

ASSESSMENT OF MEDIA'S ROLE ON *HIJAB* CRISIS IN LAGOS STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

By

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Abstract

In the Nigerian educational system, secondary education is the second level of education which aims at preparing the students with skills for useful living within the society, preparing for higher education for advanced studies at tertiary institutions and to developing and promoting Nigerian languages, arts and culture in a global context. However, different cultures have their own styles, as dressing is a medium of socio-cultural expression and a form of social communication. People wear clothes that suit their culture and religion for basic and ceremonial purposes. This study examined the role of the media in news reporting on the Hijab crisis that engulfed Lagos State secondary schools where female students who wear Hijab on their school uniform in line with their religious beliefs and fundamental human rights were victimized. In the study, literature survey was adopted and data were presented based on direct deductions from the available documents. Findings revealed that the Hijab crisis is predominantly reported as a Muslim-Christian conflict where the media have positioned themselves as judges instead of representing the thoughts that media outlet could market in the world. Therefore, it is suggested that media as a tool of cultural preservation should do well-research, be rational, thoughtful and be fair and just in news delivery in line with the Islamic ethics on communication.

Keywords: Media, *Hijab*, Crisis, Secondary Schools, Lagos State

Introduction

Education is the bedrock upon which the development of any nation is built and it is known as one of the powerful weapons for reducing poverty and inequality in modern societies. The five main goals of education in Nigeria which have been endorsed as the necessary foundation for the national policy on education are the building of: a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a unified, strong, and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (NPE, 2016).

Moreover, a learning environment must provide a safe supportive space with flexible physical resources that encourages student engagement and motivation, facilitates social and communication skills through positive relationships and fosters a culture of trust and respect where students are physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally safe and satisfied by utilizing the required facilities. (Sanchid & Cucuk, 2017).

Recently, in Nigeria educational institutions, dressing, which serves the purpose of protection, modesty, adornment, status, and identification, has taken different dimensions and reactions. (Ambassador, 2020; Maduawuchi, 2020). Despite the fact that Nigeria is a multi-religious society with Muslims constituting 50% of the population, there have been recurrent attacks and marginalization of Muslim women wearing the *Hijab* in work places, tertiary institutions of learning and public secondary schools. The discrimination and hostilities against wearing of *Hijab* in Nigeria have been indigenized for some years with Muslim girls and women as the victims of the fray.

Such discriminations are more prevalent in the southwestern states of Nigeria such as Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Kwara in the North central region and Lagos which is the focus of this work. Despite the fact that the constitution of Nigeria, Article 38, (Constitution of Nigeria, 1999) specifies the freedom of religion, female Muslim students who wear the *Hijab* on their school uniforms were victimized by the teachers and the school authorities. There have been cases of discrimination by government officials, in public primary and secondary schools, nursing schools, tertiary institutions, police and immigration officers among others against the use of *Hijab*.

There are instances where students who wore *Hijab* were prevented from writing the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). There are also cases of denial of job interviews, career progression and employment opportunities due to the use of *Hijab*. As a result of these harassment, religious rights activists such as the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) and *Hijab* Rights Advocacy Initiative (HRAI) among others and Muslim Students Society of Nigeria have decided to fight for the rights of oppressed Muslim women and girls, who chose to wear the *Hijab* as their constitutional right. The development has led to protests, closure of schools, unending legal tussles and even deaths. (Iyawa, 2019). Meanwhile, Ethno-religious diversity has been a major source of conflict among the Nigerian communities (Nwolisa, 2012).

For the Muslims, *Hijab* is not just a religious identity but a religious requirement for the non fulfilment of which the individual or her parent is accountable before Allah on the day of accountability. Nuns throughout Christian history has been recognizable by their distinctive head covering and whose appearance resembles that of the Muslim women, are not met with the same hostility as the Muslims. (Uthman, 2024).

However, the media bias when reporting the *Hijab* crisis in Lagos State schools as in other southwestern states largely reflects societal religious divides with news coverage often biased against Muslim perspectives, contributing to tensions and misunderstandings. Unlike the print media, social media act as both an accelerant of religious tension and a democratizing tool for awareness and advocacy in Lagos *Hijab* crisis. This paper advocates for the collective efforts of journalists, editors and corporate ownership of the newspapers be directed toward suppressing the negative media portrayal of Islam and to abide by the Islamic ethics on news reporting which emphasized on balanced reporting.

Secondary Education in Nigeria

Secondary education in Nigeria is the stage of formal education that follows primary education. Students at this secondary level of education are approximately between the age range of 11 to 17 or 18 years. Secondary education consists of Junior secondary school (JSS): first three years, a combination of academic and pre-vocational subjects and senior secondary

education, known as senior secondary school (SSS), consisting the next three years and includes broader academic and vocational education preparing students for higher education or the workforce (Ige, 2020). Secondary education is meant to prepare students towards useful living within the society and higher education for those willing and able and serves as a pathway to both employment and further study. It also provides a diversified curriculum, develops literacy, communication, numeracy, technical and vocational skills and promotes national unity and cultural understanding. (Lucky & Sweetie, 2020).

Brief Overview of Lagos State

Lagos State, one of the thirty-six states in Nigeria, is the economic nerve centre of Nigeria. It serves as the commercial and financial hub. It has strong influence on Nigerian economic, social and cultural landscape. Lagos State is bounded by Ogun State to the North and East and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. It also shares a border with Republic of Benin to the west (Auwal & Bello, 2024). Lagos State covers a land mass of about 3,577 square kilometers. In terms of population density, Lagos State has the highest density in Nigeria. Although this may not be substantiated by reliable census, the population of Lagos State is estimated to be well over 20,000,000 people of different cultural backgrounds.

The major ethnic groups in Lagos State are Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. There are 20 local governments and 37 Local Council Development Areas (LCDA) in Lagos State. Its territorial extent and political jurisdiction encompass the city of Lagos and the four administrative divisions of Ikeja, Ikorodu, Epe and Badagry collectively known as (IBILE) (Olaleye, 2024).

Brief History of Islam in Nigeria

Islam reached the savannah region of West Africa in the 18th century C.E, through the commercial lanes which were established with North Africa. Islam spread to the West Africa through the Muslim traders and scholars who preached Islam to the rulers, businesspeople, and to the rural areas. It spread to Hausaland and Kanem Bornu through peaceful means because of their connectivity with Northern African states before the 14th century. (Lawal, 2013).

Before the advent of Islam in Yorubaland in the 15th century, the people were adherents of African traditional religion, worshiping and making sacrifices to deities. Although the spread of Islam reduced their practice of idol worshipping but they still engaged in the practice of syncretism (Arikewuyo, 2022). Apart from the Hausa and Fulani of Northern Nigeria, Yoruba has the largest population of the Muslims in Nigeria. Yoruba people are among the most versatile and urban tribes in Africa and have had fruitful contact with Islam over five centuries before the advent of colonialism and Christianity which introduced Western Education. (Jimoh, 2016)

Islam got to Yorubaland through the northwest, the north central, the north eastern and from across the oceans. Akanni and Aisha (2016) recalled that Da'wah through the teaching and learning of Islamic Studies started when Islam entered the Yorubaland in the 15th century, which led to the emergence of Islamic scholars who significantly preserved the Islamic Knowledge. Arikewuyo asserted that those who played significant roles in the growth of Islam in Yorubaland before the arrival of the colonial Masters towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century were the scholars of Mali, Nupe, Hausa/Fulani Muslims and the Ilorin scholars (Arikewuyo, 2022). He also noted that, the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by the British Colonial Masters in 1914 constituted a great hindrance to the practice

of Islam and use of Shari'ah which the Muslims have been implementing before their arrival with the introduction of western education.

This development was resisted by the Muslims Organizations and Islamic Institutes such as Ahmadiyah Muslim Jama'ah of Nigeria founded in 1916, Ansarudeen Society of Nigeria founded in 1923, Nawairudeen Society of Nigeria founded in 1929 with the aim of combating the Christian evangelization agenda of converting the Muslims through western education (Adetona, 2017).

Emergence of Islam in Lagos State

Islam spread to Lagos in the early years of the 19th century. Shitta-bey Mosque, the first mosque in Lagos was built in 1892 and its formal opening took place in July 5, 1894. This was witnessed by the Ottoman Sultan, who was represented by Quallam, the President of the Liverpool Muslim Association in London (Siyah, n.d.). Islam flourishes in Lagos, Epe, Badagry through the connections with other regions in West Africa. (Rufai & Abdul Gafar 2019). (Adebayo & Fahm, 2019) noted that, by the end of 19th century, Lagos has produced indigenous Islamic Scholars who travelled to Al-Azhar University in Cairo to acquire the knowledge of Islam. In addition, Arab Scholars, who were at the same time merchants, like Sharif Abdul-al-Karim Al-Muradi (d. 1926), was in Lagos in 1890, while many locals studied under him. Sharif assisted in organising various Islamic societies.

He took up the task of promoting Islamic Cultures among Lagos Muslims who were experiencing the challenges of Christian evangelism during colonization like other parts of Yorubaland (Adebayo & Fahm, 2019). Another Lebanese Scholar, Muhammad Mustapha Al-Shamy established an Arabic School for the Locals in Lagos in 1904 and wrote an introductory Arabic-reading material, *Muftah Al-Lughah Al-Arabiyyah* (Adebayo & Fahm, 2019). A Moroccan, Shaykh Ali Ibn Muhammad Al-Mekkawwiyy visited Lagos in 1860 to preach Islam. The Muslims at this period could perceive alliance between colonialists and Christian leaders because the agenda of the two were in agreement. This is carefully captured in the submission of Adesina:

All strata of development in Lagos during the second half of the 19th century were permitted and greatly influenced by missionaries. They work hand in hand with the British officials in the colony to mortgage the destiny of Lagos and that of its inhabitants. To spread western European Concept of Civilization, the Government relied partly on her own effort and partly with the corporation of Humanitarian Organization and Christian Missionaries for whose activities it again offered protection".(Adesina, 2019).

In response to the ill-treatment of the Muslims in the Colonial Era, Muslim schools were founded in the name of Missionary groups as mentioned earlier to cater for the education of Muslim populace (Adebayo & Fahm, 2019). All the Muslim Missionary groups including the New Prayer groups and movements like the Salafiyah and Muslim Brotherhood established traditional Arabic schools where students were taught how to recite and memorize the Qur'an in addition to the study of Hadith and other Islamic Sciences (Arikewuyo, 2022).

In reaction to music as an instrument for converting Muslims into Christianity in the late 1970s, the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria, Lagos Area Unit, Teacher Training College Branch, Ikorodu Area Council launched a musical record led by the Islamic Studies Teacher Mr. Wahab Falowo. The record expatiated on Islam, the importance of Islamic education and portrayers of Muslims as the best of mankind. This period marked the beginning of electronic media as a tool for Da'awah propagation of Islam in Lagos State.

Individuals and groups like Abdul-Lateef Fagbayi Oloto, the Ansarudeen Youth Choral Group, The Nawarudeen Youth, and YOUMBAS Choral Group, among others, also participated in this social reform. This continued with increase in the number of individual Muslim singers in the late 1990s. However, some scholars, however, condemned singing as an anti-Islamic act (Haram). The approach of the Pentecostal and Charismatic groups towards Christian evangelism in the early 1970s with their claims of miraculous power slowed down the efforts of Muslim Prayer groups who have been responding to Christian evangelism through the *Asalatu* gathering.

Efforts by the Muslims to reform the activities of the Muslim prayer groups (the Alasalatu) and to combat the negative influence of spiritual claims by the Pentecostal and Charismatic groups in the early 1970s led to the formation of NASFAT by group of young educated Muslims in 1995 in Lagos. Membership of NASFAT cut across the socio-economic and political strata of the society. The efforts of this new Muslim group yielded significant impact in combating Christian evangelism (Adetona, 2010).

The weekly lecture as well as prayer sessions, monthly night prayer, Qur'anic lessons for business executives and other programmes by NASFAT provided avenues to counter Christian evangelism. In addition, groups like QARIB, IKHWAN, ISTIJABAH, ISMUF, and IZBULLAH also played significant roles in this reform and is evidenced in the rapid development of Islam in post-independence Lagos (Adetona, 2010).

Hijab in Islam

Hijab has been instituted in Islam around the year 627 CE, and it is a practice that is very much alive and is adopted by many Muslim women around the world (Sulaiman, 2021). *Hijab* is not just a religious symbol but it is indeed a religious requirement for the non-fulfilment of which the individual is accountable to Allah on the day of accountability (Noibi, 2016). The concept of *Hijab* as modesty for Muslim women seems to be agreed upon. The Muslim jurists and scholars are only in disagreement about which parts of the body to cover which explain the varieties of designs and terminologies used for female dress such as: *Niqab*, *jilbab*, *khimar*, *Abaya*, *Shayla*, *Al- Amira*, *Chador* and *burqa* (Nafisah, 2018).

In Lagos State secondary schools and other southwetrn States in Nigeria, what is worn on the school uniform is only the head cover and not full Islamic attire. However, Lemu (2013) observed that some Muslims today do not take the Islamic mode of dressing and behaviors seriously, either because they are ignorant of Islamic teachings in this area or they want to identify with their non-Muslim friends who embraced western cultures exposing their bodies. The injunction to wear *Hijab* by Muslim women is contained in Quran 24:31:

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and protect their chastity and not to show off their adornment except that which is apparent and to draw their veils over their bosom and not to reveal

their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers.....

Hijab freed women from being thought of as sexual object of desire, or from being valued for their looks or body shapes rather than their minds and intellect. Stacey (2019) also noted that *Hijab* differentiates between respectable women and women who were considerably publicly available.

Ahmed (1992) perceived that with Islam, *Hijab* provides its followers with equity rather than equality. The *Hijab* is viewed as a social and moral regulator that grant women respect and safeguard their livelihood. (Kamaldeen & Fatai, 2020).

***Hijab* in the Nigerian Constitution**

In Nigeria, the issue of *Hijab* is intricately linked to fundamental human rights, as enshrined in the Constitution. As a multi-religious and multi-ethnic state, and Nigeria's stance on *Hijab* should align with international standards. The Nigerian Constitution (Section 38) states in part thus:

Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom (either alone or in community with others or in public or private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance. (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, Chapter 4, Section 38 (1)).

Article 18 of UN Human Rights declaration Charter states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom either alone or in community with others and in public or private to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. (UN General Assembly, 1948, Article 18).

In view of the above, Maimunatu (2019), asserted that Muslim women in Nigeria face challenges and discrimination due to wearing the *Hijab* especially in education and public institutions. She called for institutionalized protection of Muslim women's right to wear the *Hijab* as part of religious freedom under the Nigerian constitution. It aimed for a holistic understanding of the legal and religious basis of the *Hijab* and concluded that Nigerian Muslim women have constitutional rights to wear the *Hijab* wherever they reside in the country and called for better recognition and protection of this right.

According to Akintola (2022), in his lecture at the world *Hijab* day, he asserted that *Hijab* is a vehicle of unification both nationally and internationally. It helps the Muslim women to identify themselves. Adding that *Hijab* is a symbol of social justice, freedom and equal rights and a key to morality. That a woman puts on a *Hijab* is a sign of a responsible woman ready to build the nation. To discriminate against a single woman is to discriminate against the entire nation.

Adamu (2022), on the world *Hijab* day also advocated that the Nigerian Constitution protects the right of women to wear *Hijab* and allows Muslim to practice their faith according to the dictate of their religion. He also emphasized that the constitution guarantees freedom of

religion for all citizens and called for dialogue on matters of religious differences rather than resorting to violence.

Joshua and Ebenezer (2022) opined that Nigeria is not bereft of working institutions like the judiciary and legislature to address human right issues such as the wearing of *Hijab*. The current legal approach without the further Legislative intervention or a hybrid of social and legal solutions will be inadequate. Therefore, they recommend a hybrid model for mitigating the social - legal effect of the usage of *Hijab* in Nigerian public institutions to avoid harm.

***Hijab* Crisis in Lagos State Secondary Schools**

In early 2013, the then 12-year-old JSS1 student of Kadara Junior Grammar School Ebute Metta, Lagos. Aisha Alabi was harassed and beaten by the school head for wearing *Hijab* on her school uniform outside the class inside the school premises. This principal, Mrs. E. C. Ukpata called an emergency meeting where Aisha was given 32 strokes of the cane.

Asiat Abdul Karim was also harassed alongside a friend Mariam Oyeniyi. She later took Lagos State to court and on October 17th 2014 judgment by Justice Grace Onyeabo of the High Court of Lagos State, upheld the *Hijab* restriction, the case was taken further to the Court of Appeal.

Subsequently, in a majority decision of five in favour and two dissenting, the supreme Court of Nigeria on Friday June 17th 2022 in Abuja affirmed the right of female Muslim in Lagos public primary and secondary schools to wear *Hijab*. The seven-member panel affirmed the July 21st, 2016 judgments of the Court of Appeal, Lagos, which set aside the October 17th, 2014.

Justice Kudirat Kekere- Ekun, who wrote the lead judgment which was read by Justice Tijani Abubakar dismissed the appeal filed by Lagos State against the 2016 judgment of the Court of Appeal Lagos, as being without merit. The supreme Court held that wearing of *Hijab* is an Islamic injunction and an act of worship required of Muslims and consequently the banning of female Muslim students from wearing it to school is a violation of their fundamental rights to freedom of thoughts, conscience, religion, the dignity of human persons and freedom from discrimination. The apex court relied heavily on section 38 of the 1999 constitution which guaranteed every Nigerian citizen the right to freedom of thought conscience and religion. (Adunola, 2023)

The *Hijab* crisis in Lagos secondary schools has generated significant academic attention likely due to its entanglement with issues of religion, state policy and human rights. The cause of the crisis is multi-dimensional rooted in historical, social, religious, legal and political dynamics. Muslim students who wear the *Hijab* see it as a religious obligation, while school authorities (and sometimes Christian groups) view schools as secular spaces where religious identifiers should be discouraged to avoid sectarianism

The Guardian observed the poor handling of the crisis in schools, workplaces and public spaces. Another reason for the controversy was that the Christian association of Nigeria (CAN), an umbrella body of the Christian faithful opposed the wearing of *Hijab* by Muslim girls in public or Christian owned private schools because they believed it could encourage the spread of Islam in schools.

The Concept and Roles of Mass Media in Nigeria

Mass media refers to the technologies and channels of communication designed to reach and communicate messages to a large, diverse audience simultaneously. It encompasses traditional platforms such as newspapers, videos, television and digital platforms like the

internet, website, social media and streaming services (Abdulai, 2021). The major roles of the mass media are to educate, entertain and give information to large audience. Mass media also shape the public opinion, they hold Government accountable, promote culture, provide a public platform and act as a watchdog in the society. (Robinson, 2017).

Media's role also involves promotion, preservation, dissemination and interpretation of cultural values. (Kenneth, 2011; Fakira, 2018). However, the records of how socio- religious issues such as conflict and peace resolution strategies are covered and presented to the public in Nigeria is a clue of the media as determinant of national peace and security in terms of peace resolution or conflict escalation.

Malcolm X's opinion on the power of the media is as follows: " the media is the most powerful entity on Earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent and that's power. Because they control the mind of the masses". (Malcolm X, as cited in various sources). Another quote from Brik and Birk reads "Mere words can make and prevent wars, create understanding or influence prejudice, form constitution or destroyed them, sell shoddy or superior ideas, justify man's worst action or express highest ideas". (Birk & Birk, 2023)

Analysis of Media's Report on *Hijab* Crisis in Lagos State

In Western media, the *Hijab* is often portrayed negatively, associating it with oppression, subservience and security risks, thereby fueling Islamophobia and social challenges for Muslim women wearing the *Hijab*. In Nigeria, media's response to issues that affect Muslims, receive less than favorable coverage within mainstream media. Tella (2014), noted that less than 15% of practicing journalist are Muslims and so the Nigerian mass media is controlled and dominated by Christians, hence, Media representation of Islam, Muslims and the *Hijab* have been characterized by hostility and controversy.

Fatima (2018), asserted that the way in which journalist frame issues can affect how people make judgement about it and the *Hijab* is no exception. She further stated that the Nigerian media has failed to fully contextualize the *Hijab* by focusing on negative connotation associated with the *Hijab*, instead of championing the values of piety, respect and dignity that the *Hijab* is meant to foster among Muslim women. She is also of the opinion that the influential South Westrn media organization refusal to acknowledge the *Hijab* was nothing new as they also failed to recognize that the *Hijab* particularly in the northern geopolitical zone had enabled women to gain access to the public sphere.

It was evidenced that the newspaper coverage of the *Hijab* crisis in Lagos schools was often colored by underlying religious and political biases affecting the narratives and public discourse around the crisis. Early court rulings and government positions banning *Hijab* in schools (2014 Lagos High Court's ruling) were often presented in some newspaper without freely contextualizing the constitutional right argument made by Muslim groups. Coverage sometimes amplified Christian group opposition to *Hijabs* in schools notably when the Christian association of Nigeria was involved framing the *Hijab* as alien to certain schools and stirring religious tensions. (Fatima, 2018).

Muslim organizations and Muslim students who advocated for the use of *Hijab* were portrayed in some reports as either militant or as victims. Government responses especially from the Lagos State government oscillated between legal caution, attempts at compromising limiting *Hijab* style and color and outright bans from the Supreme Court settled the matter. Some media

report criticize the government for insensitivity and discrimination, while others portrayed the government as trying to maintain secularism and order.

Some newspaper applauded the judgment of the Supreme Court in 2022 affirming *Hijab* right as a progressive protection of religious right while others focused on isolated incident of continued harassment of school disciplinary actions, underscoring ongoing challenges. (The Cable, 2022)

Newspapers exhibited bias mainly through framing of the *Hijab* issue as a religious conflict rather than a constitutional rights debate through selective emphasis on opposition or support voices and through divergent portrayals of government actions and Muslim groups. Such biases affected public perception and intensified the controversy at times .

Conclusion

The study gives exposition to the roles the Media played in the *Hijab* crisis of Lagos secondary schools. It discussed the concept and purpose of secondary education as a means of preparing students towards useful living within the society. The institution and importance of *Hijab* to the Muslim is established in the Qur'an. The stance of the Constitution of Nigeria on the right of the Muslim girls and women to wear the *Hijab* in public spaces cannot be overemphasised. The study equally examined the *Hijab* crisis in Lagos secondary school which led to protest by Muslim organizations and parents who actually took the case to the court as a result of victimization of the female students who wear *Hijab* by their teachers and principals.

The Supreme Court's ruling on the right of the female Muslim students to wear the *Hijab* in concordance with the Nigerian constitution has been specified. The national dailies' reports on *Hijab* crisis in Lagos secondary schools and south west Nigeria revealed that the media exhibited bias mainly through framing the *Hijab* issue as a religious conflict rather than a constitutional right debate through selective emphasis on opposition or support voices and through divergent portrayals of government actions and Muslim groups. Such biases affected public perception and intensified the controversy whereas one of the functional roles of the media is to serve as conflict resolution and not conflict escalation.

Recommendations

This study recommends the effective implementation of section 38 of the Nigerian Constitution which guarantees freedom of religion to Nigerian citizens. No individual or group of people or organizations should infringe on the fundamental rights of Muslim girls and women to wear the *Hijab* in public places. In agreement with Iyawa (2019), the study advocates the need for sincerity and attention by Government, Judiciary and law makers in protecting religious rights while maintain societal peace and respecting Nigeria's secular legal framework.

In concordance with Fatima, Muslims must play an active role by investing in human and financial capital within the media, which is a pillar for social construction, negotiation and social renegotiation. Muslim communities and organizations should create awareness on the use of *Hijab* among the Muslims and non-Muslims and there is need for inter faith dialogue among the adherents of the revealed religions for clarification of misconceptions, misunderstandings about the ethics of different religions to foster peaceful coexistence for national development.

There is need for concerted efforts on the part of the Muslim ummah for uniformity and connectivity of ideas and ideals on the style of *Hijab* to adopt in public educational institutions. It is therefore suggested that Government should include in the constitution, the prosecution of any individual that infringes on the right of Female Muslim students wearing *Hijab* in public educational institutions and private and public spaces.

The paper recommends adoption of a more nuanced and balance approach to reporting on sensitive religious issues, adhering to the principles of fairness, justice and cultural sensitivity. To achieve this, media outlet should prioritise fact-based reporting, avoid sensationalism and promote inter faith dialogue and understanding. Journalists should also receive training on religious literacy and cultural sensitivity. The study calls for the need of a professional Association of Muslim Journalists that aims to set ethical criteria for news reporting, protect the rights of individual local journalists and promote education and training young people who represent a major source of human resources for Islamic culture and civilization.

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