Determinants of Dressing Patterns of Female Undergraduates Students in Tertiary Institutions in Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The study investigated the determinants of dressing patterns of female undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Abia State, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire comprising 4 point scale was the instrument used for data collection. A population of 29,595 of female undergraduates was obtained from the 4 tertiary institutions in Abia State. Sample sizes of 400 female undergraduate students were randomly selected for the study but only 393 subjects filled and returned their questionnaires. The data collected were statistically analyzed using frequency, percentages and mean. The findings of the study among others revealed that the female undergraduate students dressing patterns are greatly influenced by imitation of western dress styles, peer/social group pressure, Mass Media, imitation of film actresses, Fashion in vogue. The findings of the study also showed among others that female students were exposed to being raped/sexual harassments, the image of the students/family were being tarnished, students being addressed as prostitutes and irresponsible, stealing, exposure to deadly diseases e.g. HIV/Aids were the major effects on the students. The findings also revealed that decay in human standard, spread of diseases among others are the effects of indecent dressing patterns accepted by the students on the society. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among others that parents, churches, school authorities, lecturers, media houses etc, should make both individuals and joint effort to curb indecent dressing practices in the institutions of high leaning in the country. Programmes that sample opinions of Nigerians on Indecent Dressing should be regularly put in place for these groups of students. Through these ways, proper dress sense will be inculcated in the lives of these students.

Keywords: dressing pattern, female undergraduates' students, tertiary institutions, higher education.

Introduction

Dressing is an act of putting on clothes. Importance of wearing a cloth on the body is in order to protect, beautify or adorn it. Clothes are one of the basic necessities of man. In its widest sense, it includes a great range of material that man wears or applies to the body. Clothing includes dresses, shoes, jewellery, hairdo and make- up.

Clothing is also used to show people's status and the roles they play in society (Anyakoha, Eluwa, 2008). E.U. Anyakoha and M.A. Eluwa (2008) further explained that the clothe someone decides to wear influences the impression people have about such an individual. It also tells about the family such a person comes from. It can also affect the persons comfort and self-confidence. The dressing pattern of an individual is a kind of "sign language" that communicates a complete set of information and is usually the basis on which immediate impressions are formed (Kiran, 2002). Although there are no universally acceptable way or ways of dressing, dresses are meant to serve some definable purposes, notwithstanding on country or region. They are part of people's culture and they define their tribal or ethnic identity.

Apart from dresses being a means for cultural identity, they are for ornamental or aesthetic purposes, for protection of the body against harsh weather conditions as well as for covering the intimate part of the body (Why do people…, 2011). These purposes are important especially as they form major aspects of a person's personality.

Dressing pattern is the way or mode in which an individual or group of persons has accepted or chosen to appear in society. Dressing pattern or code is a set of standard that companies, schools, communities, organizations and institutions has accepted for their employee with guidance about what is appropriate wear for work (Olori, 2003). Dressing pattern is also a set of rules as in a school indicating the appropriate manner of dressing. According to T. Olori (2003) dressing pattern is a set of

rules or guidelines regarding the manner of dress acceptable in an office, school and restaurant. It is also a set of rules specifically the correct manner of dressing while on the premises of institution or specifying what manner of dressing that is prohibited.

U. Obilo and S. Okugo (2013) observed that public Nigerian universities are battling with the wave of indecency, notably among female students. The authors explained the situation as the reign of skimpy dresses on campus which has turned many campuses to fashion runways. Beside that wearing short skirts some female undergraduates throw caution to the wind by displaying their boobs as a cheap means of getting attention. Dress to kill is now a popular slogan in lecture halls with the intention of looking sexy or classy, forgetting that they ought to look responsible.

The dressing patterns of female undergraduates have been viewed as anti-African and are invented (Curbing moral…, 2011). This un-African dressing pattern among undergraduates of this generation has generated lots of concern and worry among the citizens. T. Olori (2003) viewed that the dressing pattern of female undergraduate students are determined by factors such as mass media, peer pressure, religious, culture among others.

Female undergraduates are females of various categories in higher institutions of learning. They fall within the range of early adolescence and late adolescence (it means within the age range of 16 to 30 years). R.O. Nnachi (2008) explained that it is a period of a stressful lifestyle where life of late adolescence is uneven or irregular.

The tertiary institutions are described as both an academic and social institution. It is viewed by the public as a panacea for the ills of the society. It is also expected to solve one's social, economic and political problems (Esiowu, Igbo, 2008). In higher institutions of learning, due to influence of peers and other environmental pressure, they have exaggerated need to appear and belong. The more fashionable and well-dressed the undergraduates, the higher status they achieve in the institution.

Most Nigerian ladies have dropped their traditional clothing styles to foreign styles. People of many countries have dropped their cultural clothing styles and adopted western dress styles for everyday wears. These dressing patterns or styles are regarded as sexy fashion which allowed a degree of display of the body for male appraisal and approval. These styles or patterns were not previously experienced in the streets because they were seemed the ultimate in decadent behaviour. The female undergraduate students have completely shifted to this crazy dressing pattern that makes them appear half naked most of the time.

A. Ku (2003) stated that clothing is an important area of personal satisfaction and source of social identification for every normal individual. Dresses should be capable of protecting the body, maintaining modesty and adornment.

However, indecent appearance has become the order of the day among many female students in higher institutions of learning, there is no higher institution in this country that is not affected with this problem. The students of these campuses of learning particularly the female ones, dress provocatively and seductively leave much to be discussed.

Female undergraduates try to dress as they see others dress or as a result of what is in vogue, not actually knowing the implications of such dressing styles. It is on this premise that this research work is set out to ascertain the determinants of dressing patterns of female undergraduates in higher institutions of learning in Abia State and suggest possible ways of inculcating good dress sense among them.

This research work aimed at examining the determinants of dressing patterns of female undergraduate students of Abia State tertiary institutions, what actually motivates the dressing patterns of these students. Specifically this study determined:
- the factors influencing the dressing patterns of female undergraduates in Abia State tertiary institutions,
- the effects of these dressing patterns on the female undergraduate students,
- the effect of these dressing patterns on the society,

- suggestions/possible ways of inculcating good dress sense among the female undergraduate students.

The following research questions guided the Study:
1. What are the factors influencing dressing pattern of female undergraduates in tertiary institutions?
2. What are the effects of these dressing patterns on the students?
3. What are the effects of these dressing patterns on the society?
4. What are the possible ways of inculcating proper dress sense among the female undergraduate students?

Methodology

The study used descriptive survey design. The focus were to the examination of the determinants of the dressing pattern of female undergraduates students in tertiary institutions in Abia State from a representative group of the population so that collected data can be generalized to the population.

The geographical location of this research work is Abia State, Nigeria. Abia coordinates $5^O25'$N, $7^O30'$E/5.417^O N / 7.500^O E / $5.417^O7.500$. It occupies about 6,32km^2 (2,440 sqm), its population is 2,833,999 according to the 2006 census). Its density is 450/km^2 (1,200/sqm). Abia is bounded on the north and north east by the States of Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi, to the West of Abia is Imo State, the East and South east are Cross river and AkwaIbom States and to the South is Rivers State. There are 17 local government areas (LGAs) in Abia state. The capital city is Umuahia. Four tertiary institutions in Abia State was covered namely; Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAU), Abia State UniversityUturu (ABSU), Abia State Poly Techniqe Aba, Abia State Technical College Arochukwu.

The population for the study was made up of all the female undergraduates in the four tertiary institutions in Abia State, Nigeria. The population of female undergraduates in these four tertiary institutions were; 7,108 for Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, 10,891 for Abia State University, Uturu, 8,240 for Abia State Poly Technique Aba, 3,382 in Abia State Technical College Arochukwu, making a total population of 29,595 female undergraduate students (Office of the Registrars, 2012/2013a; Office of the Registrars, 2012/2013b; Office of the Registrars, 2012/2013c; Office of the Registrars, 2012/2013d).

The sample for this study was drawn through random sampling techniques. Participants selected were female undergraduates at the four tertiary institutions in Abia State. Proportionate simple random sampling was further used to sample female undergraduates from the four tertiary institutions. Sample sizes of 400 were selected, 96 female students were sampled in MOUAU, 148 female students were sampled in ABSU, 111 were sampled in Abia poly, 45 were sampled in Aro-chukwu Technical College of Education.

Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was constructed using a 4 point scale to guide the responses. The questionnaire items were generated based on the information gathered from review of related literature. It contained twenty seven (27) questions and was validated by 2 experts in the related fields. Test, retest method was used to test for reliability of instruments.

A total of 400 copies of the questionnaires were distributed by hand to the subjects who made up the sample by the researcher and two research assistants. Out of 400 questionnaire distributed, only 393 (98.25%) were completely filled and returned. The statistical tools used for data analysis were frequency, mean and simple percentages (%) Frequency was used to organize the data collected. Percentage (%) was used to analyze the demographic data of the students while means was used to analyze the responses to research questions. The mean was calculated by assigning nominal values to the response categories. Strongly agree (SA); agree (A); strongly disagree (SD); disagree (D) with values 4, 3, 2 and 1 assigned respectively. An interval of scale of 0.5 was added to the mean to give 3.00 any response of 3 and above is regarded as agreed while response less than 3.00 is regarded as disagreed.

Results and discussion

Table 1

Mean responses of the subjects on the factors influencing the dressing patterns of female undergraduates in tertiary institutions

S/N	FACTORS	$\bar{X}$	Remark
1	Imitation of western dressing style.	3.95	A
2	Peer/social grouppressure.	3.90	A
3	Mass media e.g. imitating Actresses, Newscaster.	4.02	A
4	Family Orientation.	3.22	A
5	Religious group doctrine.	3.17	A
6	Fashion in vogue	4.02	A

Key: $\bar{X}$ = Mean Score of the Respondents, A = Acceptable Mean Responses.

In the above table (Table 1) the entire respondents agreed that the six factors above are factors influencing the dressing pattern of female undergraduate students with items 3 and 6 having the highest mean score of 4.02 respectively.

Table 2

Mean responses of the subjects on the effects of the female undergraduates dressing pattern on the students

S/N	The Effects	$\bar{X}$	Remark
7	Sexual Harassment.	3.66	A
8	Rape.	3.75	A
9	HIV/AIDS.	2.97	NA
10	Venereal Disease.	3.29	A
11	Students being Addressed as prostitutes.	3.52	A
12	Lying/sinning against God.	2.94	NA
13	Unwanted pregnancy.	3.13	A
14	Tendency to Steal.	3.03	A
15	Poor Academic performance.	2.0	NA

Key: $\bar{x}$ = Mean Response of the Subjects, A= Acceptable Mean Score, NA=None Acceptable

In the above table (Table 2) the respondents agreed in six (6) instances that the dressing patterns adopted by the female undergraduates' students have some negative effects on the students. This was shown vividly in their mean responses which were up to and even above the acceptable mean score of 2.50. Also in the same table, the respondents did not agree in three (3) instances. This was shown in their mean scores which did not reach up to the acceptable mean score of 2.50.

Table 3

Mean responses of the subjects on the effects of the dressing patterns of the female undergraduate's students on the society

S/N	Effect of students dressing pattern on the society	$\bar{X}$	Remark
16	Decay in human standard.	3.14	A
17	Spread of diseases.	3.34	A
18	Increase in abortion rate.	2.41	NA
19	Society seen as home for frustrated nuisance.	3.29	A
20	High rate of population.	3.56	A

Key: $\bar{x}$ = Mean Responses of the Respondents, A = Acceptable Mean Responses, NA = None Acceptable Mean Responses

In Table 3 above, the respondents agreed in 4 instances that the students dressing patterns have effect on the society while in one (1) instance the respondents disagreed to that. This was shown in the mean responses of the subjects' (Table 3).

Table 4

Mean responses of the subjects on the ways of inculcating proper dress sense among female undergraduate students

S/N	Proper Ways of Dressing Among Female Undergraduates.	$\bar{X}$	Remark
21	Clothes should cover the body properly.	3.44	A
22	Students should wear clothes that fit its purpose and activities.	3.08	A
23	Using clothing accessories correctly.	3.65	A
24	In making clothing choice, students should not be carried away by the wind of fashion.	3.64	A
25	Good religious doctrine about dressing should always be maintained.	2.60	NA
26	Always like what you see in the mirror.	2.54	NA
27	Students should have Self confidence in making choice of dresses.	3.13	A

Key: $\bar{x}$ = Mean Responses of the Respondents, A = Acceptable Mean Responses
       NA = None Acceptable Mean Responses.

In the above table (Table 4) the respondents agreed in 5 instances (21, 22, 23, 24 and 27) were accepted as the proper way of inculcating proper dress sense among female undergraduate students while in 2 instances (25 and 26) were rejected as ways of inculcating proper dress sense.

Research question 1 sought to find the factors influencing the dressing patterns of female undergraduate students. The findings revealed that majority of the students imitate western style in their dressing pattern. A mean value of 3.95 which was quite above the mean cut off score indicates that, it is accepted as a factor. This finding is in line with Kiran (2002) who stated that people of many countries have dropped their cultural dressing styles and adopted western dress styles for everyday wear. Another factor that had a very high mean score was peer/social pressure groups which have an average mean value of 3.90 and therefore was considered as an accepted factor. The finding agrees with A.P. Esiowu and C.A. Igbo (2008) who stated that when people with whom they associate with wear particular styles of clothing, they tend to assume that their styles are always correct; and then tend to adopt them as their own. Hence the bible injunction that evil corrupts good manner.

Mass Media has mean level of 4.02 which is above the mean cut off of 3.0 and so it is accepted. This goes a long way to explain that mass media is the fastest means of communication in recent times due to rapid development in the information communication technology (ICT). Family orientation has mean value 3.22 which is also above the mean cut-off level. This finding agreed with J. Omede (2011) who observed that a child lives or die thrive or wither, due to the decision of their parents. Religious group/dressing doctrine of a church has mean value of 3.17 which is above the mean cut-off level of 2.50 and it is accepted. This shows that religious organizations have vital roles in shaping the characters of their congregations even in teaching the members proper dress sense. Following popular style is fashion in vogue has a mean score of 4.02 which is quite above the accepted mean score. This is in line with A.O. Obeta's (2010) earlier findings that some people tend to follow the wind of fashion blindly. She explained that it should not be like that. People should wear what is suitable at all occasions and should not imitate the dressing style of another person because people have varying figure types, what is fitted and suitable to someone may not be good enough to another individual.

The data on Table 2 revealed that the dressing pattern of female undergraduate's students has effect on the students. Unfortunately because some of the western styles these female undergraduate students have adopted were not accepted by the society, it is viewed as anti-African. This un-African dress pattern among these females has generated lots of concern and worry among the citizens of the country. Sexual harassment has a mean level 3.66 which is above the mean cut-off level and so it is accepted. This finding is in line with J. Omede (2011) who pointed out that the forms of dresses

suggest that such ladies are looking for attention and that they are irresponsible. Rape has mean level of 3.75 and was said to be accepted because this is above the acceptable mean score of 2.50. According to Nigerian Films.Com (Campus Dress Code…, 2009),when the parts of the body that are supposed to be closed are exposed, some students or men may be tempted and can employ all means including rape to get the students and have canal knowledge of such student. Unprotected sexual intercourse may result and the victims may be exposed to all forms of venereal diseases including HIV/Aids and Ebola virus diseases. The student being addressed as prostitutes was accepted with mean value of 3.52. Imagine a student from a reputable family in the society being addressed as a prostitute and when the parent of such students happened to hear that. That may send some parents to early give because not all the parents will have the mind to bear it, some may even develop high blood pressure and may die of it.

Unwanted pregnancy has a mean value of 3.13 from the findings and was accepted as an effect as it is above the mean cut-off level of 2.50. This is possible because when a student is raped or forced into sex, pregnancy may result and such pregnancy is unwanted. The students' academic studies may be delayed or hindered permanently as not all parents will accommodate that. Some of the young girls in the society roaming the street are already victims. It should not be overstatement to say that some of the affected students were always occupied in mind by always thinking of what to wear or how to dress. When this occupies the minds of the student, consequently the academic performance of such student will suffer and thus will definitely lead to poor academic performance.

The findings on the Effect of Indecent Dressing Pattern on the Society as revealed in table 3 shows that spread of diseases, decay in human standard and identity and high rate of population has mean value of 3.34, 3.14 and 3.56 respectively, thus accepted because their mean is above the mean cut-off of 2.50. These dressing patterns have so much tarnished the image of our society as though devil has been unchained, consequently turned the society into a home for frustrated persons.

In Table 4, the findings of the study revealed that proper dress sense can be inculcated in the students by encouraging the students to wear clothes that cover the body properly. Students should wear clothes that fit its purpose and activities and not being carried by the wind of fashion/ fashion trend sheepishly. Using clothing accessories correctly and have self-confidence. The findings is in agreement with J.C. Unegbu (2006) who pointed out that an individual is well dressed when the person knows what truly gives the individual fittings and goes for it, one is well dressed when one does not follow the fashion blindly but always make effort to create personal style out of what is fashionable.

Conclusions

The study focused on the determinants of dressing patterns of female undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Abia State, the study determined the factors influencing the dressing patterns of female students in tertiary institutions in Abia State, the effects of indecent dressing pattern on the students, and the society, and ways of inculcating proper dress sense on the students. The study was conducted in four major tertiary institutions in Abia State. Three hundred and ninety three (393) representing 98.25% female undergraduate students were involved in the study.

The results indicated that imitation of western style, peer pressure or social group, Mass Media and following popular style in fashion at present has greater influence on the dressing patterns of female undergraduates whereas family orientation and religious groups or church doctrine about dressing has lesser influence.

Also sexual harassment, rape, other venereal disease contracted through sexual intercourse, students being addressed as prostitute, tendency to steal and unwanted pregnancy has major effect on the students. Also spread of disease, decay in human standard and identity high rate of population were seen as the effects of indecent dressing pattern on the society. Also the findings revealed that students should cover their bodies properly with their own instinct without being forced to do so, wearing clothes that fit, not being carried away by the wind of fashion. Having self-confidence, wearing clothes that covers the body properly among others were accepted as ways of inculcating proper dress sense among female undergraduates.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings and discussions, the following recommendations were made:

- Mass Media should contend rather than support indecent dressing. The display of some indecently dressed young girls for adverts and attraction should be discouraged.

- Programmes that sample opinions of Nigerians on indecent dressing should be regularly put in place in addition to debates on the issue by youths in institutions of learning as means of effective sensitization.

- Churches should also help through regular sermons or preaching as well as counselling, pastors and Imams should resist and insist on healthy development of their members.

- Involvement of the university authority in the dressing patterns of the female students will to large extent control the present ugly manner of dressing styles. The senate, the university council, student affairs, heads of departments and lecturers should see the correction of the female students' anti-African pattern of dressing by female undergraduates as serious abnormalities.

- Good dress sense can also be motivated by the formation of campus brigade, this brigade or club is to stand against indecent dressing by sanitizing and promoting good moral values particularly, the modest African dress patterns.

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