

## MODEST, MODESTY IN STYLE

**Retno Andri Pramudyarini**

*Faculty of Arts and Design, Jakarta Institute of the Arts*

e-mail:retnoandri@ikj.ac.id;sonnymuchlison@ikj.ac.id;noviyuniarti@ikj.ac.id; angcheche@ikj.ac.id

### **Abstract**

*Modest fashion is a simple dress style that emphasises modesty and covers almost the entire body. In terms of fashion, the modest fashion currently developing in Indonesia is considered the same as Muslim women's clothing. By using qualitative research methods that emphasise the observation of phenomena. The results of the study show that modest fashion has a different concept from Muslim women's clothing. This can be seen apart from not showing body curves, using the hijab, as a head covering is not an obligation in a modest fashion. Modest fashion is not a monotonous dress but a dress that emphasises creativity based on the culture and characteristics of the wearer. That can be seen from the combination of "mix and match" clothing in European culture and the Middle Eastern ready-couture modest wear style with abaya clothes decorated with lots of decorations and details. The development of modest fashion in Indonesia is more about experimenting with hitting motifs and colours and using abstract motifs, especially on scarves and hijabs.*

**Keywords:** Modesty, Simple, Creativity.

## Introduction

Clothing is the material (cloth) worn by humans to cover and protect all or parts of their body from any weather. Clothing is also defined as anything that can cover the body. Besides being understood as a tool to protect the body, clothing is also interpreted as a tool to beautify one's appearance. But apart from these two functions, clothing is also an integral part of personality, culture, and society. Clothing can act as a visual communication tool, because clothing represents symbols with certain meanings, as seen in *Muslimah* clothing.

Islam is a religion that highly respects and upholds women. One form of Islam's respect and praise for women is by regulating the command to cover the aurat for women whose restrictions are different from men. If a Muslim man only covers his knees and navel (belly), then Islam requires a Muslim woman who has reached puberty to cover her entire body except for the face and palms. According to Arifuddin (2019) the clothes worn by Muslim women have shar'i provisions, including: 1) Islamic clothing must cover all parts of the body except the face and palms, 2) Islamic clothing must cover the limbs and not be made of thin cloth, 3) Islamic clothing should not be too tight and show the shape of the body (Rahmanidinie & Faujiah, 2022). Nestorovic mentions that the Islamic dress code generally covers the head and body (Nestorović, 2016). Therefore, *Muslimah* clothing must be loose enough not to accentuate the body shape, and the material must be thick enough to hide the body shape and skin colour.

In its progress, many Muslim women use and follow the development of Muslimah fashion trends as a daily fashion style (Rania & Widarwati, 2018). They use it not only in places related to religious events, but also in public spaces such as schools, campuses, offices, and shopping centres. Muslimah fashion wearers are not synonymous with women with rigid styles and monotonous clothing, but women with fashionable and contemporary clothing. Her presence is expressed in various styles, as can be seen in various designs of dresses, blouses, culottes, and skirts. Muslimah fashion models that are increasingly varied and fashionable, according to Melda Hidayant, are proof that the development of Muslimah fashion styles is increasingly diverse (Herawati, 2021).

Currently, there is a growing trend for young Muslim women to wear modern and neat clothes, but still follow the mandate to cover the obligatory body parts (Hassan et al., 2018), namely modest fashion style. Many people think that modest fashion is Muslim clothing. This is due to the fact that modest fashion is a closed fashion style with a loose silhouette that does not show the curves of the body, and very little exposes the skin of the wearer. In fact, the real concept of modest fashion is a simple style of dress that emphasises the element of modesty where clothes are deliberately made to cover most of the body. The

development of modest fashion is very well accepted by Indonesian society, because in addition to being in accordance with religion, the concept of fashion that does not show curves, neat, polite, is also in accordance with ethical and cultural values in Indonesia. So that it can be accepted both for Muslims and for those of other religions



Figure 1. Muslimah Fashion (Left), Modest Fashion (Right)

Muslim fashion designers such as Dian Pelangi and Ria Miranda pioneer modest fashion in Indonesia. There was also Itang Yunasz who incorporated traditional elements, such as Sumba woven fabric, in his bohemian style designs. In the past decade, modest fashion in Indonesia has gained strength as fashion shows have become more popular. According to a Ministry of Trade's report, with the development of creative knowledge and the role of social media, Indonesia has the potential to become a new international modest fashion mecca. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy's statement to target Indonesia to become a modest fashion mecca by 2025 support this.

Along with the hope of Indonesia becoming a new international modest fashion mecca, modest fashion designers realise that modest clothing is authentic with simplicity and modesty so that many parties can use it. So that the addition between modest clothing with hats, bandanas, and hair ornaments can be used in addition to the use of hijab (Sugiarta, 2022). Likewise, for clothing in tropical weather climates, of course, it must be able to make the wearer comfortable with fabrics that can absorb sweat and are light in colour. For fabrics that can absorb sweat, fabrics such as cotton and linen are highly recommended, because in addition to absorbing sweat, these clothing materials have fibres that allow air to circulate well on the skin so as to minimise heat. Meanwhile, colours such as light blue, pink or pale yellow can help block heat from entering the body (Haryanti, 2019).

Based on research conducted by Husna Saaidin et al. (Saaidin et al., 2022), Indonesian modest fashion designers have more variations and options in design. In addition, Indonesian modest fashion uses more bold colour combinations and more details, so it can be said that Indonesian modest fashion does not look monotonous and far from being rigid. Of course, Indonesian modest fashion is closely related to Muslimah clothing (Tashandra, 2018),



Figure 2. Middle Eastern Modest Style (Left), European Modest Style (Right)

While modest fashion in the United Arab Emirates has a ready-couture modest wear style that is poured into clothes such as long dresses to abayas that are decorated with many embellishments and details. Modest fashion in America and Europe has a different style of appearance, where modest wear is more about simple clothing that is the result of 'mix and match' clothes according to each person's personality.

Seeing modest fashion in each country is different, of course it adds inspiration and increases the creativity of the designers. Moreover, modest fashion is not just Muslim clothing, but many people can use simple and decent clothing as well. This research is conducted to see how varied modest fashion is, which not only dares to use colour combinations, layering styles with 'mix and match'.

### Research Method

This research is qualitative research. Qualitative research emphasises more on observing phenomena and examining the substance of the meaning of these phenomena. The analysis and sharpness of qualitative research is greatly affected by the strength of the words and sentences used. Therefore, Basri (2014) concluded that the focus of qualitative research is on the process and the meaning of the results (Wijaya et al., 2019). According to Mohamed et al. (2010), qualitative research attention is more focused on human elements, objects, and institutions, as well as the relationship or interaction between these elements,

in an effort to understand an event, behaviour, or phenomenon (Yunda & Jusnita, 2020).

## Discussion

### Modest Fashion

Modest fashion or modest wear is a style or concept of dressing modestly and covering the body like Muslimah clothing. Although modest fashion has similarities with Muslim clothing, head coverings are not a mandatory element to mix and match clothing in modest fashion. In modest fashion head coverings, in addition to the hijab, can also use hats.



Figure 3. Modest Fashion With Hijab (Left), Modest Fashion With Hat (Right)

Modest fashion not only covers the body, but also disguises the body shape of the wearer. Disguising the body shape in modest fashion is not the same as Muslim clothing. In modest fashion, disguising the body shape can be done with layering style. This style is very successful in disguising the curves of the body because of its layering features.



Figure 4. Smart and Casual Style

### Variations of Modest Fashion

As we know, the concept of modest fashion is modest and modest covered clothing that can be worn by many parties. The use of this fashion has also developed with various styles, some use mix and match styles, some combine mix and match with layering styles. This combination must be done appropriately according to its character. Such as the use of a long dress suit with an outer such as a blazer or bolero, or a shirt top with culotte pants.



Figure 5. Modest fashion with a combination of blazers and a combination of shirts with culottes pants

The development of modest fashion in Indonesia is now more daring to experiment with layering of patterns and colours. Colour trends tend towards bold or dark colours such as maroon, burgundy, purple, green, and yellow. As for motifs, they tend to be abstract, especially on scarves and hijabs. The materials used are more flowy, because besides being comfortable and light, they also give a more flexible impression.



Figure 6. Examples of Indonesian Modest Fashion Styles





Figure 7. Examples of Indonesian Modest Fashion Styles

Besides featuring layering and mix and match variations, Indonesian modest fashion also gives a regional nuance as the resort looks fashion design themed Mesastila. Mesastila itself is one of the resorts in Magelang, East Java, which is surrounded by 7 mountains with charming panoramas.



Figure 8. Modest Resort Look Fashion with Mesastila Theme

In addition, there are several styles of modest fashion creations from several brands that can inspire creativity in designing modest clothing:

- 1) The creations from the Louis Vuitton brand, crafted with voluminous silk pleats and structured fabrics cut into bomber jackets, maxi dresses and tailored suits, showed the whole look covered to be more beautiful (Phelps, 2017).



Figure 9. Modest Fashion by Louis Vuitton

- 2) The creations from brand Valentino, drawing inspiration from ethnic influences, hip-hop and the urban streets of New York City, also infused Arabian-like silhouettes into the collection of colourful maxi dresses, printed details and monochrome kaftans.



Figure 10. Modest Fashion by Valentino

- 3) Creations from the Prada brand, featuring the Cruise '18 collection of modern sportswear elegantly combined into modest pieces, consisting of cool abstract pieces combined with pastel fabrics, sequin details and metal pieces (Lee, 2017).





Figure 11. Modest Fashion by Prada

In recent years, luxury brands have been designing longer garments and looser clothes. Big brands, such as FarFetch and Yoox Net-a-Porter, have also shifted to cater to the tastes and preferences of women in the Middle East. FarFetch recently struck a deal with The Modest with the tagline 'Modest Fashion, Modern Thinking'.



Figure 12. Modest Fashion with Tagline 'Modest Fashion, Modern Thinking'

Choosing the right modest fashion depends on what clothes you have and in what setting. As with the selection of modest dresses, you can combine them in an interesting and fascinating style with maxi and midi skirts. Skirts are always visually pleasing and charming, thanks to their relaxed appearance being the ideal type of clothing for women who want to dress modestly. The shirt is a simple garment that can provide a spacious cover and a conservative appearance. There are many inventive ideas to style it in a fashionable way, with trousers for a simple full look. Colour is one element that can be played with in a variety of simple outfits. Wearing different shades of the same hue in the same ensemble is a good idea, for example a forest green abaya paired with a trendy lime green blouse or an olive long sleeve top and trousers.



Figure 13. Modest Fashion Mixes Dress with Maxi Skirt

The many variations of modest fashion show that modest fashion is not rigid and monotonous. Modest fashion is a fashion style that emphasises the characteristics of the wearer, not tied to one religion or culture. Modest fashion reflects the freedom to dress simply, modestly and neatly. With creativity, users can customise it according to their character.

### **Conclusion**

Modest fashion is clothing that has the concept of covering most of the body. Modest fashion is a simple fashion concept, which in its modesty has the freedom to be creative. All parties can use modest fashion. The use of hijab as a head covering is not an obligation in modest fashion. The wearer can combine several different kinds of head coverings such as hats or bandanas.

## References

- Haryanti, R. (2019). *Cuaca Panas, Begini Cara Memilih Pakaian yang Sesuai*. Kompas.Com. <https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2019/09/29/090000965/cuaca-panas-begini-cara-memilih-pakaian-yang-sesuai>.
- Hassan, F. H., Kasi, P. M., Shahrudin, N. A., & Kechil, M. F. A. (2018). Islamic And Modest Fashion Lifestyle. *Journal of Islamic Management Studies*, 2(1), 79–88. <http://publications.waim.my/index.php/jims/article/view/123>.
- Herawati, T. (2021). *Perkembangan Fesyen Muslimah di Indonesia hingga Dinobatkan Kiblat Fesyen Muslim Tahun 2020*. Kompasiana.Com. <https://www.kompasiana.com/tatiherawati/6120938d31a2876521350123/perkembangan-fesyen-muslimah-di-indonesia-sampai-indonesia-pernah-dinobatkan-sebagai-kiblat-fesyen-muslim-di-tahun-2020>.
- Lee, C. (2017). *Prada: Art Fusion*. Curatedition.Com. <https://curatedition.com/accessories/prada-art-fusion/>
- Nestorović, Č. (2016). *Islamic Marketing: Understanding the Socio-Economic, Cultural, and Politico-Legal Environment* (1st ed.). Springer Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32754-9>.
- Phelps, N. (2017). *Louis Vuitton, Resort 2018*. Wwv.Vogue.Com. <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/resort-2018/louis-vuitton>
- Rahmanidinie, A., & Faujiah, A. I. (2022). Adaptasi Busana Muslimah Era Millennial: Antara Trend dan Syariat. *Islamika: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 22(1), 82–95. <https://doi.org/10.32939/islamika.v22i01.1116>
- Rania, L., & Widarwati, S. (2018). Pengaruh Trend Busana Muslimah Terhadap Gaya Busana Kuliah Muslimah Mahasiswa Jurusan Manajemen Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. *Jurnal Fesyen: Pendidikan Dan Teknologi*, 7(7). <https://doi.org/10.21831/teknik%20busana.v7i7.14579>
- Saaidin, H., Saidan, S., Kamarulbaharin, W. N. I. W., & Bakar, S. A. (2022). The Perception of Malaysian Youth Towards Indonesian Modest Fashion. *Ideology Journal*, 7(1), 8–14. <https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/58557>
- Sugiarta, I. M. (2022). *Dianggap Sama, ini Bedanya Modest Fashion dan Busana Muslimah*. Balitopnews.Com. <https://balitopnews.com/read/202204020002/dianggap-sama-ini-bedanya-modest-fashion-dan-busana-muslimah.html>
- Tashandra, N. (2018). *Perbedaan Modest Fashion Indonesia dan Negara Lain*. Kompas.Com. <https://lifestyle.kompas.com/read/2018/03/21/065746520/perbedaanmodest-fashion-indonesia-dan-negara-lain?page=all>.