

Factors Influencing Clothing Selection Practices of Students in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State.

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Abstract

This study determined the factors influencing clothing selection practices of students in tertiary institutions in Lagos state. The population for the study consisted of one hundred and ninety-nine Home Economics Students. The entire population was used for the study since it was a manageable size. A Validated Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analyzed using mean. Findings revealed the clothes commonly worn by students in tertiary institutions are stimulating dresses. Also students' clothing selection practices are influenced by psychological, financial, religious and cultural factors which are determined by the students' values. It was recommended among others that there should be seminars on individuals' values and their impact on the society.

Keywords: Clothing, Selection, Practices, Female, Undergraduates

Introduction

The problem of youth's choice of clothing has been a topic of major discussion in recent times. While others think one's dressing should not bother anyone, some other persons hold the belief that one's appearance should be acceptable in the setting he or she belongs. As a trader chooses clothing to match the activities of the day, so should a students' dress code suit the school environment. Dress code, according to Paulyn (2008), is a set of rules, especially in schools and offices, indicating the approved manner of dressing. Unfortunately however, campuses of higher

institutions today have fostered a climate for the display of seductive dresses especially by the females. Kanellakis (2007) stated that making sure one's clothing fits properly should be the first step in dressing. Manwa, Ndamba, and Lokadhia, (2010) opined that one's choice of clothing should ensure appropriate size, shape, style and colour. Lynn (2004) emphasized that the key points that are very significant for clothing choices should be knowledge of one's figure type, body shape and the physical characteristics to emphasize and those not to. In line with this, Biecher, Keaton and Pollman (2012)

mentioned that examining how clothes fit; in terms of colour, harmony, line, balance, proportion, emphasis and rhythm should be a concern to students.

Odeleye (2010) stated that in making clothing choices, adolescents are demonstrating awareness that a style or choice of appearance has meaning. Rowland-Warne (2012) corroborated this by asserting that clothing in any culture is a means of communication. This assertions, point to the fact that clothing conveys messages when members of a society who share a given culture have learned to associate types of clothing with customary meaning. Through this customary association, certain types of clothes become symbols of mood, social role, socio-economic status or political class. Dibley (2004) opined that values play a dominant role in guiding choices; people choose actions that produce desired consequences and minimise undesired consequences. Values are self-organizing principles that guide thoughts and actions and shape individual's preferences and choices (Kaiser, 2008). Villani (2010) asserted that values are social cognitions that summarize adaptive behaviours which are in two categories; internal and external values. External values are developed from life experiences and learnt from a variety of sources including peers, relatives, personal experience or learnt indirectly via the media. According to Goldsmith, Heitymeyer and Freiden. (2001) media has the ability to teach, which in turn

may directly or subtly influence the user's behaviour. Media are used as a source for gaining knowledge and are known to significantly shape value systems (Villani, 2010). Dixon (2007) mentioned that the media does not only influence choice of clothing but students' way of life. If not closely monitored, young people can suffer a vast array of negative effects from media exposure. McKinney, Legette-Traylor, Kincade and Holloman (2011) opined that media influences the subconscious mind of the masses. Most female students spend money trying to achieve the look they constantly see in adverts on media.

The family, particularly parents, have a significant influence on students' choice of clothing. Okwu (2006) emphasised that parents have a primary role to play in their wards' choice of clothing through ensuring adequate supervision and control of children to inculcate good value systems in them. It is assumed that family socialization transmits values, norms, morals, and beliefs from one generation to the next. Clothing is a form of expressing one's culture (Lennon and Davis, 2013). This suggests that the values instilled by family at an early age continue to influence individuals into adulthood. Through socialization, peers play an important role in influencing young people's choice of clothing. In line with this, Kanellakis (2007) stated that individuals are usually receptive to the various social influences around them. According to Meyer and Anderson (2012) social influences are

strong variables in the susceptibility of individuals to peer and reference groups. Peer acceptance or approval of an individual's apparel is important (Corley, 2007). A peer group is made up of members who have equal standing within the group. Wilson and MacGillivray (2012) asserted that most people feel a strong need to fit in with other members of their peer group. Some will even adjust their habits and clothes to conform to the standards of the group. This is because clothing that does not conform to the group's standards and expectations may be criticized. (Meyer and Anderson, 2012) mentioned that in most schools, there is evidence of group affiliation and conformity in apparel behaviour.

Making informed clothing choice is an essential part of functioning independently as an adult in the society. Activities specifically directed towards helping students learn to make clothing choices, however, are typically neglected in educational programmes for students (Odeleye, 2010). Studies indicated that higher institutions of learning in Nigeria have been fighting against other social vices such as occultism, examination malpractice, and drug abuse but issues relating to choice and selection of clothing have not received comparable attention. There are few researches and documents available to unravel the mystery behind undergraduate students' choice of clothing especially in Lagos State. This necessitated the need for the study.

Purpose of the Study: The main purpose of the study was to investigate the factors influencing clothing selection practices of students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

Specifically, the study determined:

1. kinds of clothes commonly worn by the students.
2. factors influencing the student's clothing selection practices.
3. sources of the students clothing information
4. ways of improving the students clothing selection practices.

Research Questions: The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the kinds of clothes commonly worn by the students?
2. What factors determine the clothing selection practices of the students?
3. What are the students' sources of clothing information?
4. In what ways can the students clothing selection practices be improved upon?

Methodology

Area of the Study: The study was carried out in four tertiary institutions offering Home Economics Education in Lagos State.

Design of the Study: The research design adopted for this study was descriptive research design.

Population for the Study: The total population was 199 Home Economics students in four tertiary institutions in Lagos State. In University of Lagos (Unilag), 54 students; in Federal College of Education (Technical)

Akoka [FCE(T)A], 78 students; in Adeniran Ogunsaya College of Education (AOOCOED), 46 students while in Yaba College of Technology, affiliated to University of Nigeria, Nsukka [YCT(UNN)], there are 21 students. The entire population was used for the study since it was a manageable size.

Instrument for Data Collection: Questionnaire and focus group discussion were used for data collection. A questionnaire titled "Factors Influencing Students Clothing Selection Practices (FISCSP)" was developed by the researchers and used for data collection. It was divided into two sections. Section A sought for demographic data of the respondents of the respondents while section B contained information based on the purposes of the study and research questions. The scoring of the items were based on a 4-point scale as follows: Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4, Agreed (A) =3, Disagreed (D) = 2,

Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1. Three Home Economics lecturers subjected the instrument to face validation. Cronbach Alpha method was used in determining the internal consistency of the instrument and it yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.89.

Method of Data Collection: One hundred and ninety-nine copies of the questionnaire were distributed to students. Efforts were made to ensure that the items were completed correctly. The questionnaires were retrieved immediately. All the questionnaires were returned showing 100% return rate. The researchers also had a focus group discussion with the students.

Method of Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using mean. Mean ratings from 2.5 and above were considered as agreed item while mean ratings of 2.49 and below were considered as "disagreed" item.

Results:

Table 1: Mean Responses on Kinds of Clothes Commonly Worn by Students

S/N	Clothes Commonly Worn by Students	Mean	Remark
1.	Fitted Shirts and Blouses	3.57	Agreed
2.	Loose Fitting Shirts/ Blouses	3.89	Agreed
3.	Full Skirts (Flare, Gathered and Pleated)	1.06	Disagreed
4.	Short Skirts	3.42	Agreed
5.	Long Skirts	1.88	Disagreed
6.	Pencil Skirts (Tight Fitting)	3.70	Agreed
7.	Pencil Trousers	2.98	Agreed
8.	Sleeveless Blouses (Spaghetti and Strapless)	2.58	Agreed
9.	Flowing Gown/Empire Gown (Fitted at the top/ loose bottom/ floor length)	3.21	Agreed
10.	Baby Doll Gown (Fitted at the top and knee length)	2.96	Agreed
11.	Mini Gown (Fitted all through)	2.55	Agreed
12.	Transparent Fabrics (See through fabrics)	2.62	Agreed

Table 1 shows that items 3 and 5 were disagreed upon with mean 1.06 and 1.88 respectively as clothes commonly worn by students, while all other items were agreed upon as clothes commonly worn by students in tertiary institutions.

Table 2: Factors that Influence Students Clothing Selection Practices

S/N	Factors the Influence Students Clothing Selection Practices	Mean	Remark
1. Psychological Factors			
a)	Dress like friends in order to belong to a group	3.00	Agreed
b)	Uncomfortable when clothes are different from all others	3.78	Agreed
c)	Wear clothes according to mood	3.29	Agreed
d)	Wear clothes that makes one feel confident	3.03	Agreed
e)	Feel more friendly and out-going in certain clothes	2.67	Agreed
f)	Avoid certain clothes which do not make one distinctive	3.90	Agreed
2. Financial Factors			
a)	First to buy new styles in fashion	2.99	Agreed
b)	Keep my wardrobe up-to-date to feel accepted	3.87	Agreed
c)	Cost of clothing articles is not a hindrance to choice of clothing	3.44	Agreed
d)	Change clothes according to fashion trends	2.99	Agreed
g)	Buy clothes with well known labels	3.20	Agreed
e)	Buy, plan and prepare clothes to be worn in advance	2.77	Agreed
3. Religious/Cultural factors			
a)	Choose clothes based on religious background	3.00	Agreed
b)	Wear only clothes approved by parents	2.50	Agreed
c)	Wear only clothes that the society approves	3.00	Agreed
d)	Dress decently even when different from all others		

Table 2 revealed that all the items mentioned were agreed upon as factors influencing students clothing selection practices. However the item with the least mean (2.50) showed that majority of the students do not wear only clothes approved by their parents.

Table 3: Mean Responses on Sources of Clothing Information

S/N	Sources of Clothing Information	Mean	Remark
1.	Television	2.66	Agreed
2.	Fashion Magazines & Catalogues	3.98	Agreed
3.	Friends	2.85	Agreed
4.	Seamstress	3.00	Agreed
5.	Internet	3.32	Agreed
6.	Fashion Shows	2.63	Agreed
7.	Social Networking Sites	3.01	Agreed

Table 3 indicated that all the items were agreed upon as sources of clothing information for the students. Though, item 2 which have the highest mean is the most valuable source of clothing information for the students.

Table 4: Ways of Improving Students Clothing Selection Practices

S/N	Ways of Improving Students Clothing Selection Practices	Mean	Remark
1.	Use of dress codes in schools	3.59	Agreed
2.	Lecturers not allowing indecently dressed students into classrooms	3.00	Agreed
3.	Gatemen not allowing indecently dressed students into campuses	3.11	Agreed
4.	Parents monitoring clothes worn by their children	2.09	Agreed
5.	Public Enlightenment on the implications of indecent dressing	2.70	Agreed
6.	Students should choose clothes that make them comfortable	3.00	Agreed
7.	Students should choose clothes that depict their moral values	3.12	Agreed

Table 4 shows that all the items were agreed upon as different ways of improving students clothing selection practices with item 1 having the highest mean.

Discussion of Finding

Findings showed that flimsy and stimulating clothing such as transparent fabrics, fitted shirts, short skirts and the likes are commonly worn by students in tertiary institutions. The students' choice of clothing confirms the findings of Lynn (2004) that shifting dress styles in the early to mid-20th century, which exposed more skin and revealed a person's figure, created new definition in beauty. This could be attributed to the fact that they are young group of people and could also be as a result of the values or importance placed on such clothing which they belief affects their appearance. This corroborates Dibley, (2004) that values play a dominant role in guiding choices of consumers in choosing actions that

produce desired consequences and undesired consequences. Also in line with Lennon & Davis (2013), values affect the choice and behavior of an individual. He further stated that an individual choice of clothing is determined by his values which might result from the society that he or she lives. In a focus group discussion with some female students in an attempt to find out why they chose to wear what they wear, a student said she feels good and confident when part of the sensitive parts of the body is exposed and usually wish others would appreciate that. Another student said this is their time and should be allowed to enjoy it. These findings are contrary to Biecher, Keaton and Pollman (2012) who mentioned that examining how clothes fit; in terms of colour, harmony, line, balance, proportion, emphasis and rhythm should be a concern to students.

Findings revealed that the students clothing selection practices are influenced by psychological, financial

and religious/cultural factors. Psychological factors include self-consciousness, self-confidence, self-fulfillment, excitement, sense of accomplishment, fashion leadership, security, fun and enjoyment and spending behaviour. This collaborates Meyer and Anderson (2012), who opined that social influences are strong variables in the susceptibility of individuals to peer and reference groups. In a focus group discussion with the students, they reported being more careful in their choice of clothing checking themselves in the mirror before leaving home. A large portion of this group was concerned about making a good impression; yet they were not overly concerned of what others thought of them. These findings support Furby's, view cited in Dibley (2004), that clothing in particular, was seen as a symbolic expression of who one is.

Findings showed that financial factors also act as influencer of students clothing selection practices. Africans are always willing to spend money to acquire the best which may be perceived by others as a sign of success. This causes them to buy clothes more often. Some might not even consider the fitting in terms of figure type and the likes. All that they are interesting in is to go by the fashion trend, to show off their socio-economic status among other reasons. This confirms Corley (2007) that money has a great influence in clothing selection practices and that brand name apparel is believed to show ones socio-economic status. On

religious and cultural factors, findings revealed that some peoples' choice of clothing is dependent on the value they place on their religious background and societal ethics. This supports Dibley (2004) that peoples' cultural and religious beliefs dictate their clothing selection choices. While some people might find it difficult to put on certain fabrics or styles, some feels very comfortable with such. Also, Lennon and Davis (2013) opined that clothing is a form of expressing one's cultural background. Okwu (2006) emphasised that parents have a primary role to play in their wards' choice of clothing through ensuring adequate supervision and control of children to inculcate good value systems in them.

Findings also showed that peer influences affects student's clothing choices. Wilson and MacGillivray (2012) asserted that most people feel a strong need to fit in with other members of their peer group. Some will even adjust their habits and clothes to conform to the standards of the group. Students who want to belong choose clothing to fit the group they are associated with for peer acceptance or approval. This is because clothing that does not conform to the group's standards and expectations may be criticized.

Findings on students' sources of clothing information indicated that all the forms of media itemized were agreed upon as sources of students' clothing information. This shows that the media has an influence on clothing selection. This supports the views of

Manwa, Ndamba and Lokadhia (2010) that the media presents new ideas and designs in clothing, which could affect the cognitive structure network of individual thoughts either positively or negatively.

Results revealed that all the items on ways of improving students clothing selection practices were agreed upon. During an interaction with some of the students, we were made to understand that students believe they dress decently but casually. The students mentioned that clothes for school should be casual wears instead of formal. This finding is substantiated by Okwu (2006) that certain type of dressing in public places such as school campuses are unsuitable and inappropriate. However, Odeleye (2010) mentioned that activities specifically directed towards helping students learn to make informed clothing choices, however, are typically neglected in educational programmes for students. Hence, the choice of students' clothing should be founded more on cogent and tenable reasons such as: upholding academic standards, enforcement of morality, decency and value.

Conclusion

Clothes commonly worn by students in tertiary institutions are casual, flimsy and stimulating dresses. These clothing choices are attributed to several factors such as psychological, financial, religious, cultural and peer influence. Media such as fashion magazines, internet, social network

sites, seamstress and the likes are sources of students' clothing information. However, varying ways can be used to improve students' clothing selection practices such as use of dress codes in different departments in schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. School authorities should institute an orientation programme to educate students on the acceptable choice of clothing on campus. Seminars should be organised for students on regular intervals, on various types of clothing and the occasions suitable for each.
2. Since parents have a primary role to play in their wards' choice of clothing, they should ensure adequate supervision and control of children and inculcate good values and moral standards in them. Values instilled by family at an early age will continue to influence individuals into adulthood.
3. Students should be encouraged to access suitable media for clothing information. Information from media should be scrutinised and positive ones adopted so as not to suffer a vast array of negative effects from media exposure.
4. Appropriate measures such as use of dress codes for different departments should be put in place to correct and improve students' dressings in schools.

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