

DRESSING IN ISLAM: A TOOL TO SOLVE MORAL DECADENCE AMONG THE MUSLIM YOUTH IN EKITI STATE

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Abstract

This article explores the role of dressing in Islam as a tool to combat moral decadence among the Muslim youth in Ekiti State. It examines how adhering to Islamic guidelines on modesty and decency in attire can positively influence behavior and promote moral values within the community especially in the tertiary institutions. These are prospective parents and the ones to whom the legacy of training and nurturing future leaders is to be bestowed. It has been noticed that the dearth of Islamic culture and morality still stand as the symbol of Muslim identity, continuity, security and unity. The article employs a quantitative approach drawing from Islamic Scriptures (*Qur'an* and *Hadith*), other writing document and observation method. This work, discusses the threat of indecent dressing among youths in our immediate environment particularly as it affects young Muslim girls. It goes further to discuss decent and indecent dressing in the Islamic perspective and the Islamic solution to it among both Muslim men and women. This work shows that indecent dressing has negative effects on youth. From the research findings, it is obvious that the absence of a dress code in our contemporary society has created a high rate of indecent dressing. This has manifested in forms of distraction, lack of academic focus, sexual harassment, cultism, loss of integrity, among other social vices. It was recommended that parents and guidance should teach their children/wards moral, social and religious education.

Keywords: Dressing; Youth, Society, Indecent;

Introduction

Ekiti literally means “Hilly country side”, it is situated in the north eastern part of Yoruba land. The aboriginal people living in the area are called Ekiti people. The people speak a Yoruba dialect that is also called Ekiti. Originally, Ekiti are aboriginal people living in the area before the coming of emigrants from other parts of Yoruba land most especially, Ife, Benin and Oyo. Traditionally, Ekiti has seventeen recognised kingdoms, now located in three States of the federation, namely, Ekiti State (15) Otun, Ikole, Ijero, Ado, Oye, Efon, Aramoko, Ogotun, Ise, Isan, Itaji, Ikere, Omuo, Emure, and Ido-Ekiti; Ondo State: (1) Akure; and Kwara State, (1) Obbo.¹

Ekiti State is one of the thirty-six States in Nigeria and one of the six States that constitute the south-western geopolitical zone. It is located in the North-Eastern part of South Western Nigeria. Ekiti State was carved out of the old Ondo State in 1996 together with other five states, namely: Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Gombe, Nassarawa and Zamfara². It has sixteen Local Government Areas. It borders the south of Kwara and Kogi States, east of Osun State and is bounded by Ondo State in the East and in the South, with a total land area of 5,782 km.

Culturally, the tradition of Ekiti people had been linked with their religions. Some cultural practices like mode of dressing, dancing, greetings etc. are abounding in Ekiti. The greeting of Ekiti people, “*ṣe o kun ò, n ọ ra ò*” made them different from other ethnic groups in Yoruba land. They equally have other oral traditions like *ewi*, *ààlọ*, *oríkì* and so on. Their clothing includes;

Asọ-Òkè or *Òfì*, *Bùbá*, *Sọrọ*, *Dàndógó*, *Gbàríyẹ*, *Filà* and *Gèlè* (head gear). Their traditional medicine is as good as orthodox medicine used for curative purposes³.

Background

In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the deteriorating moral values and behaviors among young Muslims in Ekiti State, with reports of increasing cases of immorality, substance abuse, and delinquency. In response to this alarming trend, this article seeks to explore the potential of dressing in Islam as a solution to the prevalent moral decadence. Islam places a strong emphasis on modesty and decency in all aspects of life, including clothing. The *Qur'an* and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) emphasize the importance of dressing modestly to preserve one's dignity, promote respect for oneself and others, and uphold moral values.

The article addresses a pressing concern within the Muslim community in Ekiti State the rise of moral decadence among its youth. This issue is particularly significant in the context of a conservative society where adherence to Islamic principles is highly valued and expected. Ekiti State, a region known for its strong Islamic presence and cultural heritage, is grappling with the challenges posed by modern influences and societal change, leading to a decline in moral values among the younger generation.

This article is grounded in the observation that the youth in Ekiti State are increasingly susceptible to a range of moral issues, including drug abuse, premarital sex, and reckless behaviors. These behaviors not only run counter to Islamic teachings but also have detrimental effects on the social fabric and well-being of the community. The article seeks to explore how a return to dressing in accordance with Islamic guidelines can serve as a remedy for the moral decay that plagues the Muslim youth in Ekiti State.

In Islamic teachings, modesty in dress is considered a reflection of one's inner values and a means to uphold moral standards. The *Qur'an* and Hadith emphasize the importance of maintaining decency in clothing as a way to foster self-respect, discipline, and piety. By adhering to Islamic dress codes, individuals are encouraged to cultivate a sense of dignity and righteousness, thereby safeguarding themselves against immoral temptations and behaviors.⁴

Given the cultural and religious context of Ekiti State, where Islamic traditions hold significant sway over social norms and practices, the article contends that a return to traditional Islamic attire can serve as a powerful tool in combating moral decadence among the Muslim youth. By emphasizing modesty and decency in dressing, the youth can uphold their religious values, demonstrate respect for themselves and others, and contribute to a more virtuous and harmonious society.

Overall, the background of the article underscores the urgent need to address the moral challenges facing the Muslim youth in Ekiti State and highlights the potential of Islamic dressing as a solution to promoting moral values and combating decadent behaviors. By reconnecting with the religious teachings on modesty and decency, the youth in Ekiti State can reclaim their moral compass and strive towards a more righteous and upright way of life.

Dress: according *Merriam-Webster dictionary* defines dress as an outer garment (as for woman or girl) consisting of a one-piece bodice and skirt; covering adornment, or appearance appropriate or peculiar to a particular time⁵. It also means a particular form of presentation. *Collins's dictionary* defines a dress as a piece of clothing for a woman or girl that covers the body and part of all of the legs⁶; it can be referred to clothes worn by men and women. *Oxford Advanced Learners dictionary* defines dress as a piece of clothing that is made in one piece and covers the body down to the legs, sometimes reaching below the knees, or the ankles⁷.

The above definition strongly revealed what dress is to mankind and it laid much emphases on women. In Islam, Muslim girls or women have dress code as it also applicable to difference tribe/races. Which at times go along with culture. It is on the above submission that this article focuses on what Muslim women/girls put on in our immediate society most especially the south western part of Nigeria inhabited by the Yoruba. The rate of indecent dressing has come to characterize the dress pattern of many youths in this contemporary society not limited to a particular region or community. There is hardly any city in Nigeria or all over the world that is not faced with this overwhelming challenge. The way the Muslim youth particularly the female ones' dress seductively leaves much to be desired.

Why do they put on dress that would not make them feel comfortable; find it difficult to sit on a motorcycle or to pick something from the ground. Apart from the disgusting nature of these dresses, some are transparent and revealing certain parts of the bodies, that under normal dressing, it ought to be hidden away from the public. In case of boys, their pattern of the dress is different, it makes them look so dirty and very unattractive with messy hairs (some leave part and cut the other sides(*qasa*) and dirty jeans that have pockets of holes deliberately created around the knees ((like rag) called craze jeans) and the lower part of the trousers allowed to flow on the ground.

The major issue bothering mind is that, these young Muslim brothers and sisters are presumed to be fathers and mothers of our future homes and holders of our immediate society heritage as well as sources and the transmitters of our values, culture and tradition. This article intends to find possible solution to this societal menace. A situation where the dress pattern of these prospective parents are not only deviating from our cultural ethics and moral values, it is also irreligious, degrading and immoral posture that are not conformed with our faith. This displeasing trend had led to the conclusion that our young girls are no more cultured when it comes to dressing. The available evidence attests to the fact that social media, peers, society as well ignorance influenced some of our young ones to indecent dressing. In another way round, when it comes to the question of attire, sometimes the impression given by the non-Muslim media is that the Muslim girls /women who observed modesty in their dressing by putting on *hijab/khimar* or *niqob* are being oppressed. The Society at large as well as religious organisations (most especially, the Muslim community) admit that the dressing patterns of many young Muslim girls in Nigeria higher institutions and the immediate communities have remained outrageous. This description can go on and on as the attires/costumes are many and varies.

As for the Muslim young brothers, they used to be sagged, as a result, drag their legs the mode of dressing of most of our young girls and boys made them become victims of rape, lured into prostitution, used for ritual purposes, unable to complete their education or training, and also engaged in other ancillary social and moral vices like cultism, lying, drunkard, and other anti-social activities. Although there are known universally acceptable way of dressing, dresses are meant to serve some definable purposes, country, or region notwithstanding

In a contemporary society we are living today, Muslim women are viewed in different ways: some are periodic/nominal Muslims and others are full time/practical ones. Some Muslim women may be occasionally on full *hijab* and in another time remove it or dress other way. When it's time for celebration or any other social gathering they remove the Hijab and change their mode of dressing completely. This set of people find it difficult to comply with the Injunctions of Allah and claim it's the environment they find themselves. Are they the only one in the society where we truly find other Muslims who strictly abide by Allah's injunctions? Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

O you who believe! Enter Islam completely and perfectly (by obeying all the rules and regulations of the Islamic religion) and follow not the footsteps of *Shaytan*. Verily! He is to you a plain enemy. (Q. 2:208)

Affirmatively, Allah tells us to enter into Islam completely in creed and deed. Concealing today and displaying tomorrow is not in any way good. One cannot be regarded as a true Muslim unless one accepts all the Injunctions of Allah, truly and sincerely irrespective of the society or environment one finds oneself or the challenges one might be facing. Although, wearing the prescribed Hijab in a disapproving environment takes a great deal, willpower of one's internal strength cum being with people who appreciate and know its benefits. Therefore, be steadfast, if needed migrate to a better place (for the practice of Islam) and be in the company of good people. The Prophet (SAW) was reportedly asked:

"Which of our companions are the best?" He replied: "One whose appearance reminds you of Allah, and whose speech increases you in knowledge and whose actions remind you of the Hereafter". (Al-Muhasibi)⁸

In the Glorious Quran, Allah (SWT) remind mankind:

يُنَبِّئُ عَادَمَ لَا يَفْتَنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْءَٰتِهِمَا إِنَّهُ يَرَاكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

"O children of Adam, do not be deceived by Shaytan (the Devil) as he got your parents out of paradise; stripping both of them off their dresses, so that he would expose them to their private parts. Verily, he and his accomplice are seeing you where he cannot see them. Verily, we made Shaytan (the Devils) the protecting friends for those who believe not" (Q. 7:27)

Morality in Islam

Making mistakes is inherent of human nature, but the best of all those who made mistakes are those who yield to correction. The Prophet said; "every son of Adam commits sin, but the best of sinners are those who seek forgiveness"⁹. A glaring high conspiring mistake (and invariably an equity) of this era is the growing indecent dressing among our youths. An adage says; good appearance is a letter of recommendation. Yet another adage says; show your friend and I will tell you whom you are. Hence, it is worth discussing the rampant indecent dressing among our youths with the aim of getting it correctly.

A Description of the Male Dressing in Islam

Dressing refers to the entire garment, jewellery, ornamentation and fashion outfit of a person. The nakedness of a Muslim male according to the Islamic *Shari'ah* (code of dressing) extends from the navel to the knee. Also, a male Muslim is not allowed to wear an ornament meant exclusively for female like the earrings, the nose ring, bracelet, hand chain, ankle chain, etc. however, a male Muslim is allowed to use a silver ring [not gold ring] as explicitly stated in the Sunnah. He is allowed to uncover his head whether in public or while praying. Yet he should not be left exposed especially while praying [except for pilgrims]. His hair style should not be in layers. It should either be low cut, clean shave or left alone but should not be unkempt.

A Description of the Female Dressing in Islam

Muslim ladies have high propensity of winning Allah's favour and gaining entrance into Al-Jannah if only they can endure the rules of Allah on them in this ephemeral world, especially, with respect to dressing. Some dos and don'ts of female dressings are:

- i She must not wear a tight fitting gown such as will expose her shape (blossom, fatness, etc.)
- ii She must not wear male attires.
- iii She must not wear trousers except if her upper gown will cover the entire trousers which must not show.
- iv She must not leave her hair open when in public and while praying.
- v She is only allowed to uncover her face and hand in public and while praying.
- vi She is allowed to use earrings, bangles and necklace but these must not be exposed to her non-relatives.
- vii She is allowed to use gold ornaments (unlike male).
- viii She must not attach any external or artificial hair braid to her own hair¹⁰.

A Common Rule

Both male and female Muslims must not wear transparent dresses such that their underwear's or body part could be seen from outside and Both should not shave the eyebrow, should not tattoo their bodies nor file their teeth. By and large, our goal of curbing the immoral dressings among youth can be realized by the joint action of several categories of people, Allah willing among whom the parents play a central role, next the teachers, the other siblings, the elders and the imam or Islamic government per se.

The Role of Parents: The Nucleus of Every Child

Double rewards shall be the lot of parents who not only channel a child to this sinful world as a pride of non-barrenness, but also motivate the child willing to shun sins. Allah (SWT) says:

أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ

“know that the life of this world is only play and amusement, ornamentation and mutual boasting and rivalry in respect of wealth and children”. (Qur'an 57:20).

A child passes through each phase of life spending eight years in each phase. Hence, the first eight years is known with children involved in plays, the next eight years in amusement. The third phase (16-24 years) marks the beginning of youthfulness and it's known for ornamentation and pomp. Parents should be meticulous and should not take for granted the dressing of their adolescent children because at this stage, a child innately decides whether to follow the cause of Allah and dress in Islamic way or follow the cause of Ash-Shaytan and dress immorally.

Teaching by example should be the role of the mother vis-à-vis her dressing, to the daughters, likewise the father with respect to his dressing towards the sons. The prophet said: whoever set forth a practice of guidance there is the same reward for him on whoever follows the path. And whoever set forth an evil practice, there is sin on him upon whoever follows the path.

The Role of Teachers

Even though it is still the parents that choose one teacher (or school in general) for their children, yet once the children are entrusted to the teacher, he must exert himself towards making the feet of the child firm on the right path. When correcting any act of indecent dressing that may

be noticed, it is essential that the intention of the instructor should be to earn the pleasure of Allah, and not to demonstrate superiority or to vent his anger or to impress others.

The teacher is expected to use any of these avenues in admonishing the students against indecent dressing:

- i He can deal with the mistakes generally by explaining the rules (Hukm). For example, Jarhad (R.A) reported that the Prophet (S.A.W) passed by him when his thing was uncovered. The prophet (S.A.W) said: “cover your thing, for it is a part of your awrah (nakedness)¹¹”.
- ii He should condemn only what is prohibited and leave what we have given opportunity to do conditionally. E.g. a lady fell off from the back of her riding animal and her nakedness should have been exposed if not for a trouser she wore under her garment, where upon the Prophet (SAW) prayed for her¹². The caution she had taking by wearing trousers.’ The messaged that trousers are allowed if they are completely covered by upper garment.
- iii He should explain the seriousness of a rampant act of indecent act of indecent dressing, generally, as admonition to the students even before they become involved in it. For example, the prophet (*Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam*) said, ‘the two inhabitants of hellfire am yet to see: ladies who would be naked even in their dresses, making hairstyle like a mane of horse. Then the bearer of whip who will flog people unjustly, these two will never enter paradise and will never perceive its fragrance reaches great distances¹³’. Such repeated admonition will go a long way in curbing the rampant indecent dressing among Muslim youths.

The Roles of Older Siblings

As a corroboration to the efforts of parents, older siblings, both the elder brother and sister of youth up-coming Muslim should dress. This they should do through the under mentioned ways.

- i They should hasten to correct any wrong form of dressing and should not put off or overlook it or delay it. This is the way of the prophet (*Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam*) as is seen in the stories of man who is not doing his Salah properly, the Makhzoomi woman who committed larceny and Asma bint Yazeed who wanted an indecent dress. It was reported that: “Asma bint Yazeed entered upon the holy prophet (S.A.W) than wearing the indecent dress (which was transparent). The prophet (*Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam*) turned away from her and said, Oh Asma, when a lady reaches puberty, she is not expected to expose her body parts except this and this, he pointed to his face and hand”
- ii They should show comparison to their younger ones while making correction of their wrong actions. This applies in the case of youths who feel remorse for their actions for they deserve compassion.
- iii They should endeavour top explain the seriousness of indecent dressing that is serious in sight of Allah. For example, ‘it was reported that the angles of Allah would shower curses on a lady who exposes her hair (and her nakedness in general) in one public.’

The Roles of the Elderly Muslims in the Community

Next on the list of those whose action are invaluable in curbing the social menace of indecent dressing among Muslim youth are the elder Muslim in the community. Charity, they say, begins at home. Under the deception of *Shaytan*, as nagging them, but if they meet the same correction and takes the same, they will yield, Allah willing. The elder Muslim brother however observe the methodology of the Prophet (SAW) in their correction and take these important steps:

- i They should not hasten to such youth they are sinful. These may sprout up arrogance in them especially if they are from homes Islam is not properly understood.
- ii They should cultivate the practise of explaining to another person how to put the wrong dressing off, hoping the message will not get to the person involved in immoral dressing. I.e. they not away confront such youth directly. For example, Humad bin Abdur-Rahman bin Awf narrated that he heard Mu'awiyah (R.A), while holding a brand of hair which he collected from one of his guide and standing on the pulpit, during the year he performed Hajj, saying 'Oh people of Medina, where are your scholars? I heard the Prophet (SAW) condemning this (attachment of natural hair) saying the children of Israel were destroyed when ladies there start using this'. (Bukhari and Muslim related this)
- iii They should remain calm when dealing with youth mistakes and not to be too harsh.

The Roles of People in the Position of Authority (Government, Rulers and Imams)

Because the people in the authority enjoy a respectable in the society, their role cannot be over-emphasized in curbing the growing of indecent dressing among Muslim youth. The methodology of the Prophet (SAW), the best of leaders, should be adopted entirely: a time to be calm, a time to be stern, a time to overlook, a time to guide, a time to admonish and a time to provide sound alternative. The Imam, as well as those in authority should do the following.

- i They should show practical teachings against indecent dressing. In many cases, practical teaching is more effective than theoretical teaching. He (S.A.W) showed practically how the hairstyle of a male should be, both on himself (he usually leaves his hair combed, oiled but rarely cut it) and on the sons of Ja'far (R.A) as contained in the hadith below. 'Abdullah bin Ja'far said (R.A) narrated that the holy Prophet (S.A.W) left the family of Ja'far alone (to mourn the death of Ja'far) for three days, then he came to them and said: "Do not weep over my cousin after today". He also said: "call the kids of my brother for me. We were brought to him like broods of chickens, He (SAW) then said: "call a barber for me" he told him to shave our heads" (Related by Dawud)
- ii. They should offer sound alternatives. This is especially true when there is an alternative Sunnah. For example, a Muslim lady wearing a t-shirt and trouser may simply be told to wear a big, ankle length gown while her trousers on.
- iii. They should endeavour to correct the misconception that are due to something's not been clear in peoples' mind. For example, "Asma (R.A) narrated that a woman once asked the holy Prophet (SAW) saying, O! messenger of Allah, my daughter suffered from plague, making loose her hair, and I'm about to give her hand in marriage, can I add attachment (hair braids) to her hair? He (SAW) replied, Allah has cursed the one fixing attachment unto other peoples' hair and the one on whose head hair braid is fixed" (Bukhari and Muslim)
- iv They should also correct this ominous indecency by repeatedly reminding our youth to fear Allah in their show of pomp and pageantry.
- v They should guide the youth to what will prevent them from indecent dressing. For example, they should encourage the youth to be selective of kind of friends they mix with, their friends should be religious minded ones.
- vi They should denounce only the wrong acts of these youths and accept, as well as appreciate their good acts.
- vii. They must show their anger especially to those who persistently involve in shameful indecent dressing, despite admonition and useful advice. This is way of the Prophet (*Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam*) especially when continually ask questions on the same issue, thinking a wrong act may be over-looked and permissible for them.

ix They should cultivate the style of turning away from wrongly dressed one (who knew but proved incorrigible), evading argument with him/her, in hope that he or she may come back to the right way.

ix Finally, they should be high-minded in helping our Muslim youth to correct these mistakes immoral dressing. Most times, such youths come from home where clinging to the tents of Islam, as regards dressing, is linked to fanaticism. Hence sure youths to be greatly helped to avoid conflict of opinions between their and such youths.

Conclusion

From the discussion so far, findings show that immoral dressing is a social malady, it is important to know that curbing the indecency is an obligatory act to all and sundry, most especially in the communities of Muslims. It is part of *Naseehah* (giving sincere advice) and forbidding evil, but it should be remembered that Islam is not only forbidding what is evil; it is also commanded to enjoy what is good. Western education is not merely apex of good fortunes for the youths, they should also be taught and show the basic principles of the religion of Islam, the rules of Shari'ah and jointly making efforts to establish these concepts firmly in the mind and hearth of our Muslim youths, by giving good examples of what become moral in persons' life. By exhorting them, relating stories and discussing incidences to show the significant of moral virtues, decent dressing and religiousness in the society.

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