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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
اَ	a		اَ، اِيَّ	an
اُ	u		اُو	un
اِ	i		اِي	in
اَ، اِ، اِيَّ	ā		اَو	aw
اُو	ū		اَي	ay
اِي	ī		اُو	uww, ū (in final position)
			اَي	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: <http://rotas.iium.edu.my>

Challenges of ‘*Awrah* Coverage for Muslim Women Athletes in Malaysia: A Qualitative Review

Ahmad Akram Mahmad Robbi*
Saidatolakma Mohd Yunus**

Abstract: *Sharī‘ah* law provides a specific ruling that requires every Muslim to cover his/her ‘*awrah*. The prohibition of disclosing ‘*awrah* is derived from the Qur’an and practices of Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Nevertheless, covering ‘*awrah* is difficult for women, especially when it comes to involvement in sports activities or competitions. Based on a qualitative research method that uses observation and document analysis, this study explores the challenges related to ‘*awrah* faced by Muslim female athletes in Malaysia. There are several issues regarding the ‘*awrah* of Muslim female athletes, which include the non-*Sharī‘ah* compliant attire that Muslim female athletes are made to wear for certain competitions. Other issues are the mingling in coaching sessions between different genders, and the suitability for Muslim women to participate in competitions as well as the lack of enforcement of *Sharī‘ah*-compliant dress code.

Keywords: *Sharī‘ah*, athlete, Muslim, sports, ‘*awrah*.

Abstrak: Syariah telah memberikan ketetapan khusus berkenaan cara berpakaian yang mewajibkan setiap Muslim untuk menutup aurat. Larangan mendedahkan aurat boleh didapati dalam al-Qur’an dan amalan Nabi

* Assistant Professor, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia. Email: akramrobbi@iium.edu.my. *Corresponding author.*

** Assistant Professor, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia. Email: akmayunus@iium.edu.my

Muhammad dan para sahabatnya. Namun begitu, menutup aurat bukanlah sesuatu yang mudah bagi setiap Muslim, khususnya wanita, apabila melibatkan aktiviti bersukan atau pertandingan. Berdasarkan kaedah kualitatif yang menggunakan kaedah pemerhatian dan analisis dokumen, kajian ini berpandangan bahawa terdapat cabaran dalam kalangan atlet wanita Islam di Malaysia yang berkaitan dengan aurat. Sehubungan dengan itu, terdapat beberapa isu mengenai aurat atlet wanita Islam, termasuk pakaian tidak patuh Syariah yang perlu dipakai oleh atlet wanita Islam untuk pertandingan tertentu. Selain itu, terdapat isu berkenaan sesi latihan bersama jurulatih antara jantina yang berbeza, dan kesesuaian untuk wanita Islam menyertai pertandingan serta kekurangan penguatkuasaan etika berpakaian Syariah.

Kata kunci: Syariah, atlet, Muslim, sukan, aurat.

Introduction

Covering *'awrah* is a *Sharī'ah* directive that is commanded in both the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. It is a part of *'ibadah* for every Muslim. Therefore, it becomes a responsibility for every Muslim to ensure that certain parts of their body are covered according to the *Sharī'ah*. However, the observance of *'awrah* can be difficult, especially for women. This is because some of them face several challenges when it comes to career selection that requires a dress code that does not comply with the *Sharī'ah*. The *'awrah* issue is also critically embraced by some Muslim women who are involved in the sports industry. This is due to some regulations established by sports' authorities that do not consider their status of being Muslim, especially in the code of attire. Consequently, there is only a limited number of Muslim female athletes joining competitions at domestic and international levels.

Generally, Islam does not prohibit women from joining any sport competitions as long as their participation is aligned with *Sharī'ah* principles. One of the principles is to ensure the compliance with *'awrah* rules. However, some of the sports competed by athletes seem to be not appropriate, such as swimming and gymnastics, since the sports attire clearly contravenes *Sharī'ah*. In response, Islamic authority agencies have set several guidelines for those who are involved in sports industry. By having an in-depth analysis on the guidelines, this study analyses them and proposes some minor additional suggestions to close the gap in the guidelines.

Women in Malaysia face no significant barriers when it comes to participating in sports, including high-level competitions such as the Olympics. The country generally supports and encourages women's involvement in the sports industry. Fitri et al. (2017) stated that badminton is the most popular sport that has the most participation of Muslim women, followed by swimming, athletic, netball, tennis, volleyball, cycling, futsal, and table tennis.

Qureshi & Ghouri (2011) found that Muslim female athletes have experienced certain challenges when they participate in sports tournament. According to their survey, very few girls can take their enthusiasm for sports to the top level due to legal prohibitions, social stigmas, and limited opportunities available. Because of this challenge, they agreed that Muslim female athletes should have separate prayer room and washroom. Another obstacle for Muslim female athletes is the absence of female coaches and organisers in the Muslim nations. In the absence of female officials, parents are usually reluctant to allow their girls to participate in sports competition in a male-dominated environment. Other than that, transport facility could also be a challenge. According to the authors, most of the girls may not have access to transport and they are reluctant to use public transportation to go to training sessions in the evening as their parents have reservations over them taking this mode of transportation. The study also regarded 'awrah as a barrier for Muslim female athletes.

Some people argue that the practice of covering 'awrah or wearing *hijāb* constrains women's opportunities for self-fulfilment. Western feminists view *hijāb* as the ultimate symbol of female oppression (Harkness & Islam, 2011). Nevertheless, despite criticisms, it does not stop the growth in participation of Muslim women in the sports industry, which subsequently results in an increased demand for the production of *Sharī'ah*-compliant attire. This can be seen in the Muslim women's involvement in sports at high-level competitions in Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, as well as Indonesia and Malaysia.

In Malaysia, religious authorities are standardising and publishing guidelines to govern the conduct of Muslim athletes' attire. These guidelines encompass various aspects of sports and competitions. For example, "*Garis Panduan Bersukan Menurut Perspektif Islam,*" compiled by Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM)

covers several areas of sports and competitions with a particular focus on addressing the *'awrah* limitations for Muslim female athletes, as well as the consideration of coaching staff, training, and the sports themselves. Apart from JAKIM, other states such as Selangor, Terengganu, Kelantan, and Pahang also introduced their own sports and competition guidelines.

Although the guidelines have been published and are publicly accessible, the enforcement is disappointing. There are Muslim female athletes who choose not to cover their *'awrah* in sport competitions. Unlike Terengganu that enforced its *Sharī'ah*-based dress code, the Federal government leaves sport regulations to the respective sport bodies. Astro Awani (2019) reports that following Terengganu's decision to enforce the *Sharī'ah* dress code, the Ministry of Youth and Sports threw its support to Muslim gymnasts from Terengganu who could not participate in national competition. The federal government allows female athletes to make their own choice whether to participate or withdraw from the game, while the Terengganu authority decided to withdraw Muslim female athletes from competing in gymnastics competition.

The Terminology of *'Awrah*

The word *'awrah* is from Arabic. It can literally be understood as shame, disgrace, ignominy, degradation, weakness, and vice (Arabic Lexicon). In another word, it is also described as misbehaviour (Al-Mausu'ah al-Fiqhiah, 1990). The basis of prescription of the *'awrah* is described in the Holy Qur'an. In Surah al-Aḥzāb, the word *'awrah* was mentioned by referring to the case of the Companions whose houses were unprotected even though they were unexposed. The story was described in the Holy Qur'an: "And when a faction of them said, "O people of Yathrib, there is no stability for you [here], so return [home]." And a party of them asked permission of the Prophet, saying, "Indeed, our houses are unprotected," while they were not exposed. They did not intend except to flee" (Al-Aḥzāb, 33: 13).

Surah al-Nūr addresses the "*'awrah* times" that people usually use to rest, and mentions that the most private times are before *fajr*, at noon and after *'isha*. The Holy Qur'an mentions: "O you who have believed, let those whom your right hands possess and those who have not [yet] reached puberty among you ask permission of you [before entering]

at three times: before the dawn prayer and when you put aside your clothing [for rest] at noon and after the night prayer. [These are] three times of privacy for you.” (Al-Nūr, 24: 58)

In Islamic law, the word 'awrah is technically defined as body parts that cannot be exposed to people (al-Qurtubi, 2014, 190 & Shams al-Din al-Ramli, 1984, 7). Muslim jurists agreed on the prohibition of exposing 'awrah based on factors of age, gender, and status (Al-Mausu'ah al-Fiqhiah, 1990, 43) Hence, Muslims are not allowed to expose any part of their body regardless of men or women, except what is permissible, according to *Shari'ah*.

Shari'ah Standards for 'Awrah of Muslim Women

The Muslim Women's 'Awrah Limitation

There is a consensus among Muslim scholars regarding the obligation of covering 'awrah for every Muslim women who fulfilled all requirements set by *Shari'ah*. However, they differ in specifying the parts that *Shari'ah* does not consider as 'awrah.

The basis of disputes among scholars lies in interpreting several textual revelations from the Holy Qur'an. For instance, in Surah al-Nur, verse 31: "...and to not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears," Ḥanafī scholars interpret the "necessarily" parts as including the face, hands, and feet (al-Jassas, 2010). They base this on the requirements during prayer, where the face, hands, and feet must be visible. However, some argue that the feet should be considered 'awrah (al-Jassas, 2010).

The Mālikī school agrees that the 'awrah for Muslim women includes all body parts except for their hands and faces. This interpretation is supported by a saying of Prophet Muhammad: "If a woman has reached puberty, it is prohibited for her to expose her private parts except for her face and hands" (Al-Tabari, 2012). Additionally, Prophet Muhammad permitted a man intending to marry a woman to see her face and palm (Abu Daud, 12: 2082; Al-Mawardi, 1999). This view is also backed by Ibn 'Abbās's commentary on the verse, suggesting that exposing the face and hands is permissible for Muslim women (Zarzur, n.d), as they do not cover these parts during prayers and iḥrām (Zarzur, n.d).

Within the Mālikī school, there is a specific interpretation regarding which part of the hands women can expose. Al-Kharashī (n.d) states that the hand's *'awrah* includes the wrist, meaning only the palm can be exposed. However, some Mālikī scholars disagree, arguing that the elbow is not part of the *'awrah* (Ishāq, 2005). This interpretation is also supported by the Prophet Muhammad's saying and Ibn 'Abbās's commentary (Al-Tabari, 2012; Zarzur, n.d).

Shāfi'ī scholars assert that Muslim women have two distinct categories of *'awrah* coverage. The first, known as *al-'awrah al-kubrā*, pertains to intimate parts that must be covered during prayers and interactions with unrelated men or hermaphrodites. The second category, *al-'awrah al-ṣuḡhrā*, includes the area between the navel and the knees, applicable when women interact with other Muslim women or relatives (al-Mawardi, 1999).

The Ḥanbalī school has varying views on *'awrah* coverage for Muslim women. Some Ḥanbalī scholars consider the entire body as *'awrah* except for the face (Ibn Qudamah, 2010). However, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal leans towards excluding the face from *'awrah* coverage (Al-Zarkashi, 1993). Abū al-Barakat, another Ḥanbalī scholar, includes the face and hands in the exclusion, based on 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas's interpretation of Surah al-Nur: 31, which he believes to mean the face and hands are not *'awrah* (Al-Zarkashi, 1993).

The Muslim Women's *'Aurah* in Public

The 'awrah of Muslim woman in front of other women

The term "*nisā' ihinna*" or "their sisters" in Surah al-Nūr: 31 prescribes the boundaries of a woman's *'awrah* when she is among other Muslim women. Ibn Kathīr emphasised that women should still cover their *'awrah* in the presence of their Muslim relatives (Ibn Kathir, 1999). A ḥadīth from the Prophet prohibits Muslims from viewing the *'awrah* of others, stating: "a man should not see the *'awrah* of another man, and a woman should not see the *'awrah* of another woman" (Muslim, 3: 338). In line with this, most scholars from the Hanafī (Ibn 'Abidin, n.d.), Mālikī (al-Ru'yani, 1992), Shāfi'ī (Al-Mawardi, 1990), and Ḥanbalī (Ibn Qudamah, 2010) schools of thought concur that the *'awrah* of a Muslim woman in front of her Muslim female relatives extends from the navel to the knees.

The 'awrah of Muslim woman in front of non-Muslim women

Muslim scholars exhibit divergent views regarding the extent of 'awrah coverage for Muslim women in the presence of non-Muslim women. Some scholars contend that a Muslim woman should conceal her entire body, except what is necessary for daily activities and household chores, when interacting with non-Muslim women (*al-ashghal al-manziliyah*) (Ibn 'Abidin, n.d.; al-Zuḥayli, n.d.). This concept, referred to as *al-'awrah al-sughrā*, allows the exposure of hair, feet, and hands in such contexts.

Moreover, al-Fatāwa al-Hindiah (n.d.) asserts that there is no distinction in defining 'awrah in front of non-believers, which includes polytheists and People of the Book (*ahlu al-kitāb*). They interpret the term "*nisā'ihinna*" or "their sisters" in the Quranic verse as pertaining specifically to individuals of the same faith. Consequently, they argue that religious differences serve as a barrier for Muslim women to expose their 'awrah to non-Muslim women. Supporting this view, it is recorded that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb instructed Abū 'Ubaydah to prevent Muslim and non-Muslim women from using the lavatory together to ensure that Muslim women cover their 'awrah (Al-Tabari, 2012).

Conversely, scholars from the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shafī'ī, and Ḥanbalī schools of thought maintain that the 'awrah of Muslim women in front of non-Muslim women is limited to the area between the navel and the knees (Al-Sarakhsī, 1993; Ibn al-'Arabī, 2003; Al-Mawardī, 1993; Ibn Qudāmah, 2010). They base this perspective on a general interpretation of the same Quranic verse (24:31), arguing that there is no specific evidence to restrict the verse's meaning. Thus, they assert that the regulation applies equally to all women, regardless of their faith. Al-Sarakhsī (1993) likened a woman observing another woman to a man observing another man in terms of legal provision. Furthermore, they interpret 'Umar's statement as reflecting the separation of authority (*wilāyah*) between believers and non-believers, as clarified by Ibn 'Abbās (Ibn Kathir, 1999). Al-Māwardī (1993) also emphasised that interaction with non-Muslim women necessitates covering only the area between the navel and the knees, known as *al-'awrah al-ṣughrā*.

In contemporary times, where interactions between Muslim and non-Muslim women are often unavoidable, 'Abd al-Karīm Zaydān (2014) suggested that Muslim women might consider revealing certain

parts of their bodies, provided it does not lead to harm or defamation. Similarly, Ibn Bāz argued that Muslim women need only to cover between the navel and the knees when interacting with non-Muslim women. He also pointed out that the predominant opinion disallows uncovering the body except for the face and hands (<https://binbaz.org.sa/fatwas/956/>). Uthmān al-Khamīs (n.d.) clarified that Muslim exegetes interpreted Quranic verse 21:32 as inclusive of all women, including non-Muslims. Consequently, Al-Alūsī (1995) regarded this guidance as recommendatory rather than obligatory, allowing Muslim women the option to either reveal or cover specific body parts. The Office of the Federal Territory Mufti also highlighted the necessity of considering contemporary circumstances, as interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims today differ from those in the past.

Sports from the Islamic Perspective

In Islam, there are no inherent restrictions on Muslims engaging in physical activities. Any pursuit that promotes physical well-being is actively encouraged within Islamic teachings. The maintenance of health and adoption of healthy practices are deemed essential, requiring adherence to proper conduct and beneficial habits (Marwat et al., 2014). Attaining a healthy body is regarded as fulfilling a duty in Islam, reflecting how Muslims should care for their bodies and honour their physical well-being, as exemplified by the ḥadīth where Prophet Muhammad endorsed Salmān al-Fārisī's advice on this matter (Al-Bukhari, 3:75).

Beyond the belief in monotheism, the pillars of Islamic faith encompass rituals that express and reaffirm devotion to God, while the *Sharī'ah* also emphasises social responsibilities alongside spiritual obligations (Haifa Jawad et al., 2012; Alberto Testa, 2015). Prophet Muhammad did not oppose his companions seeking leisure activities, affirming the balance between worldly engagements and religious duties, as conveyed through the incidents involving Hanzalah and Abū Bakr (Muslim, 50: 2750).

While the primary acts of worship in Islam such as prayer, *zakāt*, fasting, and hajj are traditionally seen as avenues for earning spiritual rewards, the concept of *'ibādah* (worship) extends to broader realms, including sports. When sports activities are conducted in accordance with Islamic principles, serving a righteous purpose, adhering to

regulations, promoting well-being, sustaining familial obligations, and maintaining modesty, they are considered acts of worship and merit spiritual rewards (Abd Rahim et al., 2019).

During the time of Prophet Muhammad, companions actively participated in sports under his encouragement and guidance. Archery, for instance, was notably promoted as a means of self-defence and skill development (Oktay Kizar, 2018). The Prophet's own engagement in physical activities, observed by his companions, highlighted his physical prowess and active lifestyle, affirming the importance of maintaining physical health and agility (Al-Tirmidhi, 49: 3648). Additionally, equestrian sports were endorsed by Prophet Muhammad as beneficial endeavours, particularly in contexts related to jihad (Oktay Kizar, 2018). This encouragement aimed not only to strengthen physical capabilities but also to instil discipline and strategic skills among his followers (Al-Bukhari, 56: 2852).

In sum, Islam promotes a holistic approach to human well-being, integrating physical activities like sports into the concept of '*ibādah*', thereby ensuring a balanced life that addresses both material and spiritual needs. This comprehensive perspective underscores Islam's commitment to enhancing human welfare through diverse avenues of engagement and worship (Abd Rahim et al., 2019).

The Participation of Women in the Sports Industry

Previous scholarly works by Western researchers often depicted Muslim women as submissive, passive, and oppressed, while characterising Muslim societies as obstructive to development and oppressive towards women (Radzi & Abdullah, 2010). However, contemporary discourse in Malaysia highlights a growing emphasis on women's participation in sports as a means to foster empowerment. Astro Awani (2019) notes the current initiative to narrow the gender gap in sports participation, which has seen a decline among women. Radzi and Abdullah (2010) emphasise that women's sports issues have gained prominence on the global agenda for women's emancipation and empowerment.

Engagement in sports motivates women to showcase their abilities and talents competitively, as argued by Ani Mazlina Dewi Mohamed et al. (2009). Prominent Malaysian female athletes such as Farah Ann Abdullah, Nur Dhabitah, and others in gymnastics, diving, shooting,

netball, and bowling have elevated Malaysia's profile internationally (Zamri & Salleh, 2019).

In Malaysia, sports have garnered interest and active participation from Muslim women, with badminton being particularly popular due to its cultural significance in both Malaysia and Indonesia (Fitri et al., 2017). The Malaysian government supports women's sports development by providing facilities and funding, aiming to diversify success in sports traditionally dominated by men like football and rugby (Berita Harian, 2019).

Despite progress in education, Malaysia still faces gender disparities, as evidenced by its rank in the Global Gender Gap Index (Khoo & Zainal Abidin, 2021). The Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia acknowledges the role of sports in promoting women's health and well-being, combating non-communicable diseases like high blood pressure and obesity (Ministry of Youth and Sports).

From an Islamic perspective, Islam recognises the importance of physical health and movement, supporting sports as beneficial both physically and spiritually (Radzi & Abdullah, 2010; Kamali, 2017). While Islamic principles do not explicitly address sports, they generally permit physical activities as long as they maintain dignity and uphold Islamic values (Fitri et al., 2017). Thus, sports serve as a means for Muslim women to engage in healthy recreational activities while adhering to Islamic guidelines.

The Main Challenges for Muslim Female Athletes

Despite the legal acceptance of women participating in sports and pursuing careers as professional athletes, they encounter significant challenges, particularly concerning the concept of *'awrah*. Certain sports necessitate specific attire tailored to their requirements, reflecting the diverse nature of athletic disciplines. Proper sports attire is essential not only for enhancing performance and preventing injuries but also for ensuring comfort, as noted in a report by Harian Metro (2016).

Modern advancements in sports science have led to the development of specialised attire, such as compression garments, designed to reduce injury risk and support muscle function during training and competition. However, these advancements can present obstacles for Muslim women

due to their modesty requirements. Issues arise when standard sports attire does not align with Islamic principles, affecting participation in sports like rhythmic gymnastics and women's gymnastics, as reported by Free Malaysia Today (2019).

Another challenge faced by Muslim female athletes is the underrepresentation of female trainers in coaching staff, as discussed by Qureshi & Ghouri (2011). The presence of male coaches can pose difficulties as it requires adherence to *'awrah* guidelines and ethical considerations during physical interaction and training sessions. These guidelines, alongside other ethical considerations, become particularly important during physical interaction and training sessions, where close contact and specific instructions might be required. The presence of male coaches in such contexts can lead to discomfort and potential barriers for Muslim female athletes, impacting their performance and overall experience in sports.

Furthermore, not all sports are suitable for Muslim women due to attire requirements that conflict with *Shari'ah* standards of modesty. Sports such as swimming, gymnastics, and springboard diving often mandate attire that may not align with these standards. These requirements can pose challenges for Muslim women who wish to participate in such sports while adhering to their religious beliefs, which emphasise modesty and the covering of the body. Consequently, finding appropriate sportswear that meets both the demands of the sport and religious guidelines can be a significant concern for many Muslim women athletes.

Media coverage also poses challenges, particularly when male audiences are involved, as it can conflict with *'awrah* norms. According to the *Shari'ah*, Muslim women are required to maintain modesty in the presence of unrelated males, as emphasised in the Qur'an (21:30). Thus, media interactions and public exposure during sports events can become complex issues for Muslim female athletes.

In summary, while women have legal rights to participate in sports and pursue athletic careers, the challenges stemming from attire requirements, coaching dynamics, and media exposure present significant hurdles, particularly in adhering to modesty standards dictated by Islamic principles.

Analysing the Existing Guidelines for Muslim Female Athletes: A Move Towards Progress

Despite the prohibition, some states, such as Terengganu, Kelantan (UPNK Kelantan), and Pahang (www.pahang.gov.my), have supported efforts to standardise Shari‘ah-compliant attire for athletes. JAKIM has also developed guidelines for sports participation (<https://www.islam.gov.my/ms/garis-panduan/478-garis-panduan-bersukan-menurut-perspektif-islam>). These guidelines, outlined in sections 7, 8, and 10, advise Muslim athletes on appropriate attire and behaviour.

Section 7 specifies that female athletes should wear long-sleeved shirts, full-length pants, and cover their hair and neck, opting for loose-fitting garments that do not reveal the body. Section 8 emphasises gender segregation in tournament areas, recommending separate facilities for male and female athletes such as sprint tracks, gymnasias, and swimming pools, or scheduled usage if separation is not feasible. Section 10 encourages female athletes to participate in sports suitable for their gender while promoting respectful conduct.

The “*Seminar Pemakaian Atlet Sukan Patuh Syariah Peringkat Negeri Pahang*,” held on January 21-22, 2020, established guidelines aligning athletes’ attire with Islamic principles in its resolutions. These guidelines require attire that covers the ‘*awrah*, fits loosely, and avoids revealing body shape or skin tone. The resolution also addresses the issue of tight-fitting sportswear, permitting its use by athletes.

The resolution classifies sports into three distinct categories according to their conformity with *Sharī‘ah* dress codes. The first category includes sports such as *silat*, *tae kwon do*, and archery, which inherently align with *Sharī‘ah*-compliant attire without requiring significant modifications. The second category comprises sports like football and badminton, which are somewhat less accommodating to *Sharī‘ah* dress codes, but still offer potential for adaptation with some efforts. Finally, the third category encompasses sports like swimming and gymnastics, which currently pose greater challenges to compliance, yet can achieve conformity through specific adjustments and tailored attire modifications.

However, challenges arise for athletes in sports like swimming, running, gymnastics, and cycling, where specific attire requirements

may conflict with *Shari'ah* standards. While some garments may cover 'awrah, tight materials can still reveal body shape, which contradicts *Shari'ah* requirements for loose attire (Al-Nawawi, 2010). The involvement of female coaching staff remains limited, complicating adherence to *Shari'ah* guidelines. To mitigate exposure risks, athletes are advised to wear outer clothing over sports leggings, preferably in dark colours to avoid confusion with skin tones.

In addition to this, the guidelines also do not provide clear instructions on how media and broadcasters should cover sports events in accordance with *Shari'ah*. Islamic teachings stress modest interactions between men and women, advocating for lowering gaze and minimising unnecessary visual contact.

Enforcement of existing guidelines remains inconsistent, with authorities yet to reach consensus on accommodating Muslim female athletes in certain events. It is incumbent upon Muslim athletes to abstain from events that do not meet *Shari'ah* standards, prioritising obedience to religious principles. International sports bodies could foster inclusivity by permitting athletes to compete in attire aligned with their faith, thus supporting Muslim values on a global scale.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion, it can be inferred that the active involvement of Muslim women in Malaysia's sports sector faces significant challenges. The main issue revolves around 'awrah coverage, which concerns the extent of body covering according to Islamic traditions. This poses a major hurdle as certain sports require attire that does not align with *Shari'ah* standards. Consequently, many Muslim female athletes encounter obstacles in fully realising their potential. The strict dress regulations mandating comprehensive 'awrah coverage create difficulties for these athletes.

To empower Muslim female athletes, effective collaboration among all stakeholders is crucial. It is important to reevaluate the impact of dress codes on performance, considering their effectiveness and adherence to Islamic principles, and how these factors affect athletes psychologically and in terms of performance metrics. Additionally, authorities, particularly JAKIM, should compare dress codes across different sports since each sport has unique attire standards related to its

events. Some sports may pose challenges for Muslim female athletes due to attire requirements conflicting with *Sharī'ah* guidelines, exacerbated by media coverage that sometimes demands revealing attire.

Moreover, the enforcement of guidelines lacks consistency and inclusivity among authorities, leading to varied stances on Muslim women's participation in sports that may contradict their religious obligations. Authorities should take decisive action to address these issues as frontline supporters of athletes' adherence to religious duties. Collaboration with religious authorities is essential to develop dress codes that align with Islamic principles while being practical for athletes. Examining successful collaborations can offer valuable insights. Furthermore, international collaboration among Muslim countries is vital for enhancing sports governance and policies, ensuring the voices of Muslim countries are heard and protecting Muslim female athletes from potential marginalisation as a minority group.

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(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36

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The glorious Qur'ān. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

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(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)

(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

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(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

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