

Clothing Related Issues among Female Undergraduates: A Case Study of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State

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Abstract

This study focused on clothing related issues among female undergraduates in University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). Specifically, the study determined the clothing goals, preferences, problems and ways of solving clothing related problems of female undergraduate students of UNN. Study population comprised 2,966 regular female undergraduates. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Nine clothing goals of the female undergraduates were identified including to dress; understated in fitted tailored garments (94.5%), for investment (62.5%), informal in more relaxed clothes with roomy fit and layered look (77.5%), in soft textured garments for soft appearance (92.5%), in floral for soft appearance and in frilled fabrics (53.0%), to show individuality (76.0%) show self expression (52.0%), to seek attention (71.0%) in uncommon fashion (76.05). Preferences for fabric types were natural fibres (86.0%), solid patterns (59.0%), neutrals (82.0%). Jewelry accessories mostly preferred were diamond pearl (60.5%). Ribbons, pocket squares, lace, scarves (60.5%) and variety from several areas (59.5%). Nine clothing related problems and eight ways of minimizing the problems were identified. There is need for more education on clothing functions, relationship between clothing goals and preferences and their implications on personality of the female students.

Keywords: Clothing, Goals, Preferences, Female Undergraduates, Personality, wellbeing.

Introduction

Clothing and appearance play vital roles to wellbeing of individuals. Clothing is anything worn on the body to protect, adorn or to communicate an intent. Clothing includes garments, fabrics or cloth and accessories such as belts, scarves, jewelries, hats, and hand bags, shoes, even hair dos, among others. Various attempts have been made to explain the motivations behind people's clothing choices and decisions. Clothing is worn for various common reasons

including protection, modesty, occupational identity, attraction, social status and traditional identity. Four major theories have been used to explain the motivations behind individuals' clothing choices and utilization. They include modesty, immodesty, protection and adornment theories (Marshal et al, 2000). Modesty refers to what people feel is the proper way of clothing. Modesty theory stresses that clothes are worn solely to conceal or cover nakedness. It is opposed to the wearing of too gorgeous

clothing and to the wearing of too few clothing but aims at prevention of disease, disgust, shame and disapproval. Immodesty theory on the other hand states that clothing is used not to cover but to attract attention. Protection theory views physical and psychological protections as the major reasons for clothing. Adornment theory stresses that clothing is worn for beauty's sake. The emphasis is that people wear clothing to decorate or adorn the body according to the standard of their culture. People adorn themselves through clothing for psychological protection and for sexual attraction (Marshall et al, 2000).

Beyond clothing motivations, individuals consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally make clothing choices to achieve certain goals. Clothing goals refer to the aim, status, image or the 'person' an individual wants to portray or be and want their beholders to form impression about themselves. Among such goals are to dress: for investment, simple understated, for comfort, informal or casual, for attention seeking, for high fashion, to present soft appearance and for individuality (Marshall et al, 2000). Clothing goals have direct bearing on clothing preferences. Evaluating the characteristics of frequently worn clothing by individuals yields insightful information about clothing preferences. Factors in the preference of clothing include physical features of clothes including skin response, size and shape of the clothes, thermal comfort, and fit (looseness and over-sized), revealing levels and visual features; the wearers' self-appearance; and associative reasons and memories. Clothing preferences are also reflected in the type of fabric fibre (natural, synthetic, blends, unmatchable combinations),

colours (neutral, strong chroma, unusual), patterns (solid motifs, geometric, abstract, florals, odds), and accessories (pearls, minimal, bold, ribbons, variety from several areas. If an individual's clothing goal matches with clothing preferences, his or her fashion personality is easily identified.

Clothing is a non verbal communicator and silent language used by individuals as means for social interaction. Through an individual's clothing and appearance, people form impressions, make assumptions and pass valid judgments about the individual's personality traits, lifestyle, values, interests, emotional stability, social and economic status, educational, mental and moral status (Kim, Sharson and Nancy (2014). The theory of enclothed cognition states that clothes influence the wearer's psychological processes based on two variables; the meaning created for particular clothing and the concrete somatic sense that wearing clothing has (Smith, 2017). Results from various studies attest to a strong positive correlation between body image, clothing perceptions and fashion ((Markinde & Mcknney, 2020; Arooj, 2019). Wearing clothing that does not reflect individuals' fashion personality leads to disintegrated personality, cognitive dissonance or mistaken identity. Mistaken identity predisposes individuals to clothing related problems ranging from verbal rebuke, denial of attention in interpersonal relationships, disciplinary problems, sexual harassment, rape, ill-health and other clothing related problems including death (Hardcastle, 2019).

In Universities including University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), there are no established uniforms or dress codes

guiding students' clothing on campuses. Besides, there are presently no basic clothing education for the students. The students are therefore ill equipped for informed clothing decision making. They are left to wear whatever clothing they choose. The female undergraduates have specifically challenges.. They are often predisposed to various forms of clothing practices that could lead to abuses including sexual harassment. To address the problems, in some cases orientation programmes are organized or the freshmen on clothing norms. Available reports indicate that many female undergraduates ignorantly copy and wear indecent, reckless, seductive, scandalous and sexually provocative clothing. This is because majority of them are in their adolescence years, very crucial periods in which social, biological, economic, demographic events occur that set the stage for adult life (Akingba & Adeniyi, 1987). At adolescent years, fashion is an important domain of life as they copy and conform to group and peer standard of clothing. McCullough, Miller and Ford (1997) emphasized that by late adolescence, most young people become interested in selecting mates. At this period most of the females use clothing as method of enhancing their sexual attractiveness. They accomplish this through the exposure, concealment or emphasis of different parts of body using erotic symbolism or sexually provocative clothing. Female undergraduates of Nigerian universities fall into this category. Appropriate clothing choices that fit their personality will enable them develop a high sense of competence, belongingness, make them feel comfortable, happy and boost their psychological and general wellbeing. Clothing selections for various occasions

where school uniforms and dress codes are lacking are often challenging and somehow difficult for many students without correct knowledge of clothing goals and appropriate clothing options for their lifestyles and personalities. The university is the seat of education and citadel of learning. The female undergraduates are expected to be conversant with their clothing goals and matching clothing preferences that truly indicate who they are. They are expected to be models to the less educationally privileged counterparts. The reverse becomes the case in many occasions. Various clothing preference studies (Kwon, (1991), in Moody, Kinderman, & Sinha (2010) abound, but are outdated and not on female undergraduate students of UNN. Different authors have also discussed fashion personality related issues (Obong, Danso, Omari, Kuwinu-AdjaoHor, 2018; Loyd, 2019; Loius 2017, however quantitative and qualitative data on clothing goals are lacking. The present study sought to fill the gap.

Objective of the study

The broad objective of this study was to explore selected clothing related issues among female undergraduates of University Of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), Enugu State. Specifically, the study determined:

1. clothing goals of female undergraduates of UNN.
2. clothing preferences of female undergraduates of UNN.
3. clothing related problems of the female undergraduates of UNN
4. ways of solving clothing related problems encountered by female undergraduates of UNN.

Methodology

Area of the study: The area of the study was University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). It is a Federal University located in Nsukka town Enugu state and in the South East Nigeria. It has a campus in Enugu the state capital. The university has 15 Faculties and 102 academic departments. The school offers 82 undergraduate programs and 211 postgraduate programmes, (www.unn.edu.ng 2021). The main campus is in Nsukka. It has nine Faculties, School of post graduate studies, Institutes and Research centres.

Design of the study: The study adopted survey research design. It was a case study.

Population for the study: The population for the study was made up of all female undergraduates of University of Nigeria, numbering 15,382 (Academic Planning Unit of UNN 2021). The target population was however 2,966 female undergraduates living in the hostels at Nsukka campus. At the time of the study they were nine female undergraduate halls/hostels in Nsukka campus. Female undergraduates living off campus were not part of the study. There are no established dress codes guiding female undergraduates clothing on campus except faculties of Arts, Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine where few departments wear uniforms during school hours on selected days in a week.

Sample for the study: Convenience sampling technique was used for the study. With the help of the hall governors and hall executives, arrangements were made to meet with each of the female undergraduate halls after their hall meetings to solicit students' participation in the study. The total number of female students who attended the hall meetings and volunteered to participate in the

study was 200. These formed the sample for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection: Questionnaire was used to collect data. It was made up of five sections; A, B, C, D, E. Section A elicited personal data of the respondents. Section B focused on clothing goals. Section C dealt with clothing preferences and was adopted in Marshal et al (2000). Section E dealt with clothing related problems and ways of solving the problems encountered.

The instrument was face validated by three Clothing and Textiles experts in UNN. To test for the instrument reliability coefficient, 20 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 20 female undergraduate students living in the Hostel at the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC) after which Cronbach Alpha method was used to obtain the reliability co-efficient. A reliability co-efficient of 0.77 was obtained indicating relatively high reliability of the instruments.

Method of Data Collection: Two hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents by hand with the help of two research assistants. All the 200 copies were retrieved. This gave a hundred percent return.

Data Analysis Technique: Data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Percentage score of 50 and above () were taken as "agreed", while below 50 (50%) were regard as "disagreed".

Results

The data analysis on the personal data of respondents shows that majority (41.0%) of the female undergraduate students were between 19 - 21 years old followed by 22 -24 years old (40.5%). Few (9.5%) of them were above 24 years old, while very

few (9.0%), youngest respondents' age bracket was between 15 -18 years. Majority (95.5%) of the respondents were still single while few (4.5%) of them were married. There were no widower or divorced among the sample studied. The result revealed that all the students (100.0%) were Christians. Majority (31.5%) of them received between

₦11,000-15,000 monthly pocket money/income followed by 30% respondents who received between ₦6,500 - ₦10,00 for monthly pocket money. The least amount (less than 6,500) was received by 19.5% of the respondents while only 19.0% of the respondents received more than ₦15,000 monthly pocket money in school

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Responses on Clothing Goals of female Undergraduates in UNN

S/N	Clothing goals	Yes F (%)	No F (%)	Remark
	clothing goals are to:			
1	choose simple understated tailored/well fitted clothing	189 (94.5)	11 (5.5)	Agree
2	engage in investment dressing (high quality garment that will stand the test of time irrespective of cost)	125 (62.5)	75 (37.5)	Agree
3	choose casual clothing for comfort	30 (15.0)	170 (85.0)	Disagree
4	appear informal always in more relaxed clothes with roomy fit and layered look	155 (77.5)	45 (22.5)	Agree
5	always emphasize my femininity through soft textured fabric garments.	185 (92.5)	15 (7.5)	Agree
6	go for soft appearance in floral textured, frilled fabrics more than plain study fabrics and looks	106 (53.0)	94 (47.0)	Agree
7	dress uniquely to express individuality in fashion	152 (76.0)	48 (24.0)	Agree
8	use variety of clothing items in different combinations, colours, and designs to express myself and to reflect my mood and show off my fitness	104 (52.0)	96 (48.0)	Agree
9	choose fashion that attracts attention	142 (71.0)	58 (29.0)	Agree
10	go for high/extreme uncommon fashion irrespective of cost	152 (76.0)	48 (24.0)	Agree

Key: F = frequency, % = percentage, N (Number of respondents) = 200

Table 1 shows that, for majority (94.5%) of the respondents their clothing goals was to choose simple understated in simple elegant well fitted, tailored/well fitted clothing. A great number (85.0%) of the female students do not place emphasis on clothing for comfort but

majority (77.5%) of them would always like to appear informal in clothes with relaxed and roomy fit. For clothing goals that portray femininity, 92.5% and 53.0% of the respondents prefer soft textured fabrics as well as soft appearance in floral, frilled fabrics respectively.

Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages Responses on Clothing Preferences by Female Undergraduate Students of UNN

S/N	Clothing preferences	Yes F (%)	No F (%)	Remark
Fabric Types				
1	Likes natural fibre	172 (86.0)	28 (14.0)	Agree
2	Likes cotton, blends, lycra (Ease of wear)	154 (77.0)	46 (23.0)	Agree
3	Touchable angora, Cashmere	55 (27.5)	145 (72.5)	Disagree
4	Unmatched combinations	113 (56.5)	87(43.5)	Agree
5	Prefer extreme unusual fabrics	92(46.0)	108 (54.0)	Disagree
Fabric design/pattern				
6	Solid pattern, small motifs	118(59.0)	82(41.0)	Agree
7	Geometric design	100(50.0)	100(50.0)	Agree
8	Floral, tweeds fabric design	157(78.5)	43(21.5)	Agree
9	Odd pattern/design	45(22.50)	155(77.5)	Disagree
10	Abstract, trendy fabric design	83(41.5)	117(58.5)	Disagree
Fabric colour preferences				
11	Neutrals, cool colours	164 (82.0)	36 18.0)	Agree
12	Primary colours, neutrals	91(45.5)	109(54.5)	Disagree
13	Pastels	150(75.0)	50(25.0)	Agree
14	Likes combination of colours	128 (64.0)	72(36.0)	Agree
15	Black, white, strong chroma	23(11.5)	177(88.5)	Disagree
Accessories preferences				
16	Jewelry made with diamond, pearls, simple gold cufflinks	160 (80.0)	40 (20.0)	Agree
17	Simple hand-tooled leather belts, minimal sports watch	32 (16.0)	168(84.0)	Disagree
18	Ribbons, pocket squares, lace, scarves	121 (60.5)	79 (39.5)	Agree
19	Variety from several areas	119 (59.5)	81 (40.5)	Agree
20	Bold geometric or unusual tie pattern or jewelry	87 (43.5)	113(56.5)	Disagree

Key: F = frequency, % = percentage, N = 200

Table 2 shows that for fabric types, three out of five were scored highly by the respondents including fabrics of natural fibre (86.0%), cotton, fibre blends Lycra fabrics that offer ease of wear (77.0), and unmatched combinations (56.5%). Two fabric types; touchable angora, cashmere (72.5%) and extreme unusual fabrics (54.0%) were not preferred respectively. For fabric pattern, a good number (59.0%) preferred solid and small motif patterned

fabrics. Geometric design was half liked half disliked (50% 50% respectively). Floral, tweed fabric designs were liked (78.5%). Odd pattern design known was not preferred (77.5) as well as abstract, trendy fabrics (58.5%). Out of the five colour characteristics, three were liked and used by the respondents. They include neutral and cool colours (82.0%), pastels (75.0%), combination of colours (64.0%).

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages Responses Clothing Related Problems of Female Undergraduates in their Clothing Selection and Utilization.

S/ N	Problems	Yes F (%)	No F (%)	Remark
1	Inadequate finance for my clothing needs	90(45.0)	110 (55.0)	Disagree
2	Sometimes get confused about what to wear for lecture, formal or casual occasion	14(74.5)	51 (25.5)	Agree
3	Sometimes receive abuses or rebuke for the type of clothing worn by my parents	127(63.5)	73 (36.5)	Agree
4	Sometimes denied attention because of my appearance or clothing worn on campus	42 (36.0)	128 (64.0)	Disagree
5	Sometimes harassed by opposite sex on campus	45(22.2)	155 (77.5)	Disagree
6	Made mockery of because of my clothing	59 (29.5)	141 (70.5)	Disagree
7	Suffered cold as a result of body exposure	87 (43.5)	113(56.5)	Agree
8	Lack of adequate policy on students' clothing within the campus	124 (62.0)	76 (38.0)	Agree
9	Insufficient money to buy clothes or fashion en vogue my friends wear	103 (51.5)	97(48.5)	Agree

Key: F = frequency, % = percentage, N, = 200

Table 3 shows that majority (74.5%) of the female undergraduates get confused about what to wear for lectures, formal or casual occasions. More than half of them (63.0%) affirmed that they sometimes receive abuses or rebuke for the type of clothing worn by their parents. Lack of adequate policy on students' clothing within the campus attracted a very high score (62.0%) as well as insufficient money to buy fashion en vogue (51.5%)

respectively. Again, majority (55.0%), (63.5%), (64.0%), (77.5%), etc said that lack of awareness on their fashion personality, receive abuses or rebuke for the type of clothing worn sometimes, denied attention because of their appearance or clothing worn, sometimes harassed by opposite sex on the way, respectively, were not part of the problems encountered by them.

Table 4: Frequencies and Percentages Responses on Solutions to Clothing Related Problems Encountered by Female Undergraduate Students of UNN

S/ N	Problems	Yes F (%)	No F (%)	Remark
1	Regular education/orientation/seminar on clothing functions, goals and preferences	187(93.5)	13 (6.5)	Agree
2	Good clothing norms should be inculcated by the family	158(79.0)	42(21.0)	Agree
3	Students should select clothes that dignify/make them appear responsible	191(95.5)	9(4.5)	Agree
4	Clothes selected should cover sensitive parts and protect the body from harsh weather	187(93.5)	13(6.5)	Agree
5	Students should avoid wearing clothes that expose erotic part of their bodies	186(93.0)	14(7.0)	Agree
6	Costumes for sports, dramatic and dance displays should not be worn for lectures, social	158(76.0)	42(21.0)	Agree

	and religious activities			
7	School should develop and implement dress codes to guide students' clothing on campus	170(85.0)	30(15.0)	Agree
8	Durable and good texture fabrics should be encouraged	192(96.0)	8 (4.0)	Agree

Key: F = frequency, % = percentage, N = 200

Table 4 reveals that majority (93.5%) of respondents upheld that regular education and orientation on functions of clothing and their effects on personality by clothing professionals at school will help solve clothing related problems of female undergraduates. Majority also agreed that; good clothing norms should be inculcated from families (79%), students should select clothes that dignify/make them responsible (95.5%), clothes selected by students should cover sensitive parts and protect the body from harsh weather (93.5%).

Discussion

The study determined the clothing goals, preferences, problems and ways of solving clothing related problems of female undergraduate students of UNN. The results showed that majority of the female undergraduate students were between 19-21 years old. This age bracket falls within the adolescent years when clothing plays important roles in the life of female adolescents (McCullough, Miller & Ford 1997). The implication is that if not well guided, they are predisposed to wrong clothing selection and utilization that could lead them into danger. The majority of female undergraduates were single. All the respondents were Christians and received between ₦11,000-15,000 per month as pocket money/income.

The finding on clothing goals reveals that to always appear understated in simple elegant well fitted, tailored and

investment dressing (high quality garment that will stand the test of time) was the goal that attracted the highest score from the respondents. Marshal et al (2000) emphasized that individuals who would always wear clothing for those aims belong to classic fashion personality category. He stressed that such personality always go for garments made of natural fibre fabrics with small motifs, neutral colours and accessories made of pearls that give boost to their lifestyles. The respondent's preferences in Table 3 above are in line with such preferences. Murphy (2022) and Nayak (2022), agree that creating the right wardrobe for your lifestyle is the most important fashion goals you can achieve because you will have clothing that you love that reflects your personal style. Femininity clothing goal was also identified in the study through preference of soft textured fabric garments. This is in line with Loyd (2019) characteristics for romantic fashion personality. Another clothing goal of the subjects was to express individuality. This finding strongly supports that of Stolovy (2021) who explored the relationships between clothing practices, personality traits, and body image among Israeli women, using the Big Five personality traits model (NEO-FFI) and a body image measure (MBSRQ). It found that women with more openness to experience who seek fashion and individuality are more likely to exhibit an urban, sophisticated style of dress. The study concluded that these women are

less motivated by comfort and camouflage. Similar findings were made in the present study where the respondents clothing goal was not for comfort as seen by their low percentage score on the variable in Table 1. The finding is contrary to clothing professionals' postulations that comfort is the key to satisfactory clothing (Chen, Xie, Li, & Martinde & Mckinney, 2020). To go for high/extreme uncommon fashion irrespective of cost, to choose fashion that attracts attention, use variety of clothing items and accessories in different combinations, colours, and designs to express self and to reflect mood and show off fitness were also clothing goals of the female undergraduates. Fallon (2016) agreed that individuals whose clothing goals as stated above are not afraid to try trends or stand out in a crowd. They go through phases of different looks. They might go bohemian for a month then switch to 1950's and then surprise everyone with a nineties grunge look. They tend to use a variety of clothing items in different combinations to reflect their mood and to show off their fitness (Spillane & Sherlounk, 1995). They go through phases of different looks and their wardrobes may be full with piece from all sources. This could partly explain the reason behind female undergraduate students of UNN clothing goals and preferences.

Findings on clothing related problems of the female undergraduates reveal that only two out of nine were experienced. They included sometimes getting confused of what to wear for lecture, formal or casual occasions and sometimes receive abuses or verbal rebuke from parents because of the type of clothing worn. Various reports and study findings have been documented that reveal the

emotional, physical, and health consequences of individuals' clothing and appearance misidentification and misrepresentation to include anger, denial of attention in interpersonal relationships, sexual harassment, rape and even death (Shana et al 2021; Loyd 2019; Louis 2017). These have implications for the female undergraduates physical, social, mental and psychological health. The findings also revealed that the female undergraduates approved of all eight identified solutions to the clothing related problems including: regular education/orientation/seminar programmes on clothing functions, goals and preferences on campus is imperative; good clothing norms should be inculcated by the family; students should select clothes that dignify/make them appear responsible; Clothes selected should cover sensitive parts and protect the body from harsh weather; students should avoid wearing clothes that expose erotic parts of their bodies; costumes for sports, dramatic and dance displays should not be worn for lectures, social and religious activities; school administration should develop and implement dress codes to guide students' clothing on campus and inculcating good clothing norms by families as well as being selective in choice of accessories among others. The desirable clothing norms have been extensively discussed and documented by Nayak (2020), Hardcastle, (2019).

Conclusion

The results of the present study indicated that female undergraduates of UNN had wide range of clothing goals ranging from to dress in simple understated well fitted tailored, investment, high/extreme

uncommon fashion to fashion that attracts attention to express self and to reflect their moods and show off their fitness. They make clothing preferences some of which correspond to their clothing goals while others are unrelated to their goals. Major clothing related problems experienced included getting confused of what to wear for lectures, formal or casual occasions and sometimes receive abuses or verbal rebuke from parents and others because of type of clothing worn. The study identified eight different ways to proffer solutions to the problems including to organize regular education or orientation programmes on clothing functions, clothes for different occasions, formulation of dress code on campus and families to inculcate good clothing norms among others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Female undergraduate students should be constantly sensitized through orientation programmes for freshmen on issues relating to clothing.
2. Competitions or beauty contests should, occasionally, be organized on campus and awards giving should be strictly based on decent appearance.

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