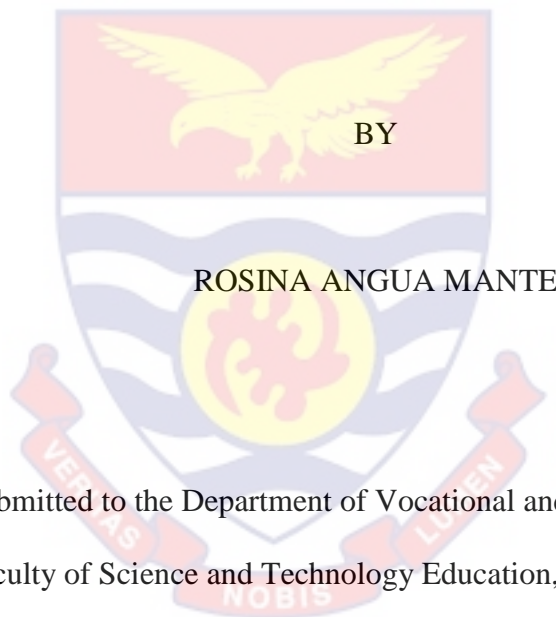


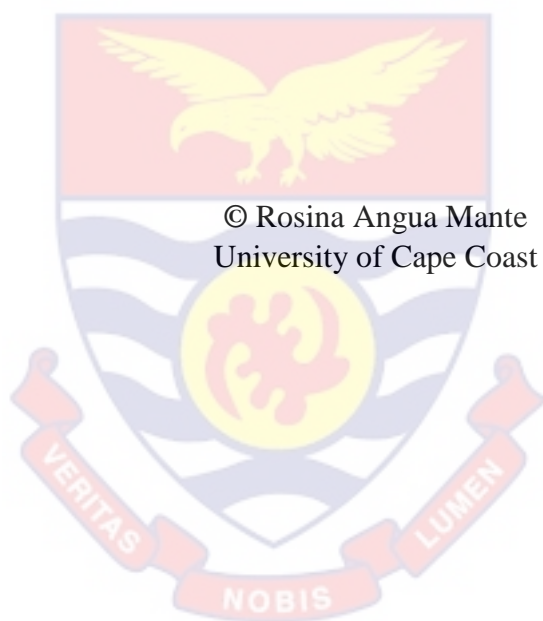
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

RELIGIOUS DRESS IN THE WORKPLACE: A STUDY OF MUSLIM
WOMEN IN SEKONDI-TAKORADI METROPOLIS



Thesis submitted to the Department of Vocational and Technical Education of
the Faculty of Science and Technology Education, College of Education
Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of Master of Philosophy Degree in Home Economics (Clothing and
Textiles)

MAY 2024



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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Rosina Angua Mante

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Dr. (Mrs.) Patience Danquah Monnie

ABSTRACT

The study examined religious dressing at the workplace and the challenges faced by Muslim women based on their extent of coverage. Three research objectives were defined to help determine the scope of the study. The study reviewed the modesty and Immodesty theories, critically examined associated empirical studies and defined a conceptual framework to show the relationship between religious dressing, stigmatization, harassment and workplace promotion. Structured interview questions were employed in data collection from selected Muslim health workers and bankers in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. The study found that Nurses are required to wear scrubs which consist of a matching set of loose-fitting trousers and a tunic-style top. On the other hand, respondents from the field of banking expressed that the dress code of women in the banking profession leans towards formal and professional attire. The study concluded that the wearing of the hijab was still relevant in modern society because it was a symbol of faith and supported morality. The study showed that though the byelaws did not frown on religious dressing, some Muslim women still suffered stigmatization and harassment from their colleagues or supervisors. The study recommended that religious diversity and inclusion should be promoted at the workplace, one way is by allowing minority groups to dress in keeping with the requirement of their faith. The study further recommended that there should be education on religious tolerance at the workplace. The study suggested that longitudinal studies should be conducted to examine changes in workplace attitudes and policies towards religious dress over time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my profound gratitude to the Almighty God for guiding me throughout the study. I am also particularly thankful to Dr. Mrs. Patience Danquah Monnie of the University of Cape Coast, for taking time to edit this work. Her criticisms, suggestions, corrections, critical supervision and encouragement have been immensely helpful for the success of this work. I also owe a big debt of gratitude to friends and family members who helped me in diverse ways. Finally, I am grateful to Rev. Prof. Seth Asare-Danso of Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education for his prayers and guidance. May God shower His blessings on you all.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my lovely husband -Alfred Asamoah, friends and family

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

According to Smith (2022), religion is a complex system of beliefs, rituals, and moral values that provide individuals with a framework for understanding and navigating the world. Globally, well over 4000 religions exist; 80% of the global population is religiously affiliated (Iowa State University, 2019). People inhabit a world of religious pluralism, where billions of individuals are linked with various religious traditions. Based on the Pew Research Centre's Forum on Religion and Public Life findings, around 84% of the global population, which amounts to over six billion individuals, adhere to one of the major world religions. According to Pew Research (2017), Christianity and Islam have the largest number of followers among all religions. Curiously, the Quran does not mandate that women cover their hair but instead emphasises the importance of modest attire and covering the chest, as evidenced by the verses and accompanying footnote in Dr. Rashad Khalifa's translation of the Quran:

Instruct the men who have faith to exercise control over their gaze (and refrain from staring at women) and to preserve their purity. This is more beneficial for them. God possesses complete awareness of all their actions.

Instruct the women with faith to control their gaze and preserve their purity. They are prohibited from exposing any parts of their bodies save for what is essential. Women must keep their chests covered at all times, and they must not deviate from this rule unless they are in the sight of their husbands, fathers, fathers-in-law, sons, brothers, or nephews. They should refrain from

stomping their feet while walking to avoid inadvertently exposing specific aspects of their physique. Every one of you must seek forgiveness from God, O Christians, in order to achieve success (Quran 24:30-31).

Due to the continent's vast expanse and the multitude of religious practices, variations have emerged even within a single religious tradition. The African continent's triple religious history comprises Islam, Christianity, and African traditional religion. Despite being more strongly demonstrated today, this heritage has a long history and effect. African traditional religion dates back to when the first African peoples first appeared. It is the first century AD and possibly later for Christianity, while it is the seventh century for Islam. The prominent position that religion currently plays in understanding African society, encompassing its social, economic, and political implications, substantiates Mbiti's assertion that Africans are widely recognised for their religious inclination. Africans have cultivated and preserved spiritually aware communities by embracing the ancient religions or following the two "converting religions," Christianity and Islam (Aderibigbe & Medine, 2015).

It would be unfeasible to cover every African religious tradition in one chapter. Hence, the primary objective of this endeavour should be to scrutinise the three principal religious systems prevalent on the continent: Islam, Christianity, and the indigenous religious customs of Africa, which African academics have designated as African traditional religion(s). Consequently, the focus is on the African perspective on religious traditions, including their origins, teachings, beliefs, and practices, which shape and

impact different aspects of African people's lives (Aderibigbe & Medine, 2015).

Religion imposes specific expectations on individuals' conduct, attire, and lifestyle. Individuals with a specific religious belief typically possess a strong sense of obligation to behave in a specific manner (Satzinger, 2015). Religious garb includes symbols or garments worn by individuals from different religious groups to express their religious identity, such as the Sikh turban and Muslim(s) headscarf (Ghumman, 2013). While religious apparel may be seen as a requirement based on one's religious beliefs, it is not unusual for individuals to wear religious attire in the workplace (Ghumman, 2013). There is concern that the cultural dynamics in various societies clash with certain religious activities that are not considered native or indigenous (Satzinger, 2015). The interaction between religion, culture, and clothes is a fascinating phenomenon to observe. Attire can serve as a means to observe and understand the social context, limited by an underlying framework of regulations, customs, standards, and ceremonies that dictate face-to-face interaction. Apparel serves as a prominent emblem of religious affiliation for numerous religious institutions (Encyclopaedia .com, n. d.).

Nevertheless, the dominance over physical appearance transcends garments for most tribes. In this context, "dress" encompasses many forms of body adornment, personal care, and garments. The outfit also encompasses behaviours associated with body regulation, such as dietary restrictions, cosmetic procedures, and beauty products. Comprehensively, clothes serve as a very efficient method of nonverbal communication. The fundamental ideas, concepts, and categories essential to a group, such as age, gender, race, and

religion, play a crucial role in shaping an individual's identity, which is subsequently manifested externally through appearance. Dress serves as a means for individuals and groups to express their identities by visually presenting themselves in a way that aligns with their belief systems, utilising self-presentation and self-promotion (Roach & Eicher, 1992).

In religion, the sacred and the secular (or profane) are two distinct categories, which can be likened to different garments. An uncomplicated article of clothing that holds substantial cultural significance regarding gender based power is occasionally regarded with great reverence as something sacred. In patriarchal religions, a dress code is established and enforced to associate certain apparel with sacredness. Men are considered responsible for ensuring compliance with religious regulations. An example of the convergence of gender-based power and clothing is the imposition of the burqa (or chadaree) on women in Afghanistan during the early 2000s. The demasculinization of sacred apparel is a recurring theme regarding the liturgical attire worn by male clergy. In many religions, men's clergy wear loose, flowing robes rather than slacks during sacred occasions. Since hair is a symbol of sensuality, many religions restrict it. To represent their turning away from worldly pleasures, several orders of priests, nuns, and monks shave their heads, trim their hair, or pluck a lock of hair (Arthur, 1999).

It is noteworthy that certain ethnoreligious subcultures, such as Hasidic Jews, Amish, and orthodox Mennonites, consider their everyday clothing as sacred, particularly in terms of symbolically distinguishing themselves from the majority culture. Religious organisations often attach symbolic meaning to clothes as societal changes occur. Certain garments worn by religious groups

may be considered sacred, in contrast to what is deemed secular. The hats, beards, head coverings, bonnets, and aprons worn by the Amish and Mennonites are considered sacred and hold great symbolic significance. Conservative Muslim women often wear fashionable clothing underneath their veils, which are visible to anyone outside their community. These veils, known as "the chador, chadaree, or burqa," are considered holy garments. The religious communities deliberately use externally worn sacred attire to separate themselves from the wider culture visually. These patriarchal religious communities purposefully use clothing restrictions to perpetuate a gendered imbalance of power because they frequently impose laws about dress codes on female community members through male clergy. There is sacred clothing in several religions hidden from the public eye. Mormons who have visited the temple dress modestly and wear sacred undergarments over their regular clothes. The sacred underwear strengthens their adherence to their religion (Authur, 1997)

Organised religion has employed attire in two interconnected manners to maintain the traditions and practices of the organisation and establish a distinct visual representation of the religion. Simultaneously, it has employed clothing as a means to control the individual identities of its members symbolically. Religions develop dress standards to emphasise morality and modesty while yet discreetly limiting sexuality overtly. Essentially, dress requirements primarily concern the influence exerted over the body by important church members rather than being solely about apparel. Religious dress restrictions serve as a means to demonstrate group affiliation and uphold male patriarchal authority. When a religion utilises clothing to maintain

tradition, it is often seen as in conflict with fashion, which is inherently changeable. Given that organised religions often discourage fashion from prioritising individual character above salvation, any modifications to religious garb will likely occur gradually. Gaining insight into how the world's major religions perceive the role of clothing as a means of expressing identity aids in comprehending how attire mirrors religious beliefs (Authur, 1999).

Individuals' interaction with the external world is almost always influenced by their clothing, whether through personal choice, their "habitus", dress codes, etc., through shaping how others view/interact with them, influencing their understanding of their identity, and conversely of influencing how others view them through how they dress. As a result of this, different clothing styles can evoke different connotations based on the viewers' assumption of the ideals of the groups or contexts that the wearer's clothing connects them to. Also, through dress individuals can internalize these ideals of the group, to influence their view of themselves, and in turn how they interact with the outside world. Furthermore, clothing can also highlight a person's individuality through failure to conform, evoking a different individual-world interaction. Regardless, an individual's desire to express themselves and externalize the internal can lead to clothing construction or altering to better represent themselves, and/or their relationship to a group (Oberhagemann, 2023).

Muslim is the term used to refer to adherents of Islam, the newest of the main religions. Islamic ideology strongly emphasizes male supremacy and the division of the sexes through both physical and visual means. This religion places a greater emphasis on the collective than the individual. Muslim dress

standards significantly impact daily living, which frequently incorporates religious expressions and rituals. Muslim modesty customs involve restricting women's behaviour and covering women's bodies. Although the Koran calls for modest clothing for women, it does not mention veiling. The necessity for women to wear veils is strictly enforced among the most orthodox Islamic families and cultures, while dress standards surrounding veiling differ among Islamic families and cultures. These laws are meant to safeguard against gender segregation, but they also aim to impede the integration process that began in Islamic nations after World War II due to Westernization. The Islamic fundamentalist movement started advocating for a return to tradition as Western clothing grew prevalent. Wearing modest clothing and veils represented nationalism and the acceptance of patriarchal control. Posters announcing the dress code terms that require women to wear chadors that cover all but the face were displayed around Iran's major cities. Women were executed in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan if they did not cover themselves entirely with the "burqa or chadaree" (Moaddel, 1998).

The relationship between the modesty of women's attire and gender norms is prevalent throughout all prominent religions, posing a substantial challenge for religious communities. Given the significance of controlling female sexuality in patriarchal religious communities, the dress standards of orthodox religious groups play a vital role in addressing gender issues. The majority of dress codes are centred around modesty and require the use of clothing to conceal the contours of the female body. Furthermore, certain religious factions, particularly the more radical factions of Islam, the

Anabaptist Church, and Judaism, also require women to veil their hair. Religious groups extend the notion of modesty beyond concealing the body to obscure female contours and secondary sexual traits. In the conservative factions of major religions, guidelines for attire also encompass the regulation and concealment of women's hair due to its association with female sexuality (Scott, 1986).

An instant and obvious indication of how someone fits into their religious system is how they are dressed. The way someone dresses might be a good indicator of how devoted they are to their group and their religion. In many conservative groups, it is assumed that uniqueness would be suppressed to uphold the religious organization's standards. Numerous religious organizations are also ethnically uniform, known as ethno-religious organizations. Some of these organizations (in the United States) include the Amish, Mennonites, Hutterites, Hasidic Jews, Sikhs, and specific Islamic sects. Clothing is a common way for the conservative wing of ethnoreligious movements to concurrently demonstrate ethnicity, gender roles, and level of religion. The most conservative of the religious social bodies exercise control over the physical bodies of their members by adhering to a rigid religious value system. Compliance with solid norms of conduct is required because rigid conformity is frequently associated with religiosity. The religious culture has power over the internal body, notably regarding food and sex. However, the exterior body is much more constrained. Because attire affects performance, strict dress requirements are in place but are somewhat more restricted. Because clothing is seen as a representation of religion, strict dress restrictions are enforced. Since clothing regulates the external body, it

becomes a metaphor for social control. Although it is impossible to determine a person's level of religiosity with any degree of objectivity, symbols like dress can prove that a person is following the "right and true path" (Laderman, & León, 2003).

Apparel is a fundamental necessity for the human species. Wearing clothing is a unique trait found only in humans and is prevalent in most communities. Pritchard (2013) defined clothes as any article worn to safeguard, enhance aesthetics, follow current trends, and maintain modesty. In 1997, Kaiser defined clothes as any physical or tangible item associated with the human body. The selection and style of clothing are determined by practical factors such as modesty, protection from the elements, adherence to cultural and social norms, and the aesthetic qualities that clothing conveys (Kumatia, 2018). Clothing is a potent means of conveying an individual's personality, emotions, religious convictions, and cultural identity (Akdemir, 2018). Clothing's distinctiveness encompasses not only the garments individuals wear but also the timing, purpose, events for which they are worn, and the message they convey about the wearer to the public (Danso et al., 2019). Hristova (2014) agrees that clothing serves as a non-verbal means of communication, imparting knowledge about the cultural values of a particular group of individuals to observers.

The dress of an individual can be viewed from two perspectives: as the complete range of body alterations and accessories that a specific social group offers to its members (Roach-Higgins & Eicher 1996). Dress encompasses several forms of bodily adornment, including styled hair, dyed skin, earrings, fragrant breath, clothing, accessories, and other supplementary goods

(Higgins, 1996). The dress can convey messages regarding age, gender, social class, school connection, or religious affiliation. However, the specific meanings conveyed by different forms and characteristics of the garment are subjective and depend on the individual's interpretations (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1996). The significance of clothes in conveying identity is emphasised since it typically establishes the foundation for later verbal communication (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1996). According to Mvungi (2014), attire accurately represents an individual's genuine identity, indicating a strong correlation between outward appearance and inner self. In addition, Mvungi asserts that an individual's clothes and behaviour reflect their attitudes towards dressing norms, whether influenced by religious or social factors.

Religious affiliation can enhance personal welfare while supporting persistent conflicts between different groups. Group identification drives individuals to differentiate their group from others to maintain high self esteem or achieve self-improvement. This can be accomplished by identifying the ideal equilibrium between individual distinctiveness and collective incentives. Religious identity is crucial when an individual's feeling of safety and security has been weakened, thereby serving as a vital signal of a strong and unified social identity (Ysseldyk et al., 2010). The motivation behind wearing religious attire or symbols can sometimes be unclear. For instance, items like crosses, crucifixes, prayer beads, and bangles may be worn as fashion accessories or to express one's identity rather than solely as an act of religious devotion (Religion & Human Rights, 2007).

Nevertheless, the connection between personal religious practice and wearing religious attire or symbols is inherent and strong for most individuals.

Donning religious attire and emblems can serve as a crucial manifestation of an individual's religious identity. The act of wearing this particular attire or displaying these symbols may indicate the wearer's comprehension of the obligations outlined in their religious customs or their opinion that donning this attire or showcasing these symbols as a sign of their religious dedication contributes to the enrichment of their spiritual existence. It could also indicate a wish to confirm one's identity to others publicly. The use of clothing as an indication is the most reliable method for assessing the genuine cultural identity of a group of individuals and their ethical integrity (Danso et al., 2019). For instance, a Muslim woman's choices about her attire are carefully considered, as this style of clothing is highly noticeable and easily seen, making it susceptible to the judgement and evaluation of onlookers. These young women design unique garments that express their religious affiliation and perspective on gender and modernity. They explore the connection between clothing and religion and the significance of clothing for Muslims. The Islamic code allows us to analyse the choices women make regarding their appearance, taking into account the Islamic principles of proper behaviour and considering the significant public scrutiny faced by women who dress in a way that publicly identifies them as Muslim(s) (Bradley & Homberger, 2015).

Oppong (2013) suggests that society prioritises the examination of religious apparel as a factor contributing to the anticipation of employment discrimination against those who wear such attire. Religion can exert a significant effect in certain communities while being less influential in others, and in certain societies, it may have a minimal impact. He argued that the role

of religion in various civilizations and eras does not completely negate the influence of religion on the development and evolution of identity across time. The topic of modesty behaviours and women's attire has been extensively debated in academics and media for the past twenty years. Religions explicitly provide guidelines for morality and modesty, taking into account the specific attire one chooses to wear. The perception of what constitutes a modest outfit might differ throughout societies and even within different sub-groups within a country.

Nevertheless, the conflict arises between adhering to religious requirements and conforming to contemporary fashion trends, rendering it unfeasible to reconcile the distinction between dressing professionally and avoiding religious sensitivities. In addition to several scholarly studies on the topic of modest attire among Muslim women, there have also been inquiries into the practice of head covering among Jewish and Christian women. Modesty, regarded as a moral and social virtue, holds significant importance in all Abrahamic religions due to its inherent connection to human nature. The Abrahamic religions encompass any religions that honour Abraham as their patriarch, according to the Bible. Specifically, they include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which all recognise Abraham as their shared ancestor (Sadatmoosavi et al, 2016).

In the 19th century, dress regulations were introduced in Africa and have been interpreted differently across various cultures in emerging countries ever since (Hansen & Madison, 2013). Dress codes are regulations typically outlined in handbooks or by-laws that pertain to appropriate attire (Manwa, Ndamba & Manwa, 2010; Jabbal, 2014). Social dress regulations encompass

both explicit and implicit guidelines on attire. Susan (2016) defines the work dress code as a collection of criteria organisations establish to offer employees clear instructions on suitable attire for the workplace. The dress code at work often spans from formal to business casual to casual. The purpose of dress codes in the workplace is to promote cohesion and individuality or to distinguish between different groups to establish identity and enhance productivity. This applies to various settings such as companies, public sectors, and higher education institutions like universities, banks, and parliaments (Galadari, 2012; Cutts, Hooley & Yates, 2015).

Organisations establish dress guidelines to reap the advantages of a professionally present staff. Dress regulations dictate acceptable and unacceptable apparel for the workplace (Courtney, 2015). The workplace, however, is often comprised of people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. An understanding of how dress works at the workplace can be seen in how various professions require donning particular garbs before an individual can function. Thus, it is with occupations that provide services, such as the banking industry, law firms, and health professionals. Organizations require specific dress codes that do not precisely align with religious requirements. The imbalance between religious requirements and professional dress codes usually places people, mostly females, at a disadvantage of not getting employed in the first place (Iowa State University, 2019).

Creating efficient clothing regulations, however, might pose challenges. Wearing religious attire and symbols in the workplace is frequently a source of conflict, necessitating a delicate balance between employees' rights and the employer's interests. The primary points of

disagreement revolve around religious personnel in non-religious institutions and the level of accommodation that religious individuals can anticipate from an organisation for their religious requirements. The second point of contention pertains to the interests of religious institutions and the degree to which equality laws should regulate them (Vickers, 2010). Occasionally, employees may oppose dress regulations, while in other cases, they may link more formal attire to heightened professionalism, resulting in improved efficiency and, thus, the desired level of performance. Although freedom of religion is widely recognised as a fundamental right globally and in Europe and Africa, there is ongoing debate regarding its application in the workplace. Organisations are responsible for determining a suitable dress code policy (Vickers, 2010).

Ghana exhibits religious diversity, with most of its population comprising Christians and Muslims. The text refers to the 2021 Population and Housing Census. According to international human rights law, every individual is entitled to the freedom of speech and the ability to demonstrate their faith or beliefs. As a general principle, the freedoms of religion or belief and expression grant individuals the right to decide what clothing they wish to wear and what they do not. Due to the extensive range of strongly held religious views and practices, this essential human right is frequently disputed and contentious.

Nevertheless, the freedom to express a religious conviction may be restricted. Individual rights are constrained in the face of numerous conflicting rights and freedoms. Expressing ideas and practices is highly likely to provoke

a response and prompt action, particularly when religious expressions are distinct and confrontational, leading to allegations of discrimination (Squelch, 2013). Governments are obligated to uphold, safeguard, and guarantee the right of every individual to articulate their opinions, personal convictions, or identity.

Statement of the Problem

Every organization comprises individuals from heterogeneous social, economic, political, and religious backgrounds (Tawiah, Kyeraa & Duah, 2019). Wearing religious clothing and symbols in the workplace is often contentious, sometimes highlighting the tensions between competing and conflicting personal and professional values and expectations. It also brings forth competing religious and secular views about the place of religion in the workplace (Squelch, 2013).

Religious freedom is a fundamental human right enshrined in numerous international and national laws. The Ghanaian constitution prohibits religious discrimination and stipulates that individuals can profess and practice their religion (Ghana Consitution, 1992).

On February 25, 2015, Ghanaian Muslims received a presidential directive highlighting the importance of the citizens' freedom of religion as stated in the national constitution. In his State-of-the-Nations address, former President John Dramani Mahama reaffirmed his dedication to upholding Article 21 of the 1992 constitution, which ensures citizens' rights to religious freedom and the ability to express their religious convictions openly. (Amadu, 2015).

Prior to the president's decision, there were reports of compulsory removal of veils among numerous female Muslim high school students and Muslims employed in the public sector. The problem was particularly evident in missionary schools and Nursing Training institutes (Amadu, 2015). There were also reports on the practice of removing the Hijab before taking picture identification for national tests. This occurrence sparked controversy and unease in specific regions of the country regarding the rationale of requesting Muslim girls to remove their headscarves prior to taking identification photos (Akuaku, 2018).

The limitation or restriction on religious clothing and symbols at the workplace is not automatically or necessarily a violation of the right to religious freedom. However, the critical consideration is whether such limitation serves a legitimate purpose and may be justified in a heterogeneous democratic society (Squelch, 2013).

In Ghana, there is limited research on religious dress in the workplace; interestingly, very little research has been carried out on Muslim women dressing in the workplace. This, therefore, leaves the topic mired in controversy. Against this background, this study was carried out to examine religious dress in the workplace with particular emphasis on Muslim women in Sekondi –Takoradi metropolis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the experiences, challenges and perceptions related to Ghanaian Muslim women wearing religious dress in professional settings.

Objectives of the Study

The study specifically sought to;

1. determine the different dress codes used in the health and banking sectors in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis.
2. determine the levels of coverage accepted in the health and banking sectors in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis.
3. examine the restrictions and discrimination faced by Muslim women for wearing religious dress in the health and banking sectors in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant implications for our understanding of Muslim women's dress and the unique challenges they encounter in the workplace. By delving into the experiences and perspectives of Muslim women who wear religious attire while on the job, this research seeks to contribute to the existing knowledge surrounding this topic. Through in-depth exploration, it aims to shed light on the cultural, religious, and personal significance of these dress practices, providing valuable insights into the lives of Muslim women in professional settings.

Beyond expanding our knowledge base, this study carries the potential to foster greater cross-cultural understanding in Ghanaian society. As it endeavours to educate non-Muslim community members about the importance of religious dress for Muslim women in the workplace, it serves as a bridge for promoting empathy, respect, and inclusivity. By raising awareness and dispelling misconceptions, this research seeks to create a more tolerant and

accepting environment that celebrates diversity and religious freedom in the workplace.

Moreover, the findings of this study have the power to catalyze positive change in Ghanaian society. By bringing attention to the challenges Muslim women face when wearing religious attire at work, it advocates for equitable treatment and inclusivity. Policymakers, organizations, and stakeholders can utilize the insights provided by this research to develop more inclusive workplace policies and practices that honour religious diversity. By addressing these challenges head-on, we can strive towards fostering an environment where all individuals, regardless of their religious background, feel valued and respected in their professional pursuits.

Also, the study has added to literature in the area of social psychology of clothing, that can be used for teaching and further research.

Delimitation

The study's scope was delimited to Muslim women's religious dress in the workplace. Religious dress covered in this study is a Hijab, headscarf, or veil worn by Muslim women at the workplace. The study covered the banking and health sectors in the Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis.

Definitions of Terms

A headscarf is a scarf covering most or all of the top of a person. Usually, women's hair and head leave the face uncovered. A headscarf is formed of a triangular or square cloth folded into a triangle with which the head is covered.

Hijab means 'covering.' Any cloth, headscarf, or long coat covering the female body is recognized as a Hijab in the dominant Muslim community.

Religious dress is any attire, accoutrements, and markings used in religious rituals that may be corporate, domestic, or personal.

The veil is a term for a wide range of headscarves and clothing. A veil can be described as a piece of clothing women wear to cover sections of the body, like the face and head.

Organization of the Study

This research is structured into five distinct chapters. Chapter one serves as the introductory section of the study. It encompasses the background information, problem statement, study purpose, research objectives, study importance, delimitation, definitions of words, and study organisation. Chapter Two examined the pertinent theoretical and empirical matters that form the basis of the investigation. Chapter three elucidates the methodology employed in the study, encompassing the research design, the population, sample and sampling process, research instruments, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and protocols for data collection and analysis. Chapter four of the study contains the presentation of the data and discussion, while chapter five summarises the crucial findings, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature that supports the study on religious dressing in the workplace. Accordingly, the chapter has been divided into three sections. They are theoretical underpinning of the study, the definition of key concepts and the conceptual framework.

Theoretical Review

This section of the chapter details related theories as they apply to the study. The theories reviewed include the Immodesty, adornment, modesty and social identity theories. These have been duly discussed below.

Several models can be considered to achieve the study's objective on the challenges faced by Ghanaian Muslim women for wearing religious dress in the workplace. These models include the Social Identity Theory, Cultural Capital Theory, Institutional Theory, and Intersectional Theory. The Social Identity theory was used to guide this study because it can help understand how the different dress codes of Muslims and levels of coverage create a social identity and potentially lead to discrimination in the health and banking sectors.

The Immodesty Theory

The history of civilisation resonates with the fact that there has been the coexistence of modest and immodest clothes. Immodesty theory acknowledges the human instinct to a level of sexual interest with the opposite sex through clothing. In order to win the interest of the opposite sex, people

adorn themselves with very colourful feathers or paint their bodies (Bryant et al., 2005).

The Immodesty theory maintains that men and women, over time, picked up on the realisation that by accessorising themselves through dressing, they win sexual favours (Gregston, 2014). In this, the Immodesty theory emphasises that sexual attraction could potentially be enhanced through the adoption of shrewd acts of both hiding and revealing parts of the body using provocative clothing (Al Wazni, 2015). However, the Immodesty theory states that familiarity breeds indifference; concealment, on the other hand, captures interest.

For the most part, the Immodesty theory draws attention to particular parts of the human body that can arouse sexual interest (Gregston, 2014). Specific mention includes the legs, buttocks, waist, hips, torso (the breasts or chest), and height (Stirn, 2003). Immodesty keeps cognisance of the psychological fact that fully formed aspects of these parts of the human body signal health and capacity to procreate.

Linking the Immodesty theory to this study, dressing in the workplace has seen different shifts and variations depending on the time. In the 1920s, short hemlines and a little revealing of the legs were considered fashionable for work and church (Stirn, 2003). This was in contrast with the 1930s, where long hemlines that accentuated the silhouette of the body were the go-to clothing style. Interestingly, interest in structured shoulders heightened in the 1940s, coupled with a reversion to shorter hemlines. Still, fashion in the 1950s was a mix of long skirts with slim waistlines and highlighted busts (Hendrie et al., 2009). The years beyond the 1950s, specifically the 1960s to the 1990s,

saw dressing being used to protest for liberation from the severe restrictions society had placed on feminine dressing (Pereira & Graça, 2018). As a result, there was a cultural shift from long dragging skirts to mini and tightly clad skirts that were quite revealing. Religious groups began to clamp down on this way of dressing, and workplaces all over had to define the acceptable dress code. The 2000s saw a shift to bold fashion as associated with flamboyant music stars characterising what was good to wear (Crane, 2012).

Analysis of the Immodesty Theory

Several researchers have analysed the Immodesty theory of dressing (e.g. Hendrie et al., 2009; Gregston, 2014; Bryant et al., 2005). Some (Gregston, 2014; Bryant et al., 2005) have justified the thinking that dressing with sexual intention is not the only reason that drives what people wear. The key takeaway from these lines of reasoning revolves around five factors. They include situational, religious, faith, psychological, physiological, and physical comfort (Egwim, 2010).

Situational factors: Cooper et al. (2000) argue that historically, attitudes to what is considered modest or immodest dressing have depended on societal norms and the particular disposition of an individual concerning sexuality. Highly conservative societies have always sought to maintain decorum through long dresses that were not revealing of the body parts. Liberal and very expressive societies typified by gentrification and quick structural, technological and ideological advancements allowed for highly expressive modes of dressing that allowed for avant-garde make overs. It is not uncommon, thus, to find various experimental dress styles in the workplace of such societies, especially where the workplace allows it.

Religion and faith: Religion and faith have long-standing influences on a person's dress (Bryant et al., 2005). Put another way, a person's faith and religious beliefs shaped how they dressed. This extends to reasons why Muslim women are typically expected to wear long dresses and dutifully wear the hijab, too (Babcock et al., 2017). Buddhist monks are normally expected to be in kasaya robes that portray the need to serve. Religion, therefore, plays a hand in people's perception of good and bad dressing styles and conditions them to dress in a particular way to work.

Psychological factors: It follows that the need to please oneself or others impacts how a person dresses (Egwim, 2010). As a result, dressing and clothing styles become a way of communicating with people (Kaczmarek, et., 2018). People who aim to please others in order to win sexual favours dress the part by putting on either sexually provocative appearances or impressive modern displays that make them look the part. In the same way, people dress to look fit for purpose when they go for interviews by donning what may be considered executive or formal wear typified by suits and matching white, black or brown colours.

Physiological factors: Another factor that influences how people dress is the variations in anatomical proportions. A person's body size, shape and height influence what they wear. Take, for instance, pregnant women. They will likely wear long dresses that proportionally hold their protruded midsection to work instead of fitted dresses and skirts before or beyond pregnancy (Parsa, 2016).

Physical comfort: For some, dressing, irrespective of where to go, must be matched by a modicum of comfort against societal expectations of

decency and appropriateness. As a result, satisfaction in comfort overrides any other form of reason for people to dress the way they do (Mensch, 2005).

The Adornment Theory

According to the adornment theory, people learned to adorn themselves well before the discovery of clothing as it is known today (Armstrong, 2005). Empirical evidence by Jones & Kramer, (2016) suggests that the need for adornment was the natural instinctive desire to feel good and look acceptable and appealing to others. The adornment theory further maintains that the aesthetic value derived from beauty could be accentuated through a fitting appearance in the form of dressing to appear welcoming to others (Thyne et al., 2016). As such, the object of endearment triggered an emotional reaction to dress in a particular way to send positive signals to the person or persons they were targeting.

In more ways than one, adornment theory takes a broader look at fashion through an extended scope that considers not just clothing but also other body accessories such as chains, rings among others and cosmetics, all of which are meant to generate a coordinated fashion allure (Stirn, 2003). The theory further extends the notion that adornment has been considered an art that captures inspiration from natural sources such as plants and animals. Accordingly, designers take a cue from natural decorations in the shape of plant petals, animal fur and feathers, among others and create harmony with these observations (Pasha-Zaidi, 2015). This creative interpretation of observed ornamentation on clothing and textiles translates to fashion forecasting. This way, embellishments in embroideries, lace work, dyeing, beads, and others have become common (Jones & Kramer, 2016).

Critics of the adornment theory, such as Hitlan et al. (2007) and Mair (2009), argue there is more to clothing and dressing than simply sending strong signals of beauty. Some draw inspiration from the modesty and Immodesty theories to argue that many reasons for dressing are to enhance one's sexual features in order to increase one's chances of procreation. Still, several researchers (Pohl et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2014; Thyne et al., 2016) maintain that clothing essentially must be justified mainly from the standpoint of protection from rough weather, serving as camouflage back in the day when humans had to protect themselves against wild animals and protecting one's self from harmful substances particularly at demanding work environments such as the mines, metal works and a host of others where protective garments are required. Nonetheless, these contrasting views do not sufficiently undermine the aesthetic theme associated with dressing of the adornment theory.

The Modesty Theory

The modesty theory follows the train of thought that maintains that a particular way of dressing or acting conveys the modesty or otherwise of a woman (Willet, 2015). The modesty theory argues that to limit or avoid unsolicited sexual attention; women must maintain a well-defined act of decorum by cladding themselves in a garb long enough to fit the requirements of religious teachings. The modesty theory follows that morality is the subject of modesty and concealment, which is a good start. Advocates of the theory preach demureness and argue that modest dressing or appearance overrides any form of self-conscious feeling of imperfection and people's perception of a negative body image (Gökarıksel & Secor, 2014). To them, modesty

appearance is a case of what you do not see or know and do not pass judgment on what you do not know. Therefore, the theory follows the rationale that contrary to insistence on social norms, modesty does not emanate from the fear of ignominy but the necessity for self-propriety and privacy.

Further, the modesty theory insists that society provides strictness through codes of conduct and body covering. This line of reasoning supports researchers such as Cooper et al. (2000), who argue that modesty is imposed by religion or culture and is very much influenced by social status, age, place and activity. To this extent, modesty has myriad interpretations depending on the location, place, cultural norms and religious requirements. Specifically, the modesty theory argues that by properly covering body regions deemed sexually seductive, people, particularly women, will be protecting themselves from unwanted attention and also meeting the standards of religious or societal expectations on conduct (Pew Research, 2017).

Criticisms of the Modesty Theory

Critics of the modesty theory contend that modesty can be a very fickle subject that is moot at best and hard to define. For instance, the wearing of the hijab: Iran banned it back in 1936 but reinstated the mandatory nature of it in 1979 (Howlett, Pine & Cahill, 2015).

Some critics such as Steib, Hood and Klein (2010) also insist that the modesty theory places unnecessary restrictions on women and takes away their power to make choices that affect their bodies. Researchers such as Moon et al. (2018) argue that rather than focusing on women dressing in fullbody coverings, the responsibility must be squarely placed on men to change their perceptions and interests.

Also, critics such as Armstrong (2005) argue that the modesty theory takes on a more outdated view of dressing that suited the purposes of the times when they were imposed. Armstrong (2005) insists that the functions of clothes and society's structures and thinking have evolved over the years. If anything, people must fully embrace the change requirements of the growing generation rather than stick with long-disputed perceptions of right and wrong.

The Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, is a significant psychological framework used to comprehend how individuals define themselves and others regarding group membership (Tajfel et al., 1979). This theory posits that people categorize themselves into various social groups based on shared characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, religion, or workplace attire, like religious dress codes (Harwood, 2020). These group identities influence our perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours toward others and the groups we belong. Social Identity Theory's core is the concept of "in-group" and "out-group." An in-group represents the group with which an individual identifies, while an out-group comprises all other groups (Hogg, 2016). The theory suggests that people view their in-group favourably and exhibit in-group bias, perceiving their group as superior to others. Conversely, they may hold negative stereotypes or prejudices against outgroups.

In the context of the study objectives focused on Ghanaian Muslim women and religious dress codes in the workplace, Social Identity Theory can be applied to explore how different dress codes are associated with specific social groups within the health and banking sectors in the Sekondi-Takoradi

Metropolis. For example, Muslim women wearing religious attire may form an in-group, while those not adhering to such dress codes may belong to an outgroup. The theory can help understand how these categorizations influence workplace interactions, attitudes, and potential discrimination.

Additionally, Social Identity Theory can shed light on the psychological processes behind group dynamics in the workplace (Brown, 2000). It can elucidate how the level of coverage accepted in the health and banking sectors may affect group boundaries and the perceptions of Muslim women within and outside their respective in-groups. The theory's insights into intergroup behaviour can provide a framework for comprehending the extent of restriction and discrimination these women face based on their religious dress.

Strength of the Social Identity Theory

The strength of a social identity varies according to the specific circumstances; when there are more substantial commonalities within a group and pronounced distinctions between groups, the group's identity becomes more potent. When social identity prevails over personal identity, individuals perceive themselves less as distinct and more as group representatives. This leads to self-stereotyping, where individuals align themselves with the group prototype (Korte, 2007). Alongside this inclination to stereotype and depersonalize oneself as an in-group member, there is a parallel tendency to stereotype and dehumanize individuals from out-groups. A fundamental tenet of social identity theory is the pursuit of bolstering self-esteem. The research underscores that the favouritism exhibited toward one's group and the

derogation of individuals from out-groups are widespread, often implicit, and readily triggered (Tajfel, 1982; Turner et al., 1987).

In power dynamics, dominant groups endeavour to maintain the existing status quo, while minority groups strive for identification based on attributes distinct from the dominant group. According to social identity theory, the desire for certainty and positive self-evaluation serves as primary motivators for groups to accentuate the similarities among their members (ingroup) and accentuate differences from other groups (out-groups) (Abrams and Hogg, 1990; Hogg and Grieve, 1999). In-group members frequently engage in harmful or derogatory stereotyping of out-groups, aiming to elevate the status of in-group members. Stereotyping, prejudice, and conflicts are significant outcomes of social identity and self-categorization (Tajfel, 1982; Turner et al., 1987).

Studies focusing on group identification reveal variations in the propensity of groups to magnify perceptions of similarity and difference, leading to fluctuations in the relative strength of groups and the extent to which individuals identify with them. Additionally, research indicates that individuals generally develop a sense of social identity for a group, and even minimal interaction or experience can trigger in-group favouritism (Hogg et al., 1995). Social identity is a cognitive mechanism to reduce uncertainty through categorization or stereotyping. However, this sense of stability can also foster rigidity, conflict, and prejudice.

Moreover, the permeability of boundaries among groups varies significantly. Some groups readily accept members from other groups, while others resist outsiders. This is particularly evident in organisations'

hierarchical power and status structure (Korte, 2007). Members of low-status groups may perceive opportunities for advancement into high-status groups, and if such advancement is not feasible or desirable, they may accentuate differences and engage in discrimination to boost their self-esteem. Discrimination can be reciprocal, with high-status groups emphasizing differences from low-status groups. Low-status groups may advocate for change during power struggles, whereas high-status groups may support the status quo.

Internally, groups also exhibit discrimination tendencies. To preserve group cohesion, members often emphasize their similarities and suppress differences (Turner et al., 1987). An individual who deviates from the norm within a group, often called the "black sheep," may face more significant disapproval than dissimilar individuals in out-groups. The "black sheep" represents an immediate threat to the in-group's identity. The pressure to conform to group norms is pivotal in group preservation.

Limitations of the Social Identity Theory

The concept of identity sparks significant debate, with three primary controversies surrounding it: its definition, locus, and significance. The first dispute over identity primarily arises from semantic confusion and overlaps with related concepts across various academic disciplines. Anthropologists view identity as a product of culture, sociologists define it as social roles, and psychologists perceive it as a collection of norms (Stets & Burke, 2000; Hogg et al., 1995). Despite these differences in construct, there is a consensus that identity is a crucial concept for comprehending behaviour in social settings,

with the debate primarily revolving around the nuances of its construction rather than its existence.

The second controversy centres on where identity resides, often influenced by disciplinary biases. This debate revolves around whether identity primarily exists at the individual or group level of analysis. Some theorists position social identity within individuals, while others construct a supra-individual entity at the group level, prompting discussions about the transferability of identity between these levels (Jenkins, 2004; Tajfel, 1981). Wenger (1998) dismisses this debate as unproductive, emphasizing the significance of the interaction between individuals and groups.

The third controversy pertains to the theory's effectiveness in explaining past individual behaviour in social contexts, compared to predicting future behaviour (Hogg & McGarty, 1990). However, this challenge in predicting human behaviour extends beyond social identity theory and is characteristic of the broader social sciences.

Identity has gained popularity as a lens for examining organizational phenomena, demonstrating its versatility and limitations. A drawback emerges when scholars and practitioners apply the concept too broadly, potentially diluting its explanatory power and generating contradictory explanations (Pratt, 2003; Korte, 2007). Despite these debates, there is little disagreement about the existence of socially influenced identity.

Relevance of the Social Identity Theory to the study

The Social Identity Theory is highly relevant to achieving the purpose of the study and its associated objectives. Firstly, in exploring the challenges

Ghanaian Muslim women face for wearing religious dress at the workplace, the theory helped elucidate how these women's social identity, linked to their religious and cultural affiliations, interacts with workplace dress codes. It also provides insights into how individuals categorize themselves and others, impacting their experiences of discrimination and restriction within the health and banking sectors. Additionally, the theory's focus on in-group and outgroup dynamics can shed light on the levels of coverage accepted and the extent of restriction and discrimination faced by these women in comparison to others in the workplace, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges they encounter in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis.

Relevance of the Theories

Linking the adornment theory to the rest of the modest theories, including modest and social identity, the adornment theory focuses on heightening beauty through aesthetics that strongly impact appearance. In contrast, the modesty theory emphasises demureness, and the social identity theory focuses on the social beliefs in group processes and intergroup relations; the Immodesty theory aims for sexual attraction (Pazhoohi & Burriss, 2015).

All four theories can shape the perspective on dressing simply by looking at the underlying purpose behind a particular clothing style. The modesty theory, to a good extent, captures the decorous theme that matches societal and religious expectations; the adornment theory broadens the scope of understanding of dressing and clothing to encapsulate the very idea that dressing and clothing goes beyond societal expectations and religious norms

to include revolutionised ideas and trends in beauty and style. The immodesty theory, on the other hand, places heavy influence on the sexual appeal of dressing in a particular way.

Also, all the theories make it possible to assess people's justifications when they take entrenched positions on the appropriate dress style. The theories give decent exposure to the functions of clothing, laying credence to the fact that the occasion or requirements of a particular time could influence what people wear rather than being a simple matter of choice (Gianettoni & Roux, 2010). It bears mentioning that while each of the theories comes with different viewpoints that have attracted heavy criticism, each has some important aspects that reflect the dynamics associated with dressing. Therefore, this makes them ideal for analysis, particularly concerning a study on religious dressing at the workplace, hence their review for this study.

The Concept of Religious Dressing

The concept of dress encompasses various practices and objects related to how individuals cover and adorn their bodies (Taylor, 2002; Entwistle, 2023). It goes beyond mere clothing and extends to various forms of personal ornamentation and their cultural, social, and psychological meanings (Olson, 2012). Dress is commonly understood as the clothing and accessories people wear to cover and protect their bodies (Twigg, 2013). Clothing includes shirts, pants, dresses, and jackets, while accessories include hats, shoes, belts, and jewellery (Snodgrass, 2015). These items serve practical functions such as protection from environmental elements, modesty, and comfort. For example, winter coats protect against cold weather, while swimwear is designed for water-related activities. Clothing and accessories also often conform to

cultural norms and trends, reflecting the aesthetics of a particular era or society (Lynch & Strauss, 2007; Murcia, 2023).

Beyond its functional aspect, dress carries significant cultural and social symbolism. Different cultures and societies attach specific meanings to certain types of clothing or colours (El-Esaad & Ibrahim, 2022). For example, in many Western cultures, white is often associated with purity and is a common choice for bridal gowns, whereas red may symbolize luck or passion (Natarajan et al., 2022; Turner, 2013). Clothing can also signify social status, occupation, or group affiliation. In some cases, specific dress codes or uniforms are required, as seen in the military, healthcare, or religious institutions, to convey a sense of authority, professionalism, or identity (Hutten & Mustafa, 2022; Roach & Eicher, 2017; Tynan, 2011).

Moreover, dress is closely tied to personal expression and identity. Individuals often use clothing and accessories to communicate aspects of their personality, values, and cultural affiliations (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). This extends to subcultures and countercultures, where distinctive dress codes signify belonging and shared beliefs. For example, the punk subculture is known for its rebellious, DIY fashion, which challenges mainstream norms (Lewin & Williams, 2016). Dress also plays a crucial role in constructing gender identity (Nash & Sidhu, 2023). Societal norms often dictate what is considered appropriate attire for males and females, and individuals may use clothing to conform to or challenge these expectations. The concept of "gendered dress" can encompass everything from the style and colour of clothing to how it is accessorized—for instance, pink for girls and blue for boys (Nash & Sidhu, 2023).

Dress code

According to a study by Feaster and Coladarci (2012), dress codes in educational institutions are defined as "policies that dictate the types of clothing students are allowed or not allowed to wear" (p. 26). These policies often have specific rules regarding clothing items, such as skirts, shirts, shoes, or accessories, and may vary in stringency depending on the institution or grade level. Such dress codes in educational settings establish a conducive learning environment, minimize distractions, and foster a sense of discipline among students. Another perspective defines dress code as a mechanism of social control and conformity, emphasizing its role in regulating appearance and enforcing societal norms and expectations. In a sociological analysis by Crane (2012), dress codes are described as "rules that specify what individuals must or must not wear, often to class, gender, or other social categories" (p. 45). Crane (2012) argues that dress codes serve as a form of social control, as they impose standards of appearance that reinforce dominant ideologies and maintain social hierarchies.

This definition highlights the broader social implications of dress codes beyond mere clothing regulations, emphasizing their influence on identity expression, power dynamics, and the perpetuation of societal norms. A third interpretation of dress code is centred around its role in creating a particular atmosphere or brand image, particularly in the context of businesses and organizations. In their study on dress codes in the hospitality industry, Kim, Kim, and Han (2018) define dress code as "a set of clothing standards that employees are required to follow to convey a desired image or brand identity" (p. 209). This definition emphasizes how dress codes are employed

strategically to shape customers' perceptions, establish a cohesive organizational identity, and align with the values and branding of a particular establishment. In this sense, dress codes visually represent an organization's desired image and can enhance the overall customer experience.

The influence of dress codes on religious dressing

Dress codes can significantly impact religious dressing practices (Lynch, 2007). This is because they may intersect with individuals' freedom to express their religious beliefs through attire, potentially leading to conflicts or challenges regarding religious accommodation. Research by Bader and Dobbins (2016) highlights that dress codes in educational institutions can sometimes clash with the religious dressing requirements of students. As is the case, certain schools may have strict policies prohibiting head coverings, such as hijabs or turbans, which are significant religious symbols for MUSLIM and Sikh individuals, respectively. Such dress codes can restrict religious expression and create tension between students' desire to adhere to their religious beliefs and the school's uniform policy.

Furthermore, in the workplace, dress codes may pose challenges for employees who wish to observe their religious dressing practices. A study by Haq and Fitzpatrick (2011) points out that restrictive dress codes may require employees to adhere to a specific dress standard that does not accommodate certain religious attire or symbols. This can create dilemmas for individuals who want to maintain their religious identity while complying with workplace regulations. Employers must balance enforcing dress codes for professional reasons and accommodating employees' religious beliefs to ensure inclusivity and respect for diverse religious practices.

On the other hand, dress codes that explicitly accommodate religious dressing can promote inclusivity and respect for diverse religious beliefs. A study by Simcock (2020) explores the impact of school dress codes that consider religious attire. The findings indicate that dress codes that allow religious garments can positively influence students' sense of belonging, cultural expression, and religious identity. Such dress codes accommodate religious diversity and foster an inclusive and supportive environment for students of various faiths.

In her book, "Qur'an and Women," Amina Wadud provides an interpretation of the Qur'an that considers women's perspectives and experiences. She contends that God demonstrates considerable equity towards women, substantiating her claim with references from the Quran. She asserts that God has explicitly indicated that he will only prefer a certain individual based on the amount of Taqwa each person possesses. She points out that Islam introduced many reforms specifically intended to help women in response to the prevalent androcentric norm, which had already catered to the interests and desires of men. Wadud argues that the fundamental goal of Islam is to ensure fairness for its adherents rather than striving for absolute equality. This is a foundation for a more equitable and morally upright life and human relationships (Wadud, 1999).

Seventh-century Arabian society was far from perfect. The society functioned as a patriarchy that viewed women as objects and judged their worth based on their family background and wealth. According to Leila Ahmed's book *Women and Gender in Islam*, only women from higher social classes wore the hijab in the pre-Islamic Middle East. The purpose was to

distinguish between women regarded as socially acceptable and those deemed available for public interaction and prohibited from wearing the hijab (Ahmed, 1992). During the lifetime of Prophet Mohamed, God only ordered his wives to wear the hijab. Due to the belief among Muslims that the actions of Prophet Mohamed are considered Sunnah, the wearing of the hijab, along with the jilbab (a long dress for men), is often regarded as a component of the Sunnah by many Muslims. The hijab, worn by all Muslim women, was a measure adopted by Islam to eliminate the hierarchical hierarchy imposed on women by the social structure of the pre-Islamic era. The correlation between Leila Ahmed's historical analysis of the hijab and Amina Wadud's interpretation of the Quran enables us to comprehend how fairness was attained through the practice of hijab in that particular era. Numerous Muslim women all over the world continue to practice the hijab tradition, which Islam established about 1440 years ago. In this essay, I will elucidate some factors that incentivize Muslim women to wear the hijab.

Muslims depend on both the Quran, the holy book of Islam, and the Sunnah, which refers to the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad, to direct their way of life. They adhere to the principles of the Quran and emulate the conduct and Sunnah of Prophet Mohamed. As a result, numerous Muslim women choose to wear veils, following the example of the prophet's wives, in order to demonstrate their submission to God and emulate the prophet's lifestyle. By engaging in this practice, individuals have a heightened sense of proximity to the divine and greater spiritual fulfillment. There is the contention that the hijab poses numerous challenges for women, particularly in the Western world, in the present era. They question the

motivation behind a woman's decision to wear a hijab, willingly forgoing her comfort and convenience as a symbol of her submission to God. The sole word I choose to respond with is "love." Love compels someone to willingly relinquish nearly anything to pursue a transcendent and elevated spiritual bond with their beloved, whether a fellow human or a divine entity. A hijab-wearing acquaintance previously conveyed that donning the headscarf granted her inner tranquillity and strength and manifested in her physical well-being and psychological equilibrium. She discovered that wearing a headscarf impacted her emotional well-being. She emphasized this by informing me that the depression she used to experience had significantly diminished. However, the hijab provides not only internal advantages but also external advantages.

Unconstrained by the limitations of current trends and physical attractiveness. Undoubtedly, Hollywood exerts significant control over the regulation of women's bodies in Western societies. Through subtle and continuous means, it conveys to women globally that their physical attractiveness primarily determines their value. For numerous Muslim women, the most effective means of navigating the complex world of fashion and beauty is donning the headscarf, which shifts focus from their external physical appearance to inner qualities. In her piece "Half and Half," Nousheen Yousuf-Sadiq describes her personal experience of breaking free from a society that places excessive importance on body size, where women are pressured to constantly monitor their calorie intake and develop an aversion to carbohydrates while indulging in excessive salad consumption. According to her, the Hijab was a means through which she gained self-assurance and authority over her physical being. "Without wearing the Hijab, I felt

compelled to conform to society's beauty standards, which influenced how I presented myself to others and impacted my self-perception when I fell short of those norms". "By adhering to the Islamic clothing code, I exercised authority over those allowed to observe me and those permitted to have physical contact with me". "I experienced a heightened sense of control over others' perception of me since, for the first time, they were not judging me based on my physical appearance but rather on my true self".

It is crucial to acknowledge that wearing a hijab does not imply that women would become unfashionable or forfeit their beauty. Conversely, the hijab is worn in several trendy styles. A simple search on Google using the term "hijab fashion" yields numerous websites offering guidance on stylishly wearing the hijab and showcasing Muslim fashion designers who specialise in making trendy attire for women who wear the hijab. "Despite not wearing a Hijab myself, I have a preferred Hijab outfit company based in Turkey that I particularly admire. I regularly visit their website (<http://www.kayra.com.tr/>) to stay updated on their latest collections".

Regarding beauty, it is crucial to highlight the numerous advantages of wearing a Hijab for hair and facial features. The hijab serves as a protective barrier from wind and dirt, enabling women in arid and warm regions to maintain cleaner hair for extended periods. Additionally, it protects both the hair and the face against the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation. They were resisting colonisation by embracing the Hijab. In the opening of his book *Desiring Arabs*, Joseph Massad (2007) elucidates how Western colonising nations have utilised the concept of "Arab sexuality" as a means to establish dominance over Arab and Muslim civilizations. He explains that the

colonisers believed that by comprehending the Arab psyche's perception of its own sexual urges and sexual identity, they could effectively control Muslim communities and force them to comply with their demands.

An anthropological assumption prevalent among colonising countries was that Muslim women who wore the hijab were perceived as docile, subjugated, and unintelligent. It was believed that these women concealed their exotic bodies under the hijab to cater to the whims and wishes of their husbands. The extent of the misperception that the Western world held regarding Muslim women is evident in numerous Western-produced films. However, the movie *Battle of Algiers* challenged and refuted these erroneous ideas.

Identity, authority, and credibility are three important factors to consider. The hijab empowers women by allowing them to shape their identities and control how others perceive them. The hijab serves as a means of signalling the identity and affiliation of these women, clearly indicating their association with Islam and Muslim society. The writers of the essay "Hijab and American Muslim Women" discuss the phenomenon of second generation Muslim American women who choose not to adopt Western cultural norms by wearing the headscarf. Consequently, they establish a distinct position for themselves inside their nation, with a readily identifiable and simultaneous identity as both a Muslim and an American, a feat that their immigrant parents were unable to do (Vashi, 2011).

The wearing of hijab can also confer women with influence and respect within their communities. From my personal experience as an unveiled Muslim woman, I have observed that hijab is often associated with piety

among Muslims. Additionally, devout Muslim males tend to find it more comfortable to engage with Muslim women who wear hijab, as they perceive them to be more modest and knowledgeable about Islamic teachings. Consequently, women who wear hijab experience enhanced credibility and receive greater prospects within their Muslim communities compared to Muslim women who do not wear hijab, as stated by Vashi (2011).

Opportunities for education, mobility, and interpersonal connections. If a woman belongs to a family that strictly follows the patriarchal interpretation of the sacred Texts in their religion, regardless of whether they are Muslim, Christian, Jewish, or Buddhist, she may have restricted access to various chances in life, such as education and travel. Certain Muslim girls opt to liberate themselves by donning the headscarf. Within a conservative, orthodox Muslim household, the act of wearing the hijab serves as a clear indication of their daughter's unwavering dedication to Islam. For numerous Muslim women who are constrained by fear or familial loyalty from defying their family's wishes, wearing the hijab offers a means to earn their family's trust and endorsement, thereby granting them the chance to explore the world with a certain degree of autonomy. The headscarf symbolizes modesty within the region of Palestine, my place of upbringing. The hijab can be seen as a safeguard that women choose to shield themselves against accusations of moral decline and, in certain severe situations, infidelity (Vashi, 2011).

Topically, dress codes can have a profound influence on religious dressing practices. They can either restrict religious expression and create conflicts or accommodate and support religious diversity. Finding a balance between dress code policies and religious accommodation is essential to

promote inclusivity, respect individuals' religious beliefs, and create an environment where diverse religious dressing practices are acknowledged and respected.

Dress Codes for different organizations

Dress codes in various organizations, such as the health sector and the banking sector, are essential for shaping the professional image of employees and the overall organizational culture (Gregston, 2014). These codes are often established to maintain a certain level of decorum, professionalism, and safety within the workplace). In the health sector, dress codes are not merely about aesthetics but are primarily designed to ensure hygiene, patient safety, and professionalism. One of healthcare institutions' most common dress code requirements is using scrubs (Murdoch, 2018). Scrubs are loose-fitting, comfortable clothing typically made of cotton or a similar material. They are chosen for their easy maintenance and ability to withstand frequent washing, which is crucial for infection control. According to a study by Garibaldi et al. (2013), using scrubs in healthcare settings helps minimize the risk of bacterial contamination and infection transmission. Also, many healthcare facilities have strict guidelines regarding the colour and style of scrubs to ensure a consistent and professional appearance. For example, research by Jozkowski et al. (2018) indicates that using solid colours and minimal patterns in healthcare attire promotes a sense of uniformity and cleanliness, reassuring patients. Again, healthcare dress codes often require healthcare workers to wear closed-toe, slip-resistant shoes, essential for safety in clinical settings. According to a study by Price and Walker (2017), proper footwear prevents slip-and-fall accidents and injuries among healthcare workers.

In the banking sector, the dress code primarily focuses on projecting a professional and trustworthy image. Employees in banking institutions are often required to adhere to a formal dress code. This typically includes tailored suits, dress shirts, ties, and dress shoes for men, while women are expected to wear formal business suits, dresses, or skirts paired with blouses or dress shirts. A study by Pohl et al. (2014) highlights that the banking sector emphasizes formal business attire to convey competence and respect for clients. In the banking sector, grooming standards are also crucial. Employees are expected to maintain a well-groomed appearance, which includes neatly styled hair, clean-shaven faces for men, and minimal use of accessories. This adherence to grooming standards is often linked to client-facing roles and the need to convey professionalism.

Moreover, the banking sector carefully considers using colours and patterns in clothing. Conservative colours such as black, navy blue, grey, and white are preferred, as they are associated with professionalism and reliability. Research by Maalouf et al. (2019) indicates that conservative colour choices in banking attire help create an atmosphere of seriousness and trust. To sum it all up, dress codes in different organizations, such as the health and banking sectors, serve distinct purposes. In healthcare, dress codes prioritize hygiene and patient safety, with scrubs and appropriate footwear being essential. In contrast, the banking sector prioritises professionalism and trustworthiness, with formal attire and grooming standards paramount. These dress codes reflect each sector's requirements and expectations while contributing to organizational culture and image.

The Concept of Religious Dress

Religious dress, also known as religious attire or attire associated with faith traditions, represents a vital aspect of religious identity and expression across diverse cultures and beliefs (Pastorelli, 2016; Kosseva & Kyurkchieva, 2016). It encompasses the clothing and adornments that individuals wear as a tangible symbol of their religious affiliation and commitment to specific religious principles or practices (Hume, 2013; Bucar, 2016). In many religions, religious dress is a visual marker of faith and adherence to religious codes. For instance, in Islam, Muslim women often wear a hijab (headscarf) as a sign of modesty and devotion to Allah, while Sikh men commonly don turbans and refrain from cutting their hair to align with the teachings of Sikhism (Rita, 2017; Qureshi, 2016).

These garments and accessories carry deep spiritual significance. They are not merely clothing but are seen as a means of obeying divine commandments, fostering a sense of humility, and promoting virtue and piety. By wearing religious dress, individuals publicly declare their faith and commitment, reinforcing their connection to a higher power and their religious community (Hass, 2020; Morag & Teman, 2018). Religious dress also plays a role in facilitating a sense of belonging and unity within a religious community (King, 2019; Cumper & Lewis, 2018). It helps individuals identify and connect with others who share their faith, creating a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding. In addition, it serves as a visual reminder of the values and principles espoused by a particular religious tradition, both to the wearer and those around them (Crnic & Pogacnik, 2019).

However, religious dress can also become a topic of debate and controversy in secular societies, as questions of personal religious expression clash with societal norms and laws. The history surrounding the significance of dress within religious orders has been somewhat lacking and contradictory. While scholarly literature acknowledges the importance and symbolism of religious habits for these orders, it often treats them as a secondary consideration (Sahli, 2017; Warr, 2016; Nichols, 2011; Fizzard, 2007). Typically, these mentions provide descriptive information about the garments, often derived from religious rules, without delving deeper into their true meaning. This approach can be seen as somewhat simplistic, assuming that those within these religious communities always strictly adhered to these sartorial rules.

Some historians have recognized that this was not always the case, occasionally touching on religious habits' controversies (Sahli, 2017). However, even in these instances, the treatment of these issues remains largely anecdotal. Nevertheless, the habits held significant meaning for those who wore them, with only a few exceptions in historical research. Kassius Hallinger, in 1951, pointed out that this scholarly neglect was due to a focus on critical editions rather than social interpretations, and more recently, Andrew Jotischky explored the Carmelite habit in his book on the order, shedding some light on the subject (Jotischky, 2002; Hallinger, 1950).

Some studies briefly touch upon the symbolic significance of religious habits, from the broader idea of the habit as an "outer sign of status, symbol of humility and detachment from the world" to allegorical interpretations of colours, shapes, and materials, often based on post-facto elaborations by the

orders themselves (Sahl, 2017; Hume, 2013). However, how this "great importance" was experienced by historical individuals has been largely overlooked. While symbolism, status, and membership were undoubtedly crucial aspects of religious habits, they only scratch the surface of the broader experiences and attitudes surrounding them (Upson-Saia, Daniel-Hughes & Batten, 2016; Trzebiatowska, 2010).

Moreover, secular perspectives have often dominated the approach when discussing religious clothing and dress, interpreting the matter within a secular logic. This approach mirrors the study of regulations of lay clothing, often viewed through the lens of prohibition and consumption, particularly in sumptuary laws (Huq, Chowdhury & Klassen, 2016; Sahl, 2017). While these aspects are undeniably a part of the equation, especially for the secular clergy, they fail to provide a comprehensive understanding that transcends rules, restrictions, status, and consumption. This approach emphasises transgressions, focusing on monks or friars violating dress codes. However, the relationship between religious orders, dress, and habits holds deeper connotations than the mere adherence or violation of these rules and regulations (Sahl, 2017).

Nevertheless, balancing the right to religious freedom with concerns related to security, social integration, and gender equality can be a complex issue (Shachar, 2016; Gray, 2011;). These debates underscore the dynamic nature of religious dress and its role in contemporary discussions on multiculturalism and individual rights. Religious dress embodies the tangible expression of religious identity and commitment for individuals from various faith traditions (Mirza, 2013). It is a powerful symbol of religious values,

fosters community and belonging, and can spark debates surrounding religious freedom and societal norms in diverse and pluralistic societies.

Religious Dress of Muslim Women in the Workplace

Muslim women's dress code is an essential aspect of Islamic culture. The concept of modesty is central to Muslim dress for both men and women and Muslim people often dress in clothing that does not reveal body parts (Lewis, 2019; Boulanouar, 2006). Muslim women wear various dress types, including the hijab, niqab, and burqa (Mohammadi & Hazeri, 2021). The hijab is a headscarf covering the hair and neck but exposing the face. It is the most common type of Muslim women's dress worn by women in many countries, including Ghana. A niqab is a veil covering the face, exposing only the eyes (Mohammadi & Hazeri, 2021). It is worn by some Muslim women in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. A burqa is a full-body garment that covers the entire body, including the face and head. It is worn by some Muslim women in countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan. In India, nearly two-thirds of Muslim women wear a burqa covering the entire face, while smaller shares say they wear a niqab or a hijab (Mohammadi & Hazeri, 2021). Muslim women's dress code varies depending on the country and the culture, and there is no Quranic text requiring Muslim women to wear a specific type of dress (Ramírez, 2018). The Quran instructs men and women to dress modestly and cover their private parts. Cultural and regional traditions often influence Muslim women's dress code. For many Muslim women, wearing the hijab is an expression of faith and a source of identity and empowerment, allowing them to align their outer appearance with their inner religious convictions (Mirza & Meetoo, 2018).

In the workplace, Muslim women often encounter distinctive challenges concerning their religious attire, particularly the hijab. For many women, upholding their commitment to modesty and religious observance is paramount, even as they pursue their careers and professional aspirations. The decision to wear the hijab in a workplace setting is not merely a matter of clothing choice; it is deeply rooted in religious freedom and personal conviction. Muslim women view their attire as an integral part of their identity, allowing them to align their external appearance with their inner religious beliefs and values (Ahmed & Gorey, 2023; Koura, 2018).

However, the presence of the hijab in the workplace can give rise to genuine concerns regarding potential discrimination, stereotyping, and bias, especially in the hiring and promotion processes (Ahmed & Gorey, 2023). Their intersecting social identities encompass several marginalized groups. As women, they often experience marginalization in the workforce. Additionally, as Muslims residing in Western countries, they belong to religious minority groups. Furthermore, many Muslim women also fall within ethnic or racialized minority groups, such as Arabs, African Americans, or Canadians (Ahmed & Gorey, 2023). Notably, Muslim women who wear the headscarf or hijab may face heightened visibility and potential targeting, as their religious affiliation is readily identifiable, unlike Muslim men who may not be as visibly marked (Litchmore & Safdar, 2015). In the United States, a substantial proportion of Muslim women, approximately four out of every ten, consistently wear the hijab, while an additional two out of ten wear it most or some of the time (Pew Research Center, 2017). Given the prevalence of hijab wearing and the essential role of equitable labour market participation in

achieving full citizenship, comprehending its role in the discrimination faced by Muslim women is of immense significance both from a human and policy standpoint.

Statistics reveal that nearly half of all Muslim Americans reported experiencing at least one incident of discrimination in the past year (48%), with employment discrimination particularly prevalent among Muslim women (Pew Research Center, 2017). This pattern aligns consistently with findings from national surveys conducted in Canada, the U.K., and the Netherlands (Ahmed & Gorey, 2023; Blommaert & Spierings, 2019; Khattab et al., 2019; Miaari et al., 2019). Across these studies, it becomes evident that Muslim women face a significantly higher risk of unemployment and underemployment when compared to Christian or majority-religion (or nonreligious) women, even after adjusting for the independent effects of ethnicity, race, and country of origin. However, as these secondary analytical studies could not fully account for the likely impact of the hijab in perpetuating such consistent and widespread discrimination, several scholars have called for future studies to address this gap.

Conversely, qualitative studies conducted in the USA and the U.K. have contributed valuable insights by providing rich narratives of Muslim women's experiences in the labour market (Hana-Meksem, 2012; Ireiqat, 2014; Tariq & Syed, 2017). In these studies, individuals responsible for hiring educators and healthcare workers expressed concerns about Muslims and associated the hijab with Islamic fundamentalism and un-Americanism. Conversely, some purposefully selected Muslim women who did not wear the hijab described their apprehensions within predominantly "anti-Muslim

workplaces. Similarly, selected women who chose to veil recounted consistent experiences of discrimination in various domains, including employment, academia, and travel (Hana-Meksem, 2012; Ireiqat, 2014; Tariq & Syed, 2017). Even among the 20 hijab-wearing Muslim women in executive, supervisory, and managerial roles, their stories reflected more significant workplace challenges compared to colleagues who adopted more Western or mainstream appearances (Hana-Meksem, 2012; Ireiqat, 2014; Tariq & Syed, 2017).

Unkelbach et al. (2010) conducted a study to assess biases in treating headscarved women in Germany, particularly in employment contexts. Through a series of experiments, the authors investigated how wearing a headscarf influenced decisions related to staff hiring. Their analysis uncovered strong and credible selection biases, with a higher likelihood of rejection for applicants wearing headscarves. In a separate study, Ahmed and Goray (2021) shed light on the discrimination faced by Muslim women who wear headscarves in Western countries. They conducted a meta-analysis that synthesized findings from studies conducted between 2010 and 2020. Their research revealed that women in religious Muslim attire encounter significant discrimination during the hiring process, placing them at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts who do not wear headscarves.

King and Ahmad (2010) expanded on this topic by examining employment opportunities for Muslim women and the interpersonal treatment they receive from prospective employers during job applications, particularly in the American retail sector. Their experimental findings demonstrated that applicants wearing headscarves experienced more negative interpersonal

attitudes, including rudeness, hostility, shorter interactions, and less helpfulness, than those wearing nonreligious attire. Furthermore, Ghumman and Ryan (2013) conducted a study to analyze discrimination against female job applicants who wear Islamic headscarves. Their research included a field experiment where women with and without headscarves applied for positions at stores and restaurants. The findings from their study provided clear evidence of both formal and interpersonal discrimination against Muslim applicants who wear headscarves.

Ghumman and Jackson (2010) researched the employment situation of Muslim women in the U.S. labour market. Their study focused on exploring the expectations of American Muslim women, offering insights into their labour market participation. This research indicated that Muslim women who wore religious attire had lower expectations of securing employment across various occupations than their non-attired counterparts. Notably, the expectation disparity between these two groups was more pronounced in job roles with higher public visibility and prestige levels. In a related study, Reeves et al. (2012) interviewed 79 female Muslim doctors and healthcare professionals, some of whom wore headscarves. The interviews revealed that the women wearing headscarves reported experiencing intolerance and discrimination within their professional environments.

The response to religious dress codes for Muslim women in the workplace varies widely among employers and organizations (Tariq & Sayed, 2018). Some workplaces actively champion diversity and inclusivity, recognizing the importance of accommodating employees' religious practices and attire. These organizations often have policies that protect employees'

rights to wear religious attire, such as the hijab. They strive to create an environment where individuals of all faiths can express their beliefs without fear of discrimination or exclusion. These policies also offer reasonable accommodations for prayer and other religious practices (Adam & Rea, 2018).

Conversely, not all workplaces are equally enlightened or informed about the significance of religious attire like the hijab. A lack of awareness or understanding of the religious and cultural context can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and unwarranted restrictions. Some Muslim women may encounter resistance or resistance to wearing the hijab in the workplace, even when it is a fundamental aspect of their religious identity. This can create discomfort and hinder their ability to fully express their faith while pursuing their careers (Etherington, 2019; Al-Surimi et al., 2020).

Job market sectors like health and banking may approach religious dress codes differently. For instance, in the healthcare sector, where uniformity and hygiene are paramount, accommodations for religious attire like the hijab are typically made without compromising patient safety or professional standards (Zulaekah & Harisah, 2021). Many healthcare organizations recognize the need for cultural sensitivity and strive to provide an inclusive environment for their diverse workforce. In contrast, the banking sector, known for its conservative and formal attire standards, may present challenges for Muslim women who wish to wear the hijab (Quintana, 2018; Alayan & Shehadeh, 2021; Syed & Pio, 2010). While some banks have embraced diversity and created policies to accommodate religious attire, others may be more traditional in their dress codes. In such cases, Muslim

women may need to balance adhering to their religious beliefs and conforming to workplace dress expectations.

The challenges and experiences of Muslim women wearing religious attire like the hijab in the workplace are multifaceted and context-dependent (Opara, Sealy & Ryan, 2020). While some employers and organizations actively support diversity and religious accommodation, others may lag in understanding and implementing inclusive policies (Ball & Haque, 2003). The dynamics of religious dress codes in various job sectors, such as healthcare and banking, can differ significantly, reflecting the broader spectrum of attitudes toward religious diversity in the workplace. Promoting religious freedom and cultural sensitivity ensures Muslim women can express their faith while pursuing their professional aspirations (Petersen, 2020).

Health Sector: Dress Code and Professional Standards for Muslim Women

The health sector has specific dress code requirements to ensure healthcare professionals' safety, hygiene, and professionalism. These dress codes aim to maintain a clean and sterile environment, prevent the spread of infections, and establish trust and credibility with patients. One common dress code requirement in the health sector is using scrubs. Scrubs are typically loose-fitting, comfortable garments worn by healthcare professionals during clinical duties. They are designed to be easily cleaned and help minimize the transmission of contaminants. According to Kaczmarek et al. (2018), scrubs are considered an essential part of the dress code in healthcare settings due to their practicality and ability to maintain a clean environment.

In addition to scrubs, healthcare professionals are often required to wear closed-toe shoes. Closed-toe shoes protect against spills, sharp objects, and potential hazards in healthcare environments. They are also easier to clean and maintain. VandenBerg et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of closed toe footwear in reducing the risk of foot injuries and the spread of contaminants in healthcare settings. Healthcare professionals are often required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks, and gowns, depending on the nature of their work. PPE is a barrier against potential infectious agents and helps maintain a sterile environment. According to a study by Babcock et al. (2017), the appropriate use of PPE as part of the dress code plays a critical role in preventing the transmission of infections in healthcare settings.

In the healthcare sector, the dress code for Muslim women reflects their commitment to modesty, which is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings (Saidum, Akhmetova & Abd Rahman, 2018). This dress code is not just a matter of personal preference but is also aligned with religious observance and cultural values. Muslim women working in healthcare, whether as doctors, nurses, or other healthcare professionals, strive to balance their religious and professional responsibilities. One of the most recognizable aspects of Muslim women's dress in the healthcare sector is the hijab, a headscarf that covers the hair. The hijab symbolises modesty and a visible expression of their faith. Muslim women wear the hijab to fulfil their religious obligation while maintaining their professional roles (Sidani, Sidani, & Ballenger. 2017).

In many healthcare settings, there are specific uniform requirements that healthcare professionals must follow. These uniforms are designed to

ensure cleanliness, infection control, and professionalism. This often means combining their modest dress with the prescribed uniform for Muslim women. For instance, a Muslim female doctor in a hospital setting wears a lab coat or disposable over-sleeves over her modest clothing (Akhmetova & Rahman, 2018). These lab coats or disposable over-sleeves are often chosen in colours and styles that comply with the hospital's regulations. The lab coat or disposable over-sleeves are professional attire and a practical garment that provides coverage while allowing her to perform her duties effectively.

Institutions like the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) provide guidelines and legal protections to protect Muslim women's rights and religious practices in the healthcare sector (Blake & Hatzenbuehler, 2019). These guidelines emphasize that employers are legally obligated to make reasonable accommodations for religious practices, including dress code, as long as they do not result in undue hardship to the workplace. This means an employer should not discriminate against a Muslim woman based on her choice to wear a hijab or modest clothing. Instead, they should collaborate with her to find reasonable solutions that respect her religious and professional commitments (Kania & Ulfa, 2020).

Muslim women working in the health sector navigate the delicate balance between their religious obligations and professional responsibilities by wearing clothing that adheres to Islamic principles of modesty, often including the hijab, and by finding practical ways to integrate these choices with required uniforms (Padela & Zaidi, 2018; Mohammadi, Evans & Jones, 2007; Wanton et al., 2014). Legal protections, such as those provided by the EEOC in the United States, ensure that these healthcare professionals can maintain

their faith-based practices while contributing effectively to the healthcare field. This approach promotes inclusivity and religious freedom in the workplace, fostering a diverse and respectful environment in healthcare settings.

Banking Sector: Dress Code and Professional Standards for Muslim Women

The banking sector often maintains a formal dress code to give clients and stakeholders a professional and trustworthy image. The banking industry's dress code requirements reflect the business's conservative nature, emphasizing professionalism and adherence to societal norms. In many banking institutions, a common dress code requirement is the expectation of employees to wear formal business attire. This typically includes tailored suits, dress shirts, ties, and dress shoes for men, while women are expected to wear formal business suits, dresses, or skirts paired with blouses or dress shirts. According to Srinivas (2014), the banking sector stresses the importance of formal business attire as it conveys a sense of professionalism, competence, and respect for clients.

In addition to formal business attire, the banking sector emphasizes the importance of maintaining a neat and groomed appearance. This includes well-groomed hair, clean and well-kept nails, and minimal use of accessories or jewellery. Wei and Ma (2011) explain that the banking sector's dress code emphasises a polished appearance to enhance the perception of credibility and trustworthiness among clients.

Furthermore, the banking sector often imposes guidelines on using colours and patterns in clothing. Neutral and subdued colours such as black,

navy blue, grey, and white are preferred, as they are considered more formal and convey a sense of professionalism. According to Pereira and Graça (2018), using conservative colours and patterns in the dress code of the banking sector helps create an atmosphere of seriousness and reliability. In the banking sector, the dress code for Muslim women can be influenced by a combination of factors, including the financial institution's policies and the cultural norms of the region in which they work (Karahan & Tugsuz, 2021). In the context of Africa, which encompasses diverse countries with varying cultural and religious demographics, the dress code for Muslim women in the banking sector can exhibit regional variations (Zins & Weill, 2016). In North and East African countries with predominantly Muslim populations, such as Egypt and Sudan, it is common to see Muslim women in banking wearing attire that includes a headscarf and modest clothing, which is consistent with Islamic traditions (Sidani & Sidani & Ballenger, 2017; Nageeb, 2004).

In Ghana, a country in West Africa known for its religious diversity, the dress code for Muslim women in the banking sector may reflect a blend of Islamic modesty and the country's broader cultural practices. While the hijab and modest clothing are still essential elements, the specific style and level of coverage may be influenced by the local culture, which embraces diversity and tolerance. Employment laws in various countries, including African nations like Ghana, may require banking institutions to accommodate religious practices and dress codes. For example, Ghana's labour laws promote religious freedom and non-discrimination in the workplace, meaning Muslim women in the banking sector have legal protections to observe their religious dress code without discrimination (Anku-Tsede & Gadegbeku, 2014).

Extent of Restriction and Discrimination of Religious Dress

The extent of restriction and discrimination against Muslim women's religious dress varies widely across the globe, influenced by a complex interplay of factors including legal frameworks, cultural norms, and societal attitudes (Syed, & Hennekam, 2018; Kirmayer, 2019). In many Western nations, a legal framework generally upholds religious freedom, granting Muslim women the right to wear religious attire such as the hijab, niqab, or burqa. For example, in the United States, the First Amendment protects religious expression, including clothing choices, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) provides guidelines to prevent discrimination in employment based on religious dress (Schragger, & Schwartzman, (2019; Akhtar, 2019). Despite these legal protections, Muslim women in Western countries may still face sporadic discrimination, such as workplace bias or verbal harassment, due to their choice of attire (Khan, 2018; Kite, Whitley & Wagner, 2022).

However, in some countries, particularly in Europe, legislative actions have imposed restrictions on certain forms of religious dress, citing concerns about security, identity, and secularism. France, for instance, implemented a ban on face-covering veils, including the niqab and burqa, in public spaces (Evolvi, 2019). Belgium has similar restrictions in place (Zempi, 2019). These bans have sparked debates about the balance between individual religious freedoms and societal values, with proponents arguing that such restrictions are necessary for security and integration reasons (Evolvi, 2019; Zempi, 2019). In Africa, the situation varies across the continent. In North and East

African countries with significant Muslim populations, like Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia, wearing religious attire is generally accepted and protected by law. Muslim women in these regions often wear the hijab or other modest dress without significant legal barriers. However, societal attitudes may still vary, and occasional discrimination can occur (Sidani, Sidani & Ballenger, 2017). Nigeria and Ghana exhibit diverse cultural and religious landscapes. In these nations, Muslim women's freedom to wear religious dress largely depends on the local cultural norms and religious tolerance. However, occasional incidents of discrimination may still arise due to a lack of understanding or biases (Obeng-Mireku, 2017; Sulaiman, Fadilu & Sulaiman, 2022).

Conceptual basis for the Study

The conceptual framework details the relationship between the various variables applied to the study. In this vein, the conceptual framework maps the relationship between the independent variable, religious dressing, and the dependent variables, harassment, stigmatization, ridicule and promotion concerns at the workplace.

Religious dressing

Owing to the contrasting extent of conservatism thinking as opposed to the more liberal secular reasoning to wearing of religious dress, quite many studies have been carried out, particularly in Western countries such as America, Europe and, to some extent, Africa and Asia (Brown et al., 2013; Pazhoohi & Hosseinchari, 2014; Al Wazni, 2015; Macedo & Arantes, 2017). The most defining feature of all this research is that perceptions of female attractiveness, cultural values, implicit biases, emotions, and social systems

impact concerns over what dress is appropriate and when (Rahmath, Chambers & Wakewich, 2016). A study by Pazhoohi, Macedo and Arantes (2017) examined the shifting attitudes of heterosexual males in their perception of female attractiveness based on the dresses they wore. The study demonstrated that conservative religious dressing that hid many of the female bodily curves from easy glare attracted less male attention than liberal dressing that revealed a small quantity of the female bodily shape. Religious dressing goes so far as to encapsulate such vestments as the wearing of robes by Buddhists, the wearing of the burqa and hijab by Muslim women, and clerical cassocks by orthodox Christians, among others. Religious dressing sometimes comes with accessories, including rings, chains, crucifixes, beads, and hats.

Perceived female attractiveness and wearing of religious dressing

Female attractiveness has long been linked with their hair, eyes, visage, breast and chest outlook, waist, bust, buttocks, legs and feet (Thyne et al., 2016). Essentially, female attractiveness has been linked with every part of the body. This makes it quite imperative for females to be properly clad to make themselves less revealing in order to warrant unwanted attention. A study by Guéguen (2012) observed that female attractiveness differed depending on various factors such as age, social status, dressing, height, cosmetics, verbal and non-verbal cues.

Many religious bodies, therefore, justify the need for women to be directed to the most appropriate dressing styles based on the interpretation of doctrine (Al Wazni, 2015). This usually influences the dressing patterns and styles of various females based on their religious affiliation. The overriding

theme, however, is that certain professional, societal and legal requirements do not allow for any form of dressing at all, albeit supported by religion. In France, full-body covering is banned. Other EU countries, such as Belgium, are actively assessing the limits of acceptable body coverings and what is deemed unacceptable through an interpretation of laws on public safety (Brown et al., 2013). Given these contentious issues bordering on religious dressing, it was quite necessary to assess it through the lens of Muslim women in the workplace.

Conceptual Framework

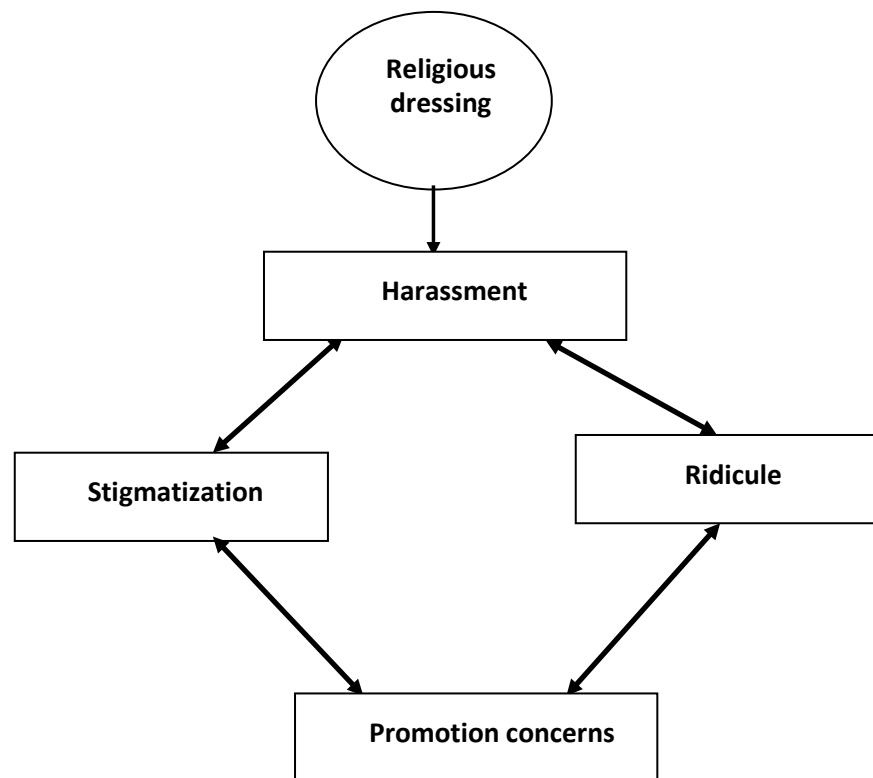


Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing the relationship between religious dressing at the workplace and the consequences thereof

The conceptual framework defines the variables for the study and accordingly maps out how they link with one another (Wilkinson, 2000). In this respect, the conceptual framework for most research revolves around defining the various variables and determining whether they are dependent or

independent (Saunders et al., 2007). Two variables have been identified for this study. The dependent variable is workplace challenges. This is characterised by stigmatisation, ridicule and promotional issues. The independent variable is religious dressing by Muslim women in the workplace. The link between them is discussed as follows and diagrammatically illustrated in figure 1.

Religious dressing

Religious clothing is dressing per specific religious practices, norms or significance to the faith practised by a group of people. For the most part, religious dressing includes wearing robes, cassocks, and hijabs. Common accessories used as adornment for religious dressing include hats, rings and chains, crucifixes, beads and many other items. According to Tomlinson (2014), certain religious expectations and traditions heavily influence what is considered appropriate to be worn by either males or females, though the emphasis is often on females.

In terms of Muslim women specifically, the hijab has a special mention in the Quran. As such, many Muslim women decide to wear it in Western countries and more liberal societies in a bid to preserve their dignity. In many conservative Muslim societies, the wearing of the hijab is imposed by law and enforced with brute force. Specific mention can be made of Iran, where the wearing of the hijab is inspected by the Morality police (Parsa, 2016). In Ghana, though there is no specific law requiring the wearing of the hijab to work, some Muslim women do so as a way of covering their hair from the glaring of other men other than their husbands. This has fetched mixed opinions among the strict conservatives who argue that old norms and customs

must be preserved because of the innate good they intend, and the more liberal modernist thinkers argue that wearing a head covering and long dresses is an outdated practice that should be scrapped or revised. Given that the discussion still runs strong and inconclusive, this study assessed the challenges some Muslim women encountered from wearing religious garbs to the workplace, as identified by Singh (2018).

Challenges with wearing religious dresses at work

The challenges of wearing religious dresses at work include stigmatisation, ridicule, promotion issues, and legal and regulatory concerns (Singh, 2018). In France, full face and body covering is banned for public safety, though religious customs may require it (Brown et al., 2013). In the Ghanaian context, the debate has often run along the lines of stigmatisation, ridicule, and promotion concerns. These have been discussed as follows:

- 1. Stigmatisation:** According to Reich (2012), religion and religious practices are deeply rooted in how many Ghanaians act, think and behave. Accordingly, people's fashion sense usually reflects their religious faith or association. Albeit in harmony with religious expectations, religious dressing to work is not always met kindly as some staff quickly form a perception of the person based on their appearance. This impacts the kind of network the person in religious garb can develop as it limits their ability to socialise depending on the environment in which they find themselves.
- 2. Ridicule:** While some forms of religious dressing may be permitted at certain societal places, they cannot be accepted in the workplace or fetch some ridicule and possibly discrimination (Beckwith & Fisher

2002). In Ghana, it is not common for a female traditionalist to be clad in Calico white with powder on her face as she marches to the workplace, though the law does not explicitly bar it (Kwakye-Oppong, 2014). In the same way, Muslim women cannot easily wear long dark dresses with full facial covering to work without eliciting attention and possibly ridicule from colleagues. This is one of the challenges associated with religious dressing in the workplace.

3. **Promotion concerns:** Every hardworking person aims to be promoted to higher levels of the organisation where his/ her impact could be most felt. However, given the stigmatisation and ridicule cited above, some jobs may not be easily willing to promote certain persons to higher levels, especially management. This may increase the disincentive to work and impact employee productivity.

The link between religious dressing and challenges with wearing religious dress at the work place

Drawing on the points identified above, wearing a religious dress to the workplace, though not forbidden by the laws of Ghana, may not be a welcoming prospect. Possible threats of stigmatisation, ridicule, and promotion concerns always remain. Back in 2021, there were heated debates on the floor of Ghana's parliament about whether it was appropriate to allow certain religious dressings in certain places. This debate was sparked by Achimota Senior High School refusing to allow a Rastafarian boy with dreadlocks to attend school without having a haircut (Ballah, 2021). Given this premise, there is enough justification to conduct a study on other

challenges Muslim women encounter at the work place from religious dressing. This, therefore, reflects on the need for this research.

Chapter Summary

The chapter presented a comprehensive literature review on religious dress in the workplace, focusing specifically on the experiences of Muslim women in Ghana. The chapter began by defining the dress concept, emphasizing its multifaceted nature encompassing cultural, social, and psychological dimensions. It then delves into the significance of religious dress, such as the hijab, niqab, and burqa, within the context of Islam and how it reflects religious commitment and identity. The literature review highlighted the challenges Muslim women face in the workplace, including discrimination and bias, and explores various forms of discrimination, legal protections, and guidelines. Additionally, it addressed the variability in approaches to religious dress codes across different sectors and the influence of cultural norms and societal attitudes on the experiences of Muslim women. This literature review serves as a strong foundation for the study's exploration of the challenges encountered by Ghanaian Muslim women in the workplace. It establishes the context for the theoretical framework based on Social Identity Theory, which seeks to understand how religious dress impacts social identity, discrimination, and workplace dynamics in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This section presents the research methodology used in the study. It contains the research design, study area, target population and other aspects of the methodology, such as data analysis and ethical considerations.

Research approach

The research adopted the qualitative research approach. The qualitative research approach is a naturalistic inquiry that seeks an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon within their natural settings (Cypress, 2015). The qualitative research approach used to achieve the objectives of this study involved in-depth interviews and thematic analysis. The qualitative research approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of Ghanaian Muslim women and other stakeholders in the health and banking sectors regarding religious dress. It enabled the study to capture the richness and complexity of their experiences and provided a comprehensive understanding of their experiences in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis.

Research Design

The interpretivism research philosophy and case study design were used in the study. Interpretivism is a qualitative research approach that emphasises the subjective nature of human experiences and seeks to understand the meaning and interpretation of social phenomena from the perspective of the individual involved (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The interpretivism research philosophy is used to understand the subjective experiences, perceptions, and meanings of Ghanaian Muslim women and

other stakeholders regarding religious dress in the workplace, aligning with the study's qualitative approach and objectives.

Moreover, the study also adopted the phenomenological research design. Phenomenological research design is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon (Wilson, 2015). The phenomenological research design was chosen because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of Ghanaian Muslim women in the workplace, providing a holistic understanding of their challenges related to dress codes, coverage levels, and discrimination based on religious attire.

Sources of data

The study used both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data consisted of the data collected from interviews with respondents. The secondary source were books and published articles consulted.

Study Area

Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, often called Sekondi-Takoradi or the Twin City, is a prominent metropolitan area along the Gulf of Guinea coastline in the Western Region of Ghana, West Africa. It is known for its historical significance, economic activities, and vibrant cultural diversity. This bustling metropolis has gained recognition as a unique and compelling study area for research focused on understanding the challenges Ghanaian Muslim women encounter as they wear religious attire in their workplace. The geographical significance of the Twin City is a notable factor. Its strategic location along the coast has made it a vital maritime trade and commerce hub.

With picturesque beaches and bustling ports, the city's proximity to the sea shapes its economic landscape, particularly in sectors such as healthcare and banking, which are central to this study.

Economically, Sekondi-Takoradi is a significant centre in Ghana, boasting a thriving industrial base that includes manufacturing, mining, and petroleum-related activities. This economic vibrancy attracts a diverse workforce from various cultural and religious backgrounds. This diversity is significant for understanding Muslim women's challenges in adhering to religious dress codes in a multicultural work environment.

The metropolis is characterized by cultural and religious diversity. It serves as home to people from various ethnic groups and religious backgrounds. This rich cultural tapestry fosters a vibrant social milieu where different traditions, languages, and belief systems coexist. In the context of this study, this cultural diversity provides a critical backdrop, as it can influence how Muslim women experience and negotiate religious dress codes within the broader framework of cultural norms and practices.

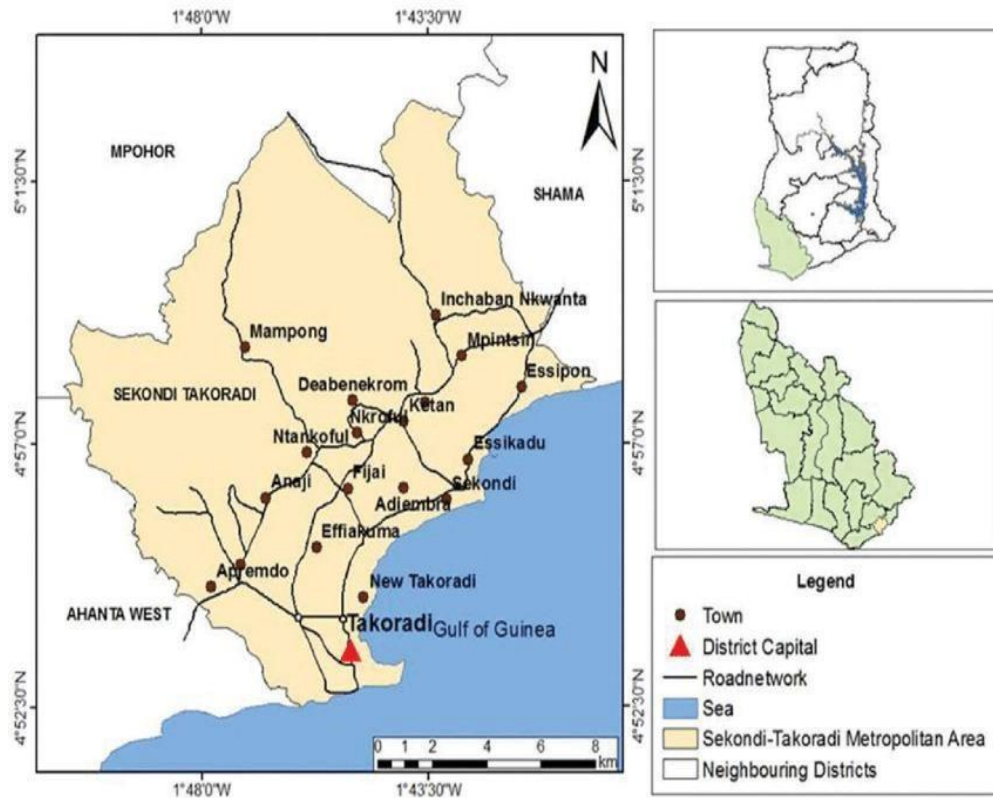


Figure 2: Study Area Map of Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis

Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis hosts a range of healthcare facilities, including hospitals, clinics, and banks. This study particularly interests these sectors since they often have specific dress codes and employee expectations. Examining how Muslim women navigate these dress codes and the potential challenges they encounter is a central aspect of the research. Furthermore, the metropolis has witnessed significant urban growth and development in recent years. This urban transformation has implications for employment opportunities, social interactions, and workplace dynamics. Understanding how the changing urban landscape influences the experiences of Muslim women in the workplace and their adherence to religious dress codes is a critical aspect of this research.

Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis is easily accessible by road, with well developed transportation networks connecting it to other regions of Ghana.

This accessibility facilitates data collection and ensures that the study can engage with a diverse cross-section of the population, further enriching the research findings. In summary, the metropolis encapsulates the complexities of urban life in Ghana and offers valuable insights into the challenges Ghanaian Muslim women face as they navigate the workplace while adhering to religious dress codes.

Study Population

The target population for this study encompasses Ghanaian Muslim women actively employed in the health and banking sectors within the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. These women represent the core focus of the research, as they are the individuals directly affected by the challenges and dynamics associated with wearing religious dress in their workplace settings. The population comprised two sectors of the economy that have prescribed dress codes for work. They are the banking and health sectors in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. Based on the 2021 population and housing census, the total number of Muslim women working in the health sector in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis is 220, while that of Public Banking Institutions is 80. However, the accessible population was 18 staff from the banking and health sectors in the Sekondi -Takoradi Metropolis, representing 6% of the Muslim women working in the public sector, according to the 2020 population and housing census. For this study, nine staff members from the health sector were selected from Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital and European Hospital. The

other nine respondents were from GCB Bank PLC, ADB Bank, and Consolidated Bank Ghana.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A sampling technique is a procedure used to select a subset of individuals from a larger population to gather data about the population (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). The purposive sampling procedure, a nonprobability sampling technique, was used to select respondents for the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling methodology where units are intentionally selected based on their possession of specific characteristics required for inclusion in the sample (Rai & Thapa, 2015). Purposive sampling was used to select and interview 18 respondents (Nine Muslim employees in Banks and the Health Sector each) in Sekondi-Takoradi based on their willingness to partake in the study. The first respondents were referrals by heads of units in the various institutions, and colleagues referred the rest after responding to the interview in a snowball technique.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using semi-structured interview guides. The semi-structured interview guide for this study was carefully crafted to align with the research objectives to gather rich, in-depth insights from participants. It consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore three key areas. Firstly, participants were asked to describe the specific dress codes they encountered in the health and banking sectors within the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis (Objective 1). Secondly, they were encouraged to discuss the accepted levels of clothing coverage in their workplaces, particularly religious attire (Objective 2). Lastly, participants were prompted to share their personal

experiences and perceptions regarding challenges and discrimination faced due to wearing religious dress in their workplaces (Objective 3). The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for flexibility and follow-up questions, enabling participants to provide comprehensive narratives about their experiences, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the experiences of Ghanaian Muslim women in their workplaces.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process involved contacting potential participants within the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis who met the inclusion criteria (Ghanaian Muslim women employed in the health and banking sectors) so all male banking staff and health workers together with non-Muslim women were not considered. After obtaining informed consent, interviews were conducted in a private and comfortable setting based on the participants' preferences. Each interview was audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached. The interviews lasted not more than 30 minutes.

Ethical Considerations

This section pertains to the ethical standards that researchers must adhere to throughout all stages of the research process. In order to ensure ethical practices, the study obtained ethical approval from the University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board. Once the clearance was obtained, the research was conducted with strict adherence to ethical considerations, including the right to participation, informed consent, confidentiality, data privacy, and anonymity.

Participants' consent was obtained before their involvement in the study to address the above ethical concerns. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they were free to decline participation at any time without obligation. Their consent was documented through their signature or thumbprint on the consent form. Participants were also encouraged to ask questions about the study, and these questions were responded to satisfactorily.

Participants were assigned unique serial numbers to safeguard their identities to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. This measure ensured that no information provided by participants could be linked back to them, and unauthorised access to the data was prevented. Participants were assured that their data would be stored securely in a personal password-protected drive by the researcher and that it would not be used for any purposes other than the study itself, protecting their privacy.

By adhering to these ethical considerations, the study upheld the principles of research ethics, safeguarding the rights and well-being of the participants. These ethical practices ensure the integrity and validity of the research findings and maintain trust between the researcher and the participants.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed using thematic analysis to identify key themes related to the study's objectives. Data were verified after a fortnight with the participants to verify what they said from the interview.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on the responses obtained from the field. The chapter is grouped into sections and subsections based on the study's objectives and themes generated.

Acceptable Dress Code at the Workplace

This theme addresses the study's first objective, which sought to determine the different dress codes used in the health and banking sectors in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. With regards to the type of dress code used at the workplace, participants confirmed that there are different dress codes depending on the industry, company policies and professional expectations. Take for example, formal office settings may require business attire such as suits and dresses, while more casual workplaces may allow for business casual attire such as khakis and button-down shirts. Regarding the health profession there are specific dress code guidelines that prioritize professionalism, hygiene and patient's safety. The dress code is also designed to ensure a uniform and identifiable appearance while promoting a clean and sterile environment. Nurses are required to wear scrubs which consist of a matching set of loose fitting trousers and a tunic-style top. Alongside the scrubs, nurses are also required to wear appropriate footwear that is, closed-toe shoes that are comfortable and essential for the nursing profession to ensure safety and prevent the spread of infections. Shoes should have slip-resistant soles to minimize the risk of accidents and provide stability during long shifts. It is important to note that some healthcare facilities may have specific guidelines

regarding the colour and style of scrubs to maintain consistency and enhance identification.

On the other hand, participants from the field of banking expressed that the dress code of women in the banking profession leans towards formal and professional attire. The women have more flexibility in terms of clothing options but they are still expected to maintain a conservative and sophisticated look. They believe a well-tailored skirt or trouser suit in dark or neutral colours is a common choice. The participants also emphasized that skirts should be knee-length or slightly below, and trousers should be tailored and well-fitted. Blouses or tops worn with jackets should be modest and not revealing, with neutral or light colours specifically white being preferred. Women can also opt for tailored dresses that meet the professional standards avoiding overly flashy or revealing styles. Closed-toe shoes with a moderate heel are appropriate and accessories should be kept minimal and conservative.

Participants clearly stated that the profession and the organization's codes of conduct guided them on who decides what should be accepted at the workplace. For the Health sector, a participant stated that, "... *I think this dressing dates as far back as the time of Florence Nightingale ...*" (participant health) and for the banking sector at work, they stated that, "*there are guidelines provided by the human resources department and errr ... it more of a rule book*" (participant banker).

Also, the measure of an acceptable dress code at the workplace juxtapose what is not acceptable, participants stated that their faith, society and work guide the acceptable dress code; thus, Muslim working women in

these two sectors merge their faith with the rules and regulations of their organisation. A banker participant's view is expressed below:

“the one that is acceptable by society, my faith and of course the work I am doing. As a banker, there are guidelines on the proper way of dressing to the workplace. The dressing must conform to the dress etiquette spelt out by the organization. I add the veil as an extra and that is considered fine at my workplace”.

“As a personal assistant, I am expected to dress formally, but as a Muslim, I can incorporate religious attire into my professional attire. This means covering up below my knees and ensuring my hair is covered. Sometimes, I wear a hijab, while other times, I opt for a turban or a similar head covering” (a health worker's view).

Similarly, another health worker also stated:

“You are supposed to put on white as a nurse. However, when I wear the white uniform, I wear my white veil to match the uniform. I also wear my white dress to the knee with shoes and white socks”.

These statements suggest that Muslim women in the banking and health sector in Ghana navigate the intersection of professional dress codes with religious attire in their workplace. This line of reasoning supports literature such as (Gregston, 2014) who argue that dress codes in various organizations, are essential for shaping the professional image of employees and the organizational culture. The accounts provided by the female banker and health respondent illustrate a pragmatic approach to incorporating religious attire while adhering to professional expectations. By wearing

religious attire such as a hijab or veil that conforms to their religious beliefs, these individuals can maintain their religious identity while fulfilling their professional duties (Héliot et al., 2020). This indicates a potential shift towards greater inclusivity and accommodation of religious diversity in these sectors. However, it also highlights the importance of organisations recognising and respecting employees' religious practices and providing clear guidelines on integrating religious attire within professional dress codes.

The measure of an acceptable dress code as oppose to unacceptable dress code

The workers are supposed to put on white veil, and they are also not to wear jalibab. They also not to reveal their cleavage and the uniform they are to wear must cover their ankle and wrist

Nevertheless, organisations may have challenges altering their dress code to suit an individual's religious beliefs. A health worker participant stated,

“Muslim health workers used to have a big problem in wearing veils and hijab at the workplace. However, things have changed, and I now see student nurses wearing veils at the wards. At some point, there seemed to be an approach addressing these concerns, which appeared to soften their stance. I have not inquired about the position of the Midwifery Council, but there was a time when some stores insisted that wearing a veil was not permitted. However, now I see them wearing veils on the wards, indicating that things have changed. From a medical doctor's perspective, it has

never been a problem. Neither during my student days nor has anyone ever restricted me when wearing one”.

A banker participant also stated,

“ Gone were the days when Muslim ladies find it difficult working in bigger organization because of our dress codes, most of the organisations has dress restrictions and it makes it more difficult for the Muslim lady to venture. However, things have changed, I wear my hijab to work, not every organization allows a Muslim lady to dress in the way her religion deems it because religion is different from work ethics”.

The finding suggests that while there has been a change in accommodating religious attire such as veils and hijabs for Muslim health workers and bankers in the workplace, challenges remain for organisations in adapting their dress codes to accommodate individual religious beliefs. The participant's observation of a shift in attitude towards the wearing of veils indicates a potential evolution in organisational policies and attitudes towards the religious dress. However, the mention of previous restrictions on particular dress and the lack of clarity regarding the stance of the Midwifery Council highlight ongoing challenges in achieving uniformity and acceptance across all sectors. Nonetheless, the account from the participants shows a more inclusive approach, indicating that accommodating religious attire has not been a historical issue from their perspective.

Moreover, the participants hold varying perspectives on who determines the acceptable dress code in the workplace. The participants expressed that the employers and the organisations determine the acceptable

dress code as they are ultimately accountable for maintaining a professional environment and ensuring that employees present themselves appropriately.

According to a banker,

“Every profession has its dress code, determined by the organisation and the nature of the job. In some places, adherence to the standard dress code is strictly enforced. Your rank does not dictate your dress code; for me it is the human capital that is HRM who decides”.

Another health worker also stated,

“The Ghana Health Service has accepted that we should put on the veil. However, it also depends on the hospital and the location. Management can also decide on the appropriate colour you should wear, the length of the uniform, and the colour of the uniform”.

The findings highlight the complex dynamics surrounding determining acceptable dress codes in the workplace, with varying perspectives among participants. While some emphasise the role of employers and organisations in setting and enforcing dress codes to maintain a professional environment, others note the influence of external factors such as industry standards and specific job requirements. The accounts provided by the participants suggest that individual preferences or ranks do not solely dictate dress codes but are shaped by a combination of organisational policies, industry norms, and management decisions (Kelly, 2019). This indicates the importance of clear communication, consistency in organisational dress code policies, and the need for flexibility to accommodate religious or cultural practices while maintaining professionalism. Additionally, the mention of variations in dress

code requirements across different hospitals and locations highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of local contexts and cultural sensitivities in implementing dress code policies.

Participants understanding of religious dressing

The findings revealed that the meaning of religious dressing borders on dressing beyond professional prescription. It is an individual's choice to wear traditional clothing that represents one's faith and Muslims women wear specific clothing that easily identifies them. They described it as an attire worn by individuals to express their religious beliefs and adhere to their faith's guidelines on modesty and appearance. These responses were clearly stated by all participants.

According to a banker participant:

"I dress in religious attire to conform to my religion's teachings and preachings. As a Muslim woman, dressing is an expression of faith".

A health worker participant also made a similar comment;

"To me, a religious dress is anything that portrays your religion. It tells everyone who you are and your religion".

Nevertheless, another health worker participant, also made the following statement,

"My understanding of religious dressing refers to cladding in a garb that conforms to a particular faith or dress that conforms to the teachings and preaching of your religion".

The study's findings highlight their diverse perspectives on the understanding of religious dressing among the participants. For

some, religious attire is perceived as a means of adhering to the teachings and principles of their faith, serving as a tangible expression of their religious identity and commitment. As exemplified by both bankers and health workers, dressing religiously, is an act of faith. Similarly, other participants emphasised the symbolic significance of religious dress in communicating one's religious affiliation and identity to others. These responses resonate with existing literature on religious attire, often underscoring its role in reflecting religious beliefs, values, and cultural norms within diverse communities (Aruan & Wirdania, 2020; Edwards, 2018; Kane, Jacobs & Hawkins, 2015).

However, including a participant who conceptualises religious dressing in terms of adherence to specific religious teachings further enriches the discourse, highlighting individuals' nuanced understanding regarding the relationship between religious attire and doctrinal principles. This distinct understanding shows the multifaceted nature of religious dressing and its significance in personal and communal contexts. Literature indicates that religious attire serve as a visual reminder of the values and principles espoused by a particular religious tradition, both to the wearer and those around them (crnic & pognacnik, 2019).

Importance of religious dressing according to faith

The faith of a Muslim woman is an important factor in determining the way they dress. In Islam, modesty is highly valued and it is recommended for both men and women to dress modestly but the standards for women are more

specific. In Islam, women are required to dress modestly in public, which includes covering their entire body and the head with a hijab or veil except for the face, hands and feet in the presence of men outside their immediate family. This is to prevent any immodest or inappropriate behaviour and to promote respect and dignity for women and focus on inner qualities rather than outward appearance. The Quran in chapter 24 vs 31 states that women should "lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof (24:31).

A health worker participant stated,

"... In Islam, there is a strong emphasis on modesty in dressing. It is believed that both men and women should dress in a way that covers their bodies and preserves their dignity. My faith demands that I wear clothing that sufficiently cover all parts of my body. Especially, parts that males may deem attractive. Which is supported by a text in in the Quran".

A banker participant stated,

"As a woman and a Muslim, it is expected that certain parts of your body, those capable of arousing temptation in the opposite sex, remain covered. Failure to do so constitutes a sin. This is why we adhere to modest clothing practices, as every aspect of a woman's body is believed to elicit inappropriate reactions from others. For instance, the exposure of hair or thighs can be sexually stimulating to some individuals. By covering these areas, we aim to prevent unintentionally arousing desires in others and avoid sinning".

A health worker participant also made similar comments,

“In Islam, it is mandated for Muslim women to cover their bodies, except for some permissible regions such as the hands and face. This directive stems from the belief that modesty is a fundamental aspect of faith and that certain body parts are not meant to be exposed to everyone. By covering these areas, Muslim women adhere to the teachings of Islam and uphold the principles of modesty and decency”.

The findings show the significant role of modesty in Islamic dress for women, reflecting a deep-seated belief in preserving dignity and avoiding temptation. Faith is a deeply personal and complex concept encompassing beliefs, trust, and confidence in something beyond empirical proof or logical reasoning (Helm, 2000). For Muslim women, religious attire holds a profound relationship with faith as an outward expression of identity and a means of deepening spiritual connection. These perspectives highlight the multifaceted reasons behind the practice, including religious, cultural, and social factors. The emphasis on covering specific body parts to prevent arousing desires in others resonates with studies by Solgi et al. (2018) and Riyan (2015) on sexuality, modesty, and gender relations within Islamic contexts (Solgi et al., 2018). Moreover, the reference to religious texts, such as the Quran, to justify modest dressing further illustrates the importance of textual authority in shaping Islamic practices (Lukens-Bull, 2016).

The Level of Coverage Accepted in the Health and Banking Sector

This section addressed the second research objective of the study, which sought to ascertain the levels of coverage accepted by Muslim women

in the health and banking sectors. This section addresses concerns regarding the level of coverage at the workplace and when performing duties. In the view of both nurses and bankers, the extent of wearing the veil or headscarf depends on conforming to the uniform requirements set by the organization.

Religious dresses that adhere to the dressing codes and guidelines are generally welcomed in the workplace. The participants generally agreed that religious dressing that did not match the general requirements of the nursing or banking profession were frowned upon, for example, burka, niqab, jilbab. Some of the nurses mentioned that the scrubs, be it green or white depending on the person's grade could be worn with headscarf and any other dressing that did not support this form of appearance was not much tolerated. The bankers likewise mentioned that long trousers and skirts were accepted with the headscarf at work. Many of the respondents however mentioned that even with the headscarf, the individual must look professional. However, it is important to strike a balance between respecting religious diversity and maintaining a professional environment.

According to a health participant,

“Depending on your duties, you can cover yourself fully or partially at the workplace. In the theatre, the dress code is not the same as on the ward. In the theatre, I have to wear a scrub gown. However, it has been tailored to my taste since I sewed it. They are still loose, and I can wear something underneath them. Also, I opt for a smaller cap instead of a veil for surgery... apart from the theatre; we wear our uniforms at the wards and other clinic areas”.

Another health participant also stated:

“I cover myself partially at work. This is because some in-charges will not allow you to wear the veil. Others will only permit a hair net. Some might even argue that it is not part of the nursing profession. They knew we were Muslim before joining this field. Some may allow it, some may not, but we know our preference deep down, and God knows it. However, due to our chosen profession, we sometimes accept these limitations. However, I believe we should be allowed to wear it because wearing the veil will not hinder our ability to perform our duties. However, I cover my hands, feet, and whole body outside the workplace. However, at the workplace, you can only cover the head. Therefore, I think it is partial”.

A banker participant also indicated,

“At the workplace, I dress partially. They only allow me to wear a veil on the official attire or uniform. They request something small or short that you can tuck into your uniform”.

Similarly, another health worker participant also made the following comments,

“As Muslim women, we cover our hair chest, extending below our bosom, and our legs below the ankle. However, the extent of coverage can vary depending on where I work. For instance, there are specific guidelines for when I am going to the theatre. In addition to wearing the prescribed attire, I wear Lycra underneath the scrub and a small scarf. The scarf should cover my hair, and the skirt should extend below my knee”.

The findings shed light on the nuanced approach Muslim women take to their dress code in the workplace, influenced by organisational policies, cultural norms, and the nature of their duties. Participants in the study acknowledged that religious dressing, covering the hair, and extending to the knees are generally accepted in the workplace, indicating a level of accommodation for religious attire. However, the extent to which Muslim women can cover themselves, either fully or partially, varies depending on the specific duties they perform and the regulations set forth by their organisations. This suggests that while some workplaces may allow for full coverage, others may impose limitations, such as permitting only partial coverage or specific head coverings like a hair net or a smaller cap. These differences in acceptance and accommodation reflect broader societal attitudes toward religious diversity and the role of religious expression in professional settings. These findings align with the observations of Rubinstein (2018) and Ahrens and Siegel (2019) that workplace dress codes often reflect dominant cultural norms and may pose challenges for individuals whose religious practices conflict with these norms. The experiences shared by the participants in this study echo these findings, highlighting the need for greater awareness and sensitivity to religious diversity in the workplace (Gelb & Longacre, 2012; Héliot et al., 2020).

Moreover, the participants' accounts reveal the internal struggle faced by Muslim women in navigating their religious beliefs and professional responsibilities. While some expressed frustration over limitations imposed by their workplaces on wearing the veil, others acknowledged the need to compromise due to the demands of their chosen profession. This tension

between personal religious convictions and professional expectations shows the broader issue of religious accommodation and the balancing act that individuals must often undertake in secular work environments. As noted by Foblets and Alidadi (2016), the accommodation of religious attire in the workplace is essential for promoting diversity and inclusion, allowing individuals to express their religious identity while fulfilling their professional roles. However, conflicts may arise when organisational policies or cultural norms clash with individuals' religious practices, highlighting the importance of fostering dialogue and understanding between employers and employees.

The findings show the complexity of navigating religious attire in the workplace for Muslim women and the importance of considering organisational policies, cultural norms, and individual preferences in accommodating religious diversity. While some workplaces may embrace full or partial coverage options, others may impose limitations, leading to varying experiences and perceptions among Muslim women. To promote inclusivity and respect for religious diversity in the workplace, organisations should create clear and flexible dress code policies that accommodate diverse religious practices while maintaining professionalism and ensuring equal opportunities for all employees (Cash & Gray, 2000). Fostering dialogue and awareness about religious diversity can help mitigate conflicts and promote a more inclusive and supportive work environment for all (Canda, Furman & Canda, 2019).

Restriction and discrimination faced by Muslim women for wearing religious dress in the Health and Banking sectors in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis

This section addresses the research objective three of the study, which sought to assess the extent of restriction and discrimination of Muslim women wearing religious dress in the Health and Banking sectors in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. It shed light on the extent of restriction and discrimination faced by Muslim women to wear religious dress in the workplace. This section also contains subsections that focus on the limitations and restrictions, harassment and abuse at the workplace, and the relevance of religious dressing in modern society and workplace.

Limitation and Restriction Faced by Muslim Women for Using Religious Attire at workplace

The participant's experiences varied regarding the extent of restriction and limitation faced by Muslim women wearing religious dress at the workplace. For the Banking sector, the organization did not restrict wearing the veil likewise it should not be flamboyant, showy or indecent to raise attention. There is some form of limitation regarding the type of headscarf to wear in the health profession. The *Abaya* was not allowed but were accommodating to the Hijab and mostly the restrictions were placed on students nurses specifically those in the missionary hospitals. Participant also stated that, depending on the interaction with patients from ward to ward, one must dress appropriately otherwise the veil can not be worn. However, it is important to note that the majority of participants mentioned that their organizations did not place restrictions on wearing religious dress at the

workplace and there have not been any disciplinary actions taken against Muslim women who wear religious dress at the workplace.

Furthermore, the participants expressed concerns about potential discrimination or prejudice based on their religious attire. They highlighted instances where wearing the veil led to assumptions about their religious affiliation and raised questions about their ability to fulfil professional responsibilities. For instance, one respondent noted that colleagues might request that they not attend to certain patients due to religious differences, highlighting the need for greater awareness and understanding of religious diversity in healthcare settings. These experiences echo findings from research on religious discrimination and accommodation, which emphasise the importance of addressing biases and promoting inclusivity in the workplace (Scheitle & Ecklund, 2017).

According to a health worker respondent:

“I had an encounter when I was in the ward. The person in charge of the ward did not have a problem with me wearing the veil. However, one of the nurses entered and shouted: What are you wearing? Could you remove it? A banker respondent also stated,

“About four or five years ago, I was cautioned against wearing my hijab. Upon visiting the Area Office, I was asked to remove it by one of the administrators, and as a result, I was nearly dismissed from my position.

However, this issue no longer exists”.

A health respondent also made a similar comment,

“Some nurses face challenges in wearing religious dress together with their work attire. Some of their ward IN-charges will not allow them to come to the ward. Upon arrival, they may face dismissal. I am very aware of this issue. The in-charges refuse entry, citing improper dress, resulting in a return trip. This is the extent of my knowledge on the matter; I am unsure if any other formal disciplinary actions have been taken against them”.

A banker respondent also made a similar comment,

“There were times when the veil was not accepted at the workplace. We faced challenges because even if I could not wear my Abaya, I just wanted to cover my hair to express my Muslim Identity, but they would not allow it until secular policies were implemented”.

The findings highlight a concerning pattern of discrimination and intolerance towards religious attire, particularly among female nurses. These restrictions can cause a dilemma for those who want to adhere to their religious beliefs while meeting professional expectations. Instances where ward in-charges and colleagues demand the removal of religious clothing, such as the hijab or veil, indicate a lack of respect for individual beliefs and cultural practices. This resonates with the findings of Ghumman and Ryan (2013), which highlight the prevalence of discriminatory behaviour towards religious attire in professional settings despite legal protection in many jurisdictions. The respondents' experiences show the challenges of those who wish to uphold their religious identity while pursuing their profession. The

fact that some individuals faced dismissal or threats of dismissal due to their religious attire reflects systemic issues within the workplace.

Verbal harassment and discouragement faced by Muslim women for using religious attire at the workplace

The participants experiences varied regarding verbal or physical assaults faced by wearing religious dress at the workplace. Participants working in the banking sector did not face any form of harassment and discouragement from colleagues or supervisors. Some health workers reported instances of verbal harassment or discouraging comments especially when the weather was hot, while others mentioned more accepting environments. A health worker participant stated, “... *there was someone from another ward who was preventing me from doing so but no physical assault. She only passed some comments. My concern was that even my in-charge doesn't have a problem. So, I didn't get why someone from another ward will come to instruct me not to wear a veil. Some will like to harass you but I am not easily intimidated*”.

“I am aware of the stigma; it is present. Seeing you in your dress alone prompts specific reactions from some people, but I adhere to my religious teachings”.

A banker also commented,

“Some people will object to wearing a veil. Sometimes, even colleagues or acquaintances comment on my attire. I cover myself well at work, exposing only my face and palms. Some may ask, “Why are you dressed like that in this hot weather?” However, I do not believe they mean any harm”.

Another health worker also added,

“In hospitals, particularly during my clinical rotations at different hospitals, I experienced physical abuse from some staff regarding my veil. This happened twice. The government must address this issue, especially in missionary hospitals”.

The findings reveal some pervasive challenges faced by individuals who choose to wear religious dress in the workplace, including discrimination, stigmatisation, and harassment. Negative attitudes and biases from colleagues, supervisors, or clients can create a hostile work environment, leading to feelings of exclusion and discomfort. Despite these obstacles, respondents committed to adhering to their religious teachings, comparing both health and banking sectors, underscoring the importance of religious identity in their lives. This aligns with research by Shaheen and Hwang (2019), who found that religious attire can serve as a crucial aspect of identity for individuals, contributing to their sense of belonging and self-expression.

Furthermore, the experiences shared by the respondents resonate with findings from studies on workplace discrimination and religious accommodation (Ghumman et al., 2013; Lund Dean et al., 2014; Kaminer, 2015). Ahmad emphasises the need for organisations to implement policies that promote diversity and inclusion and provide training to address biases and prevent discriminatory behaviour. Employers may impose disciplinary actions or sanctions against employees who insist on wearing religious attire, adding to the pressure faced by Muslim women. However, there were no cases where Muslim women faced any disciplinary actions for wearing

religious attire to the workplace during the study. The accounts of discouragement and harassment faced by individuals wearing religious dress highlight the urgency for systemic changes to ensure a workplace environment that respects and values religious diversity. These limitations infringe upon individuals' rights to religious expression and entirely hinder their ability to participate and succeed in the workplace

Effect of religious dress on work productivity

According to John Mark R. Asio The work productivity of an individual is an organisational asset that can be equated to progress and success. It provides satisfaction to the employees, the organisation and other stakeholders J.M.R (2021) it can also be expressed as the quantifiable measure of an employee's output or efficiency in completing their assigned task or responsibilities within a specific period it can be measured in terms of works' quantity, quality or timeliness. Dress can influence this and from the Islamic perspective on their dress code and their work productivity, this is what the respondents had to say.

Participants from both Banking and Health sector expressed that, wearing of religious dress at the workplace did not affect their work productivity. A participant view is stated below:

“No, my religious dress does not affect my productivity as a nurse or any other professional. My commitment to my work, knowledge and skills are the factors that contribute to my productivity. My ability to perform my job effectively is not determined by my attire but by my skills, knowledge, and dedication to my work. It is essential to recognize that religious dress is a

personal choice and should not be perceived as a hindrance to productivity or professional competence” (A health worker Participant).

A banker participant also stated :

"No. I don't see how covering my hair will prevent me from doing my work well".

“No, my religious dress does not affect my productivity as a professional. Like any other employee, my productivity is determined by my skills, qualifications, and dedication to my work. Wearing religious attire is a personal choice and does not hinder my ability to perform my job effectively” (A banker participant).

“ How will dressing affect my productivity? I really don't think my dress interferes with my work (A health participant).

Some organisations have prescribed dress code because of their brand image as emphasised by Crane (2012) who argues that dress codes serve as a form of social control, as they impose standards of appearance that reinforce dominant ideologies and maintain social hierarchies. This definition highlights the broader social implications of dress codes beyond mere clothing regulations, emphasizing their influence on identity expression, power dynamics, and the perpetuation of societal norms. A third interpretation of dress code is centred around its role in creating a particular atmosphere or brand image, particularly in the context of businesses and organizations.

Maalouf et.al (2019) also emphasised that dress codes reflects each sector's requirement and expectation while contributing to organisational culture and image. From the above research findings it is clear that organisation perceive their prescribed dress code should satisfy all stakeholders.

On work productivity all respondent asserted that their religious dressing does not affect their productivity as contained in the responses above for both nurses and bankers.

Relevance of Hijab in the Modern Society

The participants believe that, the wearing of religious dress is still relevant even in today's diverse and multicultural societies. They see it as crucial to respect and accommodate religious diversity, including choosing religious attire. Religious dressing plays a significant role in fostering religious identity, morality and a mark of high discipline, promoting inclusivity, and allowing individuals to practice their faith freely. A banker participant stated:

“Yes, the wearing of the veil or religious dressing remains relevant in modern times for many Muslim women who choose to practice their faith. It is an expression of religious identity and a means to uphold their beliefs and values. In modern, multicultural societies, it is essential to respect and accommodate religious diversity, including the choice to wear religious attire” A health participant also noted:

“If I am not wearing my veil, they might assume I am a Christian. In such a situation, if a Muslim colleague has issues with a Christian patient, they may request that I not attend to them until they hear my name. However, I do not see it as an issue. Maintaining my identity should not hinder me from providing the care I must give. Even if you ask me to remove my veil, what about my name? Will you ask me to change it? No, my name remains an identity for me as a Muslim”.

Another banker participant also commented,

“Islam is my identity, regardless of my location. I should consistently be recognised as a Muslim. However, some people believe that if they have an issue with a Muslim and then see someone wearing a veil, they may not want that person to attend to them. So, what about people who have issues with Christians? It is important to me to be seen as a Muslim based on my dress”.

Similarly, another health participant also stated,

“Everyone should have the freedom to express themselves. The distinction lies in the fact that for Muslim women, wearing the veil is a direct command from God, outlined in the Quran. It is not a matter of personal preference but a religious obligation we take very seriously. Therefore, not adhering to it would be akin to disobeying a divine law—it is not like wearing a rosary, which is not explicitly mandated in the Bible. However, prayer is commanded in the Bible. Thus, denying me the right to wear the veil is denying me the opportunity to fulfil a religious duty. Obedience, in this context, is considered a form of worship. So, for a Muslim, the veil holds profound significance”.

The findings from the study show the profound significance of Muslim religious attire as a connection to individuals' religious heritage and teachings. Participants emphasised that wearing the veil or hijab is not merely a matter of personal preference but a religious obligation outlined in the Quran, reflecting a fundamental aspect of their identity as Muslims. This sentiment resonates with existing studies on the subject, highlighting the importance of religious attire in shaping individuals' sense of belonging and adherence to faith principles (Hass & Lutek, 2019; Krause & Wulff, 2005; Mael & Ashford,

2001). The participants articulated that being recognised as Muslim based on their dress is essential to them, as it affirms their religious identity regardless of their location or circumstances. This assertion aligns with the findings of Malone and Dadswell (2018) on religious identity and expression, which emphasise the role of religious attire in fostering a sense of community and belonging among adherents.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for the study.

Summary

This study determined the experiences of Muslim women who wear religious dress to the workplace focusing on those working in the public Health and public Banking sectors in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis. The study used descriptive design. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to select participants from the two sectors. The instrument employed for data collection was semi-structured interview guide. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The interviews were conducted on 18 participants (9 from banking sector and 9 from health sector).

Key findings

The study revealed the following:

1. There are specified dress codes for workers in both sectors studied.
2. Dress code for those in the banking sector leans towards formal and professional attire, with women having flexibility but expected to maintain a conservative and sophisticated look.
3. The health sector prioritises professionalism, hygiene and patient safety in the prescription of their dress codes.

4. Importance of maintaining modesty and adhering to religious guidelines regarding acceptable levels of coverage was established.

The study demonstrated that organizations tend to accommodate religious dress as long as it aligns with workplace dress codes and guidelines.

5. There are some instances of verbal harassment and discouragement reported highlighting the challenges faced by Muslim women wearing religious dress at work. However, majority of participants indicated the acceptance of some level of religious dress for Muslim women.

Conclusions

The investigation into Religious dress of Muslim women in the workplace in the public Health and public Banking sectors in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis shed light on the relationship between religious dress and the expectations within the work environment. Muslim women wearing Religious dress to the workplace is an adherence to a faith-based requirement which also gave them the level of coverage accepted by their organisation.

It was also evident that organisation and employers did not have clear guidelines stipulated in the code of conducts to guide Muslim women employees.

Evidences showed that wearing of religious dress at some instances in the Health sector, resulted in some form of harassment but in general there was a growing recognition and acceptance of some level of religious dress in the workplace.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions the study recommends the following;

1. The banking and health sectors especially within the Takoradi Metropolis should promote religious diversity and accommodation: Organizations should make a deliberate effort to incorporate different religious guidelines in their dress codes. This will promote religious freedom and respect individual' rights to express their religious beliefs through their attire. This can be achieved by establishing clear guidelines and policies that respect employees' religious beliefs and practices, while also aligning with the overall organizational image and standards.
2. It is also important for employers to be educated about different religious dress codes to understand and accommodate the needs of employees. Organisations and employers should also educate employees to encourage open communication about religious dress codes at the workplace. This can be done by providing training and awareness programmes to foster a better understanding of religious diversity and promote a culture of inclusion and establish channels for dialogue and negotiation to address issues or concerns related to religious dress respectfully. This will help address issues of limitations, restrictions, harassments and discouragements faced by Muslim women for religious attire at work.

Suggestions for further Studies

Suggestions for future studies aimed to help expand knowledge and understanding of religions dress at the workplace are as follows;

1. A cross-cultural analysis should be conducted across different cultures or regions to explore the variations in dress codes and perceptions of religious dress in the workplace. This would provide a broader understanding of how cultural and societal factors influence attitudes towards religious dress.
2. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to examine changes in workplace attitudes and policies towards religious dress over time. This would allow for a better understanding of the progress made in accommodating religious diversity and identify any persistent challenges or improvements.
3. Quantitative surveys could be conducted to gather data on the experiences of individuals wearing religious dress in various industries and sectors. This would provide statistical insights into the frequency of restrictions, discrimination, and acceptance of religious dress in the workplace.
4. A comparative analysis of legal frameworks to explore and compare the legal frameworks and protections related to religious dress in different countries or jurisdictions could be conducted. This would provide insights into the legal landscape and help identify best practices for accommodating religious dress in the workplace.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Opening remark

Hello Sir/ Madam. Thank you for making time to dialogue with me. I am conducting a research on religious dress in the workplace with emphasis on Muslim women. Your responses will be kept confidential and used strictly for the achievement of Master's degree at the University of Cape Coast. I am ready when you are.

Interview Questions

1. What is your understanding of dressing? Why do we wear the things we wear?
2. What is the measure of an acceptable dress code as opposed to an unacceptable one?
3. What dress is considered suitable for the workplace? Why is it so?
4. What is your understanding of religious dressing?
5. In your view, is it alright to wear religious dress to the workplace? If yes, why? If no, kindly elaborate.
6. What is your opinion on the wearing of headscarf at the workplace?
7. What in your opinion is an acceptable level of dressing to the workplace?
8. To what extent should the coverage of the dress be for a workplace?
9. Do organisations have a right to place female staff under disciplinary conditions should they decide to stick with religious dress at the workplace contrary to the norms of that organisation?
10. Who decides what is suitable to wear when and to where?

Closing remark

Thank you for your time and contribution. It is very much appreciated.

APPENDIX B

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SECRETARIAT

TEL: 0558093143 / 0508878309

E-MAIL: irb@ucc.edu.gh

OUR REF: UCC/IRB/A/2016/1635

YOUR REF:

OMB NO: 0990-0279

IORG #: IORG0011497

14TH NOVEMBER, 2022

Ms. Rosina Angua Mante
Department of Vocational and Technical Education
University of Cape Coast

Dear Ms. Mante,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE – ID (UCCIRB/CES/2022/81)

The University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) has granted Provisional Approval for the implementation of your research **Religious Dress in the Workplace: A study of Muslim Women**. This approval is valid from 14th November, 2022 to 13th November, 2023. You may apply for a renewal subject to submission of all the required documents that will be prescribed by the UCCIRB.

Please note that any modification to the project must be submitted to the UCCIRB for review and approval before its implementation. You are required to submit periodic review of the protocol to the Board and a final full review to the UCCIRB on completion of the research. The UCCIRB may observe or cause to be observed procedures and records of the research during and after implementation.

You are also required to report all serious adverse events related to this study to the UCCIRB within seven days verbally and fourteen days in writing.

Always quote the protocol identification number in all future correspondence with us in relation to this protocol.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kofi F. Amuquandoh'.

Kofi F. Amuquandoh

Ag. UCCIRB Administrator

ADMINISTRATOR
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST