

Running Head: BEING ME: LIVING WITH THE STIGMA

Being Me: Living with the Stigma  
Intersectional Feminist Exploration  
in the Lived Experiences of the Post-Secondary Hijab-Wearing Students

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### Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and gain insights into the shared meanings and perspectives of the hijab-wearing women through listening to their lived experiences with attention to their context in post-secondary education in southwestern Ontario. The research sought to place greater focus upon the meanings that Muslim females attach to the hijab and their experiences concerning the visibility with a gendered Islamic identity on campus. Second, the research was to ascertain whether veiled participants encountered any complex constraints as a result of being Muslims, and women. The participants were deliberately identified as Muslim females who are post-secondary students, wear the hijab within an age range from 18 to 25 years old, and were either born or raised in Canada. The researcher was looking to interview from 3 to 5 hijab-wearing participants. Purposive and snowball samplings were used to recruit participants which are the most common methods used in the qualitative study. The participants were purposefully recruited from the same mosque that the researcher usually goes. The underpinning framework was an intersectional feminist approach to place the subjectivity of the Muslim women at the heart of the analysis taking into account a stark increase in the global phenomenon of gendered Islamophobia. The application of the intersectional feminist perspective attentively interrogated the norm that conformed stereotypical views of hijab-wearing Muslim women, such as oppressed, subjugated, and domesticated. Semi-structured interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions which were the method of qualitative data collection in the present study.

**Keywords:** Anti-Muslim; Canadian hijab-wearers; Convert; Crenshaw; Feminism; Gender; Gendered Islamophobia; Hijab; Peek's Model; Intersectionality; Islamophobia; Muslim women; Ontario; Post-secondary education; Stereotype; Stigma; Students; Veil; Violence.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background of Problem

With the current upward demographic trend, the sizes of the visible minority groups had shown a gradual national growth in Canada (National Household Survey NHS, 2011). This groups inherently exhibited out-group prejudice and racial profiling in the Canadian context, particularly Muslims (Abu-Laban & Trimble, 2006; Bahdi & Kanji, 2018; Hanniman, 2008; Nagra & Peng, 2013). Discursively religious-motivated hostility and prejudice, denoted as Islamophobia, towards Canadian Muslims were proliferating across Canada, manifested in bigotry, violence, intimidation, marginalization, and discrimination (Bahdi & Kanji, 2018; Nagra, 2018; Hanniman, 2008). According for a report by the National Council of Canadian Muslims NCCM, 2016), anti-Muslim bigotry directed toward Muslims and their institutions heightened from 10 percent of in 2015 to 24 percent in 2016, manifested in verbal abuse, threats, and vandalism.

Also, Statistics Canada (2015) reported that the highest percentage of hate crimes directed towards Muslim populations were committed against females with 53 percent increase from 2010 to 2015; the reason, as identified by the report, was merely due to the visibility of their affiliation to Islam with the hijab. Moreover, the Environics Institute (2016) reported that among other issues facing Muslims in Canada, concerns with unemployment remains a worry of Muslims constituting 53 percent; 23 percent of respondents were very worried, and 30 percent were somewhat worried. This pattern was also presented by Hanniman (2008). Within a climate of multiculturalism, democracy, and, pluralism, Muslims in Canada were among those with high credentials, yet, they were the second highest unemployment rates 14 percent, as compared with the national average of 7.4 percent (Hanniman, 2008).

Since the 9/11 tragedy, most of the influential meta-narratives indicated that pervasive media spectacles were demonizing and vilifying the diasporic Canadian Muslim communities that increased their victimization and marginalization (Abu-Laban & Trimble, 2006; Hanniman, 2008; Jiwani & Dessner, 2016; Macdonald, 2006; Winter & Previsic, 2017). In that toxic climate, Canadian Muslims were adversely impacted by victimization that was "psychologically and physically draining" causing negative mental health outcomes (Nadal et al., 2012, p. 16).

Nonetheless, religious stigma stemmed from being on the daily spotlights of the Canadian mainstream media and its representations notoriously employing "metaphoric language of dehumanization sentiments" (Jiwani & Dessner, 2016, p. 2). Ultimately, Canadian Muslims became exceptionally a disadvantaged visible minority group (Baker, 2007). To this extent, Jiwani and Dessner emphasized that Islamophobic buzzwords constructed publicly binary perceptions of us the enlightened Western inassimilable to the other, Muslims. Likewise, Winter and Previsic (2017) presented parallel assessments of the Canadian mainstream newspapers and reported that ethnicizing language was used to cast dominant comparisons between the civilized "us against the barbaric (Muslim) others" (p. 58).

Fueled by the "War on Terror" rhetoric, media coverage deliberately rationalized the animosity and skepticism against Muslims as disloyal to Canada recasting prevailing, discursive views such as, less Canadian, outsiders, suspicious, backward, and intrinsically inferior (Caidi & MacDonald, 2008; Davides, 2009, Jiwani & Dessner, 2016; Macdonald, 2006; Winter & Previsic, 2017). The rhetoric, as Kellner (2004) contended, classified Islam as a political ideology, as opposed to a religion posing a threat to legitimate discriminatory security measures and upsurge public's distrust.

At the heart of this debate, there was, however, a gendered strand of the intuitive and tactic media manipulations that was politically harnessed to depict prominent discourse against Muslim women. Within the liberal Western context, as Chakraborti and Zempi (2012) aptly proclaimed, the sharpened media rhetoric was virtually politicalized contesting Muslim women as “subservience,” who pledged for liberation from submission to patriarchy. though, post the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, however, veiled Muslim women were classified as sympathetic to terrorism (Aziz, 2012; Marcotte, 2010; Nagra, 2018), terribly oppressed and degraded (Ahmed, 1982, p. 522), and forever foreigners (Aziz, 2012a, p. 192). Unsurprisingly perhaps, veiled Muslim women increasingly were a vulnerable target to stigma and aggression as compared to other females (Perry, 2014; Zimmerman, 2015; Zine, 2006). At the same time, most Muslim women were silent and passive victims (Aziz, 2012a).

The choice of veiling provided sufficient assurance of autonomy and agency for Muslim women (e.g., Atasoy, 2006, 2003; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; McDonough, 2003; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2008; Rahmath, Chambers, & Wakewich, 2016; Zine, 2006). On the contrary, secular feminism and progressives polarized the hijab as anti-femininity and equated it with oppression and gender inequality (e.g., Allen, 2015; Ali, 2005; Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012; Cloud, 2004; Zempi & Chakraborti, 2015; Williams & Vashi, 2007). Notably, the hijab become a tangible marker of differences, like religion and ethnicity (Droogsma, 2007).

It was no coincidence, as Macdonald (2006) indicated, the huminitic discourse was, on one hand, to rescue women from patriarchy and oppression (p. 10). On the other hand, though, Macdonald referenced a concealed motif was behind the rescue mission that served political ideologies of colonial interests justifying military invasions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other Muslim majority countries (p. 9). Meanwhile, the pervasive and enduring rhetoric against

Muslim women, as Cloud (2004) noted, virtually disregarded the employment and socio-economic disparity between men and women in the West societies.

### **Problem Statement**

As aforementioned, the discursive views explicitly and implicitly bonded veiled Canadian-Muslim women to extremists who were in the mind of most Canadians described radicals (Marcotte, 2010). Positioned at diametrically opposite ends on the religion, Muslim women were inherently marginalized rather than empowered (Marcotte, 2010), in post-secondary education and work environments (Nagra, 2018). Unsurprisingly, these women found themselves as “an object within a grander political conflict between two patriarchies different in form, but similar in substance” (Aziz, 2012b, p. 195).

With these circumstances, hijab-wearing Muslim women were increasingly a vulnerable victim to bias-motivated discrimination and violence (Perry, 2014; Zine, 2006), including non-hijab wearers (Allen, 2015; Aziz, 2014). The scholars, such as Allen (2015), argued that veiled Muslim women were particularly susceptible to gendered Islamophobic attacks due to their visibility of the hijab that casted them as an over-determined symbolic of otherness. Likewise, Chakraborti and Zempi (2015) noted that domestic gendered Islamophobia had a significant impact on the lives of Muslim women and their families in different ways. In this sense, increased number of scholars emphasized the existence of palpable and widespread gendered Islamophobia, and they critically necessitate analytical reforms of the routine that was for long overlooked and negated (Allen, 2015; Brown, 2000; Droogsma, 2007; Perry, 2014; Zempi & Chakraborti, 2015).

As aforementioned, Chakraborti and Zempi (2012) had affirmed the preceding scholars’ arguments over gendered Islamophobic sentiments; they queried the subtle and covert



victimization of Muslim women that was neither seen nor heard (p. 280). Given the prevalence and veracity of the gendered Islamophobia, this study was an effort to shine the light on the lived experiences of hijab-wearing Muslim women and whether Islamophobia penetrated campuses of post-secondary education. Within the prevalence of gendered Islamophobia and the hostility of Muslim women posed the following questions: To what extent, do wearing the hijab impact their life on campus? How do Muslim women counteract marginality (Guo, 2011)? To what extent, do hijab-wearing Muslims encounter Islamophobia. The answers of these compelling questions were gradually important not only for the inquirer, but also for veiled women, and their families. Scholars, student affairs, institution leaders, and policy makers could capitalize on the answer of those questions as well as, reports from Canada statistics data, and other organizations that concern with the topic. Learning institutions, for example, can employ those findings to adopt better practices to promote an inclusive and welcoming learning environment (Caidi & MacDonald, 2008; Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Hopkins, 2011). Policy makers could also inform intersectionality as a holistic approach to capture the heterogenous experiences of Muslim women based on their gender, race, ethnicity, and religion.

Therefore, the purpose of the qualitative study was to explore and gain insights into the shared meanings and perspectives of the hijab-wearing women. The researcher listened to their lived realities with attention to their context in post-secondary education in southwestern Ontario. First, the researcher sought to place a greater focus upon the meanings that Muslim females attached to their experiences concerning the hijab as a gendered Islamic identity on campus and in public. Second, the researcher was to ascertain whether the veiled participants encountered any complex constraints as a result of their faith declaration with the hijab.

## Research Questions

Accordingly, a set of open-ended research questions have focused on gender and religious dynamics to conceptualize the hijab-wearing women's perspectives concerning their post-secondary educational context. The main question of this research was:

- **To what extent, did wearing the hijab impact life experiences on campus and in public?**

The study also investigated the following sub-question which was directly related to the main one:

- **How concerned were hijab-wearing students about Islamophobia?**

Nonetheless, being students with a visible religious identity shaping their experiences in post-secondary education was unavoidably enmeshed in a social context involving personal interactions between the researcher and the informants. In that sense, the social phenomenon could not be measured using a statistical method of inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To explore the subjective realities as lived by veiled students attending post-secondary education could best be captured through contextual qualitative study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, Creswell & Poth, 2016).

## Limitations of Study

The study had some methodological strengths and limitations. On the conceptual strength, the researcher employed triangulation by using secondary data from Canada Statistics and research studies and reports related to Islamophobia that were conducted in Ontario, and literature from Canada, U.S., and UK (e.g. EKOS Research Associates, 2018; Hamdani, 2014; NCCM, 2016). The study encapsulated extant refined literature linking topics, such as feminism, intersectionality, Islamophobia, hijab, Muslim women, and post-secondary education, to broaden

the scope of understanding the phenomenon and address the gap in the literature that most needed in this area. Thereby the study to great extent might raise awareness and stimulate further thinking, and dialogues about the disregarded hostile experiences of the veiled Muslim women in Ontario (Nagra, 2018; Perry, 2014).

Further, the research, as Edwards and Holland (2013) maintained, was dedicated to making audible to "the 'silenced' voices and perspectives of the marginalized" (p. 79). In this way, the major strength of the present study was to validate and recognize the voices of the marginalized Muslim women in Ontario through listening to their feminist perspectives. The intersectional framework placed the subjective experiences of Muslim women at the center of the analysis to create and structure knowledge about their challenges as result to adopting the hijab. Thereby, the feminist inquiry of the women's narratives and perspectives developed equitable gender circumstances and authorized the voices of the marginalized Muslim women (Gay et al., 2012, p. 403). Moreover, the study sought to actively provide some recommendations that actively involved legislators and other policymakers in learning institutions to promote inclusion and equality on campus (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Park & Bowman, 2015; Shamma, 2009). Also, the researcher intended to employ HyperRESEARCH software for data analysis, however, the collected data was organized and analyzed manually which offered in depth analysis of the topic.

Furthermore, the inquirer was aware of not to inadvertently imposing personal perspectives or experiences on participants which may restrict describing the phenomenon accurately and honestly as it appeared and lived by participants (Gay et al., 2012).

On the contrary, the research design of this qualitative study had some limitations and shortcomings that have to be taken into consideration. One weakness was that the study sought to cogently answer specific open-ended questions in a given time and place to explore a

phenomenon with a small sample size. The small size of the purposefully selected sample was highly unlikely to represent nor describe the experiences of the entire Muslim communities (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Gay et al., 2012; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Data implicitly embedded within the participants' lived experiences in which human behaviors perceived as fluid, and dynamic changing according to time and place (Scotland, 2012). To a great extent, revelations of this qualitative study were not generalizable. Besides, the present study sought to cogently answer specific open-ended questions in a given time and place to explore a phenomenon. According to Scotland (2012), in the qualitative paradigm, generalizability was often lacking, and, thereby, transferability limited due to the fragmented constructed body of knowledge channeled into the researcher's interpretations.

Besides, to gain a well-rounded exploration of the phenomenon and understand the context and challenges facing the hijab-wearing women, the study design should have included a combination of interviews with stakeholders and policymakers of the institution, and leaders of the mosque. Also, it was immensely vital to observe the classroom and social space atmosphere on campus to gain more insightful exploration of their behaviour and challenges they face. However, this instrument of data collection was not used in this study. Collectively, such limitations cannot weaken the significance of the study or hinder our exploration of the gendered Islamophobia against Muslim women.

In the Canadian context, the center of the analysis for future research might deeply help in exploring Islamophobia and its implications, particularly on mental health, academic performance, identity formation, and access to employment and leadership (Aziz, 2014). Also, further research was necessary to compare the experiences of hijab-wearing and non-hijab-wearing Muslim women in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada. This might help understanding

how religion intersect with racism and discrimination to form disadvantages. It might be also important to conceptually and empirically further the research and practice with a larger sample size while employing intersectionality to explore their vulnerability based on notion of gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic situation, and religion. Scholars might significantly benefit from employing multilevel and longitudinal research designs to better examine the phenomenon and draw solid findings and generalizability. The researchers recommended that future research design should consider adopting a mixed method to gain a better insightful understanding of gendered Islamophobia and its subtle forms. More recommendations were discussed in detail in Chapter five.

### **Definition of Terms**

- **Colonialism:** It is a term to describe “economic and political hierarchies to the production of particular cultural discourse about what is called Third-World” (Mohanty, 1988, p. 61).
- **Hijab:** It was used interchangeably with the words veil and scarf to explain a head-cover of the Muslim Women.
- **Hijabi:** Those who wear the hijab (Williams & Vashi, 2007).
- **Orientalism:** it is “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.'” (Said, 1978, as cited in Bakht, 2006, p. 70).
- **Sunnah:** The way Prophet Muhammad lived (Zempi & Chakraborti, 2015).
- **White:** It is “a metaphor for western or non-third-World-looking, rather than a matter of skin pigmentation or other such phenotype” (Hage, 1998, as cited in Perry, 2014, p. 75).

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

This chapter presented the theoretical and conceptual framework underpinning the philosophical and methodological perspective that guided this study. The aim was to explore the impact of being visible women with the hijab. The research also uncovered the subsequent overt, and covert stereotypical views, attitude, and bias that Muslim women in this study endured (Allen, 2015; Droogsma, 2007; Nagra, 2018).

Given the prevalence of Islamophobia, Muslim women endured forms of victimization, marginalization, and inequality that did not relate to an explicit theoretical model specifically for those group. The researcher was looking for a conceptual framework that question the indivisible intersections of inequality against hijab-wearing women who were, Muslims, racialized as other, and ethicized as outsiders. The intersectional feminist inquiry, embedded in Crenshaw's perspective (1991), investigated particular questions of the interconnected, but overlapping inequality against gender, race, and religion offered to some extent relevant theoretical model. However, Bilge (2010) elaborated on informing intersectionality and added the notion of religion to illuminate the complex constrains facing Muslim women and portray their marginalized experiences in the Canadian context.

The application of the intersectional feminist perspective attentively interrogated the social norm that conformed stereotypical views of the Muslim women (Aziz, 2012b; Bilge, 2010; Tariq & Syed, 2017). The intersectional feminist approach, therefore, was to place the subjectivity of the Muslim women at the heart of the analysis taking into account a stark increase in the global phenomenon of gendered Islamophobia (Aziz, 2012b; Bilge, 2010; Tariq & Syed, 2017). Employing intersectional feminist approach could explain how religion compounded with

other notions of gender, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic situation creating with new form of inequalities (Prickett, 2018). Therefore, this research was drawing upon the intersectional approach as an arching theory collectively with the pertinent theoretically and empirically refined literature to delineate the standpoints of the hijab-wearing Muslim women.

### **Significance of Study**

Conducting a feminist epistemology using intersectional analysis to investigate social phenomenon substantially contributed to addressing the gap of literature on the topics concerning the lived experiences of the hijab-wearing women attending post-secondary in the Canadian context (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Perry, 2014; Rahmath et al., 2016). Thereby, the research was to explore the experiences of the veiled Muslim women and voice their perspectives on how their racial, ethnic, religious, and other differences intersected with their marginal position in the society (Wilde, 2018, p. 1).

Further, the research, as Edwards and Holland (2013) maintained that a feminist framework was dedicated to making audible to “the ‘silenced’ voices and perspectives of the marginalized” (p. 79). In this way, the major strength of the present study was to validate and recognize the voices of the marginalized Muslim women in Ontario. The intersectional model was to place the subjective experiences of Muslim women at the center of the analysis and structure knowledge. The feminist inquiry of women's narratives and perspectives, therefore, was to develop equitable gender circumstances and authorize the voices of marginalized Muslim women (Gay et al., 2012, p. 403). Also, the study was to raise awareness and stimulate further thinking, and dialogues about the disregarded lived stories of the veiled Muslim women (Allen, 2015). Besides, the study sought to actively provide some recommendations that actively involve

legislators and other policymakers in learning institutions to promote inclusion and equality (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Park & Bowman, 2015; Shammass, 2009).

Hence, the present chapter encapsulated extant refined literature linking topics, such as feminism, intersectionality, Islamophobia, hijab, Muslim women, and post-secondary education. This discussion attempted to extend our understanding of Muslim women experiences negotiating their sense of belonging on campus profoundly influenced by the visibility of their gendered religious identity (the hijab). The following theoretical lens provided a framework of the discussion: The intersectional feminist perspective of Crenshaw (1991), Bilge's intersectional approach to agency of veiled Muslim women (2010), understanding the definition of Islamophobia, identity development among college students, and other related topics. Hence, the discussion proceeded as follow:

- Gave a deliberate overview of three waves of feminism and intersectionality;
- Placed greater focus upon the global phenomenon of gendered Islamophobia experiences of veiled women;
- Presented a deliberate overview of the definition of Islamophobia and Muslims in Canada;
- Discussed issues within post-secondary and higher education context;
- Presented some of the well-known identity and student development theories;
- Summarized main points.

### **Feminism and Intersectionality**

**Overview.** Rooted in 1832, the first wave of feminism, the suffrage movement, was for a prominent political reform to getting the rights to vote. During the suffrage movement, active White women worked hard to make their voices heard through the use of protesting, marching and campaigning and force the British government to granting women enfranchisement and



equal political liberation by late 1918 (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2005). These movements ignited other more aggressive and stubborn White, middle-class, and well-educated femininity movements referred to as the “radical feminism of the women’s liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s” (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2005, p. 8). Women’s Liberation Movement fought for abortion stance, divorce, rape, childcare, domestic violence, education, non-legislative partnership, homosexuality, to nameless.

Soon after, the second feminism wave, as Krolokke and Sorenson (2005) stated, was compounded with other movements, such as the anti-Vietnam War movement, lesbian and gay movements, the civil rights and Black power movements in U.S.A. These conscious demonstrations led to informing millions of American women about the political and social potentials of these legal reforms. The femininity movements, united sisterhood, gained dramatic support seeking equal opportunities. Women simultaneously used the slogan “women’s Oppression,” and “Women’s Liberation,” calling for the destruction of capitalism, imperialism, and heterogeneity (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2005). Ultimately, Women liberation movements won legal victories recognized in the 1970s. Congress declared legislation banning sex discrimination against women in education in federally funded schools. And, more legislative reforms were approved to give and protect women’s equality on domestic violence, and rapes.

**Black feminism.** The liberation movement expanded additional complex analysis on capitalism and patriarchy that paved the way for a third wave of feminism that increased divergences among women. Black and other feminists questioned the embedded ideologies of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism delivered in the second-wave feminism that preserved the norm of the White middle-class, well-dressed, and heterosexual feminism. The groundwork of the criticism gradually expanded into further markers of the identity that stimulated a third

wave of feminist movement. Black feminists raised concerns over identity differences based on the intersections of gender, class, and race interconnected with their marginal position.

Patricia Hill Collins, a well-known Black scholar, criticized the mainstream White feminism and its inherent resistance of 'Eurocentric' and 'hegemonic' discourse, such as Western, White, heterosexual, patriarchal systems, etc. Collins voiced her concerns saying that subjugated standpoints of Black American women that was aggressively controlled and suppressed by White masculine power. Elite White men dominated the process of knowledge validation through learning and social institutional bodies. Privileged masculinist institutions were narrowly honoring Eurocentric perspectives while devaluing and discrediting evolving attempts to formulate and redefine a feminist theoretical framework by scholars of colors.

Collins noted that the diasporic subjugated experiences of Black women resembled neither that of White women nor Black men. The reason, as Collins (1990, p. 335) highlighted, was that Black women's lives were profoundly affected by intersection of power relations and issues involving racism and sexism. Collins contended that Black women resisted layers of interlocking oppression and exclusion purely based on their gender and skin color that delineated their standpoints. Thereby, Black feminist epistemology was to adequately describe their subjectivity and better understand "how subordinate groups create knowledge that fosters both their empowerment and social justice" (Collins, 1990, p. 334).

**Third-wave feminism.** Similarly, the Black feminist legal scholar Crenshaw (1991) elaborated on the interwoven relations of being a slave, and black that impacted her experiences as a suffering woman provocatively questioning 'Ain't I a woman?' Crenshaw asserted that long-standing hierarchies of racism and sexism markedly influenced women of color's perspectives overlooked by the White feminism. Arguably, intergroup differences, such as race,

gender, and other identity dimensions, as Crenshaw (1991) pointed out, were used as instruments for racial segregations. Nonetheless, women of colors positioned at a racially marginalized position within the dominant group, suffered from poverty, and devoid of education, unemployment, and housing. They endured particular gendered and raced disempowerment that rarely racialized men or white women encountered. Crenshaw provocatively asserted that the failure to interrogate domestic violence and patriarchy against black women within the dominant culture indorsed a resistance to their subordination.

**Intersectionality of third-wave feminism.** The Western feminism, as Crenshaw (1991) criticized, obscured and neglected concerns of race and class and its impact on the subjectivities of Black women. Crenshaw stressed on the necessity to restructuring a precise theoretical and political framework that illustrate the specificities and complexity of Black women's experiences of oppression. Krolokke and Sorenson (2005) among others argued that the intersectionality of the third-wave feminism embraced pluralistic commitments for diverse groups of women based on gender, class, race, sexual orientation and so forth whilst resisted the femininity precepts of equality and liberation.

The nuanced evolutionary model of feminism embraced fluidity and accept individuality and different modes of thinking (Krolokke & Sorenson 2005, p. 16). Rather than fitting all in a universal feminist model, third wavers were actively engaged in a surge of multi-perspective narratives of feminism and identity politics including gay, black, women of color, and third-world women (Hillsburg, 2013). Further, Snyder-Hall (2010) described the third-wave feminism as "inclusive, pluralistic, and non-judgmental" across issues of class, race, and national boundaries (p.1). Saadallah (2004) documented that the third-wave feminism offered a modern

global structure that rejected exclusions of non-White scholars, yet, transcended differences of women across conventional boundaries, such as nationality, ethnicity, and religion.

At the heart of this context, Mohanty contended that mainstream feminism was rejected for its universal ideological rigidity that constitutes women as a homogenous notion, imposing silence on racial, ethnic, class, and sexual differences (p. 336). Mainstream feminist epistemology, as Mohanty (1988) specified, superficially comprised all women as “a coherent group across contexts.... purely on the basis of shared dependencies” obscuring the fluidity and interplay of identity vectors, such as gender, class, race, sexual orientation, and ability (p. 78). Mohanty also elaborated that the applications of the mainstream feminism on the oppressed experiences of women of color and third-world women encapsulated problematic falling into annalistic and strategic traps. Rather, intersectionality envisioned a holistic analysis to the subjectivity for women of colors equally enforcing the overlapping and fluctuating identity markers (Hillsburg, 2013).

Luckily, Bilge (2010) presented an intersectional model that relatively added religious markers to intersectionality. Bilge (2010) explicitly elaborated on informing intersectionality to address discrimination facing Muslim women in employment and leadership that stakeholders and policymakers should employ urgently. Bilge's argument offered a fuller portrait of the marginalized position lived by Muslim women, and their hostile situation negatively limited their chances.

**Mapping intersectionality of Muslim women.** Mohanty (1988) asserted that feminist writings constituted Muslim women as “a homogenous oppressed group” which was seemingly a hegemonic strand that nonetheless replicated dominant, often dominating, colonial discourses (p. 70). Brown (2000) also asserted that predominant in polarized political debates, orientalist

interpretations perceive Islam as “essentially inferior to the west.....monolithic, static, unresponsive, and separate” ideology (p. 76). Brown (2000) also argued that the hijab was inherently conceived as the symbolic ambivalence of gender inequality, subordination, and misogynistic creed. As a result, Muslim women sought to be rescued by the liberal West (Considine, 2017; Jiwani, 2009). though, not all Western women, as Mohanty (1988) pointed out, were independent and liberated, as not all Muslim women were as presumably domesticated and oppressed.

The notion of veiling reflected an authentic choice for Muslim women. On the contrary, radical, but secular feminism indisputably stereotypes Muslim women as oppressed and subordinated to patriarchy which purposefully divides society into “us” and “other” (Jiwani, 2016). The vocal opponents of the Muslim women’s head cover, as Mohanty sarcastically indicated, coded them as “ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, victimized, ..., etc.” (p. 65). The intricacies of such structured depictions of power relations ultimately homogenized Muslim women with “a stable category of analysis” as oppressed by patriarchal dominance (Mohanty, 1988, p. 344).

This mode of argument, in turn, fabricated dualistic opposites between the pervasive secularism of the Western women and subordination of Muslim women rather than ‘component agent’ (O’Neill, Gidengil, Côté, & Young, 2015). Such ideological colonial representations of Muslim women deprived self-agency and self-autonomy, while situating them at the periphery as ‘other’ in the context of hijab (O’Neill et al., 2015, p. 353). According to Snyder-Hall (2008), the intersectional analysis embraced dynamic global movements and recognized lacunae in some of the critical concerns within the second wave. The intersectional analysis “enriched the social science research” (Hillsburg, 2013, p. 5), and exhibited “pluralism” of feminism (Snyder-Hall,

2010, p. 255). Still, Black feminism transcended differences of women across contextual and conventional boundaries, such as nationality, ethnicity, and religion (Saadallah, 2004). In that light, the Muslim women within intersectionality determinedly inscribed their differential heterogeneous perspectives, though, discredit the grand manifestations of second-wave feminism (Ahmad, 2003). Third-wave feminist approach evidently tended to encode veiled Muslim women's agency in resistance, and interrogate Eurocentric stereotypes (Bilge, 2010; Chapman, 2016; Mirza, 2012; Mohanty, 1988; Tariq & Syed, 2017). In the Canadian context, the ban of hijab in Quebec simultaneously symbolized intersectionality between gender and religion concerning Muslim Women (Halrynjo & Jonker, 2015; Mirza, 2012). Perry (2014), for example, examined the intersectionality of Muslim women as a female and a Muslim bounding together in additive layers of gendered Islamophobia in Canada. With attention to religious identity, Perry (2014) argued that Muslim women encountered problematic constraints distinctively different in "its dynamic and impact" from that experienced by other racialized women in the West (Perry, 2014, p. 79).

### **Conceptualizing Islamophobia**

**Overview.** The demographic shifts had gradually shown growths in diasporic ethnic and religious groups in the Canadian social landscape bringing precious cultural, linguistic, racial, and religious assets to Canadian society (Hanniman, 2008; Guo, 2011). Like other visible minorities, Muslims were relatively heterogeneous groups in Canada (Abu-Laban & Trimble, 2006; Brown, 2000; Marcotte, 2010), representing 3.2 percent of the Canadian population with two-thirds residing in Toronto and Montreal (Hamdani, 2015). Notably, Muslims originated from diverse nationalities, such as Arab, South Asian, Caribbean, African, Chinese, Turkish, Bosnian,

Afghan, Persian, Indian, and other ethnicities (Macdonald, 2006; Hamdani, 2015; Hanniman, 2008).

Muslims and people who look alike were selectively targeted with Islamophobic acts in Canada (Bahdi & Kanji, 2018). This phenomenon was, yet, not novel in Canada (Gravelle, 2018). In the Canadian context, anti-Muslims bigotry heightened from 10 percent of in 2015 to 24 percent in 2016, manifested in verbal abuse, threats, and vandalism (National Council of Canadian Muslims, NCCM, 2016, p. 7). Side and Gross (2013), for instance, examined the extent of stereotypes toward American Muslims and suggested that stereotypes were most prevalent. Side and Gross (2013) claimed that the average American was often to harbor stereotypes about Muslims as markedly “violent and untrustworthy, but not lazy or unintelligent” compared to other groups (p. 588).

Indubitably, the depictions of Muslims were not a broader set of outgroup views. The denigrations of Muslims in America were inextricably linked to attitudes driven by threat perceptions of ‘War on Terror’ leading to extraordinarily outcomes on the everyday lives of the Muslim minority groups (Side & Gross, 2013). For example, in a recent report on a national survey of Canadians conducted by EKOS (2018) indicated that Islamophobic related issues hardly constituted a new phenomenon. Sadly, the study indicated that Canadians were most likely concealing negative views about Muslims as relatively “less tolerant, less adaptable, less open-minded, more violent, and more oppressive of women than Christians or Jews” (p. 2). This routine, in turn, created and intolerable climate and polarized relations with Muslim minority groups in Canada.

Historically, Edward Said (1978) argued that religious prejudice toward Muslims were extensively contextualized in the orientalist dichotomy which merely perpetuated less favorable

stereotypes of "the backward Islam" (Bakht, 2006). The latter was entrenched long before the terrorist attacks of 9/11. However, Islamophobia was exponentially resurfaced, rather than started, in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and subsequent events.

In response of 9/11 attacks, the hijab widely dominated heated debates and disputes, and associated with lack of integration and assimilation in many western societies. And the Canadian context appeared as no exception (Bahdi & Kanji, 2018; Caidi & MacDonald, 2008; Davids, 2009; Shammass, 2009; Weston, 2003). Within this climate, Muslims were "held responsible" for the tragic attacks of 9/11 and consequently confronted with a sharp increase of "public scrutiny" and "state surveillance practices" (Nagra & Peng, 2013, p. 612) which were manifested in "systematic harassment, arbitrary physical and psychological assault" (Davids, 2009, p. 177).

**Definition of Islamophobia.** At the heart of this debate, academic observers noted a tendency to define Islamophobia as an "irrational fear" and an isolated form of anti-Muslim bigotry while diminishing the role of the state in such systematic and institutionalized hostility on its citizens (Nagra & Peng, 2013). Implicit of the rhetoric of the War on Terror, the anti-terror protocols and legislations were "morally reprehensible" and fueled different forms of bigotry and civil-right violations against mainstream Muslims in the United States and Canada. Systematic violations predictably terrorized Muslim minority groups and led to increased feelings of insecurity, and injustice (Caidi & MacDonald, 2008; Davids, 2009; Nagra & Maurutto, 2016). Despite the efforts to differentiate terrorist groups, domestic political agenda mistakenly equated the vast majority of the secular and law-abiding Muslims with radicals and extremists.

As a result, Muslims were implicitly coded as potential security threats (Bilge, 2010; Dobrowolsky, 2008; Nagra & Peng, 2013; Sides & Gross, 2013; Winter & Previsic, 2017). In the Canadian context, Bahdi and Kanji (2018) strongly maintained this claim in their article about



Islamophobia. They asserted that Canadian Muslims relatively were subject to increased state security measures and discriminatory practices perpetuating the subordination of the marginalized groups. It was fairly predictable mostly at airports and borders, thereby, that many Canadian Muslims felt scrutinized, threatened, stigmatized, and alienated (Bhabha, 2018; Winter & Previsic, 2017). Bahdi and Kanji (2018) aptly asserted, that to date, the Canadian legal system wasn't devoted deep attention for the systematic conceptualization of the term Islamophobia or conducted cross-national studies to understand public opinions towards Muslims in Canada to understand the routine.

Meanwhile, in 2017, an anti-Islamophobia motion M-103, was proposed to condemn any forms of prejudice against religious minorities including Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force. The proposal erupted acrimonious debates, nationwide demonstrations, and protests denouncing the existence of Islamophobia (Gravelle, 2018). The M-103 report, passed by the Canadian parliament and recommended few actions to address racism and religious discrimination including Islamophobia, and suggested employing better data collections on hate crimes. Similarly, Ontario's new Anti-Racism Act, 2017, indicated the term Islamophobia but didn't distinguish an exact definition. The Act required the government to:

consult with members and representatives of communities that are most adversely impacted by racism, including Indigenous, Black and Jewish communities, and communities that are adversely impacted by Islamophobia.

The global and local media coverages, United States' legal documents, and reports of the United Nations were intensively saturated with the word Islamophobia. However, the term wasn't officially referenced in Canadian legal documents. Instead, it was widely referred to as anti-Muslim sentiments or racism. Relatively, Bahdi and Kanji (2018) raised a significant, but

underexplored question saying: Has the government intended to obscure Islamophobic bigotry using various silencing techniques?

Nemours legal and social scientists paid growing attention over the domestic policies and systematic bigotry targeting Muslims as an attempt to define the term Islamophobia in Europe and U.S. On the contrary, only few studies explored Islamophobia in the Canadian Context. In the British context, for instance, Malcom Brown (2000, p. 88), dictated that racism and Islamophobia shared overlapping aspects:

(a) both are defined primary with reference to ideology; (b) both are constituted by prejudice, opinions and attitudes, and behaviors and practices of discrimination, segregation, and violence; and (c) both can be conceptualized in terms of vicious circle of heterophobia and heterophobia.

One crucial distinction identified between racism and Islamophobia, as Brown inferred, was that Islamophobia is a form of religiously motivated prejudice toward Islam. However, Brown differentiated Islamophobia than racism in a way that only Muslims were subject to the racialization and discrimination.

In this regard, other academic scholars proposed more precise and conclusive definitions of Islamophobia in literature and publications. In the Canadian context, for example, Bahdi and Kanji (2018, p. 323) defined Islamophobia based on many legal narratives, official documents, and policy analysis, stating:

Islamophobia: is perpetuated by private actors; is motivated; is historically rooted in Orientalism; draws on and perpetuates stereotypes about a Muslim propensity for violence; draws on and perpetuates gendered stereotypes about roles and the nature of Muslim women; is state-driven; and, persists through a dialectical process of private and state action.

Bahdi and Kanji (2018) emphasized that defining Islamophobia in the Canadian context could significantly clarify and educate academics, advocates, policy-makers, educators, and the public to apply the term in further studies and to develop far-reaching measures that precisely address issues of differences, combat Islamophobia, and integrate inclusive policies.

**Phenomenon of hijab.** Remote from considering the hijab as oppressive practice, growing number of scholars have explored the Muslim head-cover as a global phenomenon that symbolically attributed a strategy of empowerment that authorized veiled Muslim women's voices and explored their diasporic subjugated experiences and perspectives through in-depth interviews (e.g., Ali, 2005; Atasoy, 2006, 2003; Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012; Cloud, 2004; Droogsma, 2007; Marcotte, 2010). On the other side, opponents of the hijab claimed that Muslim women were devoid of agency and autonomy and coerced to wear it (O'Neil et al, 2015). The reproduction of the latent reductive and hegemonic views in western writings, particularly feminists and progressives, replicated third world differences. This term was coined by Mohanty (1988) who her arguments about oppression against third-world women shed the light on the intolerance of Muslim women in the west. In the recent ten years, an emerging size of publications explored this argument underlying the concept of anti-Muslim sentiments (e.g., Aziz, 2012 a, 2012b; Bahdi & Kanji, 2018; Jiwani & Dessner, 2016; Sides & Gross, 2013; Winter & Previsic, 2017).

Alongside, more feminist scholars acknowledged the routine of the concealed, but unfavorable attitudes and the violence towards hijab-wearing women called gendered Islamophobia (Jiwani, 2009, 2011; Nagra, 2018; Perry, 2014; Rahmath et al., 2016; Awan & Zempi, 2017). However, the phenomenon of gendered Islamophobia and its determinantal consequences on the health and daily lives of the Muslim women were significantly the least

studied issues in literature (Hasan, 2012; Perry, 2014; Ryan, 2011; Samari, 2016). Locally, more Canadian scholars' literary critics started to get considerable attention upon topics of Islamophobia, Canadian Muslim women, and veiling as a global phenomenon that either attributed as symbolism of empowerment or oppression (e.g., Bahdi & Kanji, 2018; Nagra, 2018; O'Neill et al., 2015; Perry, 2014; Zine, 2006, 2009). Some Canadian feminists, such as Nagra, Perry, Zine, Bahdi, and Jiwani, to name but a few, critically questioned the social, economic, and political status of Muslim women in the Canadian context. Their arguments helped to shed some light on the way society developed frequently and selectively distorted images in the media, readings, and writing against Muslim women, veiling, and Islam.

In the preface to clarify Islamophobia, Bahdi and Kanji (2018) elaborated on the terminology and conceptualization. Bahdi and Kanji (2018) have documented structural analysis about the persistent religious-based prejudice and Islamophobic discrimination, and the role of the state power in perpetuating systematic discriminatory practices to vilify Muslim minorities at institutional levels which is the focus concept of the next section.

**Gendered Islamophobia.** Islamophobia, nonetheless, had a gendered strand. Women on the margins of power in the Canadian society, particularly, Muslim women, endured a recurring array of social issues intersect with gender, class, race, and religion; items encompassing victimization, exclusion, and marginalization (Jiwani, 2009, 2011; Marcotte, 2010; McDonough, 2003; Nagra, 2018; Rahmath et al., 2016; Winter & Previsic, 2017). This had considerable implications on their health and day-to-day lives (Awan & Zempi, 2017; Samari, 2016; Samari, Alcalá, & Sharif, 2018).

According to Statistics Canada (2015), the highest percentage of hate crimes directed towards Muslim populations were committed against females with 53 percent increase from

2010 to 2015; the reason, as identified by the report, was merely due to the visibility of their affiliation to Islam with the hijab. In this regard, proponents of the hijab equate the practice with oppression, ignorance, terrorism (Aziz, 2012; McDonough, 2003), anti-feminism, anti-western, and an unacceptable attire in the West (Ruby, 2006). This alarming trend ultimately led to ongoing critics to the hallmarks of multiculturalism, religious tolerance, and pluralism (Caidi & MacDonald, 2008; Chambers & Roth, 2014; Guo, 2011; Nagra & Peng, 2013; Zafar & Ross, 2015).

Hijab-wearing women progressively suffered a significant brunt of entrenched marginalization and alienation, manifested in prejudice against their gender, religion, and often ethnicity and race (Marcotte, 2010). Regrettably, the literature suggested that Canadian hijab-wearing women remained disproportionately portrayed as backward, subjugated, coerced, and secluded (Aziz, 2012; Rahmath et al., 2016; Zine, 2006). In a report was published by the National Council of Canadian Muslims, NCCM (2016), the Canadian Muslim women were targeted by regular verbally attacks, but fewer incidents of physical assaults on the streets. According to CityNews tv website, in December 2017, a Muslim woman was targeted to an alleged attack by a 46-year-old man who tried to grab her head to pull off her headscarf and said “go back to her country and that he would kill all Muslims” on the SkyTrain in Vancouver.

An incident of a violent nature certainly was not the first time that a Muslim woman experienced because of her visible religious identity. In 2016, a Liberal MP, Iqra Khalid, was flooded with over fifty thousand death threat messages, racist and sexist taunts following the presentation of the motion M-130 to condemn and combat Islamophobia. Also, Quebec passed a law banning the hijab and any other religious symbols from working in public sector which negatively affected many hijab-wearing women’s employment, mental health, and social and

economic situation. Those events illustrated how Muslim women lived in fearful climate where Islam presented as a political ideology threatening the West, instead of a religion.

### **Student Development**

**Overview.** Increasing number of scholars explored the vital juncture of identity formation and its relation to a multitude of outcomes among emerging adult students that coincide with the college years (Stoppa, 2017; Peek, 2005). According to Erikson (1968, as cited in Patton et al., 2016) identity advances through aged-linked sequential stages starting at early childhood to late adulthood, and it is directly impacted by the surrounding environment and internal self to resolve a compelling question of “who am I?” also, Chickering (1969, as cited in Patton et al., 2016), placed a greater emphasis on collegial experiences that influence a student’s identity and cognitive formation as an emerging adult. Chickering and Reisser (1993, as cited in Patton et al., 2016), noted that college students developed comprehensive ranges of intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competencies in nonrigid, but overlapping progressive vectors to establish a balanced sense of self. Besides, race and religion played a significant role in the lives of the emerging adults during their collegial experiences (Park & Bowman, 2015; Cole & Ahmadi, 2003).

Sheldon, Oliver, and Balaghi (2015) found that ethnic identity was optimistically and consistently correlated to psychological well-being effects among college emergent adults in the U.S. The study linked Phinney’s Multigroup EI Measure subscales (i.e., Other-Group Orientation (OGO), affirmation and belonging, EI exploration, and EI commitment), and positive component in Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being (i.e., Self-Acceptance, Personal Growth, and Purpose in Life). Affirmation and belonging had positively predicted self-acceptance; EI commitment had predicted purpose in life; OGO had predicted personal growth; EI exploration

ha negatively predicted self-acceptance. Besides, Sheldon et al. (2015) revealed that religious affiliation particularly embedded within ethnic group membership in Arab American Muslims. Similarly, spirituality religious identification, and engagement were increasingly critical in the lives of emerging adult college students (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010; Peek, 2005; Stoppa, 2017)

After 9/11 terrorist attacks, Peek (2005) conducted a study to gather data through observation, focus group, and individual interviews with Muslim university students. Peek (2005) noted that second-generation Muslim American students felt targeted by broad media pervasive representations and stereotypes leading to heightened religious negations and commitment to become better Muslims. Peek cogently pointed out that exposure to crisis and stereotypes prompted young Muslim identity to progress into three stages to claim their religious identity as “a powerful base of personal identification and collective association” (p. 215).

**Implications of Islamophobia.** Taken together, relative research indicated a relationship between perceived religious discrimination and poor mental health outcomes in post-secondary students (Nadal et al., 2012; Samariet al., 2018), Anxiety and Paranoia (Rippy & Newman, 2006), depression and anxiety (Amer & Hovey, 2011), especially among Muslim American college students (Lowe, Tineo, & Young, 2019), less support for civil liberties (Side & Gross, 2013), and increased racism, sexism, Islamophobia, and homophobic discrimination (Bhabha, 2018, p. 160).

In the context of employment, extant literature empirically and theoretically examined patterns of unemployment and economic inequality for Muslims in the United States (Tariq & Syed, 2017) and in Canada (Hamdani, 2015), especially Canadian Muslim women (Hamdani, 2014). For example, within the context of the ‘War on Terror’, Parry (2004) noted that employment discrimination against Muslims starkly augmented in the U. S. based on religion

and race. This pattern seems to be also in line with a recent study by Nagra (2018), who conducted 56 in-depth interviews with Canadian Muslim women. Nagra (2018) argued that Canadian Muslim women continue to face challenges in education, employment, income, and housing. And anti-Muslim sentiments were widely spread within the Canadian mainstream society.

**Challenges facing post-secondary education.** Given the diverse student body in Ontario, issues of diversity and inclusion were and continuous to be longstanding concerns facing institutions of post-secondary education (Brown, 2004; Cole & Ahmadi, 2010). Thereby, there will remain a need to plea students of various ethnic and religious backgrounds for more social and educational engagement. Student affairs administrations of post-secondary education institutions held a significant role in the political, academic, and intellectual growth of college students and in promoting a positive atmosphere that welcome everyone (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Sheldon et al., 2015). A welcoming campus climate, as Park & Bowman, 2015 argued, was linked to prejudice reduction, overall college satisfaction, working across differences, and civic engagement (Park & Bowman, 2015).

According to Bowman & Smedly, 2013, learning institutions were committed to promote an inclusive climate that promotes bridging social capital, diversity-related activities. Based on this, institutions were to set the stage for cross-racial and religious communications through exposing students to contemporary sources of information, and challenging self-stereotypes and perceptions (Bowman, 2013; Park & Bowman, 2015). With the diverse and growing size of the Muslim student body in post-secondary education, institutions, to some extent, offered universal prayers rooms and choices of halal food on campus. However, policies and resources weren't



thoroughly addressed issues of isolation, discrimination, and misunderstanding that were a painful part of their collegial experiences (Stubbs & Sallee, 2013, p. 451).

In post-secondary education context, scholars noted that cases of anti-Muslim bigotry and exclusion were evident on Ontario campuses (Caidi & MacDonald, 2008; Litchmore & Safdar, 2015; Peek, 2005; Rahmath et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 2015). For instance, some students reported being in challenging situations based on their Islamic identifications and negative views held by professors, staff, and peers (Stubbs & Sallee, 2013). Still in the Canadian post-secondary education context, Cole and Ahmadi (2003) claimed that the hijab-wearing Muslim students endured bigoted college experiences which detrimentally impacted their educational and social integration. Cole and Ahmadi (2003) argued that perceived anti-Muslim bigotry led some of them to alter their way of veiling practices, though, for others, the veil served as resisting method to honor their choice and cope with the negative pressure and dominant stereotypes against Muslim women.

Likewise, this claim was also maintained by Caidi and MacDonald (2008) who surveyed 120 PSE Muslim students in Toronto followed by in-depth interviews. In the post 9/11 climate, Caidi and MacDonald (2008) stated that Muslim students reported perceived bias and discrimination. The students linked the negative depictions of Islam and Muslims to certain Canadian media coverages that portrayed of Islam and Muslims as incompatible with the Canadian values and scrutinized as a threat. Further, Zafar and Ross (2014) conducted a study on religious groups in a large Canadian metropolitan university. The study observed a diverse mix of religious and ethnic students to examine interreligious contacts, attitudes, and stereotypes toward five religious groups including Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and Sikhs. Zafar and Ross (2014) reported that participants listed happy or neutral emotions toward all religious

groups except for Muslims. This finding was also reported by Khelifa (2017). The growing hostility toward Muslims, as Sahar Khelifa (2017, p. 7) asserted, was “one significant issue ... that poses a large threat to Muslim integration and dialogue ... as Canadians”.

### **Summary**

The literature review yielded that women of a visible minority were vulnerable to various forms of “gendered violence” based on race, class, and gender which rarely racialized men or white women encounter (Crenshaw, 1991). With attention to the religious intersectionality with the other identity dimensions, Canadian Muslim women were visible targets of complex bigotry distinctively different in from that experienced by other racialized women (Bilge, 2010; Perry, 2014, p. 79). Muslim women were unexpectedly susceptible to gendered Islamophobia (e.g., Allen, 2015; Aziz, 2012a, 2012b; Litchmore & Safdar, 2015; Perry, 2014; Ruby, 2006; Zempi & Chakraborti, 2015; Zimmerman, 2015; Zine, 2006). The latter identified as a complex routine of bias echoed across western societies, such as the UK, Australia, the U.S., and Canada (Litchmore & Safdar, 2015; Perry, 2014; Zempi & Chakraborti, 2015; Zine, 2006). Moreover, two reports of Canada Statistics (2017, 2018) suggested a rise in Islamophobic sentiments targeting Muslims, particularly hijab-wearing women in public spaces.

First, critical research questions were generated on different notions of religion, gender, ethnicity, and race to adequately capture the complexity of how veiled Muslims perceived their visibility with the hijab. Accordingly, an intersectional framework of inquiry was needed to explore the subjective perspectives of the hijab-wearing students (the knowers). The study attempted to answer questions concerning politics and the impact of being visible with the hijab on campus and in public (Hopkins, & Greenwood, 2013). The researcher sought to place greater

focus upon the meanings the motivations governing their adoption of the hijab and their experiences of being visible women of a religious group on campus and in public.

Second, the researcher was to ascertain whether participants encountered prejudice or social bias as a result of their faith declaration on campus and in public. The major themes of the literature review were:

(1) the essence of veiling for Muslim women which was the focus of previous research as source of empowerment (Atasoy, 2006, 2003; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2008; Rahmath et al., 2016; Zine, 2006), or a sign of oppression (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012; Cloud, 2004; Droogsma, 2007).

(2) the lived experiences of being a hijab-wearing undergraduate (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Khiabany & Williamson, 2008; Mir, 2009; Peek, 2005; Williams & Vashi, 2007).

(3) the implications of the rising gendered Islamophobia (Allen, 2015; Perry, 2014; Zine, 2006).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the integrative literature review, there was a growing literature on topics of Muslim women and the hijab (Atasoy, 2003; McDonough, 2003; Marcotte, 2010; Ruby, 2006). Some literature focused on the negative interpretations and opposed views of the hijab practice in Europe and North America (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012; Cloud, 2004; Droogsma, 2007; McDonough, 2003). Other literature, however, explored how they perceived their negative stereotypes and stigma (Allen, 2015; Aziz, 2012a, 2012b; Bahdi, 2003). In Canada, some literature investigated the legal and political issues related to hijab and niqab (face-cover) (Jiwani, 2011; Marcotte, 2010; Winter & Previsic, 2017). However, the lived experiences of the

Canadian Muslims received relatively insufficient attention in research and publications (Caidi & MacDonald, 2008; Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Litchmore & Sadfar, 2015, 2016).

Despite an emergence of research regarding gendered Islamophobic victimization in the public sphere, hijab-wearing Muslim woman's standpoints remained "barely acknowledged and under-theorized" in the public arena (e.g., Allen, 2015; Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012; Chambers & Roth, 2014; Nagra, 2018; Zine, 2001, 2006), and, nonetheless, it was disregarded within the academy (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Mir, 2009; Litchmore & Safdar, 2015; Perry, 2014; Rahmath et al., 2016). To conclude, there was a dearth of research explicitly investigating the perceived Islamophobic victimization of the hijab-wearing Muslim women in Ontario post-secondary. This, ultimately, taped the critical question: "why something is true are not a benign academic issue?" (Collins, 1990, p. 328).

Accordingly, an integrative review of peer-reviewed literature has been approached to gain a holistic conceptualization and synthesis (Torraco, 2005), on the experience of young veiled students who were going through transitional time while negotiating a Muslim identity on campus (Williams & Vashi, 2007, p. 269). The wide array of the discussed literature was to gain insights into the diasporic experiences of the visibility of the hijab for Muslim women "who are in the process of constructing the practical dimensions" of a Canadian Islam (Williams & Vashi, 2007, p. 271). Taken together peer-reviewed publications, data reported by Statistics Canada, and reports and literature documented in Ontario offered initial evidence and realistic conceptualizations on the detrimental implications of being visible with the hijab in the Canadian context (Chambers & Roth, 2014; Nagra, 2018; 2008; Perry, 2014).

Thereby, this research was to explore the experiences of the veiled Muslim women within the particular focus on "the way that religion intersects with inequality," (Wilde, 2018, p. 1).

Conducting this feminist epistemology using intersectional analysis substantially offered fully exploration of social phenomenon (Atasoy, 2003; Perry, 2014). This research also contributed in addressing the gap of literature on the topics of the marginal experiences of the hijab-wearing women attending post-secondary education in the Canadian context (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Rahmath et al., 2016). Though, the researcher avoided stating any hypothesis that might not be true.

Besides, this analysis endeavoured to extend the current contextualized knowledge of the gendered, racialized, class-based, occupational, and religious identities among hijab-wearing undergraduates. The analysis might serve in provoking further questioning on the intersectional inequality of veiled women in Ontario. Last, given the interest of how hijab-wearing student reflected on their experiences in post-secondary education, the accounts of Muslim women who do not practice veiling and topic of gender rights in Islam were beyond the scope of this analysis, thereby, the researcher didn't attempt to explore them (Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013).

### **Chapter 3: Study Methodology**

The literature review offered outlining to the purpose of the study, research questions, and the methodological approach. The literature review also assisted in determining and visualizing the context, participants' criteria, data collection method, ethical issues, and the role of the researcher. This chapter presented the research methodology to explore the perspectives of the hijab-wearing women and identify issues hindering their learning and social experiences on campus and in public.

#### **Purpose of Study**

The topic initially emerged through a broader literature review revealed a significant gap of the existing knowledge on the diasporic experiences of hijab-wearing Muslim women attending post-secondary education in Ontario. Thereby, the purpose of the qualitative study was to explore and gain insights into the shared perspectives of the hijab-wearing women through listening to their lived realities with attention to their context in post-secondary education in southwestern Ontario. First, the researcher sought to place greater focus upon the meanings that Muslim females attached to the hijab and their experiences concerning the visibility of their Islamic identity on campus. Second, the researcher was to ascertain whether the participants encounter any complex constraints as a result of faith declaration with the hijab. In this frame, the research intended to explore the diasporic experiences of being marginalized women and gain insights into the shared meanings and perspectives of hijab-wearing Muslim women through listening to their lived realities with attention to the context of post-secondary education.

The literature review yielded that women of a visible minority were vulnerable to various gendered forms of bigotry based on notions of ethnicity, race, and religion which rarely racialized men or white women encounter (Crenshaw, 1991). With attention to the religious

intersectionality with the other identity dimensions, Muslim women, specifically, were a visible target of complex violence distinctively different in from that experienced by other racialized women (Perry, 2014).

### **Research Questions**

Thus, critical research questions focused on intersecting layers of identity, such as gender, and religion. The questions were to adequately capture the complexity of how veiled Muslim perceived their identity with the hijab. Accordingly, a phenomenological interpretive framework of inquiry was needed to examine the intersectionality of the subjectivity constructed by hijab-wearing students (the knowers). In response, hijab-wearing women were interviewed to obtain their responses on a set of open-ended questions focused on their perspectives as undergraduates. The main question of this research was:

**1) To what extent, did wearing the hijab impact life experiences on campus and in public?**

The study also investigated the following sub-question which was directly related to the main one:

**2) How concerned were hijab-wearing students about Islamophobia?**

Nonetheless, the phenomenon of being women with a visible religious identity shaping their unique experiences was unavoidably enmeshed in a social context involving personal interactions between the researcher and the informants. In that sense, the social phenomenon cannot be measured using a statistical method of inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 19).

Contextual qualitative study was to capture the subjective realities as lived by veiled women attending post-secondary education in southwestern Ontario (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2016). The research framework was the main focus of the next section.

## **Research Methodology**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2016), the term research was defined as “a systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information –data,” that help to explore a phenomenon of primary interest or concern to the researcher (p. 2). The study employed a qualitative approach underpinned by interpretive phenomenology which “represent(s) a legitimate mode of social and human science” (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 19). This method, therefore, provided a holistic and emergent exploration with a particular focus on the phenomenon, design, measurement tool, and interpretation processes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

The qualitative methodology was an “exploratory in nature” that inextricably tied to the people's perspectives, and subjectivity (p. 80). The exploratory process, as Lopez and Willis (2004) pointed out, placed a social phenomenon at the center of the human interactions to gain similar meanings gleaned from the social accounts constructed by participants. In this way, the qualitative researcher employed inductive reasoning in which the qualitative researcher interviewed the research participants to obtain their perspectives to capture the complexity of a social or human phenomenon as being visible with the hijab (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

According to Creswell and Poth (2016), the interpretive phenomenological approach, among the various classified approaches to qualitative inquiry, was to derive common meanings from narrative accounts constructed by participants about their standpoints about a particular lived experience shaped by historical and cultural contexts in which they inhabited. Further, the term phenomenology, as Leedy and Ormrod (2016) defined, was a "person's perception of the meaning of an event, as it exists external to the person" (p. 255). The phenomenological study, hence, was to explore individuals' perspectives concerning particular situations to exert common



meanings of the phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016; Edwards & Holland, 2013). An interpretive phenomenological approach to guide this qualitative research underpinned by an intersectional feminist inquiry was the most convenient framework to understand the research problem.

**Interpretive phenomenology.** Subjectivity was constructed through interactions with participants to create an understanding of their lived experiences shaped by the context in which they live (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Hence, this qualitative research was based on inductive reasoning in the sense that emerging themes and categories formulated by data analysis based on elicited narratives from participants. The philosophical conjecture guide phenomenology was an interpretive (hermeneutics) research approach to uncover details embedded in participants' perspectives (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The interpretive phenomenology approach "encompasses a research paradigm and its philosophical assumptions and framework, the methodology, and the strategies" (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007, p. 1). Besides, the researcher sought to analyze transcripts of the participants, which subsequently were interpreted into faithful narrative accounts. According to Lopez and Willis (2004), "a narrative account by the participant of his or her knowledge and experiences related to the topic of study" (p. 2). The narrative accounts provided official descriptions of the diasporic subjective experiences of the informants as conceptualized by the researcher (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

**Research participants.** The inquirer was able to attend the Friday prayers held at a local mosque which was an excellent opportunity to observe behaviors of the hijab-wearing women. The participants, then, were invited to take a part of the current study. The researcher was looking to interview 4 hijab-wearing participants. Purposive and snowball samplings were used to recruit participants which were the most common methods used in the qualitative study (Gay,

Mills, & Airasian, 2012). The participants were purposefully selected Muslim females based on their practice of veiling, age, being PSE students. The participants deliberately identified as female post-secondary students within an age range from 18 to 25 years old who were either born or raised in Canada. The researcher excluded women with the niqab (face-cover), who were not the focus of the present study.

**Data collection method.** Semi-structured interviews guided by a set of open-ended questions were an extensive method of data collection in the present study (Creswell, & Poth, 2016). This epistemological approach anchored in the constructive paradigm that structured knowledge, meaning, and understanding through human interactions with the researcher (Schultze, Avital, & Information management, 2011). Semi-structured interviews had certain core features in common: (1) the inquirer could probe more individually tailored complex questions to clarify ambiguous responses; (2) and when possible, sought further follow-up knowledge to certain interviewees' responses (Leedy & Ormarod, 2016). Face-to-face interview questions were attached in appendix A.

The objective of face-to-face interviews approach was to directly: (1) engage participants in productive conversations; (2) stimulate the interviewer's interpretive capabilities that could reveal in-depth explorations of the phenomenon (Schultze et al., 2011). Moreover, according to Leedy & Ormrod (2016), face-to-face interviews enabled "a researcher to establish rapport with potential participants and therefore gain their cooperation" (p. 142). Face-to-face interviews also encouraged a sense of equality between the interviewer and the informants and eliminated bias for students who did not have access to a cellphone or skype (Schultze et al., 2011). At the end of each interview, the researcher thanked participants for their time and participation. The researcher also informed participants about the main points of written notes during the interview

(Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The researcher considered the characteristics of participants by collecting demographic information, such as their age, race, socio-economic situation, and program of study. Demographic characteristics yielded valuable knowledge concerning their experiences to frame some supplemental analysis.

**Data analysis.** According to Creswell and Poth (2016), the qualitative study was nonlinear, but a holistic and emergent process. To this end, the research questions captured merit an investigation regarding the experience of hijab-wearing women attending post-secondary education. The researcher employed inductive reasoning (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 82). In essence, the study started by obtaining responses to the research questions followed by qualitative analysis. The inquirer performed considerable refinement and revision to all pieces of the data gleaned from interviews using inductive logic throughout the process of the research. Common meanings gradually evolved as the researcher entailed considerable thinking and re-examination with each piece of information. The researcher was also able to build on insights and hunches gained during data collection. The researcher organized the structures of the stories in a chronological sequence, as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2016). The researcher considered using HyperRESEARCH data analysis software which might help the researcher to organize and analyze qualitative data and progressively generates patterns and themes (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2016).

The interpretative narrations offered a holistic exploration of the phenomenon to conclude the most dependable and accurate analysis of participants' language and perspectives (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2016). Indeed, the researcher reported narrations in the best contextual, descriptive accounts aided with extensive quotations of responses and insightful reflections

(Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). From this perspective, the synthesis of the collected data was accurate, respectful, and relevant to the informants' experiences.

**Validity.** Reality was subjective human experiences (Schwandt, 1994). Creswell and Miller (2000) claimed that subjectivity was what participants perceived it to be. For this reason, the researcher actively sought to consensus further verification of the participants on the accuracy and quality of the final interview data and analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This way, the researcher tested the validity of the resultant conclusions. Hence, the researcher performed several considerations, as precautionary strategies, to mitigate the risk of getting errors, and eliminate alternative explanations of findings. For example, the researcher contacted participants to check and validate the content of their initial narrative accounts.

Further, the researcher paid merit attention to the value of crafting thick descriptive narratives capturing the complex realities experienced by hijab-wearing students and their context to enhance transferability (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016; Gay et al., 2012). The term thick description refers to the sufficient and critical descriptive details accurately included in the narratives to provide readers a context to understand the participants' emotional content and demographic data. In a sense that, readers constructed a keen understanding of the situation and make informed decisions about the proximal applicability of the contexts under study (Polit & Beck, 2010).

Errors in the data collection process hamper research validity. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2016), "We can measure something accurately only when we can also measure it consistently" (p. 100). Hence, the data collection instrument, derived from recorded interviews, was administered consistently to enhances reliability. To a great extent, the researcher used the exact open-ended questions in the same way within the time allocated. During the interviews, the

researcher refrained from interjecting subjectivity of the subject to maintain objectivity with all interviewees. Besides, the researcher used interview scripts to write notes of observations.

**Ethical review.** The ethical guidelines provided validity reference throughout the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Therefore, the researcher was faithful to follow and maintain the CMU research ethics guidelines to preserve the confidentiality of human subject data. The researcher was obligated to safeguard the gathered data. All information only used for the purposes that agreed upon with the prospective research participants in the process of recruitment. The researcher did not collect any data before obtained the IEP research committee written approval for the proposed study form the Internal review board (IRB) at Central Michigan University. The researcher completed Tri-Council Policy certification for research involving Humans Course on Research ethics (TCPS 2: Core), attached in appendix D.

A key priority for this qualitative researcher was to maintain respondents' confidentiality and protection from harm (CMU Capstone Guide, 2015). Therefore, the interviews were recorded on the researcher's iPhone that protected with a password. The files were, then, stored separately in a new USB that protected with a password. The USB and all written documents were securely stored in a secured filing a double lock and key cabinet accessible only to the researcher. Destruction of the collected data happened after the study was completed.

Processes of the current was discussed with the capstone monitor, as per CMU protocol for the Research Review Application (RRA) process. Recruiting Research participants was through the Friday prayers with the help of the advisory panel from a local mosque in the southwestern of Ontario. Local mosque permission letter to recruit participants during Friday prayers, located in Appendix C. However, the students were not necessarily studying at a particular university or a college in the area of the mosque. Therefore, the researcher did not

necessarily need to obtain approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at a specific university or a college. Though, written permission letter from the board of the local mosque was obtained and received with no issues before the start of conducting the study.

To adequately avoid issues of coercion, the researcher followed special ethical considerations principals with research prospective participants. During the process of recruitment, the researcher respectfully explained to all prospective participants in plain language the purpose of the research, the identity of the researcher, the nature of voluntarily participation, foreseeable risks and potential benefits, responsibilities of the participants, duration of the study, the duration of the interview (TCPS 2 Website, chapter 3). As recommended by Gay et al. (2012), the researcher remained vigilant to ethical responsibilities to obtain written consents from all participants involved in the research prior to interviews. Therefore, researcher explained to prospective research participants their right not to participate or withdraw at any time with no prejudice to pre-existing entitlements and emphasized upon the full respect and protection of their privacy, welfare, and dignity.

Prospective participants were not friends nor in direct relationships or authorship with the researcher. In this way, participants didn't feel constrained or under undue influence of the investigator. The researcher didn't conduct research interviews with anyone refused to participate. Informed voluntary, and signed consents were obtained before the start of the interviews. The researcher explained to willing participants that the study offered no compensation and their contribution to the research was mainly based on their deeply held interests and anticipated benefits to raise awareness on the experiences of hijab-wearing Muslim women on campus. The participants were given time to assimilate provided information, pose questions for clarification, discuss availability to participate in the research.

For this reason, all participants received an email of the informed consent letters, found in appendix B. Both letters included the purpose of the study, time, date and place to conduct the interviews. To maintain confidentiality, the researcher informed the participants about using pseudonyms instead of their names to protect their identities (Leady & Ormrod, 2016). The researcher reserved the conference room at local mosque to maintain safety, privacy and confidentiality of participants, and the door of the conference room was locked during interview.

All participants were informed that the conversations were recorded and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, the researcher informed the participants that their names were protected, and pseudonyms were used instead of their real identifications. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher explained in plain and simple language to participants the terms of confidentiality and format of the interviews. Interviewees were, also, given a chance to clear any doubts about the interview and research questions.

### **Role of Researcher**

It suffices to mention that the choice of the topic was based on the alarming rise of violence and victimization targeting Muslim women in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017, 2018). To be specific, the topic initially sparked subsequent to the recent disturbing events affecting Muslims in Canada, U.S., and Europe, such as the recent massacre of worshipers at Christchurch, New Zealand mosques, Montreal mosque mass shooting, and banning religious head covering in Quebec unequivocally understood as targeting hijab-wearing Muslim women.

The researcher was a hijab wearer. The hijab for the researcher was, to one part, a form of piety to the faith she practices, and a source of "agency and freedom of choice" (Macdonald, 2006, p. 15). To another part, the hijab was perceived as a symbol of solidarity with other women who encountered stigma regardless of their different backgrounds. The inquirer was,

therefore, positioned as an advocate for Muslim women to decisively pinpoint the challenges that hijab-wearing women of being visible with the hijab in public (Cloud, 2004). Though, the researcher did not intend to glorify Muslim women (Haddad, 2009). The researcher mainly sought to empower and validate the marginalized and silenced voices of the Muslim women 'other' (Macdonald, 2006). The researcher sought to interview participants with no judging or imposing any ideas (Gay et al., 2012).

The researcher felt positive about the positive changes happened under the liberal government to address issues of racism and discrimination against minority groups, despite "the many well-intentioned warnings coming from scholars and intellectuals about the hardships Muslims will face in the years to come" in Canada (Khelifa, 2017, p. 10). Throughout the study, the researcher strictly prioritized and authorized participants' perspectives of the lived experiences which they inhabit (Gay et al., 2012). This study was to shine the light and conceptualize the marginalized experiences of Muslim women that intersect with notions like gender, race, class, and religion (Allen, 2015; Barlas, 2001; Droogsma, 2007; Williams & Vashi, 2007).

Besides, this study could extend the current contextualized knowledge on the gendered religious identity among undergraduates and to provoke further research. Last, given the interest of how hijab-wearing student reflected on their experiences in post-secondary education, the researcher did not attempt to explore the experiences and accounts of those who do not practice veiling (Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013). The researcher attempted to conduct an in-depth exploration of how Muslim females perceived their visibility with the hijab and how hijab-wearing students experienced post-secondary campus as a space of learning and socializing. The data collection instrument was semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions.



Lastly, the study limitations were expensively clarified, as well as the significance of the study and the role of the researcher.

## Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

In Chapter Three, the researcher elaborated on the theoretical framework and methodology of this study. The method was designed to explore the extent to which wearing the hijab impacted life experiences of Muslim women, and whether Islamophobia had penetrated campuses of post-secondary education. This qualitative research was based on inductive reasoning. In the sense, data analysis based on elicited narratives from four participants was conducted and themes and categories were formulated by. All participants signed the participant consent (Appendix B) and understood the voluntary basis of the interviews. All interviews were guided by the research questions. The questions elicited data on the extent to which the hijab impacted their lived experiences, their perspectives on Islamophobia, and what could be done to improve their learning experiences. The average interview length lasted approximately 40 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the details of each respondent's stories. To maintain objectivity with all interviewees, the researcher refrained from interjecting the subjectivity of the subject. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, during which research participants were narratively constructing their own lived realities. The interviews took place at an empty prayer room at a local Mosque. The inquirer used interview scripts to write notes and observations.

This chapter was structured as follows. The first section of this chapter explained the method, including sampling, procedure, participants, findings, and data analysis. The second section addressed the answers of the main research question, and the sub-question guided this capstone. Each answer to the questions has one central theme reported in the best contextual, descriptive accounts aided with extensive quotations of responses and insightful reflections. The second main theme had five categories. The chapter ended with a summary section providing an

overview of the main themes and draws a conclusion of the lived experiences of hijab-Muslim women.

### **Research Process**

**Sampling.** All interviews were conducted in the period between July 2019 till October 2019 in a multicultural city in Southwestern Ontario with a growing Muslim population. The researcher visited a local mosque during Friday Prayers, which allowed close observations on how young second-generation women negotiated their Muslim identity. The inquirer remained vigilant to ethical responsibilities to obtain informed consents and permissions to conduct, record, and quota the interviews. The researcher explained to research participants their right to withdraw at any time with no prejudice to pre-existing entitlements. The inquirer diligently emphasized to participants the full respect to their autonomy, welfare, and dignity, as these especially relate to the CMU research ethics guidelines to preserve the confidentiality of human subject data. Pseudonyms was used instead of the participants' real names and identifying characteristics to protect their privacy and anonymity. The researcher also explicitly expressed any harmful outcomes of participation in the study, including distress during face-to-face interviews.

The researcher mainly relied on snowball sampling to recruit participants through existing participants and social network. The inquirer invited several potential participants who fitted the research criteria, but only four women showed interests to be interviewed. In two instances, the prospective interviewees did not answer text messages after booking the interview appointments. And one responder abruptly cancelled the interview and said that she was out of town. Two hijab-wearing students were eliminated because they did not match the research criteria due to their status as newcomers to Canada and their English was not fluent.

The inquirer had no direct relation with any of the participants before the study. Purposive sampling was useful to recruit Iliana, who was born in Canada from a Christian family, migrated to Canada a long time ago. She converted to Islam two years ago and practiced the hijab at the age of twenty-four years old. Rafiqa was also invited using purposive sampling. Using the snowballing through an existing participant, Rafiqa, was remarkably beneficial in recruiting Zainab. Rafiqa, indeed, provided a familiar and trusted link alleviating any uncertainties related to the study for Zainab. Martina was invited using snowball sampling by a referral of my social network.

**Recruitment.** The analysis explored the distinctive viewpoints of four hijab-wearing Muslim students that revealed their lived realities overlapping with PSE experiences (Mohanty, 1991). The sample was composed of four women from different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds, which highlighted the fluidity and heterogeneity of Muslim women's perspectives within their marginal position. The participants were also from different theological orientations of Islam in which three women were Sunni, and one identified herself as a Shi'a Muslim. The women practiced veiling (head-cover), and three of them were attending full-time college and one in a third-year university student. Three interviewees identified Canada as their birthplace whose parents immigrated a long time ago to Canada. The last one immigrated with her family when she fairly was a young child.

Two of the participants, Rafiqa and Zainab, grew up as a practicing Muslims. While Iliana and Martina were from Christian parents and converted to Islam slightly after the teenage years. Their experiences explored the concrete realities of insiders, who unexpectedly turned to be unpredictable outsiders in both macros to micro context.

The Participants identified their religiosity as moderate, liberal, and conservative. Three of the four women were inactive, and one was working part-time in a clothing line boutique.

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of the Participants Based on Demographic Information*

Pseudonym	Age	Race	Ethnicity	Socio-economic Situation	Program of Study	Marital Status	Place of Birth	Religiosity	Theological Orientations
Iliana	3	White	Assyrian	Low	Architecture	Married	Canada	Conservative	Sunni
Martina	19	White	Caucasian	Low	Policing	Married	Canada	Moderate	Sunni
Rafiqqa	20	North African	Barbarian	Average	Business Administration	Single	Canada	Conservative	Sunni
Zainab	20	Middle Eastern	Arab	Low	Sociology	Single	Iraq	Liberal	Shi'a

**Procedure.** The participants were highly motivated to participate and articulated their eagerness to know the potential outcomes of the study. We shared multiple text messages and phone calls to explain the whole process and booked the date, time and place to meet for a face-to-face interview. The one-on-one interviews were conducted over three months in 2019. This study was similar to peer-reviewed studies investigating Muslim women's experiences with the hijab in a Western context and the implication of being visible within their context of subordination (Aziz, 2012; Perry, 2014; Zimmerman, 2015). To tackle the two research questions, participants were asked seven interview questions (Appendix A) in the same way.

**Table 2**

*How Interview Questions addressed Research Questions*

Research Questions	Interview Questions
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To what extent, does wearing the hijab impact life experiences on campus?

Q: 1, 2, 3

How concerned are the hijab-wearing women about Islamophobia on campus?

Q: 4, 5, 6, 7

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### **Data Analysis**

The qualitative study was nonlinear, but a holistic and emergent process (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The intersectionality model of Crenshaw envisioned a holistic analysis of the subjectivity of Muslim women in PSE that overlapped with their identity dimensions. The inquirer employed inductive reasoning (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The participants' responses were read and organized line by line. Cautiously, the researcher performed considerable refinement and revision to all pieces of the data gleaned from interviews using inductive logic throughout the process of the research. Common meanings gradually evolved as the researcher entailed considerable thinking and re-examination with each piece of information. Ultimately, findings were compared to similar studies to situate the analysis in the literature.

**Phase one.** the inquirer approaches the text in subjective patterns using inductive thematic analysis as the primary method of reasoning. The interview transcripts were carefully read many times to gain insights and hunches of each narrative as a whole. The transcripts were simplified line by line to locate initial codes. Data, then, was analyzed to identify patterns, commonalities, and significant phrases directly related to the research questions. Categories and patterns were further refined into different sets of recurrent themes among responders' narratives (Wennick, Lundqvist, & Hallstrom, 2009). Different sets of codes were identified as final themes that related to the theoretical framework of the study (Wennick, Lundqvist, & Hallstrom, 2009).

Each interview data was analyzed and organized the structures of the stories in a chronological sequence, as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2016).

**Phase two.** Themes were interpreted and presented using intersectional analysis, which was based on the intersection between notions of gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic situation, and religion. The analysis also highlighted the fluidity and heterogeneity of Muslim women's experiences by closely engaging the narratives of two born-Muslim women and two new converts in PSE. The transcripts were cyclically reread and re-evaluated emerging abstract themes throughout the research process. Relevant global literature was examined to situate the overlapping themes into published findings. Repeatedly, constant comparison across themes and Canadian literature and various reports was carefully place the findings within the Canadian context. The abstract themes revealed a pattern of the hostile experiences of the respondents in the Canadian context.

**Phase three.** The thematic analysis was supported by direct quotations from participants' narratives. The participants were sent emails with their interview transcripts to validate their voices and check its accuracy. Finally, the data were organized into two main themes that addressed the research question and sub-question.

## **Findings**

This research aimed to find answers to two research questions that explore the extent to which wearing the hijab impacted life experiences of Muslim women. The second question was to investigate whether Islamophobia penetrated campuses of post-secondary education. The findings of this research did not intend generate solid conclusion or generalization about the perspectives of the hijab-wearing women in Ontario. The narratives reflected adequate clues on the association between the hijab and the multidimensional challenges and issues negatively

affecting participants' lives. The intersectional analysis identified the hijab as a gendered religious signifier that had interconnected relation with gender, ethnicity, race, socio-economic situation, and religion.

The analysis adequately captured the complexity of how veiled Muslim student perceived their visible identity with the hijab on campus and in public. In the context of rising radical Muslims and Islamophobia, the participants reported being confronted with complex patterns of issues challenges as a result of being a woman and a Muslim. The thematic analysis revealed the interpreted experiences of the hijab-wearing students into two themes as follows: (1) Intersectionality of gender, religion, race, ethnicity, socio-economic situation, and religion; (2) Gendered Islamophobia.

To answer the first question, the researcher needed to explore their perceptions and meanings attached to the hijab and how they negotiated their identity. Then, the researcher needed to analyze the extent to which the hijab shaped their lived realities intersecting with dimensions of their identity, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and religion that cannot be differentiated.

### **Theme One: Matrix of Intersectionality**

The intersectionality of their identifications and marginal positions emerged as the first abstract theme in this analysis. The women in this research reported facing challenges interconnect with who they are as a woman and Muslim. The literature revealed that the social stigma inherently portrayed all Muslims of heterogenous nations as potential threats to the West. Perhaps not surprising, the pervasive depictions of Islam in the media misrepresented Islam and perpetuated Muslims as terrorists and sympathized with terrorism. As a result, Muslim minority groups were subject to increased security measures and discriminatory practices in Canada. In



that climate of misconceptions, Muslim women were indisputably homogenized as oppressed, subordinated to patriarchy, and devoid of agency and autonomy. The complex depictions explicitly associated the hijab with gender inequality and oppression. And, Muslim women were simultaneously situated at the periphery of Other, and vulnerable to bigotry.

**Intersectionality of religion and gender.** At the intersectional boundaries of gender and religion, Muslim women negotiated their identity as being both a female and a Muslim. The matrix of gender and religion bounded together in additive layers forming distinctive disadvantages. The visibility of the hijab intensely functioned as religious attire specifically for women cast them as an over-determined symbolic of Otherness. Hijab-wearing women endured significant brunt of entrenched marginalization, discrimination, and prejudice. In that light, the participants disclosed their differential perspectives interlocking with being a woman, and a racialized Muslim.

Raffia was born and raised in Canada twenty years ago studying Business Administration in her second year. She identified herself as a barbarian from immigrant parents originally from Algeria. Raffia started wearing the hijab since she was three years old, imitating her mother when they visited the mosque. On the interview day, Raffia was wearing loose-fitting robes with matching black and red hijab. From the interview observation, Raffia seemed to be aware of the hijab as a foremost signifier of her chosen religious identity in public. She asserted that "with the hijab, I become visibly recognizable as a Muslim woman in public."

Raffia asserted that wearing the hijab was based on self-autonomous choice to maintain essential religious obligations. Veiling to her was to comply modesty, chastity, and morality to divert undesirable sexual attention in public. For Raffia and the other three women, wearing the

hijab made them cautiously monitor and guard their chastity and behaviors while interacting with non-familial people. When Raffia was asked about the meanings behind the veil, she replied:

The hijab is a part of my identity and with the hijab that people referenced me as a Muslim lady because I created an image of Islam based on the way I look. I try to be as neutral and kind as possible. It is kind of modesty but relatable as well.

Engaging Peek's Muslim identity model (2005) in this conversation, one can see that Raffia's identity advanced through sequential stages starting at early childhood when she was visiting the mosque with her mother to adulthood in the college. She was directly impacted by the surrounding environment at home and the mosque, and internal self. Collegial experiences coincided with Raffia's identity and cognitive formation as an emerging adult trying to resolve a compelling question of who am I? as a woman and as a Muslim (Stoppa, 2017). Identity construction of Raffia and the other three women in this study entailed motivation to join the Muslim Student Association (MSA). MSA functioned as a social hub of empowering and solidarity, particularly for those college-aged young women. Through which those young Muslim women constructed their sense of self and others by participating in religious, social, and educational activities on campus (Bowman & Smedly, 2013). As revealed from the participants, being affiliated with MSA was, on one part, a coping mechanism to overcome complex social and academic challenges to adapt life on campus. However, on the other part, group affiliation with MSA operated as a buffer to resolve the religious challenges of maintaining moral purity and sexual control by finding people who conduct themselves as a Muslim.

In this frame, Rafiqa was determinedly engaged in collaborative efforts with the MSA group to create appropriate cultural space that accept veiling, honor moral values, and respect religious beliefs. Remarkably, speaking with Raffia, one could clearly see how her introspective identity flourished into a Muslim woman during the two years at the college. To great extent, she

valued interfaith dialogue and cross-racial interaction that started on at the college and encouraged others to learn positive perceptions about Islam and Muslims.

In ISA, we've been a team on campus. So, during the orientation week, we participate in the Islamic knowledge booth. Some students come and ask us questions. The ISA group runs weekly Friday prayers, organizes other events like iftar nights in Ramadan and participates in the food drive. We also set stalls and tables for international hijab day, Meet a Muslim day, Muslim culture day and other social activities.

Given the intersectionality model of gender and religion, the hijab served as conscious resistance against the dominant stereotypes of Muslim women and the sexual objectification of the female body. As a result of the hijab visibility, Muslim women were confronted with the bigotry based on negative stereotypes and stigma that led them to resist and honor their decision to veil. This point was exemplified by Raffia as follows:

Stigma is like community-based. It mostly happens on the bus or something. As soon they see a hijabi, they kind of have that image come as terrorists or whatever, like, Muslim, in their heads. So yeah, I can get a rude stare on the bus almost every time I am on the public bus. It does make me feel uncomfortable, but I just ignore their eyes.

When she was asked about any concerns with anti-Muslim bigotry on campus, she replied:

So, I don't think it's so much of a problem on campus because the school itself stands for... multiculturalism. The faculty has been accepting. Most people on campus are more open-minded, tolerant, and accepting of others.

However, a subtle form of concealed otherness seemed to occur, creating a hostile and stressful classroom atmosphere for the women in this study, as Raffia described:

I think, yeah, that kind of problem happens at school, with the whole friend group. Sometimes they see that you're wearing a hijab and or like if you're with a group of hijabi friends, they'll kind of put you in that category right off as you don't belong or unwanted.

Yet, the behavior of young White males at the college was the worthiest noting. Raffia noted that young White men, in contrast to their female counterparts, were less likely to stereotype against Muslim women.

White male students are very respectful. So, when I walk in the hallway, they would start speaking quietly. Or if they are swearing, they'll stop swearing just because I walked by. Or they'll hold the door open for you.... And I appreciate that. Um, sometimes you have students either not kind of not allow you to be in their friend group or, like, just differentiate you between, like, all the other college students just 'cause you do have the hijab. I would say most of the time was White females. Asians are pretty good and also Black. Because in a way, they might be seen as a minority as well, they don't really judge other people.

Clearly, the reason, as described by Rafiqa, was:

cause a lot of white females now, I guess... expose themselves, and they expose their body parts ...and the hijab kind of goes against what they're trying to stand for and, like, the whole feminism.

In public space, hijab-wearing women were exclusively targeted by religious bigotry that profoundly affected their daily life. For example, Rafiqa recalled being a target by an unprovoked verbal attack that almost was escalated into a physical assault.

I guess people just read things on the media and then automatically, that's their image on Islam. But Islamophobia really happens when you're alone and kind of vulnerable. But I'm always with my friends, like especially on the bus or at school. Once we were at the mall. It was me, my mom, sister, and cousins. And I guess we were walking slow. And there was this girl with a stroller, and she just yelled at my cousin, "Go back to your country." My sister got a little bit mad, and like, "How could you say something like that?" So, we had a little disagreement, and she wanted to get violent really quickly, but we, of course, were not. We kind of just brushed it off and walked away. Then we decided to go home.

Therefore, it was worthy to note that gender and religion were interconnected concepts in the life of hijab-wearing Muslim women. The problematic stereotypes and perceptions of Muslim women were negatively affecting their lives in the classroom and public settings forming distinctive layers of disadvantages.

**Intersectionality of religion and ethnicity.** Stereotypes, as a form of inequality, had a significant impact equally on the realities of the Muslim-born women and new converts in this study. For example, Iliana who perceived herself as a White, was a last year student in the Architectural technology program practiced the hijab two years ago. She was born into a Christian home to Assyrian parents. Both of her grandparents were priests and held a highly respected social status in their community, though, religion was a minor in her upbringing. Iliana lived with her single mother, who, most of the time, was not home. So, she was frequently left home alone and had a strained relationship with her mother. The father had less or no involvement in her life since the early adolescent years.

Iliana asserted that she opened her eyes in ethnically dense of a Muslim neighborhood who were the best people she knew at that time, as she described. During high school years, she built a close friendship with a group of classmates who happened to be Muslims. She described her visits to their houses as calming and happiness. By the end of high school, Iliana started reading and asking about Islam, however, it didn't bring her to the religion yet. Here how she described her visitation to those friends' homes:

There was some form of comfort when I was with them and trust and peace when I'm in their house, like in my friends' houses, and they were Muslim. So, some questions came to me like, why is it different from them rather than other people's houses?" So, this opened my eyes to Islam, but it didn't bring me to Islam.

During the college years, Iliana intensively explored Islam as a faith. She occasionally accompanied her friends to the local mosque where she was touched by the people and spoken words that overwhelmed her heart with mixed ineffable emotions. She said, "I witnessed peace and reverence that connected me with the divine every time I go to the mosque." The spiritual encounters attracted Iliana to delve into the religion. She actively explored the truth into Islam trying to find an answer to the most difficult puzzle questions stuck in her head. "Okay, I like

Islam, so how am I going to this?" She knew deep in heart that this would upset her family and erupt anger and conflicts at home. After three months of searching, she adopted Islam as an alternative path of life. She said:

I was observing my close friends in high school and looked into Islam more in college. I would come with my friends to the masjid. I spent about three months trying to figure it out. At the end of it, I just uttered my Shahada, which is my declaration of the Islamic faith, which made me a Muslim. And after that for two weeks, I moved to my boyfriend's house, who is actually my husband.

Iliana remembered how she internalized being a new Muslim and how she come to the decision of veil.

When I said the shahada and converted to Islam, I felt like I was reverted to Islam. I now become a new person, and all my sins were wiped out. So, I start reading the Quran and the narrated hadiths of the prophet Mohammed (peace and blessings upon him). I was looking for answers regarding my modesty in public. I was also inspired by the hijabi women around me. Then I finally decided to wear a hijab. One day when I was at the Friday prayers listening to the story of Prophet Ibrahim, I decided to keep covering my hair and my body in and outside the mosque. It wasn't easy, but I felt peaceful and obedient to Allah after.

The politics of wearing the hijab for her was an attempt to claim her Canadian Muslim identity in public. Iliana asserted how she constructed her way through with the hijab:

It was a big deal for me because I felt comfortable like you could say in my own skin but in my own hijab. Now I am accountable for my own behaviour for Muslim and non-Muslim people, which is part of my Dawah to spread the word of my religion to others. Being a Canadian woman with the hijab and speaks calmly fluent English mean I am showing everybody who I am.

Engaging the theory underpinning this study with Elliana's stories, intersectionality with the interplay of ethnic, cultural, and religious dynamics was mostly noticeable with her family and Assyrian community. She was racialized by her own family and confronted with anger, shame and rejection. The bigotry of her family caused her intense feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and fear. She recalled tearful memories when she finally disclosed her new faith.

People say Muslims are extremists. So, I kept my Islam a secret from my family. Right when I started wearing the hijab, the first time somebody sees me, this is the time that,

oh, now they understand. "She's Muslim. He's Muslim. They're married. She converted. She left her parents. She left her culture. She left her this, her that. That's when the problem starts so I was avoiding it for those many months and when I decided to, it was horrible. When my family saw me with the hijab and figured out my new religion, they stopped talking to me. They disowned me. So, people of my Assyrian community said, "you put your parents head down," and they disowned me.

To date, dominant assumptions of the orientalist explicitly assumed the hijab was a symbol of religious and gender oppression coerced by family, or husband. It was not deniable that some women, in the radical Muslim states, veil against their wishes to please their families, husbands, or culture. However, the notion of veiling for the rest of Muslim women genuinely informed self-desires and self-preferences of empowering to accustom religious norms. Evident from foregoing literature pointed to ways in which there were two strands to adopting the hijab for the Muslim women. One-fold dimension represented an autonomous decision to lower their gaze and be modest. The second dimension was to resist stereotypes and misconceptions. Narratives of the participants revealed that the significance of the hijab was to maintain modesty, which was based on self-interpretations of the Quran. Iliana asserted the hijab was merely based exercised conscious autonomy:

Because of the many readings in the media, my family thought I'd been the caged wife to an extremist, which is not true. My aunts, uncles, and the whole Assyrian community assume that my husband imposed the hijab on me. Deficiently it was very hard when all of the people I know hated me for my decision to choose to veil. And ... they knew how I was independent. I worked for myself. I took care of myself. I went to college for myself. I did everything on my own. And then, the time came that I became Muslim, and I got married to a Muslim man and wore hijab. They automatically think, "Her husband took control of her." But why was I in control of my whole life before? That means I'm still in control because this is who I am. This is who I was as a child, as a teenager, as an adult. So, these things don't change very easily. And, of course, it's their mentality. Now I become a Muslim married woman and wear the hijab.

Strategically, the hijab publicized and educate one's religious identity to the public to resist stigma. This point was illustrated by Iliana:

Wearing the hijab in everyday life is one form of me telling people that I'm a Muslim, and I don't care what you think and how you judge me. And it is a form of Dawah, which

is spreading the word of my religion to others without even saying anything, just by them seeing me.

Muslim women in this study endured gendered and raced stigma based on their external outfit and the hijab. Iliana, for instance, experienced public staring and bias at the mall caused her stress and self-judge feelings happened every time she was in public. She narrated her stories, saying:

I've seen it with people treating me differently. Sometimes the lady at the bank is treating the person in front of me in line much nicer than me and things like that. Or when I was at the mall. So, this is one way that I feel when girls my age, especially when they see me outside, they look down on me because I am dressed like an old. People look at me weirdly because I'm young and I'm wearing all these clothes ... This is an issue for me a lot. She's so hot and what's wrong with her and all this stuff. So, I just go home, ...and I was thinking, "I'm still beautiful, but you don't know that I'm beautiful. And I'm okay with that. I don't want everyone to know that. I'm still normal, and there's nothing wrong with me for you to treat me differently.

Therefore, from the above-mentioned stories, inequality had a significant impact not only on the realities of Muslim-born women but also on the new converts with regard to the interplay of racial and cultural dynamics in familial, community, and students. Thus, Muslim women were trapped at their marginal position that intersected with their gender, race, ethnicity, and religion.

**Intersectionality of religion and race.** Martina was from raised catholic from European descent who converted to Islam on the day of her engagement. Her parents were divorced. Martina and her brother were living with her mother and her wife. Both my mother and her wife were alcoholic and drug addict. Martina indicated that she endured distress and anger with her broken family and experienced an abusive relationship with her boyfriend. She also had problematic relationships with her fathers, who left her when she was seven years old. Only negative views of Muslims as terrorists were known to Martina's prior to her conversion to Islam.



Daily interactions with a small social circle of born-Muslim friends brought her to the threshold of Islam. They, at the same time, offered a sense of attachment and security to Martina who was going through difficult life. This group transmitted first-hand perspectives of spiritual attachment to God that got Martina acquainted to Islam. She also was in a romantic relationship with a devoted young Muslim attending the same college. Martina described him as loving and caring who he never pressured her for any sexual relationships outside marriage, and their relationships as stable and reliable. Martina's decision to marry her current husband motivated her to look into the religion, that stimulated her later to utter the testimony and embrace Islam. She stressed that Islam helped her resolve much of her internal crisis and turbulent life. She said: "I got engaged on the same day I converted to Islam, which brought peace to my soul and body. Islam offered me a sense of uplifting and acceptance the way I was."

At the turning points of no religion to actively seeking and thriving for meanings into Islam, Martina was motivated toward the spiritual and tranquil prayers that brought peace and contentment to her heart. With the help from her husband, she acquired most of the religious knowledge and disciplines to lower the gaze and guard modesty. After three months of exploring Islam, Martina adopted the veil in public.

After I converted to Islam, I started studying the religion, and I read the English translated copy of the Quran. Islam fulfilled my spiritual needs and relieved my doubts. I was asking why women cover their hair and body. I started wearing the hijab and cover my hair, neck, my arms, and everything. I've studied more about the hijab, religion. And I understand, and I am convinced to wear the hijab and continue for the whole of my life.

Notably, the hijab encompassed as a preserver to the female body from sexual relations other than that with husband. On the interview day, Martina was wearing loose-fitted pants with matching blue hijab. One can see that she became more enchanted with her new identity with the veil. She internalized different form of femininity and beauty derived from the hijab.

I start feelings of Allah inside my soul and heart. Since I started wearing the hijab, I now have more respect for myself, but people respect me less. I feel more woman than ever before. I feel more feminine. My body is only for my husband to see.

In the matrix of intersectionality, race and racism were fluid and unpredictable, and both, nevertheless, tended to recast based on the context. Overnight, Martina's social status was shifted from normative White to non- normative Muslim within her context in which Islam was racialized. Her new identity with the hijab was perceived as the conspicuous Other by her own family and community. Unexpectedly, her new identity was racialized as the outsider Muslim. Her identity as a White was unexpectedly diminished and shifted to racialized Muslim targeted with bigotry that severely influenced her social engagement. Suddenly, Martina lost ties with her mother, father, old friends, and most of the college classmates. Sadly, Martina was mostly traumatized by her father's reaction the first time he knew that she became a Muslim:

My father is extremely intolerant of Islam. My first experience with abuse and discrimination was with my father, who yelled at me, "You're white, there's no way. You're going to be a terrorist. You're going to go blow everything up. Are you a part of ISIS now? Who the hell are you?" And my mom actually cried the first time she saw me wear a hijab. It's hard.

Daily activities such as going out to a store, a restaurant, or walking through the campus became difficult, as Martina explained:

And normally, I don't leave the house without my husband because I'm scared. When my husband travels to his family, I make some of my guy friends go to school an hour early just so they can walk me to class. I'm literally like, "Guys, can you walk with me?" And they're like, "Of course. Of course. Of course." And then they'll literally go to school an hour early, stay an hour late, whatever, just to walk with me through the school. Because they know I'm scared of walking alone just because of the stuff that's happened with it.

Veiling had, indeed, detrimental implications on their lives within their family, community, and public. This posed the question of what the impact was of wearing the hijab on their learning and social outcomes in and out the classroom. Nonetheless, participants inherently endured overt and covert hostility based on perceptions related to their religion. In which, peer

relation unexpectedly transformed from strong friendships to toxic relations. Martina, for example, felt less accepted and was treated with disrespect by her classmates and friends.

Martina attributed their behaviours to the stereotypes of Muslim women:

When I started wearing the hijab and converted, I was the only Muslim girl in the class. Some of the people in the class were like, "Oh my god, you scared me. What's on your head? Take it off." There was a Muslim Iraqi classmate, who identified as a Muslim but not practicing, started to be rude and ignorant when I become a hijabi. Sometimes, they try to touch it, but I don't like it. I'm just like, "I swear I will punch you if you touch me. I'm talking seriously. I'll punch you. They weren't treated as I had been treated before becoming a Muslim.

She also recalled unpleasant encounters with a Muslim peer who used to be a close friend. She said, "There was a Muslim Iraqi classmate, who identified as a Muslim but not practicing, started to be rude and ignorant when I become a hijabi." Sadly, Martina reported perceived feelings of vulnerability, social anxiety, and fear led her to lose the motivation of attending classes.

So, I felt a coward and just started distancing myself from the class. So, I sometimes don't even go to class. I would just go to my teacher and be like, "Okay. That is what happens with them, and they're not going to stop. They're too arrogant and self-centred to stop. So, is there a way I can just get my work from you or see you later or something?" And my teachers are really understanding. They allowed me to work in the outside class more.

Likewise, when Iliana was asked about her peer relation, this was her reply:

I had one friend or two friends when they saw me suddenly wear the hijab; they were like, "Oh. I didn't recognize you." And then it would just be hi and bye. And then we were not friends like we were before. So, this is one thing that changed. One girl that did that, she was White Canadian originally from Ireland. So that's who one of the girls was. She didn't hang out with me or talk to me like before or message me on Facebook. We're just not really friends anymore.

The reason, as Iliana described, was:

I guess before I was just normal, but now I'm not normal for her. I guess she might not have been comfortable ... since I started wearing the hijab. Another girl, she was Chinese, but when I got pregnant, she started talking to me again just to be nice and be friends, and here and there we would talk to each other. But not as much as before, too. My only close friend was somebody who was the only dark-skinned religious Indian person who also felt like an outsider. We were both outsiders. And the other girls, a lot of them were white in the class. There were a few Chinese and then the rest of them were

white. So, they all got along with their own groups of people, but she and I were outsiders. So that's one reason we got along so well, which is really nice.

On the contrary, a responsive and inclusive learning environment led to great outcomes, especially relationships with the professors. Martina claimed that the college promoted relatively positive space to practice one's faith and described her professors as tolerant and understanding of her religious needs.

My teachers were so amazing with me, even after I start wearing the hijab. They asked me to teach them some Islamic expressions to use when we walk to class. I taught them "*Insh'allah, Bism'ellah, Alhamdu lillah, Mashaa Allah, and Alsalam Alikoum.*" They let me go for daily prayers and let me leave early on Friday to help set up for the Friday prayers... One professor actually moved the exam for me because it was on Eid day... There're two or three praying places in the school. The girls have a place with a huge washroom, and the men have their own too. They actually have an imam come to the school for Friday prayers to pray with the students. So, you can practice your religion freely.

Likewise, Iliana expressed her gratitude for her professors, who understood her religious needs and accepted accommodation. She said:

So, during the lab, I would leave to pray and come back, the teachers were very nice and accommodating. I didn't experience any problems with the holidays just because it didn't come into conflict with my schedule. Fasting was a little hard in school, but I did that to myself.

Deviated from norms of the larger context, stereotypes, as a form of inequality, had a significant impact not only on the realities of the Muslim-born women but also on the new converts inside and outside the college environment. Eventually, their hostility resulted in social exclusion, harassment, discrimination, and violence that defined as gendered Islamophobia.

Research Question Two: How concerned were the hijab-wearing women about Islamophobia on campus? In this section, the sub-question relatively examined patterns of Islamophobia facing Muslim women. The answer to the sub-question was elaborated in one main theme, which was gendered Islamophobia, divided into five sub-themes. The findings showed a recurrent rise in Islamophobic sentiment in the participants' lives. In order to explore the

implications of Islamophobia, the inquirer needed to explore their lived experiences in relation to anti-Muslim sentiments targeting Muslim women. Thereby, the researcher needed to examine the patterns of Islamophobia as defined in the literature and pointed out in Chapter Two of this capstone. So, the study examined their relationships with professors and students. The inquirer also explored whether they perceived or experienced any patterns of stereotypes, social bias, fear and vulnerability to bigotry, and violence. The inquirer also explored the patterns of unemployment among the concerned group. Finally, participants voiced their concerns to institutions to develop sensitive measures to accommodate their needs to promote an inclusive and respectful environment on campus.

### **Theme Two: Gendered Islamophobia**

Overall, the literature conformed Muslim women were stereotyped as oppressed, coerced, subjugated, and domesticated. Also, for a number of years, Canada Statistics reported that hijab-wearing Muslim women were the most women targeted by hate crimes. Besides, scholars increasingly affirmed that Muslim women simultaneously endured gender, race, class, and religious disadvantages. The array of disadvantages of Muslim women was distinctively different in “its dynamic and impact” from that experienced by other racialized women in the West. Veiled Muslim women in this study were particularly susceptible to gendered Islamophobia due to the visibility of the hijab. That had a significant impact on their daily lives and families.

**Facing social stigma.** Martina reported that the social stigma toward Muslims made her an easy target for bigotry and emotional harm. Martina also reported being a target to an unprovoked verbal attack within public spaces:

I've got yelled at Tim Hortons for being a Muslim. An older man was yelling at me and saying I'm a terrorist for just wearing the hijab, and he was threatening to rip off my hijab. He threatened to pull off my hijab while waiting in line at Tim Horton's. I felt so sad, but I remained silent.

In that respect, religiously motivated verbal and physical attacks were certainly not the only form of discrimination, but also cyber harassment and threats were common in the life of the participants. Martina, for example, reported being attacked by derogatory comments from random people on Instagram and Facebook. She said:

I even experienced just snarky little things, like the first time I posted a picture on Instagram wearing a hijab, I got this comment. I have a screenshot on my old phone ... I ended up blocking her, and I was going to go to the police, but I didn't, and she's like, "The only thing Muslim about you is getting Muslim [d\*ck]." ... she commented, ... "Go back to your country; don't blow us up." ... I literally just replied. I was like, "Do a little bit of research, honey. You clearly don't know what you're talking about, and that's not okay at all." ... then I blocked her." So, I've gotten comments on social media like, "Take that thing off your head; why are you covering your hair?" And on Facebook. it's like, "Take it off your head," like, "You look scary with it; you look like a terrorist with it." Just like, "Okay, you can feel free to unfollow me or delete me. I'm not following you; why are you following me? I don't even know who you are. What are you doing?" So, I don't know. I get a lot of awful comments.

Consistently with this frame, Zainab was 20 years old in the third year of the Sociology program at a local university. Zainab immigrated with her family when she was four years old. Zainab identified her religious orientation as a Shi'a Muslim. She reported that her father was targeted to unprovoked verbal attack in public:

When we were at the dollar store once, um, my dad cut, like, in line to go somewhere else. So, like, he went, like, past the line. He didn't touch the girl in front of us. He, like, passed me, and she turned around, and she's like, "Learn to say excuse me." He's like, "Oh, I didn't do anything." Like, "I'm sorry." Then she's, "Oh, don't yell at me. I'm not your wife. I don't wear those things. You don't control me." So, implying like, oh, Muslim men control Muslim women. And I got mad because, like, I was there, and I wear the hijab. So, like, my brother and I both were like, "Okay, like, what do you mean? What are you trying to say?" ... "Go take yourself somewhere else if you're gonna say, like, racist things." And she just started swearing. Then the manager of the store came and, like, had to take her out. Just hearing her view is basically saying Muslim women follow. Also, someone told him to "go back to his country at work." So, people have a major for Islam on its own.

On the contrary, Zainab experienced instances of sympathetic feedback by the public after the mosque attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand

The thing that happened in New Zealand, right after I went on the bus to school, and I felt more of the people feel bad for me. Yeah. They felt more, "Oh, this poor woman has to go and walk alone, and she's probably scared for her life." I felt like people were more trying to help.

**Vulnerability and fear.** Islamophobia was evident in the shared lived experiences of the participants. The pattern varied from explicit and implicit forms of anti-Muslim sentiments adversely limiting their opportunities of social engagement and employment, and significantly increasing fear on their physical safety and expressive rights. That implied heightened internal perceptions of exclusion and insecurity. Notably, new Muslim believers were most likely to experience a persistent sense of fear and anxiety than the rest of the participants. This was due to increased feelings of outsiders who used to be insiders. For example, Iliana exemplified the association between the hijab and perceived fear in the lives of Muslim women on a daily basis:

I honestly believe that if my family could kidnap, they'll hurt me. And this the reason I kept my new religion secret in the first few months. For about six to eight months, going shopping while wearing the hijab was very hard for me. I would almost want to run away or just dig a hole and sit there inside it. So, no one can stare at me. I was having a breakdown and crying uncontrollably. I felt depressed and lived in fear of my safety. These feelings were very common in my head for a long time.

Iliana perceived Islamophobia as a real issue that caused her to lose her family and community she grew up with. She narrated:

So, Islamophobia for me, I see it from my own parents, from my own blood relatives, and small cases, I've seen it with other people just like treating me differently. My family, if they saw me outside in the hijab, would get a message and say, "Okay, we're done talking to you. We're never going to talk to you again if this was true." And that's what they did. They completely cut me off the ones that saw me. And they don't care about me anymore, no matter what. They just acted as I don't exist. My mom did that at first, and she became crazy about it. She was fighting with me about it, all this stuff. So, she's very Islamophobic. My aunts and uncles are Islamophobic. My dad is a little more chilled out, but if he did see me in a hijab, it would show, it would come out as well.

Likewise, Rafiqah articulated concerns over her safety with the recurring aggressive experiences targeting hijab-wearing women in public.

I'm not scared so much on campus, but for sure, in public, I feel unsafe. Especially after I heard about hate crimes happening on the bus... I've recently read one that happened in Wonderland last week... a group of hijabis were attacked by a group of White people. And I've seen the video online.

**Work opportunity.** It seemed that unemployment had a religion and gender. Muslim Women encountered complex layers of discrimination in obtaining a career that led to a lack of tangible workplace skills, economic independence, and leadership. For example, Martina experienced religious discrimination in the workplace and was accused of stealing cash and lost her job immediately after wearing the hijab.

I started working when I was not Hijabi, and then I became Hijabi. I wear Hijab to work from that day. The owner started treating me badly. The manager started treating me badly. And then the owner fired me one day. No notice, nothing. Just came in, "Oh, you stole cash." I told I'm Muslim. And I would never steal. Bring a Quran. I'll swear on the Quran. I never stole anything. He's like, "You stole money from this til" I was like, "Go look at the cameras. Was I even working that day? Or if I was working, was I even over there? No." So I was like, "I'll swear on the Quran. Do whatever you want me to." And they're just like, "No. We're just going to let you go." I was like, "Really, okay. As you like." I just walked away.

Sadly, job discrimination was evident at the stage of recruitment. Martina asserted she was denied employment based on her appearance with the hijab. She reported:

I've tried to apply for other jobs, and actually, I've gotten interviews in places where the manager even like, "Oh, you'll be hired on the spot. Your resume is great. Your application's great." And then I'll even be told on the phone by the owner or the big manager like, "Oh, we just have to do a formal interview just so I can officially hire you. Consider yourself hired." And then I go wearing Hijab, "Oh sorry."

The store owners, according to Martina, reified the hijab as outsider and not Canadian. Relatedly, Zainab narrated her story associated with employment:

I was looking for a job. One of my friends worked at an ice cream store that was owned by Arabs, but I don't think they were Muslim. So, she said, "I'll talk to them, and "she mentioned my name to everyone at the job. They were just asking about my name, and they're like, "Oh, so she's Arab?" because they're also Arab, she's like, "Yeah, they're Muslim." And they asked if I wore the hijab. And she said, "Yeah, she does." And they're like, "Oh, well, we'll decline because we don't want to show religion." They were afraid that white people would be too scared to come to the store if I was working there. So, they were trying to push away racism even though they've been racist themselves. And I



couldn't really report that to anyone because they told her, and if I found out, they would fire her. And we know a family friend who is a Palestinian. She was saying how it was hard for her to get a job, even though she speaks perfect English, because of the way she looks with the hijab. I now know from that experience; personally, they did for my race or my religion, turn me down.

Zainab expressed that Muslim women held different perspectives in regard to the work requirement in the Canadian context:

I feel like when someone looks at a woman that wears a hijab. They just think she's super religious. So, she won't talk to male customers, and she has to pray.... So, I feel like they have that view to not hire Muslim women... Whereas for me, I'm totally fine going up to a male customer and be like, "Hey, do you need help?" ...So, I feel like every Muslim woman is discarded... But it's different for each person. Or some Muslims women literally don't want to shake a man's hand, which makes sense, but then others are totally fine with that. For me, I find a job at a wedding dress boutique, and we have to look presentable. So, I wear makeup every day, and I do my nails, but I still wear the hijab.

A third example was mentioned by Iliana, who had a short conversation with one of her professors and spoke about realities lived by most hijab-wearing Muslim women in the Canadian context.

After wearing the hijab, I wanted to get a reference letter from one of my professors during the exam week. And he's a White man. I'm pretty sure, like background. And he speaks his opinion. He's a very older man. So, he's not modern people... But he was nice. So, he was getting my reference letter ready, and the students were leaving the exam. So, at the end of the exam, he came to sit with me to sign all the letters. And then he just told me, "Oh. So, you might need some more time to look for a job because it's very hard to find a job. And then on top of that, you have this. He was referencing my hijab, which will make it harder for me. So, he's not worried about it. He's actually giving me a warning. He's saying, "This is how people are. If you want a job, start looking early. Don't take your time because it may be hard for you to do that. This is how the world is and stuff like that." It was really nice that he was okay with that.

Iliana spoke about her experiences in finding a job after graduation:

It's very hard to find a job because the workforce is a little bit biased. And then on top of that, I have no experience and the hijab. I have slowly realized that these are facts. So, I didn't necessarily look for jobs after college. Definitely, in Canada, we should not be like that because we are a diverse nation of people.

On the other hand, Zainab anticipated a rise in Muslim women employment:

I think they're going to have issues in finding jobs, but I see a rise in jobs in the last five years, and I've seen more young girls, who are hijabis, working in Tim Horton's, McDonald's. But I always assumed everyone asks for experience, and I just don't have it. And we're going to need to work double and as hard as white women. I think if we do, we could make it up there.

Nonetheless, the lived stories of participants illustrated the hostile situation to obtain a job based on their disadvantaged intersectionality in a climate of social inequality.

**Violence.** Indeed, many Muslim women felt targeted by prevalent scrutiny, threat, stigma, and alienation. Occasionally, their highly religious identity cumulatively made them subject to violence. Martina reported that she was a victim of physical violence attack when she and her friend were approached by a group of white people. She said:

So, I was with three of my friends in Toronto with me. There were a bunch of friends. They're three girls and three boys, and I think they were in relationships. But they were all drunk. ... One girl just looked at me, and she is yelled, "Go back to your country." And I literally just put my head down. I just put my head down and started walking. I grabbed Mustafa's arm ... So, I'll just hold his arm like this. And then she started screaming, "Oh yeah. Just hold onto your [nigger." And I literally was like, "Mustafa, walk faster." And then she came up behind me, and she pushed me like that. And I almost fell over myself. Mustafa caught me and then she punched me. She punched me in the middle of my back and right here. Mustafa just grabbed me, held me like this, and he just started walking somehow with me like this with him. And then my other two friends, they started fighting with the boyfriends, and the girls just scaring them away, whatever. And then my neck ended up hurting for two days after and at the time I had bleeding all started in my stomach so it-- I don't know what happened, but she hit me a certain way left me in pain and fear.

Nevertheless, an incident of a violent nature certainly was not the first time that a Muslim woman experienced because of her visible religious identity. Hostility appeared to be mounting for new converts. When Martina was asked if she feels safe in public, she replied, "I've gotten pretty hateful stuff outside the college. I am not feeling safe." These incidents illustrated how Muslim women lived in fear in a climate where Islam presented as a political ideology threatening the West, instead of a religion. Living within such struggle posed the question of what the role of the institution was to promote a safe and inclusive learning environment that was

conducive for bonding social capital with students of similar backgrounds and bridging social capital with students of various backgrounds, particularly students of underrepresented groups.

### **Recommendations**

Students of minority groups remained underrepresented in higher education in terms of accommodating their needs and addressing campus challenges. Evident in the literature, institutions were committed to implement welcoming and inclusive steps to include, accommodate, represent, and engage students of different needs and backgrounds (Bowman & Smedly, 2013). Ontario institutions were required to cultivate a harmonious climate that accept racial, cultural, and religious differences and celebrate the growing minority students of diverse backgrounds. Additional data was gathered at the end of the interviews and participants were asked how to change their learning experiences to match their needs on campus. Halal food was an essential need for Muslim students that seemed to be available in very limited varieties and recipes. For example, Zainab was asked how to improve her post-secondary experience, and she replied, “food is an issue because I eat only halal ... I eat only halal. For example, when we go to McDonald's, I only get the fish fillet.”

Equally important, raising awareness about Islam and empowering Muslim women were essential, yet urgent needs for the participants in this study. They requested that learning institutions needed to take into account hiring teachers of various backgrounds and religions, as exemplified by Iliana:

The normal for Canada is diversity, and people have different colours, races, accents, looks, clothes, everything. So, this is the normal of Canada. But I didn't see any Muslim teachers ... like none in my college ... It couldn't be because there's nobody applying, but I'm sure that that's not likely. I'm pretty sure that they are applying, and there are Muslim women who want to teach in college out there. I didn't see any that were hired in my college. I am more comfortable to see Muslim women in hijab teaching or working at the college.

However, Zainab had a different perspective on why hijab-wearing women were hard to be teachers:

I've only seen one hijabi teacher at the college teaching Math. she taught business math. I think it is a hundred percent an issue for hijabi women to get hired as a teacher. Because they will be attacked by students. It depends on where you're going to be working. Because you look, different younger students will bring it up. Because I did co-op for grade 4/5 and they did ask about my religion and the hijab and everything around it. It would be hard to explain it to younger kids. But post-secondary students already have an image on certain religions and certain races, so when they're exposed to something so new-- especially in high school. I've never seen a hijabi teacher in high school. So, when they're used to just White professors or a certain religion. They feel weird when they're exposed to a hijabi. Because even my math teacher, she was Palestinian, and you would hear students make a comment like, "Oh, I can't understand here." Or stuff like that. Because, if she's an immigrant and has an accent and a hijabi, the names and the stereotypes start popping up.

Iliana, for example, stressed on the need to empower and raise awareness on the hostile situation of the Muslim women and other racialized women in post-secondary education in order to embrace an inclusive environment of underrepresented students:

I think the school should have some sort of seminar or something about Islam at least once a semester or more and attendance is required. This spreads awareness of why we're like this and why we're stereotyped and how we're wrongly convicted of things. They have a lot of events that the Muslim students run, that only Muslim students go. Anyone that's not Muslim, he normally doesn't go unless they're close friends with a Muslim.

Thereby, the previous stories suggested that despite adopting the doctrine of racial equality on Ontario campuses, participants, who identified as underrepresented students, continued to endure problems. And that, despite the significance of race and religion in the collegial experiences and identity construction, participants seemed to be less satisfied with the institution practices to address overt and covert prejudice against Islam and Muslim women.

## **Summary**

This chapter examined the analysis of two major themes that emerged from four participants' attending post-secondary education in Western Ontario. An inductive reasoning was

employed, in essence, where the study started by obtaining the participants' responses to the research questions followed by qualitative thematic analysis.

The following themes and sub-themes arose from data analysis: (1) the matrix of intersectionality: (a) intersectionality of religion and gender; (b) intersectionality of religion and ethnicity; (c) intersectionality of religion and race; (2) gendered Islamophobia: (a) facing social stigma; (b) vulnerability and fear; (c) work opportunity; (d) violence; (e) recommendations. Each theme addressed one research question reported in the best contextual, descriptive accounts aided with extensive quotations of responses and insightful reflections. Thereby, merit attention was paid to the value of crafting thick descriptive narratives capturing the complex realities experienced by hijab-wearing students and their context to enhance transferability. In a sense that, readers could construct a keen understanding of the situation and make informed decisions about the proximal applicability of the contexts under study. Participants were given the opportunity to check and validate the content of their initial narrative accounts.

The interpretative narrations offered a holistic exploration of the hijab-wearing students in PSE to conclude the most dependable and accurate analysis of participants' language and perspectives. From this perspective, the synthesis of the collected data was accurate, respectful, and relevant to the informants' experiences.

## **Conclusion**

This study explored the impact of being visible with the hijab and whether Muslim women's lives were affected by Islamophobia. In a society where Islam was politically ideologized, and Muslims were determinedly racialized, the Muslim women inherently trapped at the marginal intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and religion. To that extent, Muslim women involuntarily homogenized as oppressed and subjugated. Participants invested the hijab

in negotiating their assertive identity as a woman and as a Muslim. However, the hijab heightened their association with the hated religious group and engendered their discrimination. In the light of these circumstances, Muslim women were susceptible to alienation, public scrutiny, hatred, prejudice, and violence in and outside classrooms. Not even White converts, who used to be perceived as insiders, were immune to bigotry and hate. Unexpectedly, their status was shifted to a forever disloyal. Not surprisingly, academics increasingly noted that Muslim women were simultaneously gendered, raced, and classed, forming multiple disadvantages of insecurity, physical safety, psychological well-being, unemployment, which matched responses of participants in this study.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

This study has aimed to explore the extent to which wearing the hijab impacted live experiences of the Muslim women, and whether Islamophobia had penetrated campuses of the post-secondary education. This qualitative research is based on inductive reasoning, which is nonlinear, but a holistic and emergent process (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Face-to-face interviews have been conducted in a semi-structured format guided by the research questions, during which research participants were narratively constructing their own lived realities. To tackle the two research questions directed this capstone, seven interview questions (Appendix A) have elicited data to answer the research questions. In a sense that emerging themes and categories have been formulated by data analysis based on elicited narratives from four devout participants. The intersectionality model has envisioned an inductive thematic analysis of the interviews revealed two main themes that have been discussed in Chapter Four. In this chapter, the discussion is divided as follows. (a) revisiting the research questions; (b) implications and recommendation of this study; (c) Conclusion.

### Revisiting Research Questions

This section explored how the findings of the study addressed the research question and sub-question. The overarching purpose of this study is to answer one main question, and the sub-question guided this research. The main question explores the extent to which wearing the hijab impact life experiences on campus. The sub-question envisages weather the hijab-wearing women have been targeted by subtle forms of Islamophobia on campus.

**The first research question.** The main research question has explored the extent to which wearing the hijab has impacted the lived experiences of women on campus and outside the campus. The narratives have reflected adequate clues on the association between the hijab and

the multidimensional challenges and issues that have faced the participants on a regular basis. The intersectional analysis identifies the hijab as a gendered religious signifier that has interconnected relations with notions of gender, ethnicity, race, and socio-economic situation. The intersectionality of Muslim women determinedly inscribed their heterogeneous perspectives and subjugated experiences on subjects. The chapter develops as follows: the functions and politics of the hijab, strategies to overcome obstacles on campus, issues of anti-Muslim sentiments, implications of gendered Islamophobia, and recommendations to change their learning experiences.

The inductive analysis has adequately captured the complexity of how those veiled women perceived their identity with the hijab on campus and in public. The participants have revealed that adhering to the veil captures different motivations interpreted by the Quran, Sunnah, and the context in which they live. For one strand, veiling has been genuine to affirm autonomous self-desires and preferences of empowering to accustom religious beliefs, values, and boundaries. The participants have attached wearing the hijab to an attempt to maintain modesty, chastity, and morality. These points find parallels in revelations reported by Williams and Vashi (2007). They painted an intuitive picture of the meanings attached to the hijab and its implications on the identity formation of the college-age young women. Williams and Vashi argued that wearing the hijab is mainly to lower the gaze, embrace modesty, deflect unwanted sexual attention.

The second revealed dimension of the hijab is to resist dominant stereotypes and misconceptions historically rooted in Orientalists that explicitly perpetuate the hijab as a symbol of religious oppression and gender inequality. In this sense, the veil for women in the study functions as a salient norm of political mooring and group solidarity with other *hijabis* that resist



prevailing stigma and break discursive stereotypes. This revelation has particularly been identified by many Canadian scholars (Jiwani, 2011; Rahmath, Chambers, & Wakewich, 2016; Zine, 2006). Their argument has deliberately described how Muslim women have been disproportionately portrayed as backward, subjugated, coerced, secluded, and devoid agency. And fueled by the War on Terror rhetoric, the media coverage has rationalized wearing the veil to oppression, gender inequality, terrorism, and the perceived other. In such a climate, Muslim women are a vulnerable target to religious-based hatred due to their identification as a Muslim.

Despite the current prevalent discursive views, young women in this study have politically publicized their Canadian identity with the hijab to oppose pervasive misperceptions and stigma in society. They have consciously negotiated their religious identity and carefully monitored their public behavior. For example, the participants have deliberately intended to interact with non-Muslims to break out their social stigma and educate the public about the hijab and the religion. From this pattern, the analysis has identified that those women have undoubtedly placed their religious identity at the foreground stage of the consciousness, trying to define who they are.

According to Stoppa (2017), collegial experiences are the vital juncture of identity formation and has a relation to a multitude of outcomes among emerging adult students. Also, Chickering (1969, as cited in Patton et al., 2016) placed a greater emphasis on the collegial experiences that significantly influence a students' identity and cognitive formation as an emerging adult. Chickering's model explicitly contended that the collegial stage is a critical intellectual transition period during which one can construct an emerging adult identity that makes sense of self and people around him or her. Engaging Chickering model in this conversation, there has been a tendency of the participants in this study to cluster in groups with

students of similar traits based mostly on religion in an attempt to negotiate and assert their religious identity on campus. They have been highly motivated to join the MSA, to the extent, they have invested the MSA as a coping mechanism to maintain perceived religious values and beliefs, ease heightened complexity of being hijab wearer, and maintain perceived religious values and beliefs.

Situating those intersectional findings in conversation with the rich literature on identity construction, particularly Peek's model of Muslim identity (2005). Peek's model enables a richer understanding of how the participants have negotiated their identity and how they have invested the hijab in claiming their collective identity, trying to resolve a compelling inquiry of who they are. Every one of the participants has simultaneously negotiated their emerging identity as a woman, Muslim, and Canadian. Besides, Peek (2005) also argued that second-generation Muslim American students, who experience hostility as a result of media discursive representations and stereotypes, have their religious identity heightened in return. For those young ladies in the study, exposure to unprovoked Islamophobic sentiments has prompted their spiritual negotiation by frequently attending Friday prayers, organizing events with the MSA, and engaging in the annual religious booth on campus to raise awareness on Islam and Muslim women. Ultimately, those women have claimed assertive identities as a layered base of self-identification as a Muslim woman. Their religious identity has infused resistance and commitment to resist social stigma. Wearing the hijab for those women has been consciously to reject stigma and fulfill a spiritual perspective.

This study has also examined the extent of the stereotypes toward veiled Muslims and assessed the notions of gender, ethnicity, race, and religion. The analysis has shown that the participants have experienced more occurrences of covert and overt social exclusion, prejudice,

discrimination, and violence. Seen in this context, women in the study have opened their eyes to realize that their subjectivity has directly influenced by their identity notions of gender, race, and ethnicity. Drawing on intersectionality, the findings of this study have shown alignments of the social inequality against Muslim women based on interwoven notions of gender, race, ethnicity, and other identifications. Relatedly, Bilge (2010) presented an intersectional model that relatively added religious markers to intersectionality. Bilge's model offers a fuller portrait of the marginalized position lived by Muslim women in Canada. The women who took part in this study have explicitly expressed how their marginal and stigmatized position intersected with who they are as a hijab wearer. The layers of their identity have created complex patterns of recurrent hostility. The hijab has intensely rendered their presence, heightened their religion, and made them an easy target to bigotry.

In the matrix of intersectionality, the notions of religion and racism have interplayed in the participants' lives. For example, after adopting the hijab, Martina has realized that her White status has unexpectedly diminished and shifted to racialized Muslims targeted with bigotry by her own family and friends that have, to a great extent, influenced her social connection and engagement. Unexpectedly, she has lost ties with her mother, father, friends, and most of the classmates and has been traumatized by the bigotry of her father every time they met. Bias and violence have led Martina to rely on her male friends to walk her home and through the campus to avoid unprovoked verbal and physical attacks. This convert has rationalized the extreme attacks to her identifications as a White and hijab-wearer.

Similarly, ethnicity and Islamophobia are interconnected, yet unpredictable, and both, nevertheless, tend to recast based on the context. For example, Iliana, an Assyrian convert, has found it hard to go shopping after adopting the hijab. She has experienced fear in public and

experienced frequent feelings to run away, dig a hole, and sit inside. Sadly, she has endured damaging treatments and perceived as the conspicuous Other by her own family and the Assyrian community. This pattern exemplifies how her social status has been shifted from normative Assyrian to non-normative Muslim within the familial and community context. Based on this pattern, the analysis has pointed out to intersectionality of race, ethnicity, religion, hijab, and Islamophobia.

In this frame, Perry (2014) and Zine (2006) both presented with evidence that Canadian veiled Muslim women were particularly susceptible to gendered Islamophobic attacks. Both scholars have justified the reason for the intolerance of the visible hijab casting Muslim women as an over-determined symbolic of 'otherness.' This pattern has also shown a consistent trend with the alarming data of Canada Statistics. Two recent reports of Canada Statistics (2017, 2018) have suggested a rise in Islamophobic sentiments targeting Muslims, particularly veiled women in public spaces due to the visibility of the hijab. This pattern seems to be also in line with a recent study by Nagra (2018), who conducted 56 in-depth interviews with Canadian Muslim women. Nagra (2018) argued that Canadian Muslim women continue to face challenges in education, employment, income, and housing. And anti-Muslim sentiments were widely spread within the Canadian mainstream society.

The women studied have expressed their concerns over the pervasive stigma and stereotypes attached to Muslim women. The problematic stereotypes have contributed negatively to their lives, forming distinctively compounded layers of disadvantages that were prevalent both inside and outside the classroom in southwestern Ontario. From the participants' accounts, social exclusion and alienation have significantly damaging implications inside and outside their classrooms. For example, the participants have experienced a toxic environment in the classroom

exemplified in ongoing jokes and comments on their hijab, loss of peer connection after adopting the hijab, lack of finding teamwork, ignorance in group discussion, and exclusion of social engagement. For example, Hoodfar (1992) conducted a study on the integration of the Canadian Muslim women in education and labor market and argued that the prevalent misconceptions and misrepresentations of the veiled women have substantial consequences on their psychological and socio-economic situation.

The study has examined the extent to which the intersectionality has permeating influenced their collegial experience. The respondents have claimed that, to a great extent, the college experiences have promoted the negotiation of their religious identity. According to the participants, the campus has relatively promoted positive space to practice one's faith. They have expressed gratitude for their professors for understanding religious needs and offering accommodation. According to the participants' narratives, their institution has a majority of Caucasians in professors, staff and social campus activities that shows a lack of diversity on campus, despite the growing diversity of student population.

On the contrary, the collegial experience is not entirely attractive for Muslim students, and gender and religion are interconnected concepts in the life of hijab-wearing Muslim women at the intersecting position of hostility. The thematic analysis has revealed that the hijab and Islamophobia are closely interconnected. In a sense, that Muslim women are vulnerable to exclusion, otherness, bigotry, and distancing from social activities based on their appearance with the hijab. In general, the intersectional themes of this study are interconnected and overlapping, to the point that hijab-wearing women are most likely to experience different forms of Islamophobia based on notions of gender, race, ethnicity, and gender.

Veiling has detrimental implications on their lives within their classrooms. For example, Martina's peer relation has unexpectedly transformed from strong friendships to toxic ties that created a hostile and stressful classroom. The participants have simultaneously experienced social estrangement, rejection, exclusion, and avoidance by their friends and classmates, and they have attributed their struggle to the widespread stereotypes against Muslim women and the hijab.

Nonetheless, the participants have felt coerced by an alienating campus environment based on an external outfit with the hijab and negative perceptions related to their religion and reported covert otherness. Correspondingly, loss of motivation to attend classes avoiding social exclusion and bigotry are some of the consequences. Also, the participants have altered some of their daily behaviors to avoid bigotry. They have avoided walking alone through the campus and streets and attending public transportation to reduce the risk of being attacked. In such a hostile environment, the participants have voiced their deep concerns on the less equitable and inclusive climate and described a need to adopt contemporary laws and policies to eliminate the religious biases and barriers based on stigma. Despite adopting the doctrine of racial equality on Ontario campuses, the participants, identified as underrepresented Muslim students, continue to endure complex challenges. And that, despite the significance of the race, ethnicity, and religion in the collegial experiences and formation of identity, the participants seem to be less satisfied with the institution practices to address overt and covert prejudice against Islam and Muslim women. The Muslim women are simultaneously vulnerable to social exclusion, disrespect, and anti-Muslim bigotry with peers inside and outside the classroom due to adopting the veil.

Given the diverse student body in Ontario, issues of diversity and inclusion have been longstanding concerns facing institutions of post-secondary education. Thereby, learning institutions are required to develop comprehensive documentation with sensitive measures to

combat religious and racial prejudice that promote an inclusive and respectful environment on campus.

**The second research question.** The second research question examined Islamophobic sentiment that has an unduly burdensome effect on the lives of veiled Muslim women and, to a great extent, their public safety in jeopardy. The hijab signifies their presence and makes them susceptible to patterns of complex constrain that is utterly different and more pronounced from that experienced by other racialized women. In the current rising climate of Islamophobia, the participants have pointed out vividly how they are increasingly stigmatized, racialized, and confronted with a routine of concealed, but harmful bigotry, and violence inside the classroom and in public. Religious stigma, as a form of inequality, has significantly impacted equally the realities of Muslim-born women and new converts in this study who have unexpectedly lost their White privileges and been racialized as outsiders. For example, Iliana, a White convert, has experienced public staring, verbal harassment, and bias based on the long outfit, and the hijab caused anxious and self-judge feelings every time she is at the mall.

The hostile treatment is tolerated with regard to women who wear the hijab. A report was published by the National Council of Canadian Muslims, NCCM (2018), that Canadian Muslim women have been vulnerable to verbal attacks daily, but fewer incidents of physical assaults on the streets. Also, a growing number of Canadian scholars, policymakers, human rights advocates, and decision-makers have indicated that Canadian Muslim women have simultaneously endured gender, race, class, and religious disadvantages.

In that respect, religiously motivated verbal and physical attacks have not certainly been the only form of discrimination reported by the women who participated in this study. The participants have reported forms of religious cyber-harassment and threats stuffed with

derogatory comments on Instagram and Facebook. Martina, for example, reported being attacked by derogatory comments from random people on Instagram and Facebook after posting a profile picture with the hijab. This pattern of hostility has been common in their lives, which has led them to alter their daily activities and lifestyle to minimize the risks of experiencing bigotry and violence. Sadly, this phenomenon is not novel, and it has been traced long ago in Canada (Bahdi & Kanji, 2018; Gravelle, 2018).

Replicated in literature, Islamophobia has been associated with several damaging implications. Islamophobic bigotry can have adverse outcomes on mental health and well-being adults (Samari et al., 2018; Nadal et al., 2012), negotiation of identity (Peek, 2005), feelings of vulnerability, safety, and security, (Bahdi & Kanji, 2018; Nagra, 2018; Perry, 2014), low socio-economic and employment and leadership (Hamdani, 2014; Tariq & Syed, 2017). The participants have voiced their concerns over the lack of employment opportunities and racism in the workplace. Only one of the four women in this study is active after many attempts to get a job. Consequently, this hostile situation has made them economically dependent on their families. For example, due to lack of employment and low socio-economic situation, two married participants live with their in-laws and one in subsidized housing with her parents. Tariq and Syed (2017) contended that although gender discrimination and family commitment are not unique obstacles facing Muslim women to obtain employment and career advancement. Tariq and Syed have called for a holistic approach to capture the social inequality in getting career and leadership influencing the heterogenous experiences of Muslim women based on notions, gender, race, ethnicity, and religion.

Sadly, this routine is not coincident in Canada. Linking between unemployment, religion, and gender, Canadian Muslim women face barriers to getting employment. Muslim women's



identification as Muslims and as women of a visible minority group have inextricably bound up in complex social inequality. The hijab adds a layer of discrimination to the complex subjectivity of Muslim women, limiting their opportunities to access employment, leadership and socio-economic disparity (Malik, 2008). Despite their credentials, the participants have struggled to obtain a job, gain required workplace skills, be economically independent. This finding seems to be in parallel with the results of a study conducted by Hamdani (2014). According to Hamdani (2014), Canadian Muslim females constituted 3.1 percent of the Canadian female population that had a young age structure and relatively high educational credentials in Canada. Yet the Muslim females were among the most disadvantaged groups in Canada compared with other religious groups. The rate of unemployment among Muslim women was persistently high, with only 16.7 percent in employment compared to the average of 7.4 percent for all unemployed women in 2011. Ghumman and Ryan (2013) have also reported a similar trend. They interviewed 219 American Muslim females in their empirical study in their work context, and they found that hijab-wearing women were less significantly likely to receive a call back when applying to a job than non-*hijabis*. Ghumman and Jackson (2010) also reported that hijab-wearing Muslim women have lower expectations of getting a job offer than non-hijab-wearing Muslim women, which lower the expectation of hijab-wearing women to receiving job offers in various fields. The reason as the study justified is the stigmatized hijab as a physical display of their beliefs and its associated negative stereotypes.

Moreover, all Canadian citizens have the right to freedom of religion under the first amendment. On the contrary, Muslim Quebecers have a narrow margin of manifestation to that right. Quebec's recent bill to ban religious garments for civil servants has been unequivocally interpreted to affect Muslim women. Bill 21, for thousands of Muslim women in Quebec and

across Canada, is an infringement upon their fundamental rights and simple reflective of systematic racism by the state. The implemented bill has derailed Muslim women's lives, careers, and safety has forced many Muslim women to quit their occupations and education path and be financially dependent and inactive in the labor market and politics. The secular bill has potentially segregated Muslim women from others and imposed harsh consequences on their religious exertions and financial prosperity. It, indeed, has pushed many active women to lose their independence and stay home begging their spouses and male relatives for financial support, which grants those males a degree of control over their lives. The compulsorily Quebec law has systematically caused many women to unveil and ultimately restricted their rights to religious freedom. Women who continued to practice the veil have forced to be inactive, financially dependent, and confused about their future. Most importantly, A 2019 article of Globe and Mail revealed that Islamophobic encounters have arisen since the introduction of the secular bill in Quebec.

Bill 21 and the recurrent anti-Muslim sentiments have nonetheless imposed negative compounding implications on the life of many Muslim women. Last but not least, bill 21 has exacerbated gender inequality and disempowerment of Canadian Muslim women. Medial rhetoric that depicts Islam as a political ideology threatening Canadian values. The recurrent hostility of Muslim women inextricably shows insufficient commitment to comprehend and combat Islamophobia and its gendered forms (Wing & Smith, 2006). There remains a need to inform intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and religion to understand the subjectivity of the Muslim woman, as a woman of a visible ethnic and religious group.

Linking Islamophobia to its implication, the participants are increasingly feeling vulnerable, socially anxious, and unsafe in public. Literature related to Islamophobia and poor

mental health outcomes has reported similar findings. According to Nadal et al. (2012), overt and covert Islamophobia against Muslim Americans can cause poor psychological and behavioral outcomes. In this study, the respondents have disclosed some tearful memories, that increased their fear, confusion and worries about unexpected, yet unprovoked victimization. They also revealed having intense feelings of loneliness, stress, anxiety, fear, guilt, anger, and low self-esteem. Thereby, sizable research from Canadian, U.S., UK, and France have called for immediate attention to this issue that is distinctively different in "its dynamic and impact" from that experienced by other women of minority groups in the West.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

**Policy practices in Ontario.** Despite the federal liberal government's effort to acknowledge racism against minority religious groups, Ontario and other provincial governments across Canada have been trying to implement effective policies targeting Multiculturalism and religious and racial bigotry. Various initiatives have been developed to combating anti-Black racism, antisemitism, and Islamophobia against visible minorities. As concluded from the literature review, some Canadian scholars have acknowledged and argued that the routine has not been replicated precisely in the Canadian legal system. And there has been, nevertheless, a trend to define Islamophobia as an irrational fear and an isolated form of anti-Muslim crime, while simultaneously diminishing the role of the state in systematic religious hostility on its citizens (Gravelle, 2018). For example, Bahdi and Kanji (2018) have documented a structural analysis of the recurrent religious-based prejudice and Islamophobic discrimination, and the role of the state power in perpetuating systematic discriminatory practices to vilify Muslim minorities at institutional levels. Bahdi and Kanji (2018) have aptly asserted that to date, the Canadian legal system hasn't devoted precise attention to the systematic conceptualization of the term

Islamophobia or conducted cross-national studies to understand public opinions towards Muslims in Canada. Bahdi and Kanji (2018) have emphasized that the value of defining Islamophobia in the Canadian context, which can clarify and educate academics, advocates, policymakers, educators, and the public. And that further studies should explore and investigate the term to develop far-reaching actions that precisely address issues of differences, combat Islamophobia, and integrate inclusive policies.

These findings are not generalizable; however, its recommendations are directly aligned to address widespread issues in the society facing Canadian Muslim women. A holistic approach immensely required to understand in a nuanced way the stigma, stereotype, discrimination, and unemployment against Muslim women and admit the lack of addressing their hostile situation. Thereby, the researcher recommends that the Canadian legal systems and immigration laws are to pay immediate attention to explore, understand, and define the term to combat Islamophobia in Canadian society effectively.

This hostile situation has, to a great extent, affected hijab-wearing women and limited their chances and opportunities in employment and leadership. Bilge (2010) has elaborated on informing intersectionality to address challenges and obstacles facing Muslim women. Therefore, the researcher recommends employing the intersectional approach to investigate the hostile treatment of Muslim women in Canada.

**Policy practices for post-secondary institutions.** Given the diverse student body in Ontario, issues of diversity and inclusion have been longstanding concerns facing institutions of post-secondary education (Brown, 2004). Despite the attention given to diversity and multicultural issues in higher education, current policies and measures have not effectively eliminated the barriers and challenges facing underrepresented students in higher education, who

struggle to reconcile post-secondary experiences with their religious needs (Cole & Ahmadi, 2010). Replicating previous findings, Islamophobia is evident in the shared lived experiences of Muslim students in Canada (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Litchmore & Sadfar, 2015). The pattern has varied from subtle forms of anti-Muslim sentiments to its most extreme that adversely have limited their opportunities of social engagement and employment, and significantly increased fear of their physical safety and expressive rights. In the Canadian post-secondary education context, Cole and Ahmadi (2003) claimed that the hijab-wearing Muslim students endured the bigoted college experiences, which detrimentally impact their educational and social integration by their peers and professors. The visibility of the hijab has negatively heightened their presence and triggered prominent social bias, harassment, and sometimes violence in public space. The literature has revealed that Muslim women are also discriminated against in the workplace settings, treated differently during recruitment, and lost jobs after adopting the hijab.

Also, the analysis of this study has identified misconceptions and stigma amongst students, public, and employers constitute major obstacles facing Muslim women, regarding their educational and social engagement and career aspirations. Student affairs professionals can capitalize on findings to incorporate effective practices and promote the development of social identity and well-being of its students (Hopkins, 2011). Therefore, the researcher recommends that learning institutions are committed to incorporate more constructive measures aimed at contributing inclusive equity, diversity and inclusion. Institutions' laws, policies, and strategic plans need to be more equitable and inclusive to empower, celebrate, and accommodate, the diverse population of students. According to Park and Bowman (2015), institutions are to set the stage to promote harmonious bonding social capital and bridging social capital, particularly for underrepresented students. This fact has been evident in this capstone, and the respondents have

been keen to participate to some extent in the activities run by social groups and clubs that initiate interfaith dialogue and cross-racial interaction using the MSA platform.

However, the major challenge is developing a broad method of engaging people in meaningful conversations about religious and cultural differences, while simultaneously infusing religious and cultural tolerance. Focusing on gendered bigotry against Muslim women on campus, institutions need to openly distinguish Islamophobia and its multiple forms, its implications, and ways of elimination and rejections. Literature has recommended that educational institutions should value incorporating targeted measures and procedures to raise awareness on the subjectivity of the Muslim women, and the implications of Islamophobia that target students, teachers, and employers, and employment agencies. Thereby, the researcher recommends that it's valuable for institutions to advance their approach to defining, understand, and document incidents of Islamophobia and its subtle forms and contribute a positive and welcoming campus. Accordingly, an advocacy organization on campus should work to educate visible students of their rights, provide religious and racial accommodation requests, direct students for mental health services, records behavioural complaints, and investigates incidents of racial and religious hatred incidents.

The researcher recommends that post-secondary institutions broaden their social activities aiming to destabilize the impact of stigmatization of hijab-wearing Muslim students. These activities are to incrementally challenge stereotypes and recognize the legitimacy of other cultures, values, and religions. The researcher recommends that the targeted campaign should promote interfaith dialogue and cross-racial interaction to encourage positive perceptions about Islam and Muslims. The researcher also recommends that learning institutions deliver contemporary Multicultural and multireligious sources of information that aim to expose and

challenge self-stereotypes and perceptions against students of minority groups. Also, based on findings and participants' recommendations, institutions should hire professors and staff of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Additionally, institutions may work to advance their approach to defining, understanding, and documenting Islamophobia and its subtle forms on campus.

Last but not least, literature has shown that a responsive and inclusive learning environment can undoubtedly lead to optimistic social and academic outcomes. According to Park and Bowman (2015), a positive campus climate was linked to prejudice reduction, overall college satisfaction, working across differences, and civic engagement (Park & Bowman, 2015). Thereby, there will remain a need to plea students of various ethnic and religious backgrounds for more social and educational engagement.

## **Conclusion**

Muslim women are selectively vulnerable to Islamophobic sentiments anytime and anywhere. This study engages a growing body of literature on gendered Islamophobia, raw data from Statistics Canada, and secondary data available from many reports done by different institutions in Ontario. The analysis has shown that hijab-wearing women endure different forms of entrenched stigmatization and victimization. The findings of this capstone are congruent with different literature, EKOS (2018), NCCM report (2016), and data of Statics Canada (2015, 2017, 2018). Statistics Canada (2018) has reported a startling staggering rise in gendered Islamophobia targeting Muslim women in Canada for the last consecutive five years. According to a 2018 report by EKCOs, this pattern of Islamophobic sentiments is not constituted a new phenomenon. Besides, the recent Quebec' s bill 21 blocks thousands of hijab-wearing women from

employment, social and economic disparity, and heighten gendered Islamophobia anywhere in Canada.

Thousands of Canadian Muslim women, who are on the margins of power in the Canadian society, have endured a recurring array of social issues intersect with gender, class, race, and religion (Bilge, 2010). Canadian Muslim women have been stigmatized, alienated, scrutinized, threatened, punitive, (Jiwani, 2009, 2011; Marcotte, 2010; McDonough, 2003; Nagra, 2018; Rahmath et al., 2016; Winter & Previsic, 2017). Nonetheless, this situation has considerably negative implications on identity formation (Peek, 2005), feelings of vulnerability, fear, and security (Bahdi & Kanji, 2018; Gravelle, 2018; Nagra, 2018), obtaining employment, and climbing up the ladder for leadership opportunities (Hamdani, 2015,), health and well-being (Nada et al., 2012; Samari et al., 2018). Given the current situation with rising Islamophobia, the Muslim women in this study have simultaneously gendered, raced, and classed, forming multiple disadvantages of insecurity, physical safety, psychological well-being, unemployment. Therefore, the lived experiences of the Canadian Muslim women have required relatively urgent attention in research and publications to shed light on their marginal position.



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**Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Interview Questions**

The researcher will ask the following questions to the research participants in face-to-face interviews.

- (1) What is your age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic situation, and program of study?
- (2) How do Muslim women perceive your identity with the hijab?
- (3) To what extent, do the hijab impact social life on campus?
- (4) How concerned are you about anti-Muslim sentiments (e. g., alienation, marginalization, or victimization)?
- (5) Have you experienced any form of Islamophobia?
- (6) To what extent, do the hijab-wearing student feel accommodated on campus?
- (7) What can be changed to make your learning and social experiences better on campus?

### Appendix B: The Participant Consent Form

April 21, 2019

Dear the Participant:

My name is Hanan Emhammed and I am a graduate student at Central Michigan University. I am conducting research on the lived experiences of the hijab-wearing students on campus. This research will fulfill my master's degree requirements. You were selected to participate in this study because you are wearing the hijab (headcover). Participants must be between an age range between 18 to 30 years old and was born or raised in Canada. Please confirm that you meet these criteria.

I anticipate that this face-to-face interview will take less than 30 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. In order to ensure that all information will remain confidential, I will not record your name. I will only record you as a participant A. Copies of the project will be provided to my Central Michigan University faculty monitor. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you may refuse to participate at any time.

I appreciate your willingness to help with my project. The data collected will provide useful information regarding the challenges facing post-secondary hijab-wearing students. If you would like a summary copy of this study, please let me know at the end of the interview and I will add your name to a list that I will maintain separately from my interview notes. If you have questions later, please contact me at (289) 527-3123. My faculty monitor is Scotty Lamar Roberts and he can be reached at (404) 925-0091.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to

The MA in Education: Community College

Central Michigan University

330 Ronan Hall

Mount Pleasant, MI 48859

U.S.A.

+1.989.774.3784

Let's begin with the first question.

Kindly sign below and return the form and that your signature indicates your understanding the above conditions of the participation in the current study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



### Appendix C: The Permission Letter of the Local Mosque

April 21, 2019

Dear the Board of the Local Mosque,

My name is Hanan Emhammed and I am a graduate student at Central Michigan University. I am conducting a research on the lived experiences of the post-secondary hijab-wearing students.

This research will fulfill my master's degree requirements.

I am writing you to request help finding voluntary participants during Friday Prayers to conduct face-to-face interviews. The interviews will be booked after getting the written consent of the research participants and after giving a brief description about the research. Participants must be between post-secondary hijab-wearing students with an age range between 18 to 30 years old and was born or raised in Canada. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you may refuse to participate at any time. The data collected will provide useful information regarding the challenges facing post-secondary hijab-wearing students. All collected data will be kept strictly private and confidential and only my capstone monitor will have access to it per CMU Code of ethics. All research participants' names will be replaced with pseudonyms to maximize their confidentiality and privacy.

If you have questions later, please contact me at (289) 527-3123. My faculty monitor is Scotty Lamar Roberts and he can be reached at (404) 925-0091.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to

The MA in Education: Community College  
Central Michigan University  
330 Ronan Hall

Mount Pleasant, MI 48859

U.S.A.

+1.989.774.3784

Kindly sign below and return the form and that your signature indicates your understanding the above conditions of the participation in the current study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix D: The Tri-Council Policy Certification**

