
Opinion Paper

An Islamic X-Ray on the Attitudes of Muslim Ladies Toward the Islamic Dress Code in Campuses

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Abstract: This article examines the attitudes of Muslim ladies toward Islamic dress code on university campuses, with particular attention to the moral, religious, and social implications of dressing among female Muslim students. The study adopts an opinion paper qualitative research approach, relying on reflective analysis, Islamic teachings, and observable campus realities to discuss the extent to which Muslim ladies understand, accept, reject, or modify the Islamic dress code. The article argues that although Islam prescribes modest dressing as a means of obedience to Allah, protection of chastity, and preservation of female dignity, many Muslim ladies on campuses display varying attitudes toward it. The study reveals that peer influence, fashion trends, weak parental guidance, inadequate religious orientation, and the desire for social acceptance contribute to non-compliance with proper Islamic dressing. The study concludes that Islamic dress code should not be viewed as mere cultural identity but as a spiritual obligation rooted in modesty, discipline, and morality. It recommends sustained parental responsibility and institutional enforcement of decent dressing on campuses.

Keywords: Islamic Dress Code, Muslim Ladies, Hijab, Campus Morality, Modesty.

Introduction

Islam is a complete way of life; every aspect is designed by our Creator to foster happy, healthy communities and ease the path to eternal bliss in Paradise. In today's society, modesty is seen as a sign of weakness or insecurity. This is not the case in Islam, where modesty is seen as a sign of respect for oneself and others.

The *Haya* (Shyness) that every human being is born with is seen as something to be treasured. To this end, Islam has a dress code for both women and men. Its purpose is to

protect society as a whole and promote modest dressing and behaviour. It creates a barrier between the sexes and allows us to conduct our lives with modesty, dignity and respect.

Islam holds women in very high esteem, and the Islamic rules of covering are intended to protect and guard their dignity and honour. The word used most often in regard to covering is hijab. All qualified Muslim scholars throughout the history of Islam agree that fulfilling the conditions of the dress code is an obligation on all Muslim men and women. They have based these conditions on evidence found in the Quran and the Sunnah. Below are the most well-known verses of the Quran and the most well-known sayings from the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) concerning the subject of *hijab*.

"يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا"

“O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies. That will be better, that they should be known (as free respectable women) so as not to be annoyed.”(Quran 33:59)

"وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا... "

“Say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and protect their private parts (from sins); and they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what appear thereof...”Q24:31.

Also Prophet (S.A.W) Says: *“When a girl reaches the menstrual age, it is not proper that anything should remain exposed except this and this. He pointed to the face and hands”*. [Abu Dawud]

Women’s Hijab

The purpose of hijab is to cover the *awrah*, although *awrah* varies in different situations and amongst different groups of people.

We begin with the conditions for a woman's hijab in public and amongst non-*mahram* men. As long as these conditions are fulfilled, a woman may wear whatever she pleases.

- The hijab (covering) must conceal the entire body except the face and the hands.

- It should not be translucent or tight. Tight clothes, even if they conceal the color of the skin, still describe the size and shape of the body or part of it, and create vivid images.
- It should not attract the attention of the opposite gender; thus, it should not be extravagant or excessively opulent. Nor should jewellery and makeup be on display.
- It should not be a garment worn because of vanity or to gain popularity or fame. The female companions were known to wear black and other dark colours, but other colours are permissible; a woman must not, however, wear colourful clothes because of vanity.
- It should not be perfumed. This prohibition applies to both the body and the clothes.
- It should not resemble men's clothing.
- It should not resemble clothing specific to the religion of non-Muslims.

Men's Dress Code

Allah the exalted says:

"قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ"

"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and protect their private parts (from sins). That is purer for them. And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do..." Q

24:30

Although they are sometimes overlooked or not well understood, there are dress codes for men as well. Some of the conditions are the same as the conditions for women, but others relate particularly to men.

- The part of the body from the naval to the knees should be covered.
- It should not resemble the clothing that is specific to non-Muslims. Western clothing that does not represent any particular group or sect is generally permitted.
- It should not resemble the clothing worn by women.
- It should not be tight or see-through.
- A man is not permitted to wear garments made of silk or jewellery made of gold.
- Two types of adornment are forbidden to men but permitted for women. These are gold and pure silk clothing.

The scholars of Islam overwhelmingly agree that for men, everything between the navel and the knees (including the knees) must be covered in the presence of anybody. The only exception to this is a man in the presence of his wife.

Finally, it is recommended for men not to wear garments that fall below the ankles.

Awrah

The definition of *awrah* is the parts of the body that should be covered, and this varies across situations and groups of people. However, to fully implement the Islamic dress code, it is important to understand several other situations in which the *awrah* becomes relevant.

The *awrah* of a woman in front of her husband:

There is no *awrah* between a husband and wife. When a woman is alone with her husband, she is permitted to wear any clothing that pleases them both.

"وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ"

“And among His Signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your hearts”. Q30:21

The *awrah* of a woman in front of her *mahrams*

A *mahram* is a person one is never permitted to marry, because of a close blood relationship, breastfeeding or marriage. One’s spouse is also one’s *mahram*. A *mahram* is a person with whom one is allowed to be alone. This can be categorised into the following:

A close blood relationship: For a female, her father, grandfather, son, grandson, brother, both paternal and maternal uncles and nephews. Likewise, for a male, his mother, daughter, granddaughter, sister, both paternal and maternal aunts and nieces.¹

Breastfeeding: This includes anyone, male or female, breastfed by the same mother or wet nurse. (And includes the brother or husband of the one who breastfed the person in question).²

Marriage: People who become your relations by marriage, for example, father-in-law, mother-in-law, stepfather, step-grandfather, stepson.

¹ - This ruling is found in Q 24v31.

² - this because prophet (saw) says: breastfeeding prohibit what blood relation Prohibit.”

When a woman is amongst her *mahrams*, the scholars of Islam agree that she does not have to observe strict rules of covering, but rather may uncover her hair, face, arms, hands, legs from below the knees, and feet. However, a Muslim woman must always remember that she is known for her modesty and *haya*; she must never make a wanton display of herself. Thus, Allah says:

"وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلَا يَبْضُرْنَ بِخُمْرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ ... "

“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent and to draw their veils and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband’s fathers, their sons, their husband’s sons, their brothers or their brother’s sons, or their sister’s sons, or their women, or the (female) slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants who lack vigour, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women...” Q 24:31

The *awrah* of a woman in front of other (Muslim) women:

A woman should dress decently in front of other Muslim women; she can uncover what she would usually uncover, her hair, arms and feet. As for other parts of her body, such as her thighs and breast area, they should not be uncovered.

Although she is allowed to wear beautiful and flattering clothes and makeup, she must take great care to behave and dress in a manner befitting her station, so as not to offend the *haya* of other women.

If a Muslim woman finds herself in a situation where there are other women who are known to be morally bad, then she must dress accordingly and must follow the same rules of *awrah* that apply when in public. (The rules we learned as the conditions of *hijab*.)

The *awrah* of a woman in front of non-Muslim women:

This is a matter of some disagreement between scholars. Some say that the same rules apply as for Muslim women, others say that a woman must observe stricter rules for covering amongst non-Muslim women.

When a woman is deciding on what level of covering to observe in front of non-Muslim women, she must remember that non-Muslim women may be unaware that she should not describe a Muslim woman's beauty to any man.

Thus, it is important that she makes her decisions based on each different situation. Muslim women should always dress in clothes that, above all else, express their modesty and dignity. If there are unknown women in a gathering, perhaps it would be better to have a higher degree of covering.

The awrah of a woman in front of her children:

If the child is an infant or unable to understand the meaning of awrah and sexuality, then it is permissible for her to uncover herself to the same degree as with other Muslim women. If, however, the child is a male and comes to an age where he understands the meaning of awrah and the difference between men and women, then the woman's awrah is the same as it is for other male *Mahrams*.

All Muslims, male or female, should maintain a sense of *haya* (shyness/modesty) at all times because *haya* is part of faith. A person's clothing is usually one of the indicators of their modesty.

The Prophet (S.A.W) said, "*Faith consists of more than sixty branches (i.e. parts). And haya is a part of faith.*" [Saheeh Al-Bukhari]

The Awrah While Praying

In the first two lessons, we learned many new terms and tried to assimilate a great deal of new information. We now shift the focus to what to wear when praying.

Praying is something that every Muslim does at least five times per day. It is more than a few moments of quiet contemplation - it is a time when an individual is connected to the Creator of the Universe (Allah). For this pleasure, it makes sense to want to look and feel our best.

When the time comes for a woman to pray, one condition for her prayer to be valid is that she covers her awrah. Allah says:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ
" الْمُسْرِفِينَ "

"O children of Adam, *take your adornment (by wearing your clean clothes) while praying...*" Q7:31 and Prophet (SAW) said in this regard, "*Allah does not accept the prayer of a woman who has reached puberty unless she wears a veil*".

Therefore, the awrah of a woman when she prays is the same as for non-*mahram* men. (Please refer to the above table. However, it is perfectly acceptable for a woman to wear a long, loose-fitting garment over her indoor clothes, presuming she is praying in the privacy of her home. If she is praying in the masjid, of course, she will be wearing clothes that are acceptable in front of strangers.

In order for a man's prayer to be valid, he too must cover his awrah, which is from the navel to the knees.³ However, because Islam is a religion that is very concerned with community cohesion and respect for others, a man must always be aware of where he is. In accordance with the spirit of *haya*, it is always advisable for a Muslim (man or woman) to be cautious about those things that could affect either him or those around him.

It is desirable for a man to wear perfume when he is standing in front of his Lord for prayer. Women must be careful of this point. While it is allowable, even desirable, for her to wear perfume in the home, it is not acceptable for either her skin or her clothing to be perfumed if she wants to pray in the masjid.

"If any one of you (women) attends evening prayer, let her not touch any perfume."
[Saheeh Muslim].

The Wisdom in the Islamic Dress Code

There is great wisdom in the Islamic dress code. In order to see and understand it clearly one must remember a few basic concepts.

First and foremost, Islam was revealed for all people in all places, at all times. Thus, what is in or out of fashion is not relevant.

Secondly, Islam is a holistic religion concerned with humankind's physical, spiritual and emotional health, and not just for each individual but for the community or society as a whole. This involves respect for Allah, for each other and for oneself.

Thirdly, a dress code is required for both men and women. Islam does not put the responsibility entirely on one gender, and in fact, the verses referring to men were revealed first. However, both men and women are commanded to lower their gaze and protect their modesty, and both are expected to foster a healthy social environment grounded in constructive morals, manners and values.

The term hijab is more than a scarf and more than a dress code. It is a term that denotes modest dressing and modest behavior. For instance, if a Muslim woman were correctly covered but at the same time using bad language, she would not be fulfilling the

³ -Al-ahdari. A.

requirements of hijab. If a Muslim man was covered from the navel to the knee but walking around in public, calling attention to himself or behaving rudely, he would also not be behaving in an appropriate manner.

Women who wear the hijab point out many benefits of adhering to the Islamic dress code. Some describe wearing hijab as being “set free” from society’s unrealistic expectations. They are no longer thought of as sexual objects, but are desired for their intellect. They are no longer valued for their looks or body shape but for their personality and character. Women wearing hijab report that it minimizes sexual harassment in the workplace.

Many women report that people (both Muslims and non-Muslims) are more inclined to show good manners towards a woman in a scarf. Men open doors, give up seats on public transport, apologise for bad language, and offer to carry groceries and many other small kindnesses that were once a normal part of life in most western communities.

Attitudes of Muslim Females toward the Islamic dress code on campus

Campus university is a British term for a university situated on a single site, with student accommodation, teaching and research facilities, and leisure activities. It is derived from the Latin term campus, meaning “a flat expanse of land, plain, field”.

A campus is traditionally the land on which a college or university and related institutional buildings are situated. Usually, a college campus includes libraries, lecture halls, residence halls, student centres or dining halls, and park-like settings.

A modern campus is a collection of buildings and grounds that belong to a given institution, either academic or non-academic.

There are several universities throughout the world in different countries. But as regards this discussion, we will talk about the campus of the University of Maiduguri. Tertiary constitutions include rules and regulations, such as dress codes, designed to prevent indecent dress and promote modesty and morality.

However, it is quite disheartening to learn that indecent dressing is rampant among tertiary institutions. Indecent dressing is a social phenomenon among youths. It simply means deliberately exposing one’s body to the public. In fact, the practice does not conform to societal norms and values, particularly in African and other societies. However, many clergymen do their best to ensure that this immorality ends, yet there is still nothing to write home about. Immodesty or indecency is the major cause of various assaults and sexual harassment recorded in society, for instance, the incessant cases of raping in India, not only

on their constitutional campuses but in public places, including places of worship, all caused by indecent dressing by the females since indecency is prohibited totally by the two major religions, that is, Christianity and Islam.

Indecent appearances have come to characterise the dress pattern of many students on the campuses of the University of Maiduguri. There is hardly any higher learning institution in this country that is not faced with this immoral act.

On the university campus, ladies dress in half-naked attire. They derive pleasure in wearing tight dresses, even the Hijab some female Muslim students wear are not the actual or proper type of head cover or body covering. These unfortunate societal ills have now eaten deep into the Muslim female students. It is unfair to blame all parents, but some can be blamed. The reason for saying this is that some who live outside the campus dress decently in front of their parents.

The more they go to school, the more they suddenly change their clothes, particularly female ones. Therefore, such parents are not to blame. On the other hand, some parents themselves dress indecently; how can the children of such parents expect to be modest if not with the guidance of Allah? Such parents cannot stop their children from being indecent. These kinds of parents can even encourage their children to wear these nasty dresses, while some parents buy such clothes for their children, like other Nigerian universities. The University of Maiduguri has been facing this problem for over a decade. Although dress codes were introduced several times, students did not take them seriously.

In addition to the nasty dresses, the Muslim females wear, there are those who use the Hijab, yet it never meets the needs of wearing. Hijab is meant to cover the body to avoid showing body shape or exposing areas prohibited from display. Some students wear the correct Hijab, while others wear different types of Hijab that lack the required qualities of the real Hijab.

Although they cover the body, partly for fashion, they use shaped, designed Hijabs that look the same as those worn by those who never wear the Hijab. It's quite astonishing to note that there are ladies who don't wear the Hijab or even cover their bodies as required, but only use it at the time of prayer. There are those who, during prayers, will borrow the Hijab.

However, the refusal of full-time Hijab wearers to give out the Hijab to those who do not like to wear it annoys them. It should be a challenge for them anyway, yet it does not change the situation.

Moreover, these Muslim women see the Hijab as a source of humiliation. According to their own thinking, the Hijab makes them seem local, and their identity will be further degraded, especially among fashionable women who live luxurious lives. Some regard veiling in general as a product of stigmatisation. Regarding it as a contested and complex issue. However, it is important to understand that “veiling” as a term is of various types; the practice that exists among Muslim women, the Hijab, is a general term for a modest dress code. Also refers specifically to a scarf that covers the hair and the inner decoration of the inner garment, which contains fashionable properties.

Suffice it to mention that the Muslim women on the campus have different ways of dressing, or veiling, depending on their perception of the Hijab. Some consider it as degrading, while some are just not interested in an orientation from home. While other accept fully as an Islamic conjunction for the Muslim women abiding by it is the submission to the commandment of Allah (SWT) which has many advantages among which include coming closer to Allah, a source of chastity protection, service as a security guide against harassment, it raised the status of the women, naturally those who wear the Hijab (veil) are properly respected not only in the campus but also on the whole society.

In this regard, there are various ways to drastically reduce indecent dressing on campus and in society at large, at least to a minimum.

Ways in which indecency can be reduced

It is imperative that parents dress modestly, act as role models for their children, and allow their children to do whatever they like. Parents should remember that it is their duty to provide a proper upbringing for their children, teaching them in all aspects of their lives. The child's entire future depends on the parent's teachings, training and the environment in which the parent raises their child. The home environment and the parents' upbringing of the child either make or mark the child's future. In this regard, if the child receives religious education and positive social training (i.e., inclusive of Islamic dress) from childhood, the child, especially the lady, as she grows up, will definitely understand and consistently dress modestly, to the extent that negative environmental influences will never affect her.

As they got proper orientation from the outset, so also, if the Muslim lady lacks proper Islamic education and training, she will be clueless about her acts, defects in her morality and will not discharge the rightful acts to expectations. Therefore, parents should do their best to save themselves and their family from the punishment of Allah/for on the hereafter. As Allah clearly said in the holy Qur'an (Q66:6).

Secondly, religious scholars keep preaching tirelessly, especially organising Islamic lectures in the campuses of higher institutions from time to time, on the importance of veiling and modesty as incumbent and mandatory for the Muslim lady.

The mass media should fulfil their social responsibility by promoting the importance of decency and the negative effects of indecency both on and off campus, and by forming campus brigades/officials to monitor students' dress codes. Moreover, the university campus management is adamant about enforcing the dress code. A new dress code was introduced in previous sessions and was a continuous process. The dress code, which prohibited female students from wearing trousers and skimpy skirts, with immoral descriptions, was circulated. It was a situation that put many students in a tight corner about obeying the rules, because the dress code was enforced at the start of the university's semester exams, so students in inappropriate attire would not be allowed to attend the examination. In this regard, it is part of progressing on the campus through enforcement.

Thus, the enforcement of such dress code's implementation, maintenance and consistency is required without doubt, this will reduce indecency, immorality not only in our university, polytechnics, and colleges of education, but on the entire country.

CONCLUSION

Muslims should know that the Islamic code of dress is meant to protect their dignity, in which, if applied, they will be safe from abuse, rape and will be respected wherever they find themselves. Therefore, Muslims should try as much as possible to see that their daughters, wives, and all relatives are equally wearing the proper Islamic code of dress, in order to be safe from evil and to be regarded here in Dunya and in the Hereafter in Jannah. Thus, Allah (S.W.T) says: "O you who believe, save yourself and your family from the *fire of jahannam...*". Therefore, parents should also know that it is imperative for them to dress modestly, act as role models for their children, and remember that it is contemptuous of them to give their children a proper upbringing, teaching them in all aspects of their lives. May Allah (S.W.T) protect and guide us to the right path.

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