THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON STUDENT DRESSING IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigates how religion affects student dress at Ghanaian universities, particularly at Accra Technical University (ATU) and Kumasi Technical University (KsTU). It looks into how students' wardrobe choices are influenced by their religious convictions in light of the rising prevalence of indecent attire among college students.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A quantitative survey used a structured questionnaire to collect student data, and 304 respondents answered the questionnaire. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics from the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study examined the relationship between students' religious beliefs and clothing codes at various colleges.

Findings: The findings show that religious convictions significantly impact what students wear to Ghanaian universities. The study emphasises the necessity of dress code regulations and policies that consider these factors and encourage students to behave appropriately.

Research Limitation: This study examines two institutions and offers important insights into the viewpoints of Ghanaian universities. Hence the findings cannot be generalised.

Social Implication: The results highlight how crucial it is to consider religious views when debating student dress standards, arguing that they should uphold decency while honouring cultural and religious values.

Practical Implication: According to the survey, college religious communities should be consulted when creating dress code policies. To address concerns about indecent dress, these rules should explicitly outline what is appropriate for different circumstances, including public spaces and classrooms.

Originality/Value: This study advances knowledge of how religion influences Ghanaian students' fashion choices. It offers insightful information for legislators and educational establishments seeking to establish welcoming and courteous spaces considering their student groups' cultural and religious backgrounds.

***Keywords:** Dress code. indecent dressing. policies. religious beliefs. student*

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INTRODUCTION

The rise of indecent dressing among students on tertiary campuses has become a state of grave concern to individuals deeply committed to religious beliefs in Ghana and around the world who perceive appropriate dressing as a way of covering certain vital parts of the body Manswab, Mahsen & Abdulrahman. (2023). Synonymous with appropriate dressing is modesty in dressing. This subject is subjective across cultures worldwide, as what is considered modest in one culture may be viewed as immodest in another (Essel & Amissah, 2014).

Modesty is often regarded as a virtue in various religions, where individuals are encouraged to dress in a way that conceals certain parts of the body and refrains from wearing revealing clothing (Sadatmoosavi, 2013; Lewis, 2017). One can observe this phenomenon in different religious traditions, like Islam, where women have the option to wear hijabs, niqabs, or burqas, or in specific Christian denominations that advocate for modest dress codes. These clothing choices are deeply connected to one's religious convictions and are a visible symbol of dedication to one's faith.

According to a study by Nyaga (2023), there are several factors that contribute to moral decadence among young people, including inadequate parental guidance, a desire for material goods, peer pressure, a decline in religious and moral education, and a lavish lifestyle. Nyaga (2023) also highlights the impact of media influence and societal norms on shaping the moral values of young individuals. Additionally, the study suggests that addressing these factors through comprehensive education and community support can help mitigate moral decadence among youth. This study was conducted among the youth of a presbyterian church in East Africa. Again, a study conducted by Jajil et al. (2020) also revealed that the morality of a person's character is based on their outward appearance, such as their use of cosmetics, fashion sense, level of body exposure, physical beauty, friendliness, bold temperament, and ease in communicating with other guys.

Both Christian and Islamic teachings discourage indecent exposure of certain body parts due to the impact on an individual's spirituality as outlined in religious texts (1Peter 3:2-5; 1Timothy 2:9-10). Further studies have investigated the influence of religion on consumer behaviour, specifically focusing on aspects such as indecent dressing's impact on academic performance (Yohanna et al., 2020; Selasi & Mawuli, 2013), modesty (Ashrafet al, 2023), and dress codes (Wilké & Osman, 2018; Okosa, 2022).

Religion and Student Dressing in Ghana, where Christianity and Islam are the two most common religions, religious practices and beliefs have a discernible impact on student dress (Atencah et al., 2018). Muslim students adhere to Islamic dress standards, while Christian students may follow biblical ideas about modesty (Sulaiman, 2018). Additionally, Ghanaian customs strongly emphasise modesty, influencing how students dress (Anku, 2018). Religious practices and teachings can significantly influence individuals' dress norms, often prescribing rules for modesty, decency, and compliance. As students navigate the academic environment, their attire choices may represent a blend of their personal convictions, cultural conventions,

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or religious concepts. Therefore, understanding the intricate interplay between religion, culture, and personal identity is essential for creating a campus environment that respects and accommodates a range of religious views. However, there is limited knowledge about the specific ways in which religion influences how students dress in Ghana's higher education institutions.

Blackwell (2016) examined the impact of Christian identity on modesty and how modesty in many forms influenced body image among a sample of 428 adult Christians. The study found that extrinsic religious orientation and personal values positively influenced different types of modesty, such as self-esteem, respect-driven, and contextual. These types of modesty have different effects on a person's image, as they act as filters against negative body messages. While Atencah (2018) also found out among two prominent tertiary institutions in Ghana that trends in dressing among students are influenced by music or music videos, the internet, personal interests, and sports, among others. Certain garments seem to reveal very sensitive areas that may be categorised as indecent. There has been a clarion call on religious bodies to assist in reshaping morality (dressing) among the youth, which mostly gets its foundation from tertiary institutions.

Therefore, further research is needed to explore how religion shapes student dress within Ghana's tertiary institutions. Motivated by the rising prevalence of indecent dressing in Ghanaian tertiary institutions (Atencah et al., 2018; Sulaiman, 2018; Selasi & Mawuli, 2013). The study aimed to investigate how religion influences student dressing at Kumasi Technical University (KsTU) and Accra Technical University (ATU) as case studies. The study presents the intricate connection between faith and education, the various dress codes upheld by different faiths, and the rich traditional garments that honour cultural heritage. The study explores the profound effects of religious practices on students' clothing choices, shedding light on the various perspectives, challenges, and opportunities that emerge when religion intertwines with campus life.

Indecent Dressing in Tertiary Institutions
Concern has been expressed by certain administrators and faculty members about the growing prevalence of indecent dress among students on college campuses (Bua & Tsav, 2014). Nwikpo et al. (2022) have expressed a similar view, citing research findings that indicate the inappropriate clothing worn by female undergraduates on specific campuses not only compromises the focused mental state necessary for academic endeavours but also negatively impacts the academic engagement of their male counterparts (Nwikpo, Ejembi & Adokpa, 2022). According to Fareo and Jackson (2018), there is cause for concern regarding the unsuitable and worrying way that students in higher education are dressing.

Many reasons have been given for the rise in indecent clothing on college campuses. According to specific research (Chukwueloka, & Onwuejeogwu, 2021; Okorodudu, & Okorodudu, 2020), social media and popular culture significantly impact how students view what is appropriate to wear. Peer pressure and the desire to conform to society's norms are also important elements

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(Adeyemi, & Ajayi, 2022).

It's been discussed how inappropriate clothing affects the academic environment. Others contend that it is a matter of personal preference and a means of expressing oneself (Olawale & Oluremi). According to Nwankwo, Okoye, and Obasi (2021), others argue that it might lead to distractions and a setting that is unsuitable for learning purposes. According to Abiola and Oluwafemi (2022), there have been concerns expressed over the possibility that indecent clothing may continue to support objectification and discrimination against women.

Institutions have introduced clothing standards or guidelines to address this problem, intending to encourage a courteous and professional learning environment (Okoh, & Ugwuanyi, 2019). Nonetheless, there have been differing responses to introducing these policies; some students believe that they violate their right to privacy and freedom of speech (Ogunsanya, & Ogunsanya, 2021).

The Impacts of Indecent Dressing in Tertiary Institutions

The influence of growing indecent dressing on university campuses in Ghana is one of the significant difficulties that institutions face in the twenty-first century. Provocative clothing causes instructors and students to lose focus during academic lectures, according to research by Bua and Tsav (2014). Furthermore, incidences of sexual favouritism by lecturers frequently influenced by immodest clothing have been connected to test question leaks at the College of Education Katsina Ala (Adikwu, 2019). According to Nwikpo et al. (2022), certain male undergraduates may find female undergraduates' attire on campus to be distracting, which could result in a decline in concentration and involvement with their academics (Nwikpo, Ejembi, & Adokpa, 2022).

Research implies that one's gender may influence decisions on what to wear. Research conducted at Nigerian universities by Nwikpo et al. (2021) revealed a relationship between female undergraduates' "indecent dressing" and male undergraduates' diminished academic engagement and focus on their studies (Nwikpo, Ejembi, & Adokpa, 2021). It seems from this that some men might find it distracting when women wear skimpy apparel. According to Chukwueloka and Onwuejeogwu (2021) and Adeyemi and Ajayi (2022) among other things, peer pressure, popular culture, and social media have all been linked to the problem of indecent clothing on college campuses.

While some scholars contend that students' clothing choices are motivated by their desire for individual freedom and self-expression, others argue that inappropriate attire can contribute to an environment that is not conducive to learning and may even reinforce gender-based discrimination and objectification (Abiola, & Oluwafemi, 2022; Nwankwo, Okoye, & Obasi, 2021).

Certain institutions have responded to these worries by enacting rules or clothing regulations that aim to provide a courteous and professional studying atmosphere (Okoh & Ugwuanyi

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[2019]).   Though some students view the introduction of such restrictions as an infringement on their right to personal freedom of expression, there have been varied reactions to them (Ogunsanya, & Ogunsanya, 2021). Some research indicates that indecent clothing can harm academic performance (Fareo & Jackson, 2018), others contend that it is a matter of personal preference and a form of self-expression (Olawale & Oluremi, 2020).

Solving these issues requires a multidisciplinary strategy involving stakeholders like students, teachers, administrators, and legislators. In addition to fostering a respectful and professional culture on college campuses, awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and open discussions can help people grasp the problem better (Okorodudu & Okorodudu, 2020; Adikwu, 2019).

Motivations for Indecent Dressing

According to Smith and Jones (2018), peer pressure and adherence to social standards are two of the main drivers of indecent dressing among college students. Students frequently look to their classmates for approval and validation, which substantially influences the clothes they choose to wear (Garcia & Martinez, 2020). Clothes selections frequently reflect the self-discovery and identity exploration processes on university campuses (Brown & Lee, 2019). Some students may use inappropriate attire to express themselves and claim their individuality (Williams et al., 2021).

Students at universities are also highly motivated to dress indecently by issues related to body image and sexualization (Taylor & White, 2017). Students may wear skimpy clothing to get attention or affirmation in a society that values physical appeal and desirability (Garcia & Martinez, 2020). Fashion trends and cultural views on sexuality and modesty impact students' clothing (Brown & Lee, 2019). Furthermore, climatic conditions and social events on campus could influence what people want to wear (Chen & Kim, 2020).

Gender relations and power dynamics within society may be significantly impacted by the differential treatment of genders concerning indecent clothing. Men may be given more freedom and latitude in choosing how they want to dress, but women may experience prejudice and victimisation (Smith, 2019). According to Jones and Brown (2020), these differences have the potential to maintain gender inequality and normalise harassment and violence against women.

Religious Influence of Dressing on Tertiary Students

Tertiary students' choices and dressing standards are greatly influenced by their religious beliefs and practices in various cultural contexts (Zainuddin & Mahdy, 2023; Lim & Yaacob, 2021; Ogunniyi et al., 2022). Research has indicated that students' attire is frequently influenced by their religious associations and the modesty standards imposed by such faiths (Adamu et al., 2022; Mahfuz & Nahar, 2021; Abdullahi & Salisu, 2021). Christian students may choose to dress modestly following biblical ideas, whereas Muslim students typically follow Islamic dress regulations, which include wearing hijabs, niqabs, or abayas for women

(Mahfuz & Nahar, 2021; Wardah & Affandi, 2020; Olaniyan & Ogunnaike, 2022).

The impact of religion is especially noticeable in situations where it has a considerable influence on cultural norms and values (Zainuddin & Mahdy, 2023; Ogunniyi et al., 2022). Within these kinds of environments, students are encouraged to dress modestly in academic settings following their cultural and religious beliefs, as revealing or provocative attire is frowned upon (Adamu et al., 2022; Wardah & Affandi, 2020; Abdullahi & Salisu, 2021). According to Zainuddin & Mahdy (2023; Lim & Yaacob, 2021), students' opinions of suitable clothes are also influenced by cultural traditions, societal standards, and linked religious beliefs.

Recent research has examined how religious beliefs affect students' choices for clothing by affecting their perceptions of their bodies and sense of self (Zainuddin & Mahdy, 2023; Mahfuz & Nahar, 2021; Olaniyan & Ogunnaike, 2022). Results imply that religious beliefs and individual ideals can have a favourable impact on several forms of modesty in students, including self-worth, respect-driven, and contextual modesty (Lim & Yaacob, 2021; Wardah & Affandi, 2020; Ogunniyi et al., 2022). These types of modesty can serve as filters against messages detrimental to one's body, encouraging pupils to have a positive body image and influencing their fashion choices.

Additionally, studies on the connection between impure clothing and academic achievement have continued, emphasising the possible impact of religious convictions on students' learning results (Adamu et al., 2022; Mahfuz & Nahar, 2021; Abdullahi & Salisu, 2021). Research has investigated the potential effects of indecent attire on students' academic performance. Findings indicate that modesty, as dictated by religious and cultural norms, may provide a more favourable learning atmosphere (Zainuddin & Mahdy, 2023; Lim & Yaacob, 2021; Olaniyan & Ogunnaike, 2022).

It is imperative to acknowledge that the impact of religion on student apparel is intricate and diverse, given that personal convictions, cultural upbringings, and personal inclinations can also influence students' clothing decisions (Adamu et al., 2022; Wardah & Affandi, 2020). More research is required to examine the subtleties of this interaction within certain tertiary institutions to better understand the viewpoints and difficulties faced by students negotiating the junction of religion, education, and personal expression through their clothing choices.

METHODOLOGY
This study employed a quantitative approach involving a structured questionnaire, as recommended by previous researchers (Smith & Jones, 2018; Garcia & Martinez, 2020). The questionnaire was developed to gather quantitative data on students' religious beliefs, dressing preferences, perceptions of indecent dressing, and the perceived impact of religious beliefs on dressing choices. It included closed-ended questions with Likert-scale responses and multiple-choice options, similar to the approach used in studies by Nwikpo et al. (2022) and Fareo and Jackson (2018).

The research was conducted mainly with students who attend Accra Technical University (ATU) and Kumasi Technical University (KsTU) in Ghana. To ensure a representative sample and enable comparisons across different subgroups, a stratified random sampling technique was used to select individuals from a range of academic programmes, levels of study, and religious affiliations, as recommended by Chukwueloka and Onwuejeogwu (2021).

Electronic administration of the questionnaire made it possible to keep it private and anonymous, following ethical guidelines outlined by Adeyemi and Ajayi (2022) and Olawale and Oluremi (2020). As a descriptive study, the data collected from 304 respondents were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, as suggested by Nwankwo et al. (2021) and Abiola and Oluwafemi (2022).

The data were summarised using descriptive statistics, which included the computation of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests, t-tests, and analysis of variance (ANOVA), were utilised to investigate the relationships between variables and determine significant differences among subgroups. Okoh and Ugwuanyi (2019) and Ogunsanya (2021) followed this methodology in related studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic information of respondents

Demographic information	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
Gender: Male Female	 42 262	 13.8 86.2
Age: 17-19 years 20-22 years 23-25 years 26 years and above	 36 111 94 63	 11.8 36.5 30.9 20.7
Qualification: WASSCE Certificates Diploma HND Degree	 59 176 35 30 4	 19.4 57.9 11.5 9.9 1.3
Religious Affiliation: Christianity Islam African Tradition	 267 35 2	 87.8 11.5 0.7

Table1 showed the background information of respondents. The demographic breakdown of

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the participants reveals a notable gender imbalance, with 262 females (86.2%) compared to 42 males (13.8%). In terms of age distribution, the majority of participants fall within the 20-22 years category (36.5%), followed by the 23-25 years group (30.9%), while the smallest proportion comprises individuals aged 26 years and above (20.7%). Regarding qualifications, the largest contingent holds certificates (57.9%), followed by those with WASSCE qualifications (19.4%), with degrees being the least represented (1.3%). Lastly, the majority of participants identify with Christianity (87.8%), followed by Islam (11.5%), and a minimal presence of African Tradition (0.7%) among the respondents.

Table 2: Factors that constitutes the selection of attire on campus

	Responses	
	Number of people	Percent of people
Personal style	188	19.1%
Easy wear	125	12.7%
Comfort	166	16.9%
Weather	109	11.1%
Social norms	40	4.1%
Cultural background	50	5.1%
Budget	54	5.5%
Accessibility to clothing	42	4.3%
Peer influence	13	1.3%
Prescribed wear	73	7.4%
Total	983	100.0%

The factors influencing attire selection among respondents encompass a variety of considerations. The most frequently cited factor is personal style, mentioned by 188 individuals (19.1%), indicating a predominant focus on individual expression. Comfort follows closely, with 166 responses (16.9%), suggesting that physical ease plays a significant role in clothing decisions. Religious beliefs and easy wear also hold substantial sway, with 123 (12.5%) and 125 (12.7%) mentions, respectively. Weather conditions influence attire selection for 109 participants (11.1%), reflecting the practicality of adapting to environmental circumstances. Social norms, cultural background, and budget considerations are cited less frequently but still contribute to clothing choices, with 40 (4.1%), 50 (5.1%), and 54 (5.5%) responses, respectively. Accessibility to clothing (42 mentions, 4.3%) and prescribed wear (73 mentions, 7.4%) are also noted, indicating factors related to practicality and adherence to guidelines. Peer influence has the lowest frequency, mentioned by only 13 respondents (1.3%). These factors collectively shape attire selection, with personal style, comfort, and adherence to religious beliefs emerging as the most prominent influences among the surveyed population.

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Table 3: Factors that constitutes the choices of attire on campus by religious affiliation

Factors	Religion			Total
	Christianity	Islam	Traditional Religion	
Religious beliefs	107	16	0	123
Personal style	165	22	1	188
Easy wear	108	16	1	125
Comfort	144	21	1	166
Weather	94	14	1	109
Social norms	32	8	0	40
Cultural background	45	5	0	50
Budget	47	7	0	54
Accessibility to clothing	37	5	0	42
Peer influence	11	2	0	13
Prescribed wear	64	9	0	73
Total	266	35	2	303

Analysing factors influencing attire selection by religion unveils distinct patterns among respondents. Among Christians, the most commonly cited factor is personal style, mentioned by 165 individuals (62.0%), followed by comfort (54.1%) and religious beliefs (40.2%). Similarly, among Muslims, personal style is predominant, noted by 22 individuals (62.9%), followed closely by comfort (60.0%) and easy wear (45.7%). In the traditional religion category, personal style again emerges as a significant consideration, mentioned by one respondent (50.0%), followed by comfort (50.0%). Across all religious groups, social norms and cultural background receive relatively lower mentions. Notably, peer influence remains consistently low across all religious groups.
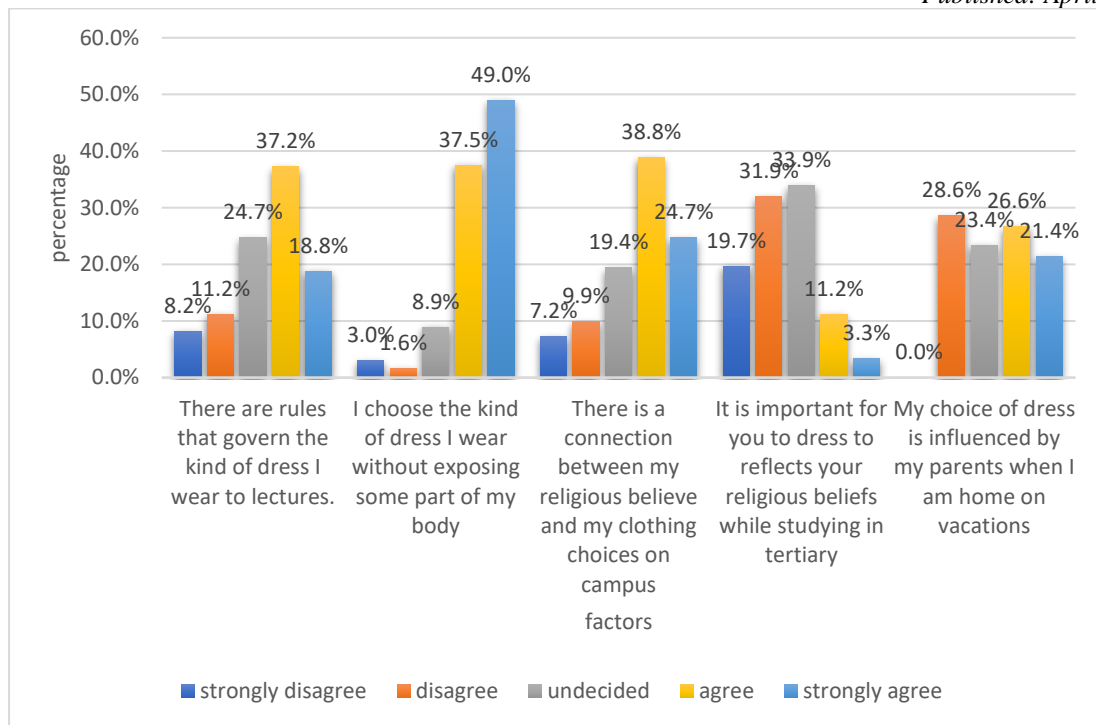
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Figure 1: Choice attire among students at tertiary institution

The survey data reflects students' diverse perspectives regarding their attire choice. While a notable proportion of respondents acknowledge the presence of rules governing dress for lectures, with 37.2% agreeing and 18.8% strongly agreeing (Survey Data, 2024), a majority assert their autonomy in selecting clothing that does not expose any part of their body, with a significant 49.0% strongly agreeing (Survey Data, 2024). Additionally, opinions vary regarding the connection between religious beliefs and clothing choices on campus, with 38.8% of respondents agreeing (Survey Data, 2024). However, a majority either disagree or strongly disagree with the importance of dressing to reflect religious beliefs while studying in tertiary education (Survey Data, 2024). Moreover, there is a range of responses regarding the influence of parents on dress choices during vacations, indicating diverse perspectives within the student population (Survey Data, 2024). These findings underscore the complexity of factors influencing students' attire decisions, including institutional regulations, personal autonomy, cultural values, and familial influence.

Table 4: Cross tabulation on the attire choices and religious affiliation

	Christianity mean	Islamic mean	Overall mean mean
I choose the kind of dress I wear without exposing some part of my body.	4.24	4.56	4.20
There is a connection between my religious believe and my clothing choices on campus.	3.67	4.19	3.60
There are rules that govern the kind of dress I wear to lectures.	3.45	3.53	3.46
It is important for you to dress to reflects your religious beliefs while studying in tertiary.	3.00	3.00	3.00
My choice of dress is influenced by my parents when I am home on vacations	2.62	3.15	2.60

The table above examines the relationship between students' religious affiliation (Christianity and Islam) and their dressing preferences, using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The results are presented as mean scores for Christians, Muslims, and the overall sample across five survey items. For the statement, "There are rules that govern the kind of dress I wear to lectures," the mean score was 3.45 for Christians, 3.53 for Muslims, and 3.46 overall. These moderate scores indicate that both groups generally agree that some form of regulation or societal expectations influences their lecture attire. Regarding the statement, "I choose the kind of dress I wear without exposing some part of my body," Christians reported a mean score of 4.24, Muslims 4.56, and the overall mean was 4.20.

The high scores reflect a strong inclination toward modest dressing among all respondents, with Muslim students exhibiting a slightly stronger tendency. When asked about the connection between religious beliefs and clothing choices on campus, "There is a connection between my religious belief and my clothing choices on campus," Christians scored a mean of 3.67, Muslims scored 4.19, and the overall mean was 3.60. This suggests that Muslim students perceive a stronger link between their faith and clothing preferences compared to Christian students. On the item, "It is important for you to dress to reflect your religious beliefs while studying in tertiary," the mean score was consistently 3.00 across Christians, Muslims, and the overall group. This indicates a neutral stance among respondents regarding the importance of aligning dressing habits with religious identity in a tertiary setting. For the last item, "My choice of dress is influenced by my parents when I am home on vacations," Christians had a mean score of 2.62, Muslims 3.15, and the overall mean was 2.60. These relatively low scores

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suggest that parental influence on dressing preferences is limited, with Muslim students reporting slightly more influence than Christians.
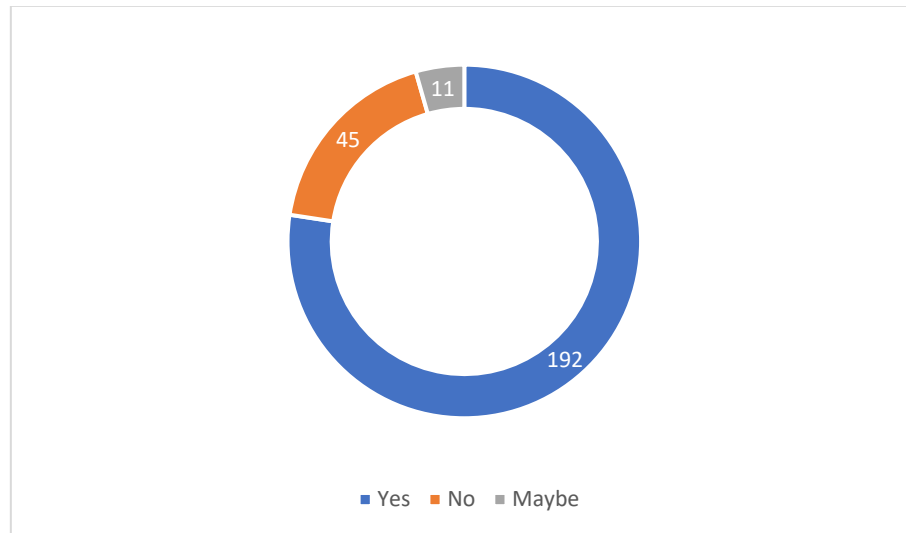

Figure 2: Differences in dressing preferences between students with religious backgrounds and those without

Figure 2 shows the results of the observed differences between students with religious background and those without.

"Yes" Responses (192)
The dominant theme among the "Yes" responses was the modesty of students with religious backgrounds. Many participants highlighted that religious student, especially Muslims, adhere to strict dressing norms. One participant remarked, *"The respect Muslims have for their religion makes them always dress according to how every Muslim should dress, and some Christians also dress decently."* This statement reflects the perception that religious students often maintain a conservative approach to dressing, with Muslim students standing out for their consistent adherence to cultural and religious attire. Another participant observed, *"Those with religious backgrounds dress very decently to cover all parts of their body, especially the Muslims, while those without any religious backgrounds choose to dress anyhow of their choice to lectures."* This response exemplifies the sharp contrast some respondents perceived between religious and non-religious students, associating modesty with religiosity and freedom of choice with non-religiosity. Some responses also delved into variability within religious groups, particularly among Christians. For instance, one participant noted, *"The differences are not plenty because even some Christians do dress indecently when on campus, but for those who take their religious beliefs seriously, you can see the vast difference."* This highlights the notion that religious commitment plays a role in dressing preferences. A few responses linked modesty with responsibility, such as the statement, *"Those with religious backgrounds are more responsible,"* indicating a broader perception that dressing styles reflect personal and moral character.

"No" Responses (45)
Participants who responded "No" generally argued that there are no significant differences in dressing preferences between religious and non-religious students. One response stated, *"Most of the people from the religious backgrounds even dress and expose more skin, so no differences."* This challenges the stereotype of religious students being more modest and suggests that dressing preferences may not always align with religious beliefs. Several respondents pointed out the influence of external factors such as peer pressure, with one remarking, *"Not much difference because, at the tertiary level, students face a lot of pressure from peers and so-called 'belonging in,' so they end up changing their way of dressing to suit the environment."* This suggests that the university setting, with its social dynamics, dilutes the expected norms associated with religious adherence. Another participant commented on inconsistencies in religious dressing, saying, *"Well, except Muslim girls who wear their hijabs, I haven't really seen any female dressing 'religiously.'"* This indicates that visible signs of religious dress, like the hijab, are less common among non-Muslim religious groups.

"Maybe" Responses (11)
The "Maybe" responses expressed ambiguity, often attributing dressing choices to individual freedom rather than religious affiliation. One participant shared, *"Not really, I believe everyone dresses the way they feel defines them."* This perspective suggests that self-expression plays a more significant role in dressing preferences than religious background. Some participants highlighted nuanced differences, such as, *"Slightly, except Muslim girls who wear their hijabs."* While acknowledging some distinctions, these responses emphasised that religious dressing is not universally practised even among religious groups. Others pointed to the complexity of dressing norms in tertiary institutions, with one remarking, *"Sometimes cool,"* implying that dressing styles can vary significantly depending on personal comfort and situational factors.

Table 5: Main challenges faced when wearing religious attire

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Main challenges	I feel uncomfortable or discriminated against by other students	59	22.7%	28.6%
	I feel uncomfortable or discriminated against by staff members	28	10.8%	13.6%
	My religious dress code interferes with my academic activities	49	18.8%	23.8%
	My religious dress code interferes with my social life	117	45.0%	56.8%
	None	7	2.7%	3.4%
Total		260	100.0%	126.2%

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Based on the provided responses regarding main challenges faced by students regarding their religious dress code, the data indicates various concerns from table 5. Among the respondents, the most prevalent challenge reported is feeling uncomfortable or discriminated against by other students, comprising 22.7% of cases. Following this, interference with social life due to religious dress code is reported by a significant majority, constituting 45.0% of cases. Moreover, interference with academic activities due to religious dress code is noted by 18.8% of respondents. A smaller proportion reports feeling uncomfortable or discriminated against by staff members, representing 10.8% of cases. A minority of respondents, comprising 2.7% of cases, report facing no challenges related to their religious dress code. These findings underscore students' multifaceted challenges regarding their religious attire, ranging from social to academic implications. Further examination and support may be necessary to address these concerns effectively.

Table 6a: Benefits of Religious Attire Across Campus Faiths & Cultural Impact

Question	Christian mean	Islamic mean	Mean Difference
Q8: Connection between religious belief and clothing choices	3.67	4.19	0.52
Q10: Religious attire contributing to respect	3.76	4.19	0.43
Q13: Religion shaping dress choices	3.71	4.16	0.45

Table 6b:

	Responses	
	N	Percent
It promotes cultural understanding and tolerance by allowing students to express their religious beliefs through their attire.	205	74.01%
It encourages dialogue and awareness about different religious traditions and practices	32	11.55%
It helps create a respectful atmosphere where students learn to appreciate and value religious diversity	30	10.83%
It enriches the educational experience by providing opportunities for cross-cultural learning and engagement	6	2.17%
We are fashion designers or students so allow us	1	0.36%
Religious dressing and a decent dressing is a different thing all tight	1	0.36%
In no way	1	0.36%
I do not relate	1	0.36%

A comparison was made to explore the perceived benefits of religious dressing on campus across different religious groups, specifically Christians and Muslims. The results are presented in the Table above (6a). For the question, "Connection between religious belief and clothing choices," Christians reported a mean score of 3.67, while Muslims reported a mean of 4.19.

The difference of 0.52 indicates that Muslims, on average, perceive a stronger connection between their religious beliefs and their clothing choices compared to Christians. With "Religious attire contributing to respect", Christians had a mean score of 3.76, while Muslims scored 4.19, resulting in a difference of 0.43. This suggests that both groups believe religious attire contributes to respect, but Muslims tend to feel this connection more strongly than Christians. "Religion shaping dress choices," Christians scored a mean of 3.71, and Muslims reported a mean of 4.16, with a difference of 0.45. This again reflects that Muslims feel their religion plays a stronger role in shaping their dress choices compared to Christians.

The influence of religion on student dressing and its potential contribution to a respectful and culturally diverse educational environment is represented in Table 6b. The most widely held view, expressed by 74.01% (n = 205) of respondents, was that religious dressing promotes cultural understanding and tolerance by allowing students to express their religious beliefs through their attire. This suggests that most students believe that religious attire is an important vehicle for promoting inclusivity and understanding among diverse cultural groups on campus. A smaller proportion of participants, 11.55% (n = 32), felt that religious dressing encourages dialogue and awareness about different religious traditions and practices. This response highlights the role of religious attire in fostering meaningful conversations and increasing awareness of various religious customs and values. Another 10.83% (n = 30) of respondents believed that religious dressing helps create a respectful atmosphere, where students learn to appreciate and value religious diversity. This perspective indicates that religious attire can contribute to a more harmonious campus environment by reinforcing respect for cultural and religious identities. A small group, 2.17% (n = 6), indicated that religious dressing enriches the educational experience by providing opportunities for cross-cultural learning and engagement. This response suggests that religious attire has the potential to offer students a chance to learn from one another's diverse backgrounds in an academic setting. One participant (0.36%) noted, "We are fashion designers or students so allow us," while another commented, "Religious dressing and decent dressing is a different thing all tight." Additionally, three other participants (0.36% each) either expressed indifference or disagreement, stating "In no way" or "I do not relate."

Table 7: Guidelines or workshops to promote understanding of decent dressing on campus in collaboration with religious groups

		Responses		Total %
		N	Percent	
Yes	Providing guidelines and workshops can help promote understanding of decent dressing on campus and foster a respectful environment.	221	42.91%	63.3%
	Collaboration with religious groups can offer valuable insights and perspectives on appropriate dressing based on cultural and religious norms.	105	20.39%	
No	Guidelines or workshops might infringe on individual freedom of expression and personal choices in dressing.	59	11.46%	31.85%

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	Dress codes and guidelines should be left to individual discretion without interference from the university or religious groups.	42	8.16%	
Maybe	It could be beneficial to explore a middle ground where general guidelines are provided while respecting individual choices and diversity.	87	16.88%	16.88%
	You may receive warnings or reminders from faculty or staff.	1	0.19%	0.19%
Total		515	100.0%	

Table 7 examines students' perspectives on the role of guidelines or workshops in promoting understanding of decent dress on campus. The results revealed a range of opinions, categorised into "Yes," "No," and "Maybe" responses. Among the respondents, 42.91% (n = 221) agreed that providing guidelines and workshops would help promote understanding of decent dressing on campus and foster a respectful environment. Additionally, 20.39% (n = 105) of participants believed collaboration with religious groups could offer valuable insights into appropriate dressing based on cultural and religious norms. A significant portion of the sample supports structured initiatives to encourage respectful dressing practices on campus. 11.46% (n = 59) of participants disagreed, arguing that guidelines or workshops might infringe on individual freedom of expression and personal choices in dressing and 8.16% (n = 42) felt that dress codes and guidelines should be left to individual discretion, without interference from the university or religious groups. This reflects concerns regarding autonomy and the potential limitations of personal expression. A smaller proportion of respondents, 16.88% (n = 87), suggested a "Maybe" response, proposing the possibility of a middle ground where general guidelines are provided while respecting individual choices and diversity. A very small percentage, 0.19% (n = 1), expressed a more specific view on the issue, suggesting that faculty or staff might issue warnings or reminders about appropriate dressing.
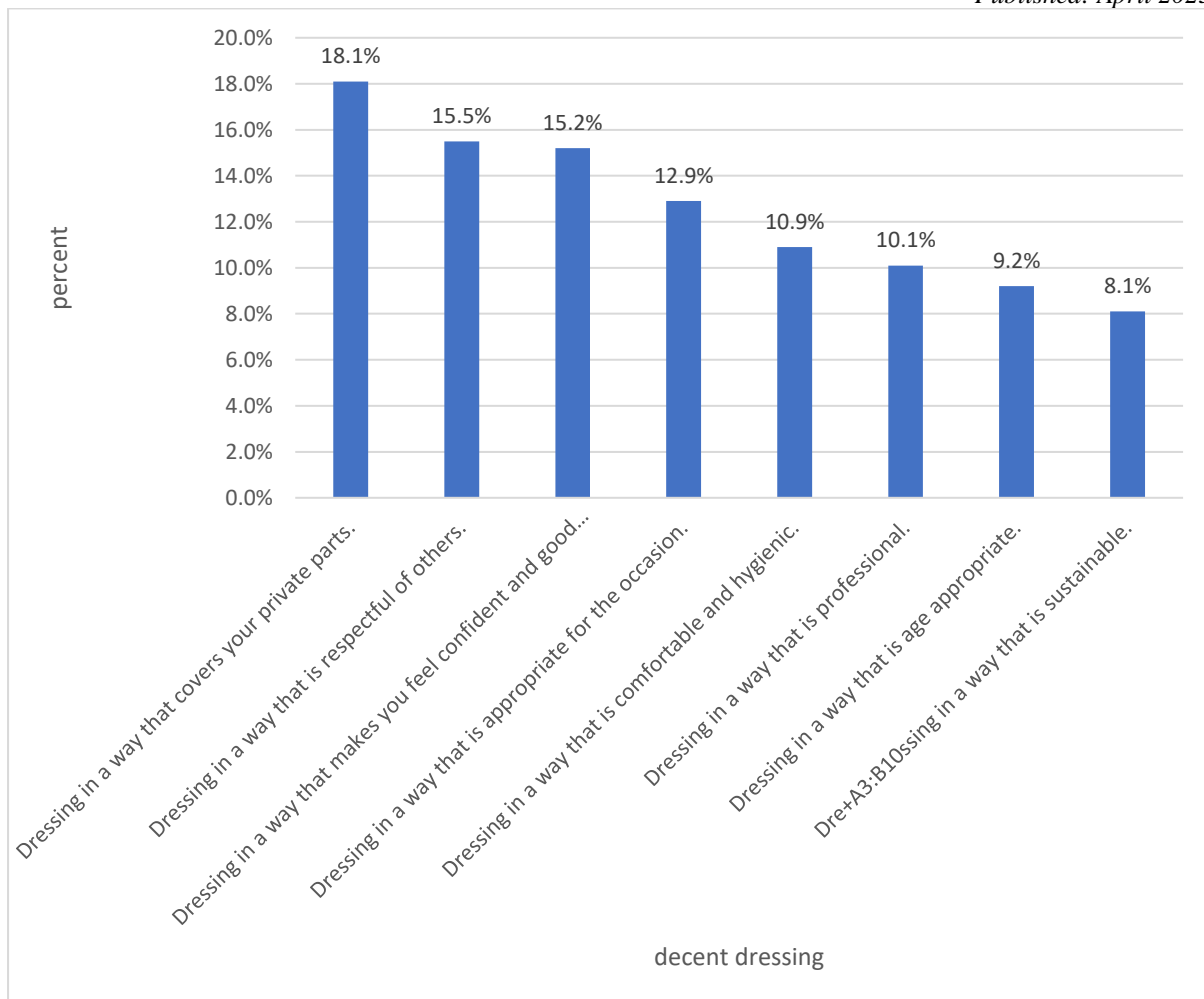
Figure 3: Perception of decent dressing

The provided figure outlines responses regarding perceptions of decent dressing, encompassing various factors such as coverage of private parts, respectfulness, appropriateness for the occasion, comfort and hygiene, confidence, professionalism, age appropriateness, and sustainability. Among respondents, dressing in a way that covers private parts receives the highest frequency, with 18.1% indicating this aspect. Following this, dressing in a way that makes one feel confident and good about themselves and dressing in a way that is respectful of others both garner significant percentages, with 15.2% and 15.5% respectively. Additionally, dressing in a way that is appropriate for the occasion and dressing in a way that is comfortable and hygienic are noted by 12.9% and 10.9% of respondents, respectively. Dressing professionally and dressing in an age-appropriate way are reported by 10.1% and 9.2% of respondents, respectively. Finally, 8.1% of respondents mentioned dressing sustainably. These findings illustrate a range of considerations that individuals perceive as integral to decent dressing, encompassing aspects of modesty, respect, appropriateness, comfort, confidence, professionalism, age suitability, and sustainability.
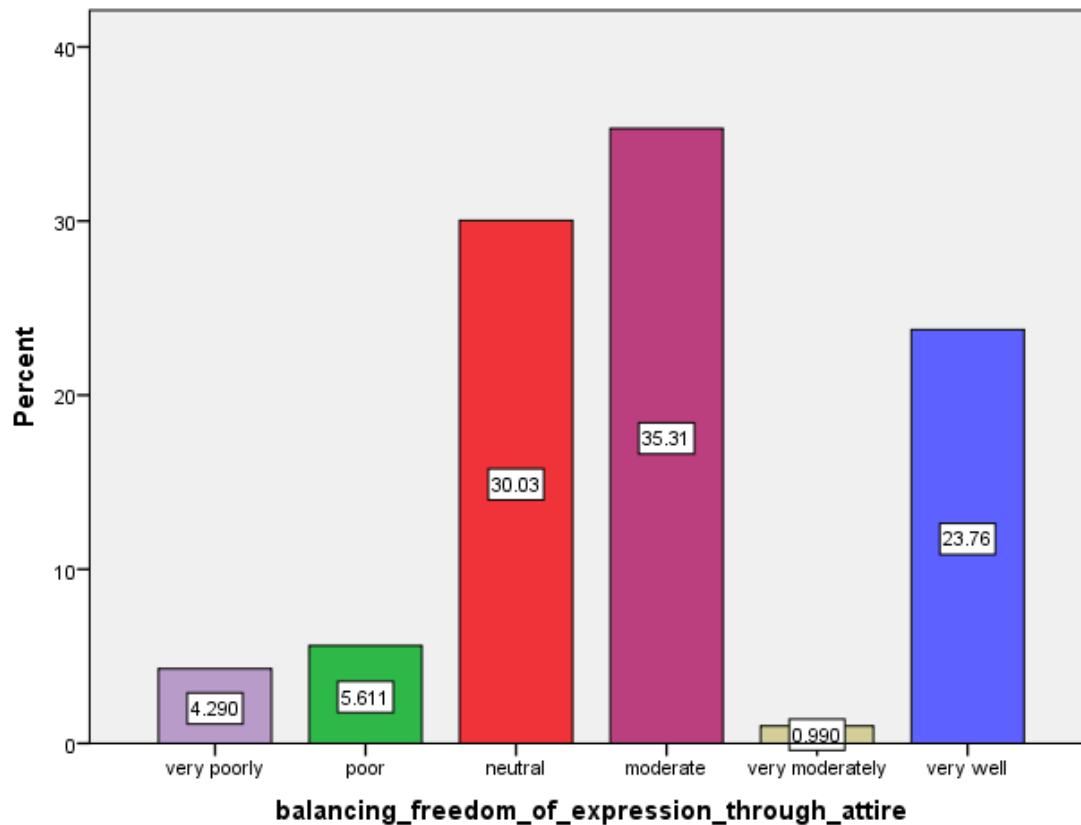
Figure 4: Balancing freedom of expression through attire

The information in Figure 4 displays the freedom of expression of students through attire. The figure shows that the majority of the students express their freedom moderately, and very few express it very moderately.
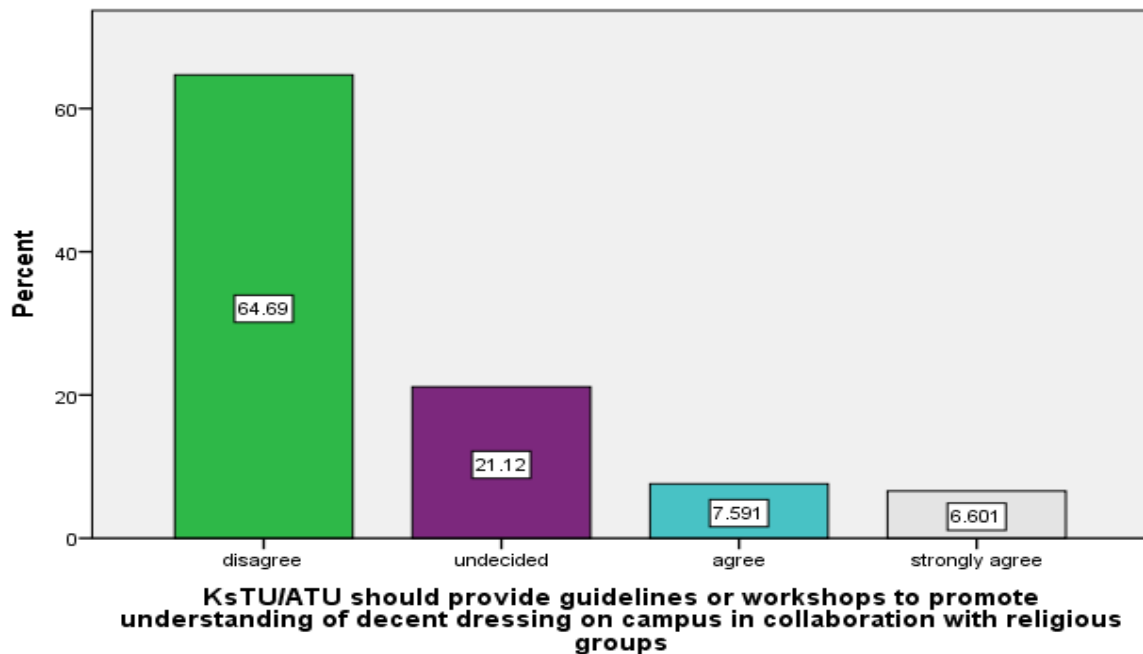
Figure 5: guidelines to promote understanding to promote understanding of decent dressing on campus in collaboration with religious leaders.

Figure 5 shows that there is little or no specific workshop promoting understanding of decent dressing at KsTU/ATU in collaboration with religious groups since the majority disagree with that concern.

Table 8: Extend to which religious background influences peer interaction based on dressing choices

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
christianity	267	2.87	1.072	.066
Islam	34	2.24	1.046	.179
Tradional Religion	2	4.50	.707	.500
Total	303	2.81	1.092	.063

The data presents statistics about Christianity, Islam, and Traditional Religion, alongside a total encompassing all religions. For Christianity, the sample size of 267 yielded a mean of 2.87

with a standard deviation of 1.072 and a standard error of 0.066. Islam, with a smaller sample size of 34, showed a lower mean of 2.24, a standard deviation of 1.046, and a higher standard error of 0.179. Traditional Religion, represented by a mere 2 observations, exhibited a notably higher mean of 4.50 with a standard deviation of 0.707 and a standard error of 0.500. The collective dataset, comprising 303 observations across all religions, displayed a mean of 2.81, a standard deviation of 1.092, and a standard error of 0.063. These statistics suggest varying degrees of central tendency and dispersion among the religious groups, with Traditional Religion demonstrating a particularly elevated mean but limited by its small sample size.

Table 9: ANOVA Analysis of Extended Religion Influence on Interaction-Based Dressing

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	17.989	2	8.995	7.883	.000
Within Groups	342.288	300	1.141		
Total	360.277	302			

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the influence of extended religious beliefs on interaction-based dressing. The study compared the variability between groups representing different religious influences on dressing choices. Results revealed a significant difference between groups (F(2, 300) = 7.883, p < .001), indicating that extended religious beliefs have a substantial impact on interaction-based dressing. The between-groups sum of squares was 17.989, with a mean square of 8.995, while the within-groups sum of squares was 342.288, suggesting that the variance within groups exceeded that between groups. These findings underscore the significance of considering diverse religious perspectives when analyzing dressing preferences in social interactions.

Table 10: Significant Mean Differences in Interaction-Based Dressing Across Religious Groups: LSD Multiple Comparisons

(I) Religion	(J) Religion	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
christianity	Islam	.637*	.195	.001	.25	1.02
	Tradional Religion	-1.627*	.758	.033	-3.12	-.14
Islam	christianity	-.637*	.195	.001	-1.02	-.25
	Tradional Religion	-2.265*	.777	.004	-3.79	-.74
Tradional Religion	christianity	1.627*	.758	.033	.14	3.12
	Islam	2.265*	.777	.004	.74	3.79

An LSD multiple comparison analysis was conducted to explore significant mean differences in interaction-based dressing influenced by various religious affiliations in Table 10. Results indicate significant variations between Christianity and Islam (mean difference = 0.637, p = 0.001, 95% CI [-1.02, -0.25]), as well as between Christianity and Traditional Religion (mean

difference = -1.627, p = 0.033, 95% CI [-3.12, -0.14]). Similarly, significant differences were observed between Islam and Traditional Religion (mean difference = -2.265, p = 0.004, 95% CI [-3.79, -0.74]). These findings underscore the diverse influences of different religious beliefs on interaction-based dressing choices, highlighting the importance of considering religious diversity in understanding sartorial preferences.

Discussion of the Key Findings

The study sample exhibits a notable gender imbalance, with a significantly higher representation of female participants (86.2%) compared to males (13.8%). This aligns with previous research indicating that female students often outnumber male students in higher education institutions, particularly in fields such as fashion and textiles (Baffour-Awuah & Thompson, 2011). The majority of respondents fall within the age range of 20-22 years (36.5%) and 23-25 years (30.9%), indicating a predominantly young adult population. Most participants hold certificate qualifications (57.9%), followed by WASSCE (19.4%), with minimal representation of degree holders (1.3%). The religious affiliation of the respondents is predominantly Christian (87.8%), with a smaller Muslim population (11.5%) and a negligible presence of Traditional Religion followers (0.7%).

Personal style (19.1%) and comfort (16.9%) emerge as the most significant factors guiding attire choices among respondents. This finding is consistent with literature emphasizing the importance of individual expression through clothing, particularly among young adults (Mohsin & Kamal, 2012). Religious beliefs (12.5%) and easy wear (12.7%) also play substantial roles in influencing attire selection. Weather conditions (11.1%), social norms (4.1%), cultural background (5.1%), and budget considerations (5.5%) contribute to attire choices, albeit to a lesser extent. Peer influence (1.3%) appears to have a minimal impact on attire selection among the surveyed population, which contradicts some studies suggesting that peer pressure significantly affects young adults' clothing decisions (Fadokun, 2005).

Personal style and comfort are the predominant factors shaping attire choices across all religious groups (Christianity, Islam, and Traditional Religion). Religious beliefs significantly influence Christian and Muslim respondents, with a notable proportion citing this as a factor, supporting earlier findings that indicate religious affiliation can impact personal style choices in educational environments (Onyesom & Ashibogwu, 2013). Most respondents across religious affiliations acknowledge the rules governing lecture attire and perceive a connection between their religious beliefs and clothing choices on campus. However, opinions diverge regarding the importance of dressing to reflect religious beliefs while studying, with notable disagreement among respondents. This divergence highlights the complexity of individual values versus institutional expectations, a theme echoed in the literature concerning student experiences in diverse educational settings (Igborgbor, 2012).

The most prevalent challenge reported is feeling uncomfortable or discriminated against by other students (22.7% of cases). Interference with social life due to religious dress code is a significant concern (45.0% of cases). Interference with academic activities (18.8% of cases)

and feeling uncomfortable or discriminated against by staff members (10.8% of cases) are also noted as challenges. These findings resonate with previous research that highlights social tensions surrounding religious dress codes in educational settings and their impact on students' overall experiences (Wahba, 2012).

Most respondents across religious groups perceive potential benefits of wearing attire that conforms to one's religious principles, such as receiving respect on campus and shaping dressing habits. No significant differences are observed across religious groups regarding these perceived benefits, indicating a shared understanding of the advantages associated with conforming to cultural norms.

Covering private parts (18.1%), dressing respectfully (15.5%), and dressing in a way that promotes confidence (15.2%) are among the most frequently cited aspects of decent dressing. Factors such as occasion appropriateness (12.9%), comfort and hygiene (10.9%), professionalism (10.1%), age appropriateness (9.2%), and sustainability (8.1%) are also considered important aspects of decent dressing.

The majority of students express their freedom through attire moderately, while a smaller proportion expresses it very moderately. This suggests that while there is an acknowledgement of personal expression through clothing, it is often tempered by social and cultural expectations.

The data suggests a lack of specific workshops or collaborations with religious groups to promote understanding of decent dressing at the university, as most respondents disagree with the existence of such initiatives. This gap indicates an opportunity for universities to foster dialogue around attire choices that respect individual expression while promoting cultural sensitivity.

The ANOVA analysis reveals a significant difference between religious groups in terms of the influence of extended religious beliefs on interaction-based dressing $F(2,300) = 7.883$, $p<.001$. Multiple comparison analysis highlights significant mean differences in interaction-based dressing between Christianity and Islam, Christianity and Traditional Religion, and Islam and Traditional Religion. These findings underscore the diverse influences of different religious beliefs on social interaction preferences regarding attire choices.

Overall, the study highlights the complex interplay of personal, cultural, and religious factors shaping students' attire choices on university campuses. While personal style and comfort are dominant considerations, religious beliefs and societal norms also play a significant role, particularly among specific religious groups. Additionally, the findings reveal challenges faced by students regarding religious attire, perceptions of decent dressing, and the influence of religious beliefs on peer interactions based on dressing choices.

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CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has provided valuable insights into the influence of religion on student dressing in tertiary institutions in Ghana, using Kumasi Technical University (KsTU) and Accra Technical University (ATU) as case studies. The findings highlight the complex interplay between religious beliefs, personal preferences, and societal norms in shaping students' dressing choices on campus.

One of the key findings is the significant role played by religious affiliation in influencing students' attire. The study revealed that students belonging to different religious groups, such as Christianity and Islam, tend to adhere to the dressing norms and modesty guidelines prescribed by their respective faiths. For instance, Muslim students were more likely to wear hijabs or other modest clothing under Islamic teachings, while Christian students often followed biblical principles of modesty in their dressing choices.

However, the study also highlighted the challenges faced by students in navigating the intersection of religious beliefs and dressing norms on campus. Many students reported feeling uncomfortable or discriminated against by their peers or staff members due to their religious attire. Additionally, some students expressed concerns about their religious dress code interfering with their academic activities or social lives, indicating potential conflicts between religious expression and participation in campus life.

Furthermore, the study revealed diverse perceptions of decent dressing among students. While covering private parts, dressing respectfully, and promoting confidence were commonly cited as important aspects of decent dressing, other factors such as occasion appropriateness, comfort, professionalism, age appropriateness, and sustainability were also considered relevant. These varying perspectives underscore the need for open dialogue and mutual understanding within the campus community.

The findings of this study have significant implications for tertiary institutions in Ghana. It underscores the importance of fostering an inclusive and respectful environment that accommodates diverse religious and cultural practices related to dressing. Institutions may need to review their existing policies and guidelines to balance respecting individual beliefs and maintaining a conducive learning environment.

Moreover, the study highlights the need for increased awareness and education regarding the impact of religion on dressing choices. Sensitisation campaigns and open discussions involving students, faculty, administrators, and religious leaders could promote understanding and reduce instances of discrimination or discomfort related to religious attire on campus.

Ultimately, this research emphasises the need for tertiary institutions to proactively address the complex issue of student dressing, considering the diverse religious and cultural backgrounds of their student population. By fostering an environment of mutual respect, understanding, and inclusivity, institutions can create a conducive learning atmosphere while upholding their

students' fundamental rights and beliefs.

Recommendations

According to the study, thorough rules or standards about appropriate attire must be developed after consulting with representatives from various stakeholder groups, such as student organisations and religious leaders. These rules should strike a balance between respect for individual expression and religious views to foster a supportive learning environment. Organising educational initiatives and awareness campaigns to advance tolerance and respect for various ethnic and religious clothing customs can also be helpful. It's also critical to set up channels for handling grievances and issues pertaining to indecent attire, such as student advisory committees or counselling services.

Campus climate can be made inclusive and courteous by promoting communication and cooperation amongst student organisations, religious institutions, and university management. Additionally, carrying out additional research to investigate the influence of religion on clothing preferences in alternative educational environments or to assess the efficacy of putting regulations or laws into place might yield important information for subsequent advancements.

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