarath and Liyanage, 2020). In this study, it was determined that women who adopted the closed dressing style were verbally harassed with statements such as "Can the veiled woman do sports", "Can the veiled woman wear this". In fact, these statements were in the form of insults and were seen as defamation such as "religious provocateur".

Research has shown that they are influenced by their families' culture and identity processes with ethnic groups (AbdulRazak et al., 2010). In this study, it is seen that female athletes who adopt hijab sportswear style are criticised by their families, relatives, environment and friends. Ethnic approaches are dominant on the basis of these criticisms. In a study interviewed 21 young Muslim women and said that the women were divided into two groups (Walseth and Strandbu, 2014). While one group is based on their ethnic origins and does not consider doing sports within the framework of a respectable understanding of femininity (Pakistanis), the other group is the group that focuses on the health dimension of Islam, promotes itself beyond ethnic identities and is positive about doing sports (Norwegian). Muslim women's participation in sports differs according to countries, rural

or urban areas and the dominance of understanding such as traditionalism and westernization (Sfeir, 1985).

It is important to see the effects of women who adopt the closed dressing style on their participation in physical activity, sports or Physical Education and Sports Science classes. It is because women face many social, political, educational and economic problems. Especially in Muslim countries, problems may arise due to the struggle between religious and sports requirements for athlete women.

From an Islamic feminist perspective, women's participation in sports holds significant value in light of both Islamic teachings and the promotion of healthy living. The hadith narrated by Ibn Umar, where the Prophet (s.a.w.) advises teaching children swimming, archery and horseback riding, underscores the importance of physical skills and sports. Such activities enhance physical fitness, mental health and spiritual well-being. The Quran and Hadith endorse the values of maintaining physical fitness and developing strength; thus, women are encouraged to engage in sports within the boundaries of Islamic etiquette and morality. The Prophet's (s.a.w.) example of racing with female companions illustrates the support for healthy competition and athletic activities. Moreover, the martial prowess of female companion Khawlah bint al-Azwar in battles demonstrates that developing physical abilities and strength in women is accepted in Islam. The hadith narrated by Abu Huraira, "The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer", highlights that strength acquired through physical activities is commendable in Islam. The overarching principles of Islam emphasize the preservation and enhancement of health; therefore, women's participation in sports is seen as an action that aligns with Islamic values and strengthens their societal roles.

Conclusions

The presence of women who adopt a closed dressing style in sports environments has given rise to several challenges. These women face pressure from various sources, starting within their families

and extending to relatives, friends and educational settings. Balancing religious requirements with athletic demands, they grapple with societal oppression. While attempting to address this issue through flexible clothing choices to enhance their sports performance, they encounter dilemmas due to criticism from their surroundings. A solution lies in adopting a flexible approach, involving joint decision-making and context-specific policies (Benn et al., 2013a; Benn et al., 2013b). Viewing this issue through the lens of 'Islamic Feminism' provides deeper insights into women's experiences. Interestingly, these criticisms come from other women. Despite societal pressure and religious judgments, women emphasize that criticism is disproportionately directed at them, with little scrutiny of men. They express a desire for freedom from interference, regardless of gender or veiling status.

The study underscores the need for inclusive, affordable and comfortable sportswear options tailored to the specific requirements of women who wear hijab. By addressing these challenges, we can create a more supportive environment for all athletes, allowing them to perform at their best without compromising their comfort or beliefs. The scarcity and high cost of suitable hijab sportswear pose significant barriers, leading some women to resort to non-specific athletic clothing or forgo sportswear altogether. To overcome this, brands should focus on diversity and affordability, rather than relying solely on a single solution.

Promoting a healthier lifestyle and breaking down barriers to physical activity for hijab-dressed women requires hijab sportswear brands to prioritize inclusivity in their designs and make their products more accessible. Understanding and respecting the cultural and religious factors that influence women's choices regarding hijab sportswear is essential. Some women may prefer full-body coverage, while others may opt for sportswear allowing more skin exposure.

The limited availability of suitable sportswear options for women, particularly those who wear hijab, significantly impacts their comfort and performance during physical activities. Addressing the deficiencies in marketing and design is crucial to overcoming the challenges women face with

clothing. Prioritizing women's needs when designing sports apparel is essential. The increasing demand for comfortable and stylish options reflects women's desire to participate in physical activities without feeling restricted or uncomfortable.

In conclusion, the lack of diverse and affordable sportswear options for women, especially those who wear hijab, not only hinders their performance but also affects their overall experience during physical activities. By recognizing and addressing these challenges through inclusive design and marketing strategies, sportswear brands can play a vital role in promoting inclusivity and empowering women to lead active and healthy lifestyles. Additionally, there is a significant gap in sportswear marketing for closed dressing styles and existing brands fall short of meeting this demand, necessitating relevant economic policies.

The current study reflects the experiences of only a limited number of women. A more comprehensive research would be possible through quantitative approaches rather than qualitative methods. Therefore, future studies could attempt to reach a larger sample of women who wear the hijab using a scale to reveal broader findings.

Practical Implications

This study emphasizes the importance of addressing the challenges faced by women who wear hijab in sports environments. These challenges span from societal and cultural barriers to the lack of appropriate sportswear options, significantly impacting their ability to participate in physical activities. The findings suggest that sportswear brands need to prioritize inclusivity by designing affordable, functional and culturally sensitive apparel tailored to the needs of hijab-wearing women. Such designs can enhance comfort, performance and confidence, enabling these women to engage fully in sports without compromising their beliefs or facing societal judgment.

Moreover, the research highlights the necessity for broader societal and institutional efforts to promote inclusivity in sports. Policies that reduce stereotypes and support the integration of hijab-wearing women into sports can foster equality. Collaboration among policymakers, educators and

sports organizations is crucial to creating a supportive environment that acknowledges and respects the diverse needs of athletes. By addressing these issues, sportswear brands and institutions can contribute to empowering hijab-wearing women, promoting active lifestyles and enriching the sports domain with cultural diversity.

A limitation of this study is the restricted number of participants. Future studies could address this topic with larger participant groups and different universities, leading to more detailed and comprehensive findings.

References

- Abdallah, S. (2010). Le féminisme islamique, vingt ans après : économie d'un débat et nouveaux chantiers de recherche. *Critique Internationale*, 46(1), 9–23. <https://doi.org/10.3917/crui.046.0009>
- AbdulRazak, M., Omar-Fauzee, M. S., & Abd-Latif, R. (2010). The perspective of Arabic Muslim women toward sport participation. *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, 1(2), 364-377.
- Al-Kazi, L. A., & González, A. L. (2018). The veil you know: Individual and societal-level explanations for wearing the hijab in comparative perspective. *Social Compass*, 65(5), 566-590.
- Almila, A. M., & Inglis, D. (2018). On the Hijab-Gift: Gift-theoretical considerations on the ambiguities and ambivalences of Islamic veiling in a diasporic context. *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*. <https://doi.org/10.20897/jcasc/2672>
- Al-Sharmani, M. (2014). Islamic feminism: Transnational and national reflections. *Approaching Religion*, 4(2), 83-94. <https://doi.org/10.30664/ar.67552>
- Bachleda, C., Hamelin, N., & Benachour, O. (2014). Does religiosity impact Moroccan Muslim women's clothing choice? *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 5(2), 210-226.
- Badran, M. (2001). Understanding Islam, Islamism and Islamic feminism. *Journal of Women's History*, 13(1), 47–52. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2001.0022>
- Baharudin, A., Hafidz, A. H. A., Roslan, N. M., Zahir, I. N., Norjeferi, N. A., Musa, A., & Ahmad, M. R. (2021, August). Study on the comfort of 3 local hijab sport brands on Muslim women during physical activities. *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*, 1176(1), 012026.
- Bahrainwala, L., & O'Connor, E. (2019). Nike unveils Muslim women athletes. *Feminist Media Studies*, 22(3), 469-484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2019.1620822>
- Bakhshizadeh, M. (2023). A social psychological critique on Islamic feminism. *Religions*, 14(2), 202. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020202>
- Benn, T., & Dagkas, S. (Eds.). (2013a). *Sport in Islam and in Muslim communities*. Routledge.
- Benn, T., & Pfister, G. (2013). Meeting needs of Muslim girls in school sport: Case studies exploring cultural and religious diversity. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 13(5), 567-574. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17461391.2012.757808>
- Benn, T., Jawad, H., & Al-Sinani, Y. (2013b). The role of Islam in the lives of girls and women in physical education and sport. In Z. Gross, L. Davies, & A. K. Diab (Eds.), *Religion and education in a chaotic postmodern world* (pp. 239-256). Springer.
- Bhuiyan, Z. A. (2018). *Islamic fashion in South-East Asia: A descriptive research on web-based fashion of Bangladesh: A global window view project certificate of participation view project*. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327136868>
- Chung, H., Lim, Y., & Sumartiningih, S. (2022). A journey of continuous commitment to martial arts in alumni karate practitioners. *Apes Journal of Physical Education, Sport and Health (Ajpes)*, 2(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.15294/ajpes.v2i1.56838>
- Constance, A. (2023). Critiquing Islamic feminism from a social psychological perspective. *Journal of Modern Islamic Studies and Civilization*, 1(2), 50–66. <https://doi.org/10.59653/jmisc.v1i02.130>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Dagkas, S., Benn, T., & Jawad, H. (2011a). Multiple voices: Improving participation of Muslim girls in physical education and school sport.

- Sport, Education and Society, 16(2), 223-239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2011.540427>
- Dagkas, S., Koushkie Jahromi, M., & Talbot, M. (2011b). Reaffirming the values of physical education, physical activity and sport in the lives of young Muslim women. In Muslim women and sport (pp. 13-24).
- Dalaman, Z. (2021). From secular Muslim feminism to Islamic feminism(s) and new generation Islamic feminists in Egypt, Iran and Türkiye. *Border Crossing*, 11(1), 77-91. <https://doi.org/10.33182/bc.v11i1.1042>
- El-Bassiouny, N. (2018). The Hijabi self: Authenticity and transformation in the Hijab fashion phenomenon. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 9(2), 296-304.
- Fatima, N., Bilal, M., & Butt, B. (2017). Social construction of feminism through media: The discourse and critique in Pakistan. *Global Regional Review*, 2(1), 320-329. [https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2017\(ii-i\).22](https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2017(ii-i).22)
- Fuad, A., & Ramadhan, A. (2023). The contestation of feminism and religious authority and its implication in Islamic education. *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies*, 7(2), 125-142. <https://doi.org/10.21009/hayula.007.02.01>
- Galadari, A. (2012). Behind the veil: Inner meanings of women's Islamic dress code. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, 6(11), 115-125.
- Ge, Y., Zhang, Q., Wang, M., Zhang, L., Shi, S., & Laar, R. (2022). Restrictions on Pakistani female students' participation in sports: A statistical model of constraints. *SAGE Open*, 12(4), 215824402211387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221138771>
- Hamzeh, M., & Oliver, K. L. (2012). "Because I am Muslim, I cannot wear a swimsuit": Muslim girls negotiate participation opportunities for physical activity. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 83(2), 330-339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2012.10599864>
- Hassan, S. H., & Ara, H. (2021). Hijab fashion consciousness among young Muslim women in Malaysia. *Studies of Applied Economics*, 39(4), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.25115/eea.v39i4.4312>
- Hassan, S., & Harun, H. (2016). Factors influencing fashion consciousness in hijab fashion consumption among hijabistas. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 7(4), 476-494. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jima-10-2014-0064>
- Hattab, M., & Abualrob, M. (2023). Under the veil: Women's economic and marriage rights in Palestine. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01591-4>
- Hussain, U., & Cunningham, G. B. (2023). The determinants of Muslim women's pro-sport Hijab purchase intention: A theory of planned behavior perspective. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 23(4), 1249-1268.
- Jawad, H. (2009). Islamic feminism: Leadership roles and public representation. *Hawwa*, 7(1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156920809x449517>
- Jiwani, N., & Rail, G. (2010). Islam, hijab and young Shia Muslim Canadian women's discursive constructions of physical activity. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 27(3), 251-267. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.27.3.251>
- Kabir, G. (2023). Rearticulating Islamic feminism. *Martabat: Jurnal Perempuan dan Anak*, 7(2), 127-144. <https://doi.org/10.21274/martabat.2023.7.2.127-144>
- Keddie, A. (2009). Giving Muslim girls 'a voice': The possibilities and limits to challenging patriarchal interpretations of Islam in one English community. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 17(3), 265-278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681360903194301>
- Keskin, M. T. U., & Ulusay, N. (2023). Tesettür giyimi tercih eden kadınların spor giyimine yönelik gardırop faktörleri: Din ve pazarlama açısından bibliyometrik bir inceleme. In F. Hazar (Ed.), *SPOR & BİLİM 2023-I*. Efe Akademik Yayıncılık.
- Keskin, M. T. U., Ulusay, N., & Özer, Ş. C. (2023). Spor yönetimi alanında yayınlanan makalelerin bibliyometrik bir analizi: 1993-2023 yılları arasında altı dergiden toplanan verilerin incelenmesi. In G. Özen & İ. Özmutlu (Eds.), *Beden eğitimi ve spor araştırmaları 2023-II*. Efe Akademik Yayıncılık.
- Knez, K., Macdonald, D., & Abbott, R. (2012). Challenging stereotypes: Muslim girls talk about physical activity, physical education and sport. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health*,

- Sport and Physical Education, 3(2), 109-122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18377122.2012.700691>
- Koburtay, T., Abuhussein, T., & Sidani, Y. (2022). Women leadership, culture and Islam: Female voices from Jordan. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 183(2), 347-363. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05041-0>
- Laar, R., Ashraf, M., Zhou, S., Zhang, L., & Zhong, Z. (2022). Assessing the association between Pakistani women's religious beliefs and sports participation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.915521>
- Lapadat, J., & Lindsay, A. (1999). Transcription in research and practice: From standardization of technique to interpretive positionings. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5(1), 64-86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049900500104>
- Lazuardi, F., & Shamsu, L. (2024). Gender and feminism in an Islamic perspective. *Focus*, 5(1), 23-32. <https://doi.org/10.26593/focus.v5i1.7659>
- Mahmood, S. (2009). Religious reason and secular affect: An incommensurable divide. In J. Chandler & A. I. Davidson (Eds.), *Critical inquiry* (pp. 836-862). The University of Chicago Press.
- Marwat, M. K., Islam, S. Z., Waseem, M., Khattak, H., & Bibi, S. (2014). Sport performance of Muslim women and different constraints in their way to participation in sport. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(1), 208-214.
- Neale, J. (2016). Iterative categorization (IC): A systematic technique for analysing qualitative data. *Addiction*, 111(6), 1096-1106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13314>
- O'Brien, B., Harris, I., Beckman, T., Reed, D., & Cook, D. (2014). Standards for reporting qualitative research. *Academic Medicine*, 89(9), 1245-1251. <https://doi.org/10.1097/acm.0000000000000388>
- Omar, M. A. (2016). Architecture, culture and needs of Australian Muslim communities: Challenges and opportunities for social inclusion. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 3(2), 1390-1409.
- Peter, I. D., Oshagbami, A., Danjuma-Karau, J. K., & Ashaolu, J. (2024). A phenomenological study of the lived experiences of mothers and healthcare professionals caring for preterm babies in Abuja, Nigeria.
- Rabaan, H., Young, A., & Dombrowski, L. (2021). Daughters of men. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 4(CSCW3), 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3432923>
- Rose, R. (2021). A user-centred approach to modest sportswear design for Cape Town Muslim women [Master's thesis, Cape Peninsula University of Technology].
- Rua, I. (2024). The representation of Muslim women in the Portuguese press: From the perspective of Islamic feminist movements. *Dígitos: Revista de Comunicación Digital*, 10, 94-121. <https://doi.org/10.7203/drdcd.v0i10.282>
- السنانى, Y. (2022). Omani women participation in sport and physical education: Islamic feminism review. 154-143), 39(6, *مجلة العلوم التربوية و النفسية*). <https://doi.org/10.26389/ajsrp.d020822>
- Segran, E. (2018). Muslim fashion is a \$254 billion market—but big brands can't crack it. *Fast Company*. Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/40559445/the-se-startups-nailed-muslim-fashion-burberry-and-dkny-did-not>
- Senarath, S. K. I. U., & Liyanage, T. P. (2020). Religious involvement in young Islamic women participation in physical education, sports and physical activities. *Journal of Psychology Research*, 10(8), 319-323.
- Sfeir, L. (1985). The status of Muslim women in sport: Conflict between cultural tradition and modernization. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 20(4), 283-306.
- Shafee, W. H. (2020). Approaches to the wardrobe challenges of Muslim women in the west. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 11(5), 1155-1173.
- Shahin, F. (2020). Islamic feminism and hegemonic discourses on faith and gender in Islam. *International Journal of Islam in Asia*, 1(1), 27-48. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25899996-01010003>
- Sheen, M., Aman Key Yekani, H., & Jordan, T. R. (2018). Investigating the effect of wearing the hijab: Perception of facial attractiveness by Emirati Muslim women living in their native Muslim country. *PLoS One*, 13(10).
- Stride, A. (2016). Centralising space: The physical education and physical activity experiences

- of South Asian, Muslim girls. *Sport, Education and Society*, 21(5), 677-697. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2014.938622>
- Toffoletti, K. (2012). Iranian women's sports fandom. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 38(1), 75-92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723512468758>
- Toffoletti, K., & Palmer, C. (2017). New approaches for studies of Muslim women and sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 52(2), 146-163. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690215589326>
- Toktaş, Ş., & O'Neil, M. (2015). Competing frameworks of Islamic law and secular civil law in Türkiye: A case study on women's property and inheritance practices. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 48, 29-38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.10.011>
- Vatuk, S. (2008). Islamic feminism in India: Indian Muslim women activists and the reform of Muslim personal law. *Modern Asian Studies*, 42(2-3), 489-518. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026749x07003228>
- Vohra, A. (2023). Feminism in the Middle East: An analysis into Western, Islamic and secular feminism. *Crossings: An Undergraduate Arts Journal*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.29173/crossings117>
- Wahyu, W., Suwandi, S., & Rofiq, A. (2023). Feminism in Islam: Its relation to the rights and responsibilities of career women in domestic spaces. *International Journal of Nusantara Islam*, 11(2), 289-299. <https://doi.org/10.15575/ijni.v11i2.27967>
- Walseth, K. (2006). Muslim girls' experiences in physical education in Norway: What role does religiosity play? *Sport, Education and Society*, 20(3), 304-322.
- Walseth, K., & Strandbu, Å. (2014). Young Norwegian-Pakistani women and sport: How does culture and religiosity matter? *European Physical Education Review*, 20(4), 489-507.
- Wang, Y., Thomas, J., Weissgerber, S. C., Kazemini, S., & Ul-Haq, I. (2015). The headscarf effect revisited: Further evidence for a culture-based internal face processing advantage.
- Wibowo, A., Wijayanto, T., Widyastuti, W., & Herliansyah, M. (2018). The effect of clothing fit and material of women's Islamic sportswear on physiological and subjective responses during exercise in warm and humid environment. *MATEC Web of Conferences*, 154, 01074. <https://doi.org/10.1051/mateconf/201815401074>
- Williams, J. P., & Kamaludeen, M. N. (2017). Muslim girl culture and social control in Southeast Asia: Exploring the hijabista and hijabster phenomena. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 13(2), 199-216.
- Ziaee, A., Sterkenburg, J., & Hilvoorde, I. (2022). Female elite sports achievements in Iran: The case of the first Olympic medalist. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 58(1), 208-229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902221088124>