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THE PREFERRED STYLES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF FASHION ATTIRE EMBRACED BY MALAYSIAN MUSLIMAH ICONS AND CELEBRITIES

Zaleha Arshad^{1*}, Asliza Aris¹, Zainuddin Md Nor¹, Arasinah Kamis^{2*}, Sri Endah Wahyuningsih³,
Kokom Kamariah⁴, Adhi Kusumastuti⁵, Farah Najwa Ahmad Fuad⁶

- ¹ Faculty of Art & Design, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Malaysia
Email: zaleha@ftv.upsi.edu.my, arisasliza@uitm.edu.com.my, zainu570@uitm.edu.my
- ^{2,6} Faculty of Technical and Vocational, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia
Email: arasinah@ftv.upsi.edu.my, farahnajwa@ftv.upsi.edu.my
- ^{3,5} Faculty Technic, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia
Email: s.endah32@mail.unnes.ac.id, adhi_kusumastuti@mail.unnes.ac.id
- ⁴ Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Email: kokom@uny.ac.id
- * Corresponding Author (arasinah@ftv.upsi.edu.my)

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Abstract:

This study investigates the fashion preferences and attire choices of prominent Malaysian Muslimah icons and celebrities. The study aims to understand the factors that shape their fashion decisions and the broader impact of these choices on societal fashion trends while examining the interplay between Islamic dress standards and contemporary fashion trends. Employing qualitative methods including in-depth interviews and document analysis, the research delves into the factors shaping their fashion decisions and the broader impact of these choices on societal trends. Key findings reveal a dynamic negotiation between religious adherence, cultural expression, and global fashion influences. The study identifies themes such as the significance of modesty, economic considerations, public perception, comfort priorities and the influence of international trends on Islamic attire. The research concludes that Malaysian Muslimah icons and celebrities navigate a nuanced balancing act, reconciling their religious and cultural identity with the ever-evolving global fashion landscape. Their choices reflect individual preferences and significantly influence societal fashion trends, positioning them as trendsetters in the Islamic fashion industry, bridging tradition and modernity. This study illuminates the complex context of fashion decisions for this group and paves the way for further exploration of the evolving landscape of Islamic fashion in Malaysia.

Keywords:

Fashion Attire, Celebrity, Islamic Dress, Fashion Trends

Introduction

The intricacies of Muslimah clothing have been a subject of scholarly inquiry and interpretation among scholars and researchers for centuries. Rooted in religious teachings and further elucidated by interpretations of prominent Islamic scholars, the attire of a Muslim woman is not just about fabric but encapsulates broader principles and values. The Quran, the central religious text of Islam, offers guidance on various aspects of life, including attire. It utilizes specific terms to convey this guidance. Two key terms relevant to Muslimah attire are “*khumurihin*,” appearing in Surah An-Nur, and “*jalabeebihin*,” found in Surah Al-Ahzab. These terms offer a glimpse into the detailed guidance on Muslimah attire. The term “*jilbab*” is an Arabic word signifying garments that envelop the entire body. This understanding is reinforced by commentary by Ibn A'tiyah, which highlights the Divine instruction for women to wear the *jilbab* as a comprehensive covering. The concept of “*hijab*”, while popularly associated with the headscarf, is more extensive. It represents a garment that swathes an individual from head to toe, emphasizing the idea of complete modesty. Another essential aspect of Muslimah clothing is the understanding of *aurah*, or the parts of the body that should be concealed. While the Qur'an underscores the principle, scholars have delved deeper to offer interpretations. For instance, the debate about whether the face and wrists should be considered *aurah* is ongoing. While a minority of scholars opine that they should be concealed, the majority, drawing from the interpretations of Ibn Abbas, argue that they can be exposed (Asna al-Matalib, 1/176). This distinction becomes crucial when considering adornments like jewellery, which, as per Qur'anic guidance, should remain concealed, save for close family members. In conclusion, Muslimah clothing, as elucidated by scholars, is a complex and multifaceted expression of religious teachings, cultural interpretations, and individual choices. It is not just about adherence but something that resonates with deeper meanings and an understanding of modesty and identity.

Understanding the Concept of Aurah in Quran and Hadith

Islam has established specific boundaries regarding the *aurah*, or the parts of the body that should be concealed, for both males and females. These boundaries are in place to safeguard the *aurah*, guided by the religious principles and the essence of Islam itself. Concealing the *aurah* is important to prevent any potential accusations or slander. The term *aurah* carries various interpretations. In a literal sense, *aurah* refers to a shortage or something that could lead to reproach. In terms of linguistic understanding, *aurah* is synonymous with reprehensible, signifying both the *aurah* itself and anything that might cause embarrassment (Karyono et al., 2017). Furthermore, *aurah* can be defined as anything that brings shame or disgrace to its possessor when exposed (Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab, 9/370). It encompasses whatever would cause embarrassment or bring dishonour if revealed. Subsequently, the concept of *aurah* has evolved to primarily signify the embarrassment or shame that arises when something that should be concealed is exposed, occurring on three occasions when the covering is opened. In the Quran, the term *aurah* is mentioned four times, each time with different connotations. Firstly, *aurah* can be defined as the limbs that must be covered, as stated in Surah An-Nur (24:31). Secondly, it is defined differently as three specific time periods when bodies were often uncovered, as mentioned in Surah An-Nur (24:58). Lastly, the term *aurah* is repeated twice, and in both instances, it signifies being overt or exposed, as found in Surah Al-Ahzab (33:13).

The obligation to conceal one's *aurah* is not solely found in the Quran but is also reinforced by the Hadith. In a Hadith, the Prophet provides guidance regarding the command to conceal the *aurah* and delineates the boundaries of *aurah* for women who have reached the age of

menstruation as follows: It was narrated from 'Aishah that Asma bint Abi Bakr entered upon the Messenger of Allah SWT wearing a thin garment. The Messenger of Allah SWT turned away from her and said: "O Asma, when a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it is not proper for anything to be seen of her except this and this." And he pointed to his face and hands (Sunan Abi Dawud, 4104).

In adherence to Islamic Dress Standard, the concept of *aurah*, or modesty, holds paramount significance. Both the Quran and the Hadith instruct individuals, irrespective of gender, to diligently conceal their *aurah*. For Muslim women, the *aurah* of a Muslim woman with men who are not her *mahram* or with non-Muslim women is her entire anatomy apart from her face and palms (Mustafa et al., 2018). The requirement to cover themselves is mandatory for Muslim men and women. This divine guidance is rooted in the core principles of Islam: to foster an environment where faithful women are not subjected to undue male attention. Women who embrace Islamic practices, especially those pertaining to modest attire, serve as exemplars for their fellow Muslim women. A noteworthy trend in contemporary times is the increasing number of celebrities and fashion influencers embracing Islamic dress, including the hijab, as a manifestation of modest attire (Brayson, 2021). What began as a personal choice by devout individuals has evolved into a global phenomenon, akin to a cultural trend. Bloggers who align their fashion choices with Islamic principles have garnered widespread recognition, now shaping the perception of younger generations. In this digital era, they have transitioned into influential figures, often regarded as digital role models. However, the widespread adoption of Islamic clothing, including the hijab, has inadvertently contributed to misconceptions about Islam (Chowdhury et al., 2017). To some, it may perpetuate the false notion of Islam as an oppressive religion associated with antiquated dress codes (Sands, 2014) while the reality is that Islamic dress is a personal choice and an expression of faith for many Muslims. Nevertheless, many Muslim-majority countries have witnessed a transformation in recent years. Islamic clothing and the hijab are increasingly seen as symbols of empowerment, indicative of national development and the evolving role of Muslim women in society. Despite these global shifts and the proliferation of hijabi icons in the fashion industry, there remains a conspicuous lack of comprehensive studies examining the fashion styles of icons and celebrities in Malaysia through the lens of Islamic Dress Standard. This glaring research gap necessitates the undertaking of a formal inquiry to explore and elucidate this multifaceted phenomenon, addressing the complex interplay between Islamic Dress Standard and contemporary fashion in Malaysia. The research question for this research is "What are the preferred styles and characteristics of fashion attire embraced by Malaysian Muslimah icons and celebrities?"

Islamic Dress Standard in Malaysia

The evolution of Islamic Dress Standard in Malaysia is a dynamic journey through time, marked by distinct eras that have shaped the attire and style of its Muslim population. From the early days of Islamic civilization to the contemporary fashion landscape, each era reflects unique influences, values, and trends. This essay explores the diverse phases of Islamic Dress Standard evolution in Malaysia, offering insights into how historical and cultural factors have left their mark on clothing choices. From the 7th through the 14th centuries, Malaysia experienced the emergence of Islamic fashion, characterised by a strong influence from broader Islamic design trends. The dissemination of Islam throughout Asia facilitated the introduction of clothing regulations that were founded upon principles of modesty and practicality. Both males and females adhered to these principles, donning attire specifically crafted to modestly hide their bodies. In Malaysia, it was common for women to don a hijab or headscarf, while

their attire often consisted of loose-fitting garments crafted from breathable materials, which were well-suited for the tropical environment prevalent in the region (Borschberg, 2022). The period spanning the 15th to 16th centuries is widely recognised as the age of the Malacca Sultanate, which played a significant role in shaping the development of Islamic design within the region of Malaysia. This historical period is distinguished by the occurrence of cultural interchange, as merchants originating from several regions of the globe congregated at the thriving harbour of Malacca. The outcome of this convergence was the amalgamation of Islamic attire with traditional Malay fashion. It is worth mentioning that the apparel worn by the Malay nobility at this particular period showcased extravagant textiles, elaborate needlework and distinctive headwear, which exemplified a peculiar amalgamation of Islamic modesty with the magnificence of Malay court garments (Borschberg, 2022).

From the 17th through the 20th centuries, the colonial era exerted a substantial influence on Islamic dress in Malaysia, mostly as a result of the presence and dominance of European powers such as the British and the Dutch. Despite the introduction of Western-style clothing, traditional Malay costumes remained culturally significant (Ahmad & Mohd Tajuddin, 2022). During this period, there was a contradiction observed between traditional attire and Western influences (Zain et al., 2021). The principle of modesty continued to serve as a guiding force, albeit with a transformed manifestation. Prominent illustrations encompass the "Baju Melayu" attire for males and the "Baju Kurung" attire for females, which harmoniously amalgamated conventional aesthetics with the principles of Islamic modesty (Condra, 2013). The period of the mid-20th century, after Malaysia's attainment of independence in 1957, witnessed a revitalised focus on traditional attire as a manifestation of national identity (Jerome et al., 2016). These articles of clothing not only became commonly worn attire but also assumed significant roles as symbols of national pride and solidarity. The reinforcement of modesty in clothes has been highlighted as a significant aspect of Malaysia's emerging national identity (Aljunied, 2019). In the 21st century, Malaysian Islamic Dress Standard has embraced diversity and dynamism, reflecting the nation's multiculturalism and the impact of globalisation. Although traditional Malay attire continues to be widely embraced, there has been a notable increase in the adoption of modern interpretations of Islamic design (Utami et al., 2019). The rapid evolution of Islamic fashion, including hijab-making, mirrors the broader fashion industry. Fabric selection is crucial, directly impacting the final product's aesthetics. Manufacturers consider consumer preferences, their own design visions, the fabric's physical look, aesthetic value and attractiveness of printed designs when making fabric choices (Yusof & Yusof, 2020). The emergence of social media platforms has played a significant role in shaping fashion trends, including those related to hijabs. The power of minor fashion influencers has grown, and these influencers often use social media as a platform to showcase various hijab styles, fabric choices and outfit ideas (Priedel, 2022). Malaysian designers have garnered global acclaim for their adept integration of diverse global design influences with Islamic principles (Chandran, 2020; Salvá, 2017). In contemporary Malaysia, Muslim individuals possess a diverse array of clothing options that span from traditional to cosmopolitan styles, exemplifying the versatility of Islamic dress within a contemporary milieu (Aljunied, 2019; Borschberg, 2022; Shamsul, 2005). In brief, the development of Islamic Dress Standard in Malaysia can be characterised as a dynamic trajectory that amalgamates many aspects from several historical periods. This exemplifies the lasting importance of modesty in clothing while also highlighting the capacity of Islamic Dress Standard to adjust to evolving circumstances and external influences. The Islamic Dress Standard in Malaysia demonstrates a dynamic and progressive manifestation of faith, culture and identity while the country undergoes ongoing cultural and social transformations.

Intersection of Religion and Culture

The rich tapestry of Islamic Dress Standard in Malaysia is intricately woven with threads of religion and culture. Malaysian women have adeptly navigated the intersections of these two influential aspects, resulting in a unique and diverse fashion landscape that reflects their religious identity while honouring their cultural heritage. This part explores how Malaysian women have balanced the dynamics of religion and culture, shedding light on the profound influence this intersection has had on their fashion choices and attire. Malaysia is a multicultural nation with a diverse population consisting of Malays, Chinese, Indians and indigenous communities, each with its own distinct cultural traditions. This cultural diversity profoundly influences fashion choices, as individuals often incorporate elements from their cultural backgrounds into their daily attire (Aziz, 2021; Ghirlanda et al., 2013; Rabimov, 2018). While Islamic Dress Standard serves as a unifying thread among Malaysian Muslims, cultural nuances add depth and richness to their clothing choices. One of the most visible ways in which religion and culture intersect in Islamic Dress Standard is through the choice between traditional and contemporary styles (Thimm, 2021). Malaysian women often find themselves at a crossroads, deciding whether to adhere to traditional dress codes or embrace more modern interpretations. This dilemma arises from the desire to balance religious modesty with cultural aesthetics (Kamarulzaman & Shaari, 2023). Islamic Dress Standard in Malaysia is influenced by a variety of factors, including religion, culture, and globalization. On the one hand, Islamic law (sharia) provides specific guidelines on what is considered modest dress for both men and women. For example, women are required to cover their heads, chests, and legs (Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). On the other hand, Malaysian culture is also a major influence on Islamic fashion. For example, traditional Malay clothing, such as the baju kurung for women and the baju Melayu for men, are often worn for formal occasions. Additionally, globalisation has led to the introduction of new fashion trends from around the world. As a result, Islamic Dress Standard in Malaysia is a diverse and dynamic mix of traditional and modern elements. The Malay community, being the majority in Malaysia, has a substantial impact on the country's Islamic Dress Standard (Tahir Jan & Abdullah, 2015; Thimm, 2021).

Methods

The study employed a combination of qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and document analysis, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences, perspectives and interpretations of Muslimah icons and celebrities regarding Islamic Dress Standards in Malaysia. The informant criterion was set to select Muslimah icons and celebrities who are actively involved in the Islamic Dress Standard industry in Malaysia, a few celebrities who have transitioned from mainstream fashion to Islamic fashion, and those who have been influential in shaping the discourse and trends of Islamic Dress Standard in Malaysia, ensuring that their knowledge in Islamic dress standard, perspectives and experiences are relevant to the study. The ethnography approach holistically examines social interactions, cultural practices and the symbolic meanings attached to Islamic dress among Malaysian Muslimah icons and celebrities. The suitability of ethnography for studying fashion trends and cultural expressions is discussed. Ethnography's strengths in observing and interpreting daily practices, social interactions and the symbolic aspects of Islamic dress are highlighted.

These methods allow the researcher to understand how Muslim women in Malaysia navigate the intersection of religious guidelines and contemporary fashion trends, observe the manifestation and negotiation of Islamic Dress Standard in various contexts, and capture various expressions and interpretations of Islamic Dress Standard among Muslimah icons and celebrities in Malaysia. Besides that, conducting interviews with multiple samples allowed the

researcher to obtain a variety of perspectives. Besides that, other data collection techniques such as document analysis were used to support and triangulate data from the in-depth interviews (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Some pictures were also gathered through the informants' social media, namely, Instagram and Facebook. Permission and consent were obtained in using those materials from the informants while conducting the in-depth interviews. Examining related pictures and videos helped the researcher to triangulate information from the in-depth interviews to support the findings related to their attire choices. Thus, rich data was gathered from multiple sources for this study. In the context of exploring the engagement of Malaysian Muslimah icons and celebrities with Islamic fashion, purposive sampling was instrumental and helpful. The chosen informants were those who could offer diverse perspectives and in-depth insights into this unique cultural and fashion landscape. This method facilitated a multifaceted exploration of the topic, enabling the study to delve deeply into the nuances and complexities of Islamic Dress Standard as experienced and influenced by these icons.

Sampling Procedure

The next phase involves establishing clear and concise criteria for participant selection. These criteria are designed to ensure that the participants (icons and celebrities) are deeply embedded in the Islamic Dress Standard milieu, either as designers, influencers or notable celebrities. The selected criteria revolve around their active engagement in Islamic fashion, their prominence or recognition in the industry and their potential to provide varied perspectives, including differences in age, fashion approach and career trajectory. In addition, consultations with experts and insiders in the field were undertaken to refine this list and ensure the inclusion of individuals who are not only influential but also represent a spectrum of experiences within Islamic fashion. The proposed range of 10-15 participants is an initial estimate, with the flexibility to adjust based on the depth and variety of information gathered during the initial interviews.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis is approached with methodological rigour, suitable for qualitative research. Thematic analysis is employed to identify patterns, themes, and insights. This involves a detailed examination of transcribed interviews and document materials, allowing for the identification of recurring motifs and overarching themes. The interpretative process involves the researcher immersing themselves in the data, discerning connections and constructing a coherent narrative that reflects the informants' perspectives. Transcriptions serve as a foundational element in the subsequent stages of data analysis, allowing for a detailed examination of verbal expressions, nuances and contextual cues. The fidelity of transcriptions is upheld to capture the richness of the participants' voices.

Results

The Preferred Styles And Characteristics Of Fashion Attire Embraced By Malaysian Muslimah Icons And Celebrities

The primary aim of this study entails a meticulous analysis of the fashion garments worn by prominent Malaysian Muslimah icons and celebrities. By closely examining the selection of garments, one can attain a thorough comprehension of the wide range of designs and trends that are now evolving within this sector of the fashion industry. This purpose functions as the primary stage in comprehending the intricate realm of fashion among Malaysian Muslimah icons and celebrities.

The Intersection of Modesty and Courtesy in Celebrity Fashion Choices

During discussions with P2 (radio host and actress), P5 (Islamic law lecturer), P13 (actress and entrepreneur) and P14 (TV host and actress), the researcher discerned a strong inclination towards modesty and courtesy in the fashion preferences of Malaysian Muslimah celebrities. These elements stood out prominently, establishing them as hallmarks of their sartorial choices. Typically, the principles of modesty and courtesy in attire are manifested in elements such as hijabs, appropriately sized shirts, socks, hand socks and niqabs. To illustrate this, P2 delved into the nuances of Muslimah dress, elaborating:

P2:

"... For example, Nana Mahazan, MasyaAllah she's one of a very good reference. Her clothes are not too big, not too small, just nice on her. That is a courteous dress. Back to Muslim clothes, we have not only covered the lid, but must wear socks, hand socks, we are talking about really common Muslimah. Because in the end of the day, the complete Muslimah I know it is like that ..."

While not every female celebrity in Malaysia might be widely recognised, their attire often stands out and becomes a point of identification among the general public. Additionally, the Malaysian populace exhibits a keen interest in Muslimah celebrities, particularly discerning their commitment and values through their choice of clothing. Shedding light on this observation, P5 remarked:

P5:

"...I'm sorry for question number 10, I want to mention the names of celebrities I don't really know, because I'm closer to the ones I think are courteous, those who dress courteously, there are actually many, very many. The usual thing we see is, among the beautiful clothes now, who is the one who has worn the niqab, Neelofa, then someone asked for her clothes to be anchored, that is one of the clothes that I think is beautiful, but I want to say the clothes that it's a bit inappropriate - because I don't follow it very much so it's a bit hard to say, but for me there is indeed a usage that we feel is not really in accordance with the Sharia-compliant aspects of Islam..."

Beyond the public, Muslimah celebrities are also acutely observant of their peers within the entertainment industry. This suggests that the fashion choices of one celebrity are not only influential to their fans but also to fellow professionals in the same field. Delving into this dynamic, P13 elucidated:

P13:

"... Personally, I think I like to see a celebrity friend named Irma Hasmie. My point of view she is always dressed in modest, courteous, and always sweet ... Among the other celebrity friends, I think can be an example for Islamic fashion is Ardella Aryana. She has also been a lot of them/ producing trendy and easy-going Muslim fashion..."

Nonetheless, it's essential to understand that fashion attire shouldn't be the sole metric to gauge an individual's level of adherence to "Islamic" principles or their inherent kindness. While modest and courteous fashion choices reflect positively on the individual, they do not encompass the entirety of a person's faith or character. P14 aptly captured this sentiment, stating:

P14:

"... but it is a problematic or problem if it is made up of a measure of "Islam" and the good of a person. It is good if there are more celebrities that can be more modest and courteous ..."

Economic Implications of Celebrity Fashion Trends

A recurring sentiment among the informants in this study was the undeniable influence of economic factors on attire choices. This interplay between financial considerations and fashion preferences laid the foundation for the second theme: the economic implications. Indeed, the cost associated with specific attire can play a pivotal role in guiding a celebrity's decisions regarding what to wear. Offering an insider's perspective from the fashion world, P1, a renowned fashion designer, clarified:

P1:

"... Like Heliza Helmi, Aisyah Hijanah, they are not sponsored, they pay. If this is a sponsor, I can get many artists. There are many who want it. But for example, if you want, you can. But must pay. There are a lot of people, it's okay. But if I feel like it, let's take Neelofa as an example, is that okay? But I want to use it like this if we can change it? So, he will be a bit of an issue because some of you have your own style. The latest is the Heliza Helmi shirt. I did everything once from the wedding, everything..."

Despite the undeniable financial dimension of attire choices, celebrities often have a choice between acquiring custom-made or ready-made attire. This flexibility in their options, even in light of cost considerations, enables them to adhere to Islamic dress standards in their clothing choices. A fashion designer and a TV personality, P3 provided a vivid illustration of this scenario:

P3:

"...I think we need to be open minded about this. In fashion, you can buy something that looks expensive but it's not expensive- you can buy anywhere- beautiful abaya- there are many prices. It's just how you style yourself. At the same time, I think the problem is when you start comparing yourself with someone who has more than you, it becomes a very negative outcome on yourself. You start comparing- "oh I'm not good enough", "I can't afford that", "if only I can go there." Your focus deviates from positivity and goes towards negativity. So, we have to be real- if I can afford it, ok why not but if you can't afford it, then you should buy something else..."

Another informant expressed a sense of relief and advocated for a transformation in fashion education, addressing the role of policymakers and fashion designers. While acknowledging that some fashion choices can fully align with Islamic Dress Standards, the persistent issue of affordability and pricing remains a challenge. An Islamic speaker, P9's perspective shed light on this matter:

P9:

"...But I want to say this, education needs to be holistic from policymakers to designers who play an important role. If a designer understands, no matter what kind of fashion comes out, he will adjust it to be beautiful, trendy, but cover the aurah, people are comfortable wearing it, but the price is high, we just must fight now how to release a cheap price..."

In contrast, another informant emphasised that the cost of fashion, irrespective of its alignment with Islamic Dress Standards, can lead to the wastage of resources, including clothing and veils. This perspective underscores that even non-Islamic Dress Standards fashion can come at a high financial cost. An actress and a TV host, P14 articulated this viewpoint as follows:

P14:

"...The fashion industry itself is problematic for me. It pollutes the world. The world of fashion whether Islamic or not also contributes to waste, encouraging women to buy too many clothes and hijabs that they do not need. This is also un-Islamic... Most celebrities and icons wear clothing that may cover the aurah, but it is too expensive..."

Media and Public Influence in Celebrity Fashion Choices

This study underscored that celebrity fashion choices are significantly shaped by public perception, which is vividly echoed through platforms like social media and live streaming. Consequently, the third theme that surfaced pertains to the public's embrace of these fashion choices. The transition of a celebrity from non-Islamic Dress Standards to attire in line with Islamic Dress Standards can be both influenced and pressured by this prevailing public sentiment. Moreover, the portrayal of celebrities in media plays a pivotal role in steering the degree of public acceptance. As articulated by a motivational speaker, TV host and an actress, P11:

"...Where there are celebrities and influencers, there needs to be media that understands and cooperates. The media amplifies the voices and values of the celeb and helps to put them in front of the audience. How the media portrays a celeb can also influence how an audience accept and gets attached to that celeb as well..."

Nevertheless, the degree of public perception and embrace can exert considerable pressure on celebrities. From the vantage point of the celebrities themselves, as articulated by P2:

P2:

"...When they exchange identity images, that thing is magnified so that some of them are very pressured. And some he opened the hood again. That thing is very scary to me. Especially when I'm in the position of a celebrity, like that..."

While not all fans readily embrace the transformation in their attire, a segment remains accepting and loyal. This sentiment was encapsulated by P3, who elaborated:

P3:

"...There are fans from before who are still with me regardless if I'm wearing the hijab or not. There are probably fans who have stopped following me too. If you look at my Instagram, it's very Islamic. On Instagram you can see the statistics, how many people followed or unfollowed me. Everyday there are people who follow, and people who unfollow..."

Additionally, audiences often emulate the attire choices of celebrities, even when these choices do not align with Islamic Dress Standards. This phenomenon was highlighted by P9, who observed:

P9:

"...a few years ago, before Neelofa introduced the short hijab, everyone wore khimar and long hijabs, no matter the artist, before the short hijab came back."

So, at that time, a lot of people wore long hijabs. But after Neelofa appeared to make the short hijab, there were no more girls to make Muslim fashion OOTD..."*

*Outfit of the day

Moreover, the endorsement from fans and the broader public can sometimes place celebrities in a precarious position, leading to misconceptions about religious matters among their followers. This arises because, while celebrities might be perceived as paragons by the public, they are not equipped as Islamic scholars. It's imperative for celebrities to recognise this distinction and refrain from delving into religious discussions. An Islamic speaker and entrepreneur, P4 articulated this concern, stating:

P4:

"...These artists who migrated are considered to be very perfect, full of life, perfect in the eyes of the community. When he migrated alone, he was called to speak in front of people, talk about religion and so on. It's not that I'm jealous, I also enjoy being friends with artists who have migrated, but he and the community should know where he has limitations because they are not religious..."

Much like celebrities, not all audience members are well-versed in Islamic teachings. Many, without a proper understanding of Islamic Dress Standards, tend to comment on and judge celebrities. An Islamic speaker, P6 shed light on this scenario, noting:

P6:

"...We always talk about veiling, sharia and so on, and some of us like to punish - that's not right, this is not right, for example, what happened to the wedding of my friend Heliza Helmi and Mahadi, some commented about beards, about henna and so on. What I have seen is that many of them punish without the first knowledge. The second, they do not delve into the issues of 'non-consensus' related to women's voice, related to women's henna during marriage, women's make-up during marriage, all of that is allowed by the Shariah that we do not need to discuss, and we must accept according to the law and circumstances environment in Malaysia..."

The Comfort Factor: Influencing Attire Choices

This study identified comfort as a compelling factor that shapes the attire choices of celebrities. Consequently, the fifth thematic element, centred around the concept of comfort, emerged as a noteworthy aspect influencing celebrity attire choices. For instance, P14 illustrated this perspective as follows:

P14:

"... During still do not covering the aurah - media and magazines and famous celebrities. When covering my aurah, I looked for myself what was comfortable because at that time Muslim fashion was not as popular as it is today..."

Alongside comfort, celebrities who have transitioned to Islamic Dress Standards attire often adopt a fashion concept known as 'ready to pray'. P2 elucidated this concept as follows:

P2:

"...Because I have a concept of fashion or my clothing, used the word my clothing is more about comfort, it's all about comfort. And but I'm embarrassed to say it, but because this is for reference material, it's for ready prayer, it's easy to tell..."

Conversely, this study also revealed that one of the informants selects a comfortable fashion style based on how that particular fashion represents her identity. This underscores the notion that a fashion style can directly influence an individual's personality and self-expression. For instance, an actress and a TV host, P15 elaborated on this aspect as follows:

P15:

"...I've always comfortable being me and most of the time it is my own sense of fashion and my main focus in fashion is my comfort and fashion that represents me..."

Impact of International Trends on Islamic Attire

Through interviews with informants, it became evident that the attire worn by Malaysian Muslimah celebrities is significantly impacted by international fashion trends. This has given rise to the theme of the influence of global trends on Islamic dress. However, integrating foreign fashion poses challenges, especially regarding clothing sizes. As P1 described:

P1:

"...The experience at New York Fashion Week was really difficult. I cry a lot. I brought Mira Filzah as an icon. We go far, bring clothes. Our clothes in Asia and there are not the same. I cried because the clothes didn't fit. American people's back, chest, other size. Some people don't want to wear our hijab. But that was the most expensive experience so far. From there I got a customer from New York..."

In addition, celebrities often encounter and collaborate with international fashion designers when working abroad. This exposure can significantly influence their sartorial choices. P2 elaborated on her experience, noting:

P2:

"...I once experienced with just a scarf, I had a show in Jakarta. The stylist was nearby, he put a turban on my head, but it was a hijab. I don't know how you do it. That to me is hijab fashion. If you can make it with this tudung bawal, all kinds of styles, fashion, that's what we call hijab fashion. Sometimes this hijab can change your age. How you style your tudung will you like it or not, to some extent it can change a person's face and age..."

This study also found, an informant also interested to brand and style from various countries. To illustrate, P3 stated as below:

P3:

"...It depends on the brand and style. I like some UAE brands. Their styles are amazing. Their ideas and materials and cuts they use are very high fashion but also sharia compliant. And then you go to Malaysia, Indonesia also has beautiful clothes- very nice abayas- my favourite right now is Juli Zubedi. I like quality, Sharia compliant, creative, not so expensive... I like Japanese fashion because they are actually sharia compliant. They have loose cut, simple and not too much, like what I have today. I like Yoji Yamamoto because it's all black. International brand in UAE I like is Bleach- they have abayas."

I like Japanese fashion because most brands are loose cut, opaque, their kimonos are like abayas..."

However, not all celebrities follow foreign fashion because of interest. Another reason is because of safety when staying at a foreign country. If a person wears local attire, that person will increase her risk of getting disturbed after staying there. In short, fashion choices should be based on the local culture. P9 described her experience as below:

P9:

"...For example, I went to Egypt alone, so to make sure I was safe, and the Arabs d'dn't disturb me, because we were alone in a country of people, so I wore a niqab like the Arabs, the black one that covers everything. So, this person does not notice that I am an expat. He remembers that I am an Arab. I also feel safe, people 'on't care. But if I wear it like this, like a Malay, everyone will mess up. So, we think it's simple, but t'at's 'od's way of protecting wo'en's dignity. T'at's why when dressing, there has to be a polite concept and that politeness has to blend with the local customs, t'at's what I mean".."

In addition, an informant was also influenced by foreign fashion. This included Islamic Dress Standards and non-Islamic Dress Standards. P13 described the situation as below:

P13:

"...Reference in dressing from teenagers to now I like to see those who are abroad. Since I was a teenager, I like to refer to Japan street fashion style. From there brought my interest to refer to English vintage style. Now I like to see Korean fashion style and also Muslimah fashion style in Indonesia..."

Furthermore, big fashion shows also influence celebrities in their attire style choices. The reason for this is because big fashion shows also represent various styles of Islamic fashion. P14 cited as below:

P14:

"...The big fashion show also features Islamic clothing. To expect that there is only one "style" or only one way to cover the aurah perfectly is unreasonable and illogical. The fact is that we will continue to live in diversity - diversity in levels of faith, understanding, life choices and so on. The one who should improve fashion to be more "Islamic" is yourself..."

Discussion

This study reveals key insights into the fashion choices of Malaysian Muslimah icons and celebrities. This section explores the intersection of modesty and courtesy in their attire, emphasising the importance of balancing Islamic dress principles with contemporary fashion trends. It also delves into the economic factors influencing these choices, highlighting the role of financial considerations in the fashion industry. Additionally, the impact of media and public perception on these fashion choices is examined, alongside the significance of comfort in attire selection. Lastly, the influence of international fashion trends on Islamic attire in Malaysia is discussed, demonstrating the global integration of fashion styles. This analysis sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how these factors collectively shape the fashion landscape for Malaysian Muslimah celebrities.

Intersection of Modesty and Courtesy in Celebrity Fashion Choices

At the heart of their sartorial choices lies a commitment to modesty and courtesy. Through discussions with P2, P5, P13, and P14, a deeper understanding of the nuanced approaches to modesty and courtesy emerged. These celebrities carefully navigate their fashion choices, striking a delicate balance between religious adherence and personal expression. These elements serve as defining features, emphasizing their commitment to both personal style and religious values. Notably, elements such as hijabs, appropriately sized shirts, socks, hand socks, and niqabs are prominent, reflecting adherence to Islamic dress standards. As P2 eloquently put it, “Nana Mahazan, *MasyaAllah* she’s one of a very good reference. Her clothes are not too big, not too small, just nice on her. That is a courteous dress.” This sentiment underscores how attire serves as a marker of identification (Özdil, 2021), not only for celebrities but also for the broader public, who keenly observe and interpret their fashion choices. Similarly, P5’s observations underscored the meticulous scrutiny of attire choices among the Malaysian public, reflecting a broader cultural emphasis on modesty and religious values. This meticulous scrutiny suggests that people pay close attention to how celebrities dress (Caan & Lee, 2023), especially when it comes to adhering to modesty standards and reflecting religious values. In Malaysia, where there is a strong cultural emphasis on modesty and religious principles, the attire of public figures, particularly celebrities, often serves as a reflection of societal norms and values. Therefore, the careful examination of their fashion choices by the public underscores the importance placed on these aspects within Malaysian society. However, it is important to recognize that while modest and courteous fashion choices are commendable, they do not encompass the entirety of an individual’s faith or character. As P14 aptly stated, “It is problematic if it is made a measure of Islam and the goodness of a person.” By cautioning against using attire as the sole measure of a person’s religious devotion or moral character, P14 challenges the notion of equating modesty in dress with one’s righteousness or adherence to Islamic values. This perspective invites us to consider the multifaceted nature of faith and personal identity, suggesting that while modest attire may reflect religious observance for some, it does not necessarily encompass the entirety of one’s beliefs or actions (Galadari, 2012). Additionally, P14’s statement prompts us to question the potential pitfalls of using external markers, such as clothing, as indicators of piety or virtue, emphasizing the importance of deeper introspection and understanding when evaluating individuals within religious contexts. This nuanced perspective highlights the need to appreciate fashion choices as part of a larger narrative of religious adherence and personal expression. Malaysian Muslimah icons and celebrities carefully balance Islamic dress standards with contemporary fashion, a blend that embodies both modesty and courtesy in their attire. This approach reflects a broader trend in Islamic fashion, where there is a harmonious coexistence of religious obligations and modern style preferences, showcasing how cultural and religious identities can be expressed through contemporary fashion (Ahmad & Mohd Tajuddin, 2022; Brayson, 2021).

Economic Implications of Celebrity Fashion Trends

The choices in fashion among these celebrities are not just style-driven but also significantly influenced by economic considerations. The cost of custom-made pieces versus ready-made options influences celebrity choices, reflecting broader realities of the Islamic fashion industry. P1, the renowned fashion designer, sheds light on the economic dynamics within the fashion industry by highlighting the distinction between sponsored and non-sponsored celebrities. Sponsorship plays a crucial role in the fashion world, as it often dictates which celebrities endorse certain brands or products. P1’s observation indicates that some celebrities, such as Heliza Helmi and Aisyah Hijanah, might not be sponsored and instead purchase their attire, reflecting a deliberate choice or financial necessity. This insight suggests that while

sponsorship deals can be lucrative and prestigious, not all celebrities have access to them or choose to engage in them. This aspect of the industry underscores the varying financial situations and strategic considerations of celebrities when it comes to their fashion choices. Furthermore, it hints at the complex negotiation processes between designers, brands, and celebrities, where factors like personal style preferences, brand alignment, and financial terms come into play. Another informant's perspective, P3 delves into the psychological aspect of fashion choices, emphasizing the significance of maintaining a positive mindset despite economic constraints. This insight underscores the importance of mental resilience in navigating the fashion world, particularly in the face of financial disparities. P3's viewpoint highlights how it is important to be realistic and positive when it comes to fashion. Instead of constantly comparing yourself to others and striving for impossible standards, P3 advises people to choose clothes based on what fits their own budget and values. This illustration underscores the nuanced dynamics at play in celebrity attire decisions, where financial considerations intersect with cultural and personal preferences. The choice of clothing materials, styles, and accessories is not only a reflection of personal preferences, but also a reflection of the societal norms and economic circumstances (Shaw, 2023). Moreover, P9's perspective offers insights into the broader societal implications of fashion affordability. P9 suggests that addressing the issue of affordability requires a multifaceted approach involving policymakers and designers. In simpler terms, P9 is saying that it is not just about what individuals do, but also about larger changes that need to happen in the fashion industry and government policies to make Islamic fashion affordable for everyone. This implies that while individual actions play a role in addressing affordability, systemic changes are necessary to ensure that Islamic fashion remains accessible to all segments of society (Sierra, 2023). These insights align with broader discussions in Islamic fashion studies, which emphasize the economic dynamics and financial aspects that influence fashion trends in the Muslim community (Aljunied, 2019; Chowdhury et al., 2017). Understanding these financial considerations adds depth to the analysis of celebrity trends and their accessibility within the Muslim community.

Media and Public Influence in Celebrity Fashion Choices

Across the interviews, there was a consistent acknowledgment of the significant role played by media portrayal and public perception in shaping the fashion decisions of Malaysian Muslimah celebrities. The fashion choices of these prominent figures are deeply intertwined with public perception. Media portrayal plays a crucial role in shaping societal acceptance and even emulation of celebrity trends. As highlighted by P5 and echoed by P11, the symbiotic relationship between celebrities and their audience emerges as a central theme. It reveals a dynamic relationship where celebrities serve as influential figures whose fashion decisions are closely observed and imitated by the public. In simpler terms, celebrities act as role models whose clothing choices are carefully watched and often copied by their fans. This phenomenon illustrates the significant impact celebrities have on shaping societal norms and fashion trends. It highlights how celebrities wield influence beyond their personal style, shaping the broader cultural landscape through their fashion choices. However, as explained by P2, this influence is not without its challenges. Celebrities face immense pressure to conform to societal standards and trends, sometimes at the expense of their personal beliefs and values. This pressure can lead them to compromise their own beliefs and values in favour of conforming to what is popular or expected. In simpler terms, it means that celebrities may feel compelled to follow fashion trends even if it goes against their personal preferences or principles. This can create a conflict between staying true to themselves and meeting the expectations of their audience and the media. This tension between individual autonomy and external expectations underscores

the complexities inherent in navigating the intersection of fame, fashion, and faith. Furthermore, P9's insights shed light on the potential pitfalls of idolizing celebrities without a comprehensive understanding of religious principles. This can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of religious concepts, as people may emulate behaviours without fully understanding their significance or context. Thus, it highlights the crucial role that media and public perception play in shaping how celebrities are perceived and how their fashion choices are interpreted by the wider audience. These observations align with other studies that examine the impact of media on fashion trends, indicating a universal phenomenon (Abd. Latiff & Alam, 2013; Priedel, 2022; Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen & A. Manaf, 2019). Exploring this dynamic relationship helps us understand how fashion choices influence and are influenced by public sentiments.

The Comfort Factor: Influencing Attire Choices

Comfort is revealed as a significant factor influencing the attire choices of celebrities, especially in the context of adhering to Islamic dress standards. P14 highlights how comfort intersects with religious modesty, indicating a personal journey towards finding comfort within the confines of modest attire. P14's statement reflects a journey towards finding comfort within the context of adhering to religious modesty standards. This journey likely involves not only physical comfort but also a sense of inner peace and alignment with personal values. This suggests that comfort plays a pivotal role not only in physical sensations but also in aligning with religious values. Moreover, P2's discussion introduces the concept of 'ready to pray' attire, emphasizing the practicality and ease of wearing garments suitable for religious practices. This concept reflects a blend of functionality and spirituality, where attire serves a dual purpose of meeting religious obligations and ensuring comfort throughout the day. Interestingly, P15's input adds another dimension to the discussion by emphasizing the connection between comfort and self-expression. In this context, comfort extends beyond physical sensations to encompass a sense of identity and authenticity. By choosing attire that aligns with personal style and values, individuals like P15 find comfort not only in the fabric but also in the representation of their true selves. Collectively, these insights highlight the complex nature of comfort in attire choices, ranging from physical comfort to spiritual fulfilment and self-expression. They underscore the intricate relationship between comfort, identity, and religious adherence, illustrating how these factors intertwine to shape the fashion preferences of celebrities and individuals alike. These trends indicate a shift towards attire that is both aesthetically pleasing and functionally convenient, facilitating religious practices without compromising on style. This reflects a broader movement towards comfort in Islamic attire, aligning with global fashion trends (Beckmann, 2014; El-Ali, 2022).

Impact of International Trends on Islamic Attire

The world of Islamic fashion is not immune to the influence of international trends. Malaysian Muslimah icons and celebrities seamlessly incorporate global styles into their attire, showcasing the interconnectedness of the fashion landscape. The integration of international trends into Malaysian Islamic fashion illustrates a broader phenomenon observed among celebrities, as exemplified by P1 and P2. The reconciliation of foreign fashion aesthetics with local sensibilities presents a challenge for celebrities, as evidenced in the cases of P1 and P2. Their accounts echo the universal challenge of harmonizing diverse cultural norms and body types, underscoring the need for thoughtful adaptation in the pursuit of sartorial expression. P1's account of her struggles during New York Fashion Week highlights the practical challenges of fitting clothing designed for Western body types to the Malaysian context. This highlights the impact of global fashion trends on local Islamic attire and the need for adaptation

to ensure cultural appropriateness and accessibility. Similarly, P2's experience of working with a stylist in Jakarta showcases the complexities of merging different cultural sensibilities within Islamic attire. The stylist's attempt to incorporate a turban-style hijab, commonly seen in Indonesian fashion, reflects the diversity of Islamic dress practices across different regions. However, P2's discomfort with the style illustrates the importance of personal preference and cultural authenticity in fashion choices, even when influenced by international trends. On the other hand, P3 expressed admiration for certain international brands, particularly those from the UAE and Japan, praising their adherence to Sharia compliance (Islamic dress standards) while maintaining high fashion standards. This demonstrates how some celebrities selectively incorporate foreign styles that align with Islamic principles and resonate with their personal tastes. By recognizing and endorsing brands that blend global fashion trends with Islamic values, celebrities like P3 contribute to the adoption of international styles within the context of Islamic attire. This highlights the interconnectedness of global fashion trends and the preferences of celebrities, showcasing how international influences shape the evolving landscape of Islamic fashion. Furthermore, P9's experience of wearing a niqab in Egypt for safety reasons demonstrates the influence of international trends on fashion choices. When traveling to foreign countries, individuals, including celebrities, often adapt their attire to align with local customs and cultural norms. In this case, P9's decision to wear a niqab reflects the impact of the prevalent dress styles in Egypt, influenced by Islamic fashion trends in the region. This highlights how international trends in Islamic attire can influence the clothing choices of celebrities, even in situations where safety considerations play a significant role. Meanwhile, P13's fashion choices, drawing inspiration from various countries such as Japan, Korea, English and Muslimah fashion style in Indonesia, demonstrate the influence of global trends on Islamic fashion. By embracing diverse styles, P13 showcases the rich variety within Muslim attire worldwide. This illustrates how international trends shape and evolve Islamic fashion, breaking stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive portrayal of Muslim identity. This blending of tradition and modernity demonstrates the adaptability and dynamism of Islamic fashion, constantly evolving while retaining its core principles. It also indicates the growing impact of globalization on Islamic fashion, where international trends and designs are being incorporated into Islamic attire, reshaping traditional dress norms (Kamarulzaman & Shaari, 2023).

Comparative Analysis

The examination of the data reveals several noteworthy themes that provide a basis for a comparative analysis of the fashion preferences and experiences among Malaysian Muslimah icons and celebrities. These themes encompass aspects such as modesty and courtesy in attire, economic considerations, media and public influence, comfort factors, and the impact of international trends on Islamic attire.

Modesty with Variations

Upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that while there is a general inclination towards modesty and courtesy in attire among the celebrities interviewed, there are variations in how these principles are interpreted and expressed. Some individuals, such as P2, emphasize the importance of attire being "just nice" and appropriately sized, while others, like P5, stress the significance of adherence to Sharia-compliant aspects of Islam, particularly regarding the wearing of the niqab. These variations suggest a nuanced understanding and application of modesty and courtesy within the context of Islamic fashion.

Balancing Finances and Preferences

Furthermore, economic factors emerge as significant influencers of attire choices, with celebrities often facing decisions between custom-made and ready-made attire based on financial considerations. While some, like P1, opt for custom designs regardless of cost, others, such as P3, advocate for a more pragmatic approach, emphasizing the importance of affordability and practicality in fashion choices. These divergent perspectives underscore the complex interplay between financial constraints and personal preferences in shaping attire decisions among Malaysian Muslimah celebrities.

Media and the Public Eye

The role of media and public perception also looms large in influencing celebrity fashion choices, with the portrayal of celebrities in media and the endorsement from fans exerting considerable pressure on attire decisions. While some celebrities, like P2, express apprehension about the magnification of their image and the scrutiny they face, others, such as P11, acknowledge the symbiotic relationship between celebrities and media in shaping public perception. These dynamics highlight the delicate balance celebrities must navigate between maintaining authenticity and meeting public expectations.

Comfort: A Personal Expression

Comfort emerges as another significant factor influencing attire choices, with celebrities often prioritizing comfort and practicality in their fashion selections. However, comfort is subjective and varies among individuals, with some, like P14, emphasizing the importance of comfort in expressing their identity, while others, like P2, adopt a “ready to pray” concept that prioritizes ease of movement and functionality in attire.

Global Inspiration with Local Considerations

Finally, the impact of international trends on Islamic attire presents both opportunities and challenges for Malaysian Muslimah celebrities. While exposure to global fashion trends offers inspiration and creative possibilities, as exemplified by P3's admiration for UAE and Japanese fashion, it also poses challenges such as sizing discrepancies and cultural differences, as noted by P1. Additionally, the adoption of foreign fashion styles may not always align with local cultural norms or personal preferences, as illustrated by P9's cautious approach to attire selection while abroad.

Conclusion

Examining fashion choices of Malaysian Muslimah celebrities reveals a fascinating interplay. Balancing modesty with personal style, they navigate between religious principles and contemporary trends. Their attire, beyond aesthetics, embodies a modern take on tradition. Economic realities, media portrayal, and comfort all influence their decisions. The analysis highlights the multifaceted nature of their fashion choices, offering a glimpse into the evolving landscape of Islamic fashion and its role in shaping Muslim women's identities globally.

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