

**FACTORS INFLUENCING FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES' CLOTHING  
BEHAVIOUR IN SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTHWEST  
NIGERIA.**

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## **Abstract**

*Clothing is a reflection of a society's culture, tradition, beliefs, weather conditions, history, tribal and spiritual identity. It communicates the wearers' innate character, personality, societal class and moral values; hence, the growing concerns over the rising tendency for immodest dressing among young female adults and its anti-social effects in Nigerian society. The study examined factors influencing clothing behaviour of female undergraduates in selected tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was administered to 1,067 female undergraduates randomly selected from six purposive selected Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics including Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and student t-test. The results revealed the influence of socio-economic factors ( $r=0.725$ ), environmental factors ( $r=0.736$ ) and preference for foreign culture ( $r=0.529$ ). Peer group ranked first among socio-economic factors influencing the female undergraduates clothing behaviour with a mean score of 73.69 followed by sense of belonging (70.81) clothing cost (66.84), socio expectations (61.72) and income (59.22,) with purchasing power coming last (54.63). Mass media exerted the greatest influence among environmental factors (71.28) followed by psychological factors (67.97) such as self-concept, fulfilment and looking attractive. Weather condition ranked third (64.43) followed by religious affiliation (61.22) while the least influencing factor was cultural background (56.51). The study concluded that dressing behaviours of female undergraduates are influenced by socio-economic factors and mass media among other prevailing factor.*

## **Introduction**

Society recognizes the role of clothing as a communicator of information during social and cultural interaction. Evelyn (2003) noted that clothing goes beyond utilitarian; it is a reflection of a society's idea about the sacred and the secular, a means of determining belonging, expression, self-adornment, personal appeal, exclusion and inclusion, age, beauty, sexuality, status, physical wellbeing and life transitions. In the Nigerian society, dress serves more purposes and functions than just clothing or securing the external body from storm or weather. It is also regarded as a reflection of the wearer's personality, societal class, and moral values. This gave birth to the Yoruba adage which states that "Irinisi ni isonilojo" meaning "first impression lasts long".

In Nigeria, history reflects an expression of uniqueness and a cultured way of life where clothing traditions are passed down from generation to generation. Much value was placed on the sanctity of proper dressing. Dressing properly according to societal norms and values was regarded as a normal socio-cultural standard that required no authority to enforce compliance.

Culturally, the indecent exposure of the female body was regarded as an anathema and jealously guarded against, offenders were societally considered as loose and uncultured. The female figure was culturally perceived as an embodiment of virtues which cannot be exposed arbitrarily and this is embraced by everyone growing up as a societal norm to be complied with.

Isabel (2010) in an earlier study also supported this when she stated that in today's world, Nigeria's rich cultural heritage in the area of dressing is being gradually eroded by subsequent imposition of an alien culture. Olugbenga and Odeleye (2008) further expressed their opinion on this when they referred to an indecent exposure of the female body as unethical and an anathema.

This study examined the emerging permissiveness of improper clothing behaviour among the female gender and investigated the various factors responsible for such. It identified the socio-economic and environmental factors influencing the clothing behaviour of female undergraduates. The relationship between the clothing behaviour of the female undergraduates and their parents' socio-economic status was also assessed. The study ascertained the influence of parental perception of foreign culture on the dressing habits of the female undergraduates.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigerian traditional society has always embraced proper dressing as an expression of uniqueness and a cultured way of life where every woman is expected to dress up in clothing covering the sacred parts of their body to show modesty and respect for their gender. In today's world, this rich cultural heritage has been overturned and conspicuously replaced by indecent habits of half-nakedness and nudity. Technological developments have made the world a global village with inter and intra cultural transference of which dressing habits is not

an exception. This development cannot just be overlooked as mere advent of new culture or cultural diffusion from the Western world. The wearing of different kinds of tight transparent clothing, naked dressing and scanty styles in public places calls for serious concern. We are confronted with the grave danger of producing youths who are totally disconnected from their roots as far as culture is concerned. They would rather be seen in westernized scanty clothing which they consider more fashionable, trendy and comfortable. Dressing is fast losing its potency as a means of determining the tribal affiliates of the wearer. It has become almost impossible to see the younger female generation dressed in the traditional *iro* and *buba* wears.

The younger generation is no more interested in preserving the tradition of modesty as far as dressing is concerned. The fact that the female gender is the most vulnerable to this cultural pollution makes the trend a worrisome development. However, as the society becomes more fashion conscious, there is the danger of failing to distinguish between fashion and improper dressing habits. This may not augur well for the future development of the country. Improper dressing behaviour is an embodiment of anti-social comportment which is at variance with modest dressing habit which could attract vices such as unwanted pregnancy, induced and unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/ AIDS, early marriage, forced childbearing, forced marriages, prostitutions and a wide spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STD). The alarming rate of increase in cases of rape and sexual deformation in our society is a call for serious concern. Provocative dressing styles on the part of the female gender in the name of fashion have been fingered as one of the causal factors for this anomaly.

The Nigerian tertiary institutions accommodate a large percentage of the female gender whose future is germane to the development of the nation. Therefore it is believed that this group of people need to be exposed to relevant information that will guide them towards

responsible and safe sexuality. The need to re-orientate them on the indigenous and ethnic values embedded in the traditional dress culture is the reason for this study. A new mind set is essential so that they will develop confidence on the possibility of modernizing indigenous clothing to meet current societal needs. The problem of this study is the anti-cultural dressing of young female adults and its attendant effects in Nigerian society. The study was guided by the following research questions:

### **Research Questions**

1. Are female undergraduates' clothing behaviour influenced by their demographic status?
2. What are the socio-economic factors influencing the clothing behaviour of female undergraduates?
3. Are female undergraduates' clothing behaviour influenced by environmental factors?
4. Does parental perception of foreign culture have any influence on clothing behaviour of female undergraduates?
5. Are female undergraduates clothing behaviour influenced by foreign culture?

### **Research design**

This study was a sectional and descriptive survey study. It involved the collection of extensive and sectional data for the purpose of describing and interpreting the factors influencing female undergraduates clothing behaviour in South Western Nigeria.

### **Study Population**

The study populations were all female undergraduates studying in Nigerian South western Universities.

## **Sample Size**

A sample representative of female undergraduates in Nigerian Universities was obtained from a population of 3,760,000. The sample size was calculated using UNESCO 2012 Creative research systems (2012) the sample size used was one thousand and sixty seven (1,067) randomly selected female undergraduates studying in the six South Western Nigerian Universities.

## **Research Instrument**

Questionnaire titled “The Clothing Behaviour Assessment Questionnaire (CBAQ) was administered to gather data from the female undergraduates. The questionnaire was in three parts. The first part was designed to collect demographic data such as sex, age, religion, educational institution and marital status. The second part consisted of sixty one (61) structured questionnaire items which were made to reflect the focus of the study, eliciting responses from the respondents on factors influencing their clothing behaviour.

## **Analytical Tools**

Data obtained were subjected to Pearson product moment correlation coefficient Statistical method and Student t-test to analyze relationship between variables. Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and Standard Deviation (sd) were also used to rank identified factors.

## **Results**

The results of the study in terms of answering the stated research questions are as follows:

**Table 1: Influence of Demographic Characteristics on female undergraduates clothing behaviour**

<b>Age</b>		
14-20	62.18	7.01
21-30	65.48	8.25
31-40	65.91	6.21
41-50	65.53	5.28
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	62.64	7.67
Islam	62.68	7.46
Others	62.84	9.29
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	62.38	7.63
Married	63.05	7.67
Others	66.18	2.07
<b>Ethnic group</b>		
Yoruba	62.63	7.43
Igbo	61.58	9.25
Hausa	65.81	7.93
Others	62.13	7.69

**Table 2: Mean score ranking of socio-economic factors influencing female**

**undergraduates clothing behaviour**

<b>Socio-Economic Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Peer group influence	73.69	1 <sup>st</sup>
Sense of belonging	70.81	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Clothing cost	66.84	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Social expectations	61.72	4 <sup>th</sup>
Income	59.22	5 <sup>th</sup>
Purchasing power	54.63	6 <sup>th</sup>

**Table 3: Mean score ranking of environmental factors influencing clothing behaviour of  
female undergraduates**



<b>Prevailing factors influencing clothing behaviour</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Mass media	71.28	1st
Psychological factors	67.97	2nd
Weather condition	64.43	3rd
Religious affiliation	61.22	4th
Cultural background	56.51	5 <sup>th</sup>

**Table 4: Result of one - sample t-test to determine the influence of environmental factors on female undergraduates clothing behaviour**

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Ho: <math>\mu=50\%</math></b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>P value</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Ho: <math>\mu=50\%</math></b>	<b>Ha: <math>\mu &gt; 50\%</math></b>	64.11	13.63	32.77	1000	<0.05	Significant
<b>Ha: <math>\mu &gt; 50\%</math></b>							

**Table 5: Result of one - sample t-test to determine the influence of foreign culture on female undergraduates clothing behaviour**

Hypothesis	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P value	Comment
<b>H<sub>0</sub>: μ=50%</b>	59.71	11.39	26.98	1001	<0.05	Significant
<b>H<sub>a</sub>:μ &gt; 50%</b>						

### Discussion

The study revealed the influence of demographic characteristics on the respondents clothing behaviour. Preference for foreign clothing was found to be highest among respondents aged between 31-40 years and lowest among those aged 14-20 years. This is in agreement with Workman (2009) who stated that age and life-cycle have potential impact on the consumer buying behavior. He believed that it is obvious that the consumers change the purchase of goods and services with the passage of time. ). The respondents within the age bracket of 31 – 40 years have higher allowances which may be responsible for the higher influence. Many of them are not full time students like the respondents belonging to age of 14 – 20 who are still majorly under the care of their parents. Guy et al (2001) agree with this view when he opined that statutes and social roles tend to influence buying behavior as there is an assumption that one will behave in a way that conforms to one’s role.

Fashion is a very important aspect of culture and is shaped by religion, ethnicity and occupation which thereby affect consumer behaviour and the way people dress (Calefato, 2004). Muslim respondents have the lowest influence while their Christian counterparts have the highest influence. Muslims have clearly defined dress patterns unlike their Christian

counterparts who are more liberal; this may be responsible for the lower influence. Hausas have the highest influence followed by the Yorubas while the Igbo were the least influenced out of the three major tribes in the Southwest, Nigeria. This is in variance with the general belief that the Yorubas are the most enlightened and hence should have the highest influence (Aronso, 2010)

The influence of six socio-economic factors were examined, the study revealed that out of the socio-economic factors influencing female undergraduates clothing behaviour, peer group influence ranked first, it topped the list of influencing factors on clothing behaviour. Sense of belonging takes the second position. Clothing cost ranked third while Socio-economic expectations ranked fourth followed by income of the female undergraduates. Purchasing power was sixth with societal status being the last. This supports the findings by Chan and Cho, (2010) that peer and media influence on clothing behaviour increases with age as television and celebrities plays a significant role in influencing clothing choices, irrespective of gender.

The influence of environmental factors on clothing behaviour of female undergraduates was very significant as revealed by the study. The five environmental factors examined apart from socio-economic factors stated earlier were mass media, psychological factors, weather condition, religious affiliation and cultural background. The findings revealed that mass media exerted the greatest influence out of other prevalent factors influencing the female undergraduates clothing behaviour followed by psychological factors such as self-concept, fulfilment and looking attractive. Weather condition ranked third closely followed by religious affiliation while the least influencing factor was cultural background.

Parental perception of foreign culture influence on female undergraduates clothing behaviour in the study area was discovered to be significant. This suggests acculturation influence.

Acculturation is defined by Berry (2007) as the way by which one culture is imposed on another either in bit or in totality while Johnson (2002) identified it as the process by where superior culture overlaid the local ones. Tylor, (2004) explained it as the process by which an individual, group or sects imbibed what is foreign to them and their setting. Berry (2007) expresses acculturation as taking into ones culture, traits of another culture.

The influence of foreign culture on the female undergraduates clothing behaviour was statistically significant. The study concluded that foreign culture has significant influence on female undergraduates clothing behaviour. This leads credence to the fact that the cultural heritage of the study area as far as clothing is concerned is being gradually eroded. The world has become a global village with inter and intra cultural transference of which clothing behaviour is not an exception. Charama, (2010) noted this when he stated that the Nigerian society is confronted with the grave danger of the younger generation being totally disconnected from their roots culturally. Ahrold, Woo, Brotto and Meston (2007) also observed that the greater taste for civilization turned Nigerians against their traditions. Ajayi (2006) observed that because Africans were said to be indoctrinated by Europeans, the level of acculturation of the whites culture by the blacks was rapid and fast to the extent that the culture of the whites fast diluted that of the Africans, whereas Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder, (2006) recalled that the target to be like the white influenced all sects of African's life to the neglect of theirs. They further reported the indoctrination of the blacks by the whites that anything that is white is good while anything that is black is evil.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this study was to examine factors influencing clothing behaviour of female undergraduates. This is with the aim of providing the needed theoretical and empirical bases to put a stop to the danger of producing youths who are totally disconnected from their roots as far as clothing culture is concerned.

The study revealed a significant influence on the female undergraduates clothing behaviour by socio - economic factors (peer group, sense of belonging, clothing cost, social expectations, income and purchasing power), environmental factors (Mass media, psychological factors, weather condition, religious affiliation and cultural background), parental influence and foreign culture.

One of the major factors responsible for the endangerment of our indigenous dressing culture is the misconception that they are no longer compatible with modern and societal demands in a global and modern world and should be allowed to die a natural death. This is because culture is viewed as static. Culture can no longer continue to be viewed as static; it is dynamic and should be viewed as such. There is the urgency to modernize our dressing culture to attract national and international appeal to make it compatible with socio economic development.

Conclusively, it is very essential to take advantage of mass media to re-orientate the indigenous and ethnic values embedded in the traditional dress culture for the female undergraduates.

## **Recommendations**

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Mass media should be maximized to re-orientate the youth on the indigenous and ethnic values embedded in the traditional dress culture. Media managers and practitioners as gate-keepers must develop a Nigerian cultural inclination and consciousness that will allow for the production of programmes reflecting the Nigerian idiom, develop its own television rhetoric and creative ability. The broadcast houses should enforce in-house policy requiring that staff must air their indigenous name at least while on air.
2. Authority of government parastatals and educational institutions should enforce the wearing of traditional wears on Fridays to project the Nigerian culture. Traditional attires should also be regarded as an official dress during cultural and national meetings and festivities.
3. All higher institutions should enforce dress codes to discourage the excesses of westernized wears by the female undergraduates. Revealing clothes and short skimpy tops and the likes should be discouraged.
4. The film industries should be regularized. Programs projecting western cultures to the detriment of the indigenous culture should be discouraged. Radio and television jingles that promote moral values and sanctity of sex should be aired and relayed.
5. Religious institutions should serve as dry-cleaning houses where morals are preached and societally acceptable dressing patterns are enforced.
6. Further studies on relationship between female undergraduates clothing and sexual behaviour should be carried out.

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