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Muslimah Fashion: Theory and Concept

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the theoretical frameworks and cultural concepts underpinning Muslimah fashion. The objective of this study is to identify elements influencing Muslimah fashion trends according to the theory and concept of Muslimah Fashion. This study also considers the influence of social media and fashion influencers on the evolution of Muslimah attire in Malaysia. This study used a qualitative approach through systematic literature review on journals, books, and reports that were analyzed. There are two key theories, including Social Identity Theory and Theory of Planned Behavior. These frameworks provide insights into how fashion choices are shaped by identity, personal motivation, social influence, and cultural context. The findings reveal that Muslimah Fashion is not static but evolves with time, integrating faith-based values with modern fashion trends. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection between faith, fashion, and youth identity, emphasizing the importance of Muslimah fashion as both a personal and societal phenomenon.

1. Introduction

Fashion serves as an essential expression of identity, culture, and values, with Muslimah fashion emerging as a significant domain within the global fashion industry. Muslimah fashion refers to clothing styles that align with Shariah principles of modesty while simultaneously embracing modern aesthetics, cultural influences, and personal preferences [5]. Over the years, the concept of Muslimah fashion has evolved, balancing religious obligations with contemporary fashion trends, thereby creating a dynamic and expanding market.

Fashion refers to a style that is widely accepted and practiced by a group of people during a specific period. The development of fashion affects various cultural aspects, including clothing, art, and architecture. Fashion can also be seen as a form of communication, offering insights into the

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values and meanings embraced by those who follow it [6]. In other word, fashion significantly influences both style and design, with styles often emerging and gaining acceptance within specific timeframes. It encompasses the visual and structural attributes of clothing that differentiate one garment from another [4].

Muslimah fashion concept is clothing that must cover the entire body except for parts that are given specific exceptions, such as the face and palms. However, many modern fashion designers tend to overlook this Shariah principle, often prioritizing global fashion trends that focus on style, seasonal appeal, and market demand rather than religious guidelines. This is reflected in changing design patterns, which frequently reveal more than what is permitted in Shariah principle. Despite this, there remains a smaller segment of the fashion industry that is committed to creating styles aligned with Islamic law, ensuring modesty while still incorporating elegance and creativity. These designs often balance religious requirements with tasteful aesthetics, allowing Muslimah to express themselves without compromising their faith [8].

In Islam, Allah s.w.t clearly emphasizes the obligation for women to conceal their adornments from the view of non-mahram men (*ajnabi*). This command is not only about covering the physical body but also about protecting dignity, preserving moral values, and fostering an environment of respect [8]. Thus, Muslimah fashion is meant to uphold both Shariah principles and personal identity, ensuring that clothing becomes a reflection of piety rather than merely a response to fleeting trends.

The theoretical framework of Muslimah fashion is rooted in Islamic teachings on modesty, which vary based on interpretations, cultural contexts, and individual beliefs. At the same time, it is influenced by global fashion movements, consumer behaviour, and the rise of Muslimah fashion industries. The increasing demand for Muslimah fashion has not only reshaped the traditional notions of Islamic attire but has also led to a growing body of scholarly research examining its sociocultural, economic, and psychological aspects.

This study explores Muslimah fashion which represents the intersection of Shariah principles of modesty and contemporary style, reflecting identity, culture, and values. While it must cover the body except for the face and palms while modern trends often prioritize aesthetics and market appeal over Shariah principle. Rooted in Islamic teachings and influenced by global fashion movements, Muslimah fashion has grown into a dynamic industry, shaping cultural expression, consumer behavior, and scholarly discourse. Therefore, this study aims to identify the elements influencing Muslimah fashion trends according to the theory and concept of Muslimah fashion.

2. Systematic Literature Review

Systematic reviews are designed to gather and examine all available research that addresses a particular question, with the goal of presenting a comprehensive, balanced, and unbiased summary of existing literature. These reviews follow structured and carefully developed methods to ensure that no relevant study is overlooked, regardless of its nature or outcome. A key aspect of these methods is the intentional search for studies that report negative or non-significant results, which may often be published in lower-impact journals, conference proceedings, or other sources that are not indexed in major bibliographic databases [10].

The fashion industry has undergone notable transformations over recent decades, particularly in how fashion trends are predicted, analyzed, and applied. As noted [12] since the 1960s, the dominance of singular fashion trends has given way to a more diverse and inclusive approach, reflecting the impact of mass communication and the increasing sophistication of consumers. This shift has led to a fashion landscape where consumer preferences are now heavily influenced by brand identity and lifestyle choices, moving away from the traditional model where high-end designers

dictated trends that gradually trickled down to the mass market. Furthermore, the blending of street styles and subcultures with luxury fashion has contributed to the emergence of individualized and niche-driven fashion expressions.

Although Muslimah fashion is not a new concept, it has only recently gained substantial recognition and acceptance within the global fashion industry. Despite lingering misconceptions in Western contexts, the Muslimah fashion movement has gained momentum through the visibility of Muslimah fashion icons and the involvement of non-Muslim designers in Muslimah fashion collections. The convergence of religious values with contemporary fashion has made Muslimah fashion increasingly popular, especially among young women, as highlighted by Kamarulzaman and Shaari [9].

Ali [2] conducted a qualitative study focusing on Muslim women in the United Kingdom, particularly university students and young professionals, to explore the factors influencing their fashion choices. The study found that modesty, religious identity, and personal expression are the primary motivators for clothing preferences among Muslim women. The findings suggest that Muslimah fashion serves not only as a religious obligation but also as a platform for individual expression and social navigation. The study reinforces the idea that Muslimah fashion is evolving in complexity, particularly within multicultural environments like university campuses, where traditional values and contemporary fashion trends coexist.

In Indonesia, research by Putri, Andriansyah *et al.*, [11], explored how Muslimah fashion brands in Yogyakarta respond to the increasing demand for innovative and ethical Muslimah clothing. The study highlighted how local designers creatively interpret Islamic guidelines while respecting cultural and religious values. Findings revealed that young Muslim consumers favor brands that reflect their ethical and religious beliefs, indicating a growing trend toward conscious consumerism. This underscores the important role of local fashion industries in shaping the Muslimah fashion landscape in ways that are both culturally grounded and globally relevant.

On a global scale, the Muslimah fashion sector continues to grow rapidly, fueled in part by social media and digital influence. According to Gateway [7], Muslim youth are increasingly influenced by online platforms, fashion influencers, and global trends. Major fashion brands have begun launching Muslimah wear collections, recognizing both the cultural importance and commercial potential of this market. Moreover, Muslim women are actively redefining Muslimah fashion by blending Western styles with Islamic principles, reflecting a broader trend of hybrid identity construction. Through fashion, young Muslims are negotiating between tradition and modernity, using clothing as a tool for self-representation.

In summary, the existing literature underscores that Muslimah fashion is a dynamic and evolving field shaped by a combination of religious values, cultural identity, personal expression, and global fashion influences. It highlights how Muslimah fashion is no longer seen solely as a religious duty but also as a means of identity negotiation and self-expression. The influence of social media, the emergence of Muslimah fashion influencers, and the integration of ethical consumption practices all point to a continuously redefined understanding of Muslimah fashion in today's world.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design using the documentation method to explore the theoretical and conceptual foundation of Muslimah fashion. The documentation method involves systematically collecting and analyzing existing written materials such as academic journal articles, books, reports and relevant online content. This approach is particularly suitable for research that aims to develop or deepen conceptual understanding rather than produce primary data through

fieldwork. By examining documents published from 2021 onward, the study ensures that the analysis reflects current developments and discourses in the field of Muslimah fashion, Islamic studies and consumer behaviour.

Data sources were selected based on their relevance to the themes of Muslimah fashion including modesty, identity, youth culture and theoretical frameworks such as Social Identity Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Material was obtained from digital academic libraries, scholarly databases like Google Scholar and ResearchGate, university repositories, and industry reports from reputable platforms. The inclusion criteria focus on peer-reviewed publication while non-scholarly or outdated sources were excluded to maintain academic rigor. The data collection process began with identifying key terms such as “Muslimah Fashion”, “modest fashion”, “Concept of Muslimah Fashion” “Islamic clothing”, and “fashion and identity”, which were used to search for literature published between 2021 and 2024. After identifying potential sources, the materials were screened for relevance and categorized thematically based on their content. This included the influence of Islamic values on clothing choices, the role of fashion theory in Muslimah dress, the impact of globalization and social media, and the negotiation of religious identity through clothing.

The selected documents were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. This involved reading and analyzing the texts to identify recurring themes, patterns and theoretical insights. The analysis aimed to synthesize how different scholars and fashion theorists conceptualize Muslimah fashion in the contemporary era, particularly as it related to the lives of young Muslim women. To enhance validity and reliability, the study relied on triangulation by comparing insights from academic, cultural and industry perspectives. Overall, this methodology enables a structured and comprehensive understanding of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of Muslimah fashion as reflected in current scholarly literature.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Findings

Based on the Table 1.0, Muslimah fashion emerges as a blend of faith, culture, and modern trends. Many Muslim women, especially in Malaysia, show strong understanding and practice of modest dressing, though some still face challenges in full adherence. Fashion brands are merging traditional styles with updated designs, ensuring they remain modest yet attractive and relevant in the global market. In the UK, buying choices are influenced by religious values, personal style, and quality, but the lack of sufficient modest options limits accessibility [2]. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, local labels creatively combine innovation and cultural elements, using online platforms to reach buyers, though smaller brands often struggle with resources [11]. Overall, the field reflects an ongoing effort to harmonize tradition with current fashion demands.

Table 1

Systematic literature review of muslimah fashion

NO	AUTHOR (S)	TITLE	YEAR OF PUBLICATION	COUNTRY BEING STUDIED	FINDINGS
1.	Fatin Faqeriah Hamsah, Farah Hanan Abu Bakar & Lezawati Seron	Kefahaman Pelajar Muslimah Terhadap Kewajipan Menutup Aurat	2023	Malaysia	The study found that Muslim female students at Politeknik Mukah generally have a high level of understanding (mean 4.78) and practice (mean 4.41) regarding

		di Politeknik Mukah			the obligation to cover the aurat. There is a very strong and significant relationship ($r = 0.741$) between understanding and practice, indicating that better knowledge tends to lead to better compliance. However, some gaps remain, as 21.5% of students reported not wearing the hijab past the chest and 26.4% admitted they have not consistently covered their aurat since puberty.
2.	Suriati Saidan, Husna Saaidin, Wan Nadhra Ixora Wan Kamarulbaharin, Norzaleha Zainun	Muslimah Design Trends through the Role of Fashion Forecasting	2022	Malaysia	Findings show that these brands integrate forecasted trends from the spring/summer 2020–2021 seasons—including specific colors, fabrics, silhouettes, and detailing—while retaining traditional Malay attire elements like baju kurung, kebaya, and caftan. Designers adapt trends to align with Islamic dress codes, ensuring garments are modest, climate-appropriate, culturally relevant, age-suitable, and affordable. By balancing beauty with modesty, fashion forecasting enables Muslimah fashion to remain contemporary, attractive, and competitive in the global market without compromising religious requirements.
3.	Zulina Kamarulzaman, Nazlina Shaari	A Systematic Review of Modest Fashion Perspectives in the Malaysian Fashion Industry	2023	Malaysia	The study found that female Muslim students at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) generally demonstrate a high level of knowledge (mean = 4.65) and practice (mean = 4.37) regarding Islamic dress codes. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.615$, $p <$

					0.01) was identified between knowledge and practice, indicating that greater understanding is associated with better adherence. However, some students still wear tight or transparent clothing, fail to fully cover their aurat, or follow non-Islamic fashion trends.
4.	Nargis Ali	Muslim women's clothing style and the key factors influencing their intention to purchase modest clothing in the UK	2023	United Kingdom	In contrast, religiosity, modesty, frugality, need for uniqueness, subjective norms, digital media, product attributes, and perceived availability all positively and significantly affect purchase intention. The findings also highlight a shortage of modest clothing in the UK market, leaving many Muslim women unable to find garments that meet their needs despite their strong buying potential. This research is among the first to examine modesty, advertising, frugality, product availability, and product attributes together in the context of modest fashion.
5.	Nurul Elisa Putri, Yuli Andriansyah, & Fatou Badjie	Product development strategies in Yogyakarta's Muslim fashion industry: Innovation and ethics	2023	Indonesia	The findings reveal that businesses integrate customization, innovation, and traditional elements into their products to meet consumer preferences. Digital platforms, such as e-commerce and social media, play a critical role in expanding market reach. While all businesses align with Islamic principles in sourcing and pricing, smaller enterprises struggle with resource constraints and scalability.

Overall, the findings highlight that Muslimah fashion is a dynamic intersection of religious commitment, cultural heritage, and evolving fashion trends shaped by both local and global influences. In Malaysia, Muslim women generally demonstrate a high level of knowledge and adherence to Islamic dress codes, which reflects a strong awareness of modesty as a religious obligation. However, certain gaps in consistent practice remain, indicating the need for continuous education and awareness to ensure full compliance. This shows that Muslimah Fashion influenced by cultural context, consumer values, and digital engagement, making it an ever-evolving space where tradition and modernity continuously interact to shape trends, perceptions, and practices.

4.2 Discussion

Fashion encompasses a variety of clothing styles that primarily serve the purpose of covering and protecting the body from elements that may cause discomfort to the wearer, such as shielding against excessive heat or cold. Beyond its practical function, fashion can also reflect personal taste, cultural identity, and social expression. In the context of Islam, however, fashion is guided by specific boundaries and principles, as its primary aim is to uphold the concept of *maslahah* (benefit) and fulfill the objectives of *maqasid syariah* (the higher purposes of Islamic law) [8]. This means that while self-expression and aesthetic appeal are acknowledged, they must always align with Islamic guidelines on modesty, dignity, and appropriateness, ensuring that clothing choices protect both the physical and moral well-being of the individual.

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سَوَاتِكُمْ وَرِيثًا طَيِّبًا وَلِبَاسُ النَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

Meaning: “O children of Adam! We have provided for you clothing to cover your nakedness and as an adornment. However, the best clothing is righteousness. This is one of Allah’s bounties, so perhaps you will be mindful.”

(Al-A’raf verse 26)

Based on the above verse, there are three types of clothing mentioned by Allah SWT. The term “اللباس” refers to the basic clothing used to cover the *aurat*. The term “الريش” refers to something worn to enhance outward beauty and appearance. Meanwhile, the “clothing of *taqwa*,” which is understood metaphorically, refers to righteous deeds, according to the explanation of Ibn Abbas [3].

Understanding Muslimah fashion requires a multidimensional perspective that considers psychological, sociological, and cultural aspects. One of the most relevant theories in this context is the Social Identity Theory, developed by Trepte and Loy [13], which explains how individuals derive a sense of identity from the social groups to which they belong. For many Muslimah, choosing to wear Muslimah fashion items such as the hijab, jubah, or abaya is not only a reflection of religious observance but also a statement of belonging to the global Muslim community. For example, a university student in a Western country may choose to wear a modern hijab style with contemporary Muslimah clothing to both represent her faith and feel connected to other Muslimah on campus. This symbolic expression helps their assert and religious identity while navigating a secular and multicultural environment. In this way, Muslimah fashion functions as a social marker that allows women to visually affirm their place within a faith-based community, particularly in contexts where their beliefs may be in the minority [2].

The Theory of Planned Behavior, introduced by Ajzen [1], further explains the motivations and decision-making processes that influence Muslim women’s fashion choices. This theory identifies few key factors that drive behavior: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. For instance, a young working professional may have a positive attitude toward modest dressing,

believing that it aligns with her spiritual and personal values. At the same time, Muslimah may feel encouraged by the support of their family, friends, or workplace environment, which constitutes the subjective norm. If they also feel confident in their ability to find Muslimah yet fashionable clothing through online stores or local brands, their perceived behavioral control is high. Together, these factors support their intention and decision to consistently dress modestly.

A practical example of this can be seen in the increasing popularity of Muslimah fashion influencers on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. These influencers often showcase how modesty can be harmonized with current fashion trends, such as layering oversized blazers with wide-leg trousers or pairing neutral-toned scarves with minimalist outfits. Their content not only inspires personal attitude changes among viewers but also shifts societal norms within their digital communities. This creates a ripple effect that encourages more Muslim women to embrace Muslimah fashion by reinforcing that it is both socially acceptable and personally empowering. Therefore, Social Identity Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior provide a comprehensive framework to understand the motivations behind Muslimah fashion. The former highlights the role of modest dress as a symbol of group identity and cultural belonging, while the latter explains how personal beliefs, social influence, and perceived ability interact to shape fashion behavior. When viewed together, these theories offer a deeper insight into how modern Muslim women especially those in urban and multicultural environments use fashion not only as religious practice but as a form of self-expression and identity construction.

5. Conclusion

This study has shown that Muslimah fashion is guided not only by Shariah principles of modesty but also shaped by broader theoretical frameworks such as Social Identity Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Elements that influence Muslimah fashion are more than a simple expression of religious obligation, it represents a complex and layered social phenomenon shaped by the interplay of faith, cultural heritage, global fashion influences, and individual self-expression. Fundamentally, it reflects Shariah principles of modesty, serving as a visible marker of adherence to religious values. However, it also functions as a powerful cultural statement, allowing Muslim women to express their identity in ways that are both rooted in tradition and responsive to contemporary trends. Social Identity Theory sheds light on how modest attire strengthens a sense of belonging, unity, and shared values within the Muslim community, fostering collective pride and solidarity. In parallel, the Theory of Planned Behavior provides insight into how personal attitudes, perceived social expectations, and a sense of control influence the choices women make when selecting specific styles, fabrics, or designs. This decision-making process often balances religious commitment, cultural symbolism, fashion industry offerings, and personal taste. In addition, these perspectives reveal that Muslimah fashion is not only shaped by religious guidelines but is equally driven by social meaning, psychological motivations, market dynamics, and the evolving dialogue between tradition and modernity. These theories help to explain why and how Muslim women adopt Muslimah clothing in ways that align with their beliefs, societal roles and aspirations. The literature indicates that Muslimah fashion have evolved into a dynamic form of identity negotiation, where young women creatively integrate tradition with modern style. Influenced by digital platforms, ethical consumerism, and community expectations, modest fashion has become a space for both conformity and innovation. In conclusion, understanding Muslimah fashion requires a multidisciplinary lens that acknowledge its spiritual roots while appreciating its relevance in contemporary fashion discourse. Further research is recommended to explore its impact across different culture, economic classes and regions, especially as the global modest fashion industry continues to grow.

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