

TACKLING INDECENT DRESSING IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

By

Aliyu Umar Pariya, PhD

Adamawa State College of Education Hong,
Department of Arabic Language, PMB 2237 Yola, Adamawa State
Email: aliyuumar68.au@gmail.com PH. 08060886830

and

Ahmed Idris Malik, PhD

Islamic Studies Dept.
Adamawa State College of Education, Hong

Abstract

One of the differences between human being and animal, sane and insane person is the mode of dress or dressing. Therefore, this paper discusses the importance of dress and the mode of dressing that was approved by the two predominant religions in Nigeria, the paper also addresses the spiritual and ethical importance of imbibing Islamic mode of dress in particular. It condemns the exposure of private parts of human body or nudity in public as an act of indecency in both Islam and Christianity, the paper argues that the exposure of human nakedness is a crime against humanity in both Islam and Christianity, because they are the tools for improving morality and modesty among humans, some verses from the two religious sources(Qur'an and Bible) are cited in the paper to indicate that Islam and Christianity are against it.. The paper also condemns the mode of dress adopted by our students in almost all tertiary institutions in the country but more emphasis was given to the colleges of education, where attention of stakeholders is drawn particularly parents, schools authority, students, Government both at federal and state level and security agencies to be involved in eradicating such act of indecent mode of dress among our children in schools and community in general. The research work is mainly based on doctrinal methodology where relevant sources both primary and secondary were consulted and analyzed. The research revealed that the exposure of human nakedness is a crime against humanity and the source of all evil in a society. The paper recommends some modalities to be adopted by the parties concerned to minimize the act.

Keywords: *Islam, Indecent Dress, TertiaryInstitution, Nigeria.*

Introduction

The issue of indecency of dress in our tertiary institutions of learning is becoming a worrisome syndrome. It is one of the most difficult problems of our time which is occurring among male and female students with no

regard to the position of any religion on the mode of dressing. This research work is pointing accusing fingers to the pro-globalization campaigners as the body solely responsible for the propagation of exposing nudity in our tertiary institutions.

Females are seen wearing provocative dresses like mini-skirts and the maxi gown in order to attract the opposite sex. In fact, globalization and westernization encourage nudity and discourage Islamic modest dress. This explains why in the 1990s, French authorities disallowed three Muslim female students from entering an examination hall because of wearing the Islamic modest dress, it was a deliberate policy designed to halt Islam on the one hand, and on the other accelerate the speed process of globalizations. (Mohammad, 198). This indicates that if the female students are free to wear provocative dress on campus in the tertiary institutions; immorality may be generated in our tertiary institutions of learning because the male counter parts will respond to their acts and vice-versa.

The Males on their part, roam with untidy tattered pairs of jeans trousers, short knickers necklaces and bracelets in order to attract the attention of their female counter parts. (Mohammad, 199).

In view of the above reasons, Islam needs to educate its adherents and other people of interest; the position of Islam on dress code. Islam is not only a religion per say; rather it is a complete code of life. The mundane affairs of every Muslim are recorded and he must account for it on the Day of Judgment; where ignorance will never be an excuse!

It may be argued that Nigeria is not an Islamic state and the tertiary institutions were not established on Islamic principles, therefore,

academic freedom granted to students in the tertiary institutions cannot be tempered with. Also the 1999, constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gave provision for religious freedom as contained in chapter IV fundamental rights articles under article 38. (i) When it says:

Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion, or belief and freedom (either alone or community with others, and propagate his religion in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching and practice (1999 Constitution) 1139.

The Concept of Dressing

Islam is the chosen religion of Allah. It is a complete code of life for all times. Its distinguishing feature is that it combines the requisite of the world and the Hereafter. It has abrogated all other religions, systems and ideologies. Now Islam stands out as a true religion leading mankind to salvation. (Abdullah 21). It is worthy to note that even the western world do not accept nudity as being practiced today. The exposure of nudity breeds nothing but moral decadence in the society. Thus the issue of introducing dress code by the tertiary institutions in Nigeria is a welcome development, However the problem is that the university authorities demonstrate double standards in the implementation of the dress code (Nastirde 44). The University authorities for example condone or find it difficult to correct erring female staff members or female

students with powerful connections. Thus it is appropriate to use religious teachings and values on the issue of dress code in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The tertiary institutions should solicit the support of these two major religions that is Christianity and Islam to embark on preaching campaigns on the issue of dress code in the tertiary institutions of learning. The teachings of the two major religions are not in support of exposing nudity and all kinds of moral indecencies. For instance, in Christianity there are many citations that advocated decency in dressing and adornment. However, only two have been cited here to as substantiation to buttress our argument. These are (Timothy 2:9- 10 and Deuteronomy 22:5). The Christians hold the belief that the Bible made emphasis on decency in dress making;

I also want women to dress modesty, with decency and prosperity, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who press to worship God. (Timothy 2:9-10)

This is the position of the Bible to the Christians. The university authority could use this Biblical injunction to improve modesty on the campus. In the citation, the Bible explains that good deed is more appreciated by God than adornment with expensive clothes while in Deuteronomy 22:5.

The Bible says:

Women should not wear that which pertained to a man, neither should a man put on a

woman's garment for all that do an abomination unto the lord thy God your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as obtained" such as braided hair and wearing of gold, jewelry, and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quite spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. (Deuteronomy22:5)

Analysis of the second citation: the bible has vividly explained that male should avoid the female's dresses and vice versa. The physical adornment is not encouraged by the teachings of Christianity. So the authorities in the tertiary institutions may use these two citations to demand for the government to legislate on the issue of dress code in the whole tertiary institutions in the country.

In our World of chaos and confusion concerning the unending problems of sexual abuses and perversion, most of mankind have given up hope on how to come to terms with this problem. If we don't come up with a solution to face this dilemma, the disaster that accompanies these crimes will be upon us as a whole. We will pay the price, our children will pay, and our children's children will pay. This is certain. Thankfully, we have the Divine guidance on how to curtail these problems by following the laws set for us by the One Who knows His creation. (Abdullah 7)

Islamic Perspectives

Islam does not seek the impossible; rather it seeks only to bring a constant improvement of human morals in all

walks of life by the means available to individual and collective responsibility will always remain personal in order to ameliorate public morality. The Muslim Ummah, particularly the youths should study well and understand the strategies adopted by Zionist and neo-imperialism to de-Islamize the Muslims by neutralizing them through various propaganda, Campaigns. Dauda argues that the Islamic identity should therefore be guarded against any form of corruption. (182).

The prophet (SAW) is reported to have said:

Simplicity of dress is one of the signs of faith. He also observed that there are many servants of Allah in the world, whose outward appearance is humble, their dress is ordinary and yet in the sight of Allah their stature is very high. Should they take a vow to do something, Allah fulfils their vow. (Nastirde 50).

In the case of Islam there are many citations, which condemned indecencies in dressing or even in talking. Islam as a complete way of life calls upon Muslims to wear a dress, which covers and protects the body and meets the requirements of modesty, honor and virtue. Muslim's dress should always be descent. Allah (SWT) says in the glorious Qur'an:

﴿ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي
سَوْآتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ
ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴾

O ye children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as

well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness, that is the best such are among the sign of God, that they may receive admonition! (Qur'an 7:26).

Islam requires that a Muslim should be careful about his appearance, dress decently, maintain his dignity, and enjoy what Allah has created for the purpose of clothing and adornment, from Islamic viewpoint clothing has two purposes: that is to cover the body and to beautify appearance. (Qardawi, 79) At the same time, Islam prohibits the wearing of dress, which can make one an object of ridicule or provoke satirical comments from the people. One should bear in mind while putting on clothes that wearing a dress is a blessing, which Allah has conferred on humans only. It has not been granted to all other living creatures. Therefore, humans should offer thanks to Allah for this special favor and blessing. (Nastirde 45). Purity is the best apparel. It also signifies purity of soul as well as righteous physical appearance. In other words, one should wear dress of the kind, which Shariah has prescribed for the believers, which does not display arrogance or pride, which does not lend a feminine stature to men or a masculine appearance to women.

Islam makes it prohibited for women to wear clothe, which fails to cover the whole body, and which are transparent and revealing. It also prohibits wearing tightly fitting clothes, which delineate the parts of the body, especially those parts that are sexually attractive. (Qardawi, 85).

It is recorded in Sahihi al Bukhari Vol 7, Hadith 773. As narrated by Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them; That: Allah's Apostle may benediction and salutation of Allah be upon him: cursed those men who similitude (assume the manners of) women and those women who similitude (assume the manners of) men.

Allah the creator admonishes the noble prophet in the glorious Qur'an, thus:

﴿قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ (٣٠) وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْتَبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوْ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them; and God is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except

what (must ordinarily) appear, therefore; they should drown their veils over their bosom and not to display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their son, their husbands' Sons, their bothers or their brothers' son, or their sisters' sons or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands posses, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And o ye believers! Turn ye all together towards God, that ye may attain bliss. (Qur'an 24:30-31).

The Shari'ah forbids women to expose their natural beauty and the artificial ornaments (Zinat) except seven persons: husband, father, Old people, maidservants, impotence servant, near relatives and infant or small children. (Ali 2985)

The Veil

Veil is legitimately defined as the dress that covers the whole body of the woman including her head, face, hands and feet. It should be long, loose and plain not defining her shape. Veil been prescribed for women to block the roads to sin. Allah says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِرُؤُوسِكُمْ وَبَنَاتِكُمْ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلْبَابِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ﴾ [الأحزاب: ٥٩]

O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their

bodies (except eyes to see the way). That will be better, that they should be known (as free respectable women) so as not to be annoyed. (Qur'an 33:59)

The purpose of veiling is to safeguard women from the biased looks of men and provide her a pure atmosphere at home so that she can perform her household duties properly and contribute to improve the whole society.

The advantages of veiling:

The veiling system contains a number of advantages particularly in a society where the rape, sexual molestation and disrespect of women are very common. Some of them are listed below:

1. Veiling is a protection for Muslim woman against the behavior of the wicked.
2. It is an identity of the Muslim woman that distinguished her.
3. It gives her an honored position in the society.
4. It acts as a barrier between men and women to keep them away from sins.
5. It is a means for observing chastity of woman.
6. It awakens the fear of Allah in the heart of man and woman and saves them from falling in the abyss of evil.
7. It teaches man to respect the veiled woman, provide her protection from the curious persons and ensure the uplift of the high morals and social values in the society. (Abdullah 34)

The Spiritual Importance of Islamic Dressing

Spiritually God created man "bare and alone" the soul in its naked purity and beauty knew no shame because it knew no guilt: after it was touched by guilt and soiled by evil, its thoughts and deeds became its clothing and adornments, good or bad, honest or meretricious, according to the inner motives which gave them color. So in the case of body: it is pure and beautiful, as long as it is not defiled by misuse: its clothing and ornaments may be good or meretricious, according to the motives in mind and character: if good, they are the symbols of purity and beauty: but the best clothing and ornament we could wear comes from righteousness, which covers the nakedness of sin and adorn us with virtue. (Ali, 1008).

Islam as a complete code of life recognizes the noble prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his teachings as an example. This statement is acknowledged in the glorious Qur'an thus:

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا﴾

Ye have indeed in the apostle of God a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in God and the final day, and who engages much in the praise of God. (Qur'an 33:21).

The teaching of this verse is solitary on the noble prophet Muhammad (SAW) the role model for all mankind in general and Muslims in particular. It is on record that the noble prophet

leads by example; for instance Ubaid ibn Khalid (RA) said: I was once working in the city of Madina when a voice said from behind: lift up your lower garment-by so doing a man not only guards himself from physical filth but also from the impurity of soul: looking over my shoulder, I saw the Allah's Apostle may benediction and salutations of Allah be upon him, I submitted! O Apostle of Allah! It is simple sheet of cloth that I am wearing. How can it show haughtiness and pride? The noble prophet observed: is it not obligatory for you to follow my example? On hearing these words of the noble prophet, may eyes at once feel toward his lower garment and I saw that it come to the middle of his calf. (Nastirde 47). This explains that, the noble prophet is our tutor and mentor he did observe the appearance and adornment of Muslims and admonished them where necessary. The noble prophet stressed the necessity of following his footsteps, because there are rewards for imitating his practices, which are Sunnah, is worthy that, all Muslim students on campuses as well as the entire Muslim Ummah to be obliged to accept and follow the life styles of the noble prophet, It will earn them rewards from their lord on the day of accountability. The Muslim will also be guarded against the physical dirt and the impurity of the soul. Allah the most high and His Apostle have cursed those who create artificial spaces between their teeth to look beautiful. The noble prophet said in his tradition: narrated by Abdullah (May Allah be pleased with him),

Allah has cursed those women who practice teeth tattooing and those who

have themselves tattooed, and those who remove their face hairs and those who create spaces between their teeth artificially to look beautiful, and such women have change the features created by Allah the most high; why then should I not curse those whom the prophet (SAW) has cursed? And that is in the book of Allah that is his saying:

﴿وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾ [الحشر: ٧]

"So take what the Apostle assigns to you to take it, and deny your selves that which he withholds from you. And fear God; for God is strict in Punishment". (Qur'an 59:7).

The spiritual aspect portrays the getting of rewards and the avoidance of sins through the practice of Sunnah or otherwise. Disobeying the prescribed manner of the noble prophet may lead a Muslim astray or earns him the wrath of Allah. There are among Muslims who always love to see scandal among the believers and are ignorant of the consequences. Allah the most high says in the glorious Qur'an :

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

Those who love to see scandal published broadcast among the believers will have grievous penalty in this life and in the hereafter. (Qur'an 24:19).

According to the above verse, such people are the real hypocrites.

Indecency of dress is part of scandal, because it is a mischief that can be planned by the evil to delude simple folk who mean no harm in their own minds, but who by thoughtlessness are deluded step by step to become the instrument of evil. (Ali 2970).

The Importance of Islamic Dress Code

The material aspect of dress in Islam is to cover one's shame and it is the expression of culture, elegance and beauty. A Muslim lady is advised by Shari'ah not to wear thin dress, which should make her form visible, nor should she put on a tightly fitting dress, which might make her figure prominent and alluring. In this way she would be exposing her body, despite having worn clothes. This type of dress will trigger feeling and causes confusion among youths in the tertiary institutions of learning. It was because of this reason when Adam and Eve were deprived of the elegant robes of paradise; they began to use leaves of trees to cover their bodies. Islam rejects the exposure of nudity; and described the scope of nudity thus, 'The nudity of men and maid servants is from the navel to the knees.... And the nudity of free daughter is the whole of her body except her face and two palms of hands. (Al-Safti, 241).

The quoted verses indicate that a 'free' male is the same with the maidservant in relation to privacy, while a 'free' female is obliged to cover her nudity. Islam enjoins Muslims to choose a dress, which fulfils the requirements of modesty. One should also make sure that his dress, besides affording adequate

protection against climatic condition, should also be such that it should lend an aura of grace, elegance and culture to his personality. (Nastirde 48)

God created men and women to be different, with unique roles, skills and responsibilities. These differences are not viewed as evidence of superiority or inferiority, but of specialization. In Islam, the family is of central importance. The man is responsible for the financial well being of the family while the woman contributes to the family's physical, educational and emotional well being. This encourages cooperation rather than competition. By fulfilling their mutual responsibilities, strong families are created and hence strong societies. Also emotionally, neither men nor women live a happy life without one another. Allah describes this beautifully by saying:

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ

[البقرة: ١٨٧]

They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them
(Qur'an 2: 187)

The Islamic Ethics on Dress

Islam encourages one to shake the garments before putting them on, lest there be no deadly insect hidden in them, which might cause harm. One should be careful to put on dress with the right side first. Similarly, while putting on a trouser one should enter the right leg first. The noble prophet peace be upon him, while putting on shirt he used to wear the right arm first and then put the left arm into the left sleeve. (Nastirde 48). In Islam, it is a sign of ingratitude to Allah, when Allah has blessed one with wealth and

he refused to wear good dress that will cover his shame. One should dress himself in accordance with his means and status. One should not dress-up to show off vanity or to display an attitude of haughtiness towards others or to make an indecent show of one's influence.

Challenges Faced by Muslim Students

There are two types of challenges in campus life in relation to Islamic dress code. The students that divorced the teachings of Islam in their manner of dressing are never in accord with those that observed it. At the same time such students may wear indecent dress so as to circumvent the efforts of those who practice the Sunnah of the noble prophet (peace be upon him).

There is the need to differentiate between the two categories in our tertiary institutions. Some students are products of Islamiyyah schools right from nursery, primary up to secondary schools. In such Islamiyyah schools, one may get proper control of students even in mixed schools; there will be no intermingling of the opposite sex freely. The products of such schools may find it difficult to relate with the opposite sex freely at the tertiary institutions where some may find it very easy to be assimilated to such life. The campus life is a life of struggle; each student is struggling to pass examination. Some students can adopt any behavior that can help them to graduate. This poses a beginning of serious challenges to some female students on campus. Some people are of the opinion that there are some ladies among students that dressed indecently, so as to attract the lecturers with weaker mind to assist

them in their examinations. While others are of the view that it is the lecturers that encourage such female students to behave so. Whosoever may be responsible, let the Muslim students develop a policy of their actions so as to avoid falling as victims. They need to organize themselves and engage in constant preaching and supplication to their lord for change so that they may escape the traps of the devil. Muslim students should not dis-regard their fellow students who are non-Muslims rather; they should also encourage the willing ones among them so as to jointly chase the devil practice in our tertiary institutions. Imam has said: relationship with non-Muslim students poses another challenge on the Muslim students. Tolerance without compromising the ideas of Islam should be the basis of the relationship between Muslim students and their non-Muslim counterparts. They may even team up with the non-Muslim students to fight against disunity and fracas on the campuses. (Imam, 2007).

Some Muslims elites internalized the orientalist view of themselves, they also became convinced that, they were back warded, their women degraded, and that they ought to follow western prescriptions for improvement. Unveiling became a central urgency for elites attempting to 'catch up' with the west. Hence the need for awareness campaign on Islamic civilization generally, right from our tertiary institutions down to primary schools.

Conclusion

The issues of indecency of dressing by students in our higher institutions of

learning pose a serious challenge, particularly to Muslim students. Therefore, there is the need for a concerted effort from the school authority and bodies from Islam and Christianity to motivate government to legislate on the dress code for the students of the tertiary institutions in the country. The paper revealed that the teachings of the two religions regarding dress code are rich enough to prompt the government to mandate the school authorities to deal with culprits. Scholars must also strive hard to enlighten parents and the society in general on the importance of morality in the society and warn them against any form of indecency.

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