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A Comparative Study of Dress Code among Children from Muslim and Christian Homes

Samuel Tamba [α] & Mohamed A. Nyally [σ]

Abstract- **The study showed that the dress code of children from Muslim and Christian homes is in line with the Principles of dress code. It also revealed that children must dress elegantly because God has dress code; and that it is legalistic to talk about dress code, dress according to set standards of Muslims and Christians; enforce dress code at home distinctively for males and females; dress decently, monitor dress code so that the type of dress worn by the child influences his life in society, and that parents should continue to educate their children about dress code to enable the children enjoy religious freedom.**

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I. Introduction

There are many religions in the world and each religion claims to be the one and only true religion: Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, African Tradition Religion, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Judaism, Aaraduism, etc.

The Islamic concept of religion, for example, is unique. Genuine religion must come from God for the right guidance of man, (Ref. Islam in Focus by HammudahAbdaliti-pg 31). Religion can be referred to as a total commitment of an individual to a set of belief or ritual doctrines by which the individual lives and for which he provides to sacrifice himself. Religion can also be a means of relationship that someone establishes with his creator, God, also referred to as Allah, his dead relations or ancestors and with his fellow man. It is also an institution whereby people come together for the adoration of their All-Powerful Creator, Allah or God. To indigenous Africans, religion meant rules and regulations, rites and rituals that are carried out to appease the object of worship at least for them to live a righteous life; (ibid)

"Islam" as an Arabic word means "to yield" "Surrender and submission to the will of Allah". The noun "Salam" or "Salamah" in Arabic Language is equivalent to peace, Salvation and safety. It can also be referred to as mode of life and a system of belief and practices that control and regulate the life of the individual and society, including lawful and unlawful acts, or permissible and prohibited acts, (ibid).

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The dressing material and the manner of dressing which may stimulate arrogance or false pride and vanity are strictly prohibited. So are the adornments which may weaken the morality of man or undermine the Malines. Man should remain loyal to his manly nature, which God has chosen for him, and must keep away from all things that are likely to weaken or endanger his character. This is why Islam, for example, warns man not to use certain clothing material such as pure silk and certain precious stones like gold for the purpose of adornment: These are thinks which suit the femine nature alone. The handsomeness of man is not the wearing precious stones or flaunting in pure and natural silken clothes but in high morality, sweet nature and sound conduct.

When Islam allows women to use the things which are forbidden for men and which are suitable for the feminine nature alone, Islam does not let women go loosely or wonder unrestricted. It allows them the things which suit their nature and at the same time contain them against anything that might abuse or upset their nature. The manner in which women should dress up beautifully, work and even look is a very delicate question and Islam pays special attention to it. The vision of Islam focuses on the general welfare of women to retain and develop their dignity and chastity safe from been the subject of idle gossip or vicious rumors and suspicious thoughts. The Quaranic verse advices as follows: Say to the believers who are men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty that will make for greater purity for them. And say the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty that they should not display their beauty ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except before their husbands, their fathers and certain other members of the household and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments, Quran and Hadith (24:30-31).

The Code of Conduct for Teachers and other Educational Personnel in Sierra Leone, (August 2009), principle2 on commitment and attitude to the profession state that teachers and other education personnel shall demonstrate commitment and display a positive attitude to the teaching profession, the school, children, community and ensure a high standard of quality and excellence in their professional service delivery,

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including specifically, that education personnel shall be appropriately attired and presentable.

www.godsmercyandgrace.com/indexm16.htmasks how should a Christian dress and does God care what shall I wear? Is it legalistic even to talk about it? Does God have a dress code? and states as follows: Eph. 4:22-24 put off/ Put on Col. 3:8-10 put off/ put on garments of evil/ on garments of righteousness. 1 Sam. 16:7. But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his height or his stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees for man looks at outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. Here it is the physical form and disposition and not clothing that is referred to. 1 John 2:16 For all that is the world –The lust of flesh, the lust of eyes, and the pride of life- is not of the father but the world. Gal. 5:13 for you Brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Consider 1 Peter 3:3-4. A Christian should wear what is appropriate and stylish for any given occasion, with proper modesty. God will look the heart of such a human with approval. 1 Timothy 2:9 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or peals or costly clothing, which is proper for women profession, with good works.

However, dress code has principles. First, maintain the male-female balance. Deut 22:5. A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God. Apparel should indicate the sex of the person. Men and women are to honour God who He created us to be. Second, consider the effects our clothing has on our influence. Matt. 5:14-16. A Christian is to be salt and light in this world. Attire is an important part of our testimony. The way a person dresses is an indication of that person's character and spiritual maturity. Dress for both man and woman should respect the Bible principles of modesty, non-conformity to the fads of the world who are popular just briefly; and express humility and simplicity. We should set an example in churches with how we dress. Third, make sure our clothing does not offend anyone and be sure our clothing is modest in God's sight, Rom. 14:21-23.

Although Islam has no standard in style of dress or type of clothing that Muslims must wear, there are minimum requirements that must be met. Huda (2019) highlights that the manner of dress of Muslims has drawn great attention in recent years with some groups suggesting that restrictions on dress code are even demeaning or controlling, especially to women. When women appear in public, they must adhere to strict requirements on parts of the body to be covered: in general, standards of modesty call for a woman to cover her body, particularly her chest- the Quran call for woman to draw their head-coverings over their chests, Quran & Hadith (24:30-31), and the Prophet Muhammad instructed that women should cover their bodies except for their face and hands. And for men, the minimum amount to be covered is between the navel and knee. Also, Islam guides that clothing must be loose enough so as not to outline or distinguish the shape of the body. That is, skin tight body hugging clothes are discouraged for both men and women. The clothing must be thick enough so that the colour of the skin it covers is not visible, nor the shape of the body underneath. The overall appearance of a person should be dignified and modest. Islam encourages women to be proud of who they are as Muslims should look like Muslims and not like mere imitations of people of other faiths around them. Be decent but not flashy- the Quran instructs that clothing is meant to cover our private areas and be an adornment, Quran and Hadith (7:26).

https://www.christiantruthcenter.com/seek-good-with-yourmoneyand-riches-too/ explains about Christian Modest Dressing. A Christian must always be dressed modestly: whether male or female, Jesus Christ must be revealed in your dressing.

'Modest' means "not extravagant" and "Decency" means "correct" "honorable" or "modest" "Decent" means "Conforming to standards of decency, avoiding obscenity, respectable, acceptable or good enough. "Modest dressing is good because the body is God's temple; it is the dwelling place of God, 1 Cor.3:16. Dressing is about how we take care of our brothers and sisters not to sin. How then must a Christian lady dress? The world tells and pushes for ladies to dress sexy. Dressing sexy according to the world is exposing female private body parts; exposing God's temple. The world pushes and wants ladies to dress like harlots; prostitutes. A prostitute is identified by her dressing. The way you dress identifies who you are. Proverb 7:10. And, behold, there met him a woman with attire of a harlot. Harlots have a dressing code. A Christian lady must not dress like a harlot. Female private body parts must remain private (covered) only to be seen by God and your husband. Female private body parts entice males' sexuality; makes males commit adultery and fornication in their minds (they have sexual intercourse with you in their minds), (1 cor. 8:13). Likewise, males private body parts must be covered decently; they are only to be seen by their wives and God.

Dress code-wikepedia, htt://en.wikepedia.org/wik/Dress-code notes that a dress code is a set of rules, often written, with regards to clothing; dress codes are created out of social perceptions and norms, and they vary based on purpose.

Richard G. Boehm, Glencoe, McGraw-Hill (1995) reveals that like in the United States and Canada, Sierra Leone enjoys religious freedom which is always valued by her people.

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Anthony Giddens et al (2005), reveal that since systems vary widely, the nature of the relationships established between mothers and their children is influenced by form and regularity of their contacts, and that the family into which a person is born determines the individual's social position.

Spencer (1985) compares the behaviour of mothers and fathers toward their children and notes that some are far better parents than others, and that the difference is fateful, especially to determining whether their children will behave well or be delinquent.

The New Encyclopedia Britain (1987) shows that Western styles of dress are today worn worldwide, though many non-western forms continue to be important in such countries as Japan and India; and that dress and personal ornamentation with jewelry has traditionally been important in the Indian subcontinent where two ancient garments, the woman's sari and the man's dhoti, are still used, with the top of the body left bare.

II. Statement of Problem

The use of appropriate attire is usually lacking among Muslim children and Christian homes; in most cases it is the youths who wear attire that is unpleasant to the type of religion they belong to.

III. Research Question

How does dress code influence the lives of children from Muslim and Christian homes?

IV. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

i. Identify the dress code of children from Muslim and Christian homes
ii. Relate dress code to professional service delivery in Sierra Leone
iii. State the effect of dress code on the lives of children from Muslim and Christian homes.

V. Significance of the Study

The study was relevant in that it attempted to identify better dress code for children from Muslims and Christian homes.

VI. Methodology

The methodology of the study included research design, study area/ setting and population and sample/ sample size.

a) Research Design

A comparative study of dress code among children from Muslim and Christian homes was done in Kenema city. The city is divided into zones as provided by the Inter Religious Council, Kenema City.

b) Population And Sample/Sample Size

The population of the study consisted of all the Muslims and Christians in Kenema city, whereas the sample size totaling two hundred was made up of ten Muslims and ten Christians each from ten different churches, totaling one hundred Christians. The sample was from two zones consisting of ten zones for Muslims and thirteen zones for Christians. There are one hundred and thirty-one mosques in ten zones and seventy-four churches in thirteen zones.

VII. Results and Discussion

Well-structured questionnaires were randomly distributed among one hundred Muslims from one hundred and thirty-one Mosques and one hundred Christians from seventy-four churches. From the total number of questionnaires (200) one hundred and ninety-eight respondents completed and returned the questionnaires. The age range of the respondents was between 20-25 years, while one hundred and eighteen respondents were above twenty-six years: Sixty-six (33.3%) were females while one hundred and thirty-two (66.7%) were males; but one hundred and twenty-four (62.6%) were Muslims while seventy-four (37.4%) were Christians. The data was presented and analyzed as follows: (Table 1 – table 15).

Table 1: God Has Dress Code

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	26	14.0
2	Disagree	24	13.0
3	Undecided	29	15.0
4	Agree	39	20.0
5	Strongly Agree	77	38.0
Totals		198	100.0

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38.0% strongly agree, 20.0% agree, 15.0% did not decide, 13.0% disagree and 14.0% strongly agree the God has dress code.

Table 2: Children Must Dress Elegantly and not Extravagantly.

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	02	1.0
2	Disagree	09	5.0
3	Undecided	03	2.0
4	Agree	84	42.0
5	Strongly Agree	100	50.0
Totals		198	100.0

50.0% strongly agreed, 42.0% agreed, 5.0% disagreed, 2.0% were undecided and 1.0% strongly disagreed that children must dress elegantly and not extravagantly.

Table 3: It is Legalistic to Talk about Dress Code:

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	00	0.0
2	Disagree	09	5.0
3	Undecided	07	4.0
4	Agree	61	30.0
5	Strongly Agree	121	61.0
Totals		198	100.0

61.0% strongly agreed, 30.0% agreed, 5.0% disagreed, and 4.0% undecided that it is legalistic to talk about dress code.

Table 4: There are Principles Binding Dress Code

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	04	2.0
2	Disagree	07	4.0
3	Undecided	10	5.0
4	Agree	73	36.0
5	Strongly Agree	104	53.0
Totals		198	100.0

53.0% strongly agreed, 36.0% agreed, 5.0% did not decide, 4.0% disagreed, and 2.0% strongly disagreed that there are principles binding dress code.

Table 5: Religion has a Fixed Standard of Dress Code.

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	05	3.0
2	Disagree	23	11.0
3	Undecided	19	10.0
4	Agree	68	35.0
5	Strongly Agree	83	41.0
Totals		198	100.0

41.0% strongly agreed, 35.0% agreed, but 10.0% were undecided, while 11.0% disagreed, 3.0% strongly disagreed that religion has a fixed standard of dress code.

Table 6: I Enforce Dress Code at Home for my Children

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	03	1.5
2	Disagree	05	2.5
3	Undecided	08	4.0
4	Agree	83	42.0
5	Strongly Agree	99	50.0
Totals		198	100.0

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50.0% strongly agreed, 42.0% agreed, 4.0% were undecided, 2.5% disagreed and 1.5% strongly disagreed on reinforcement of dress code for their children.

Table 7: There are Distinctions in Dress Code between Males and Females

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	01	0.5
2	Disagree	02	1.0
3	Undecided	11	5.6
4	Agree	70	35.3
5	Strongly Agree	114	57.6
Totals		198	100.0

57.6% strongly agreed, 35.3% agreed, 5.6% were undecided, 1.0% disagreed and 9.5% strongly disagreed that there are distinctions in dress code between males and females.

Table 8: Dress Code has Positive Effect on my Child or Children

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	07	4.0
2	Disagree	06	3.0
3	Undecided	05	2.5
4	Agree	71	35.0
5	Strongly Agree	109	155.0
Totals		198	100.0

55.0% strongly agreed, 35.5% agreed, 4.0% strongly disagreed, 3.0% disagreed and 2.5% were undecided that dress code has positive effect on their children.

Table 9: A Decent Dress is Recommended for my Child or Children.

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	01	0.5
2	Disagree	04	2.0
3	Undecided	07	4.0
4	Agree	71	35.5
5	Strongly Agree	115	58.0
Totals		198	100.0

58.0% strongly agreed, 35.5% agreed, 4.0% were undecided 2.0% disagreed and 0.5% strongly disagreed that decent dress code is good for their children.

Table 10: I Monitor my Child's or Children's Dress Code Regularly

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	03	1.5
2	Disagree	05	3.0
3	Undecided	15	7.6
4	Agree	85	42.9
5	Strongly Agree	90	45.0
Totals		198	100.0

45.0% strongly agreed, 42.9% agreed, 7.6% were undecided, 3.0% disagreed, and 1.5% strongly disagreed that they monitor their children's dress code regularly.

Table 11: The Family to Which a Person is Born Determines the Social Position for his or her Children.

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	15	7.6
2	Disagree	31	15.7
3	Undecided	14	7.1
4	Agree	64	32.3
5	Strongly Agree	74	37.3
Totals		198	100.0

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37.3% strongly agreed, 32.3% agreed, 15.7% disagreed, 7.6% strongly disagreed, and 7.1% were undecided that families determine social statuses of children.

Table 12: Attitude to Dress Code Influences Behaviour Patterns

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	08	4.0
2	Disagree	11	5.6
3	Undecided	13	6.6
4	Agree	70	35.3
5	Strongly Agree	96	48.5
Totals		198	100.0

48.5% strongly agreed, 35.3% agreed, 6.6% were undecided, 5.6% disagreed, and 4.0% strongly disagreed that attitude to dress code influences behaviour patterns.

Table 13: Parents should clearly tell Children about how they are Expected to behave.

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	05	2.5
2	Disagree	07	4.0
3	Undecided	03	1.5
4	Agree	49	24.7
5	Strongly Agree	134	67.3
Totals		197	100.0

67.3% strongly agreed, 24.7% agreed, 4.0% disagreed, 2.5% strongly disagreed and 1.5% were undecided that parents should clearly tell children about how they are expected to behave.

Table 14: Parenting Techniques should be taught in School on Dress Code

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	05	2.5
2	Disagree	17	8.6
3	Undecided	14	7.1
4	Agree	75	37.9
5	Strongly Agree	87	43.9
Totals		198	100.0

43.9% strongly agreed, 37.9% agreed, 8.6% disagreed, 7.1% were undecided, and 2.5% strongly disagreed that parenting techniques should be taught in school on dress code.

Table 15: Children Enjoy Religious Freedom in my Home

No.	Item	Response	Percent (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	06	3.0
2	Disagree	27	13.8
3	Undecided	12	6.0
4	Agree	65	32.8
5	Strongly Agree	88	44.4
Totals		198	100.0

44.4% strongly agreed, 32.8% agreed, 13.8% disagreed, 6.0% were undecided, and 3.0% strongly disagreed that children enjoy religious freedom in their homes.

VIII. Conclusion

The study concluded that even though the youthful generations usually dress unpleasantly, it is realistic to talk about dress code in homes, monitor dress code, and tell children about how they are expected to behave, (tables 3, 10 and 13). It revealed that although Prophet, Muhammad said that in later generations, there would be people who dress yet naked, God has dress code, (table 1), and that male-female distinctions should be maintained, Duet. 22:5 in www.godsmercyandgrace.com/indexm16.htm. It further stated that parenting techniques should be taught in school, even though there is a positive impact of dress code on the lives of children from Muslim and Christian homes, (table 12).

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IX. Recommendations

The study recommended that churches and Mosques should continue to emphasize that God has dress code, and must enforce that the family to which a child is born determines the social position of that child; thus school children should be appropriately attired and presentable. Therefore, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should ensure that school heads actualize the policy on dress code.

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