

Indecent Dressing in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions: A Case Study of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State

Azuka A. Nzoiwu

Department of Fine and Applied Arts,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria
Email: aa.nzoiwu@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

The trend of indecent dressing appears to have continued unabated as students; males and females alike are still found dressed indecently in the lecture hall and even beyond. Thus, the objective of the study was to find out the causes and consequences of indecent dressing in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The sample of this study was made up of 300 undergraduate students obtained via accidental sampling technique. Data collected with self-developed questionnaire were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that indecent dressing among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka is caused peer pressure, poor parenting, poor self-worth, internet addiction, a feeling of wanting to belong as well as fading societal values. The finding of the study further indicated that sexual harassment, devaluation of a lady/guy, tendency for a lady to be lured into prostitution and poor academic achievement are some of the consequences of indecent dressing among undergraduate students. It was recommended among others that University administrators should see to the legalization and implementation of dress code that portrays decency so as to address the menace of indecent dressing.

Key Words: Indecent dressing, Undergraduate students, causes and consequences.

Introduction

The university is seen as the citadel of higher learning. It is the apex of education in Nigeria. It is a place where students who were successful in their Joint Admission and Matriculation (JAMB) and Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE), gain admission at the expiration of their secondary education. Thus, so much is expected of any undergraduate student who is exposed to university education. One of the expectation is that one who has been exposed to university education ought to be found worthy in character and learning. However, revelations from recent events point to the fact while students place premium on the learning aspect of university education, the aspect that border on character appears to have been relegated to the background. This reflects itself in various ways; indecent dressing inclusive.

Originally, indecent dressing was not a common sight in Africa. It, however, made inroads into Africa and seems to have stuck as a result of colonialism and the evolution of modernity (Omorogiuwa, 2020). In other words, indecent dressing was alien to the African culture until modernity took over. Indecent dressing is the putting on of clothes that are provocative. It refers to any form of adornment that seeks to expose any private part of the body. Kwanuba, Subaba and Filgona (2020) defined indecent dressing as an unacceptable and provocative manner of dressing that is not in conformity to the students' society or culture. Indecent dressing is a mode of dressing or appearance which is deemed disruptive and distractive (Akpan, 2018). In the view of Oluwadare, Otunaiya, and Opeoluwa (2020), indecent dressing is any style dressing that is at variance with the socially acceptable dress mode in a specific community of reference. Fareo and Jackson (2018) pointed out that indecent dressing entails that the attitude of someone be it male or female who dresses to display parts of the body such as the breasts, buttocks, or even underwear that otherwise is supposed to be covered. Instructively, it is not indecent to go nude in one's bedroom, bathroom or even the labour room. However, it typifies indecency for one to go naked outside of the afore-mentioned confinement. Thus, indecent dressing connotes the exposure of private parts of the body for public consumption. It is interesting to note that there are forms of indecent dressing.

Instructively, forms of indecent dressing include: trousers and skirts worn below the waist (sagging); low-neck blouses exposing the cleavages or breasts; transparent attires, mini – skirts, sex/violence-

displaying attires/adornments among others. Similarly, Coji (2014) noted that the principal characteristics of indecent dressing include: “strapless garments, bum shorts, short blouses, miniskirts/gowns, cleavage shirts, drooping of pants, and hair colouring by males and even girls” In the past, females were seen to be more culpable than their male counterparts in matters of indecent dressing, but recently, their male counterparts are making frantic efforts to bridge the gap as they go almost nude while referring to sagging as fashion (Oyeleye, 2022). In other words, indecent dressing is not a function of gender as both male and females dress indecently. Sadly, most tertiary institutions in Nigeria are characterized with a trend of indecent dressing among their students (Ako & Igbo, 2013). Among the tertiary institutions facing the scourge of indecent dressing is Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

The observation of the researcher as a lecturer of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka is to the effect that the trend of indecent dressing among university students is assuming a worrisome dimension. More so, the university authorities have taken steps to stem the tide of indecent dressing among its students such as turning back students who are indecently dressed at the entrance of the institution. This is rather commendable given indecent dressing poses a huge source of distraction to the students and lecturers alike in the course of instructional delivery. Nevertheless, the trend of indecent dressing appears to have continued unabated as students; males and females alike are still found dressed indecently in the lecture hall and even beyond. In view of the foregoing, it is interesting to find out the causes and consequences of indecent dressing in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Causes of Indecent Dressing in Universities

There are many causative variables of indecent dressing among university students. This is rather apt given that the cause of indecent dressing among male students may differ from that their female counterparts. More so, indecent dressing appears to have been more associated with the female gender than the male gender. Many adolescents that are given to indecent dressing do so as a result of their exposure to media, poor parenting/moral upbringing, peer pressure as well as desire to keep up with a particular social class (Oga, 2016; Sola, 2018; Omorogiuwa, 2018).

Parental disposition. Parents are seen as the child’s first teacher. This, to all intents and purposes, means that parents play a very vital role in the upbringing of the child. The expectation is that parents model behaviours that are worthy of emulation by children. Apparently, children learn more by observation than by instruction. Example is better than precept. Thus, the trend of indecent dressing seen among university students can hardly be separated from their parents’ disposition towards indecent dressing. Corroborating the afore-mentioned assertion, Egbule (2013) noted that children blossom or wither as result of their parents’ choices. This means that parents must be seen as living above board.

Influence of the Internet. The evolution of information and communication technology (ICT) which is birthed the use of internet has brought about immense changes in students’ perception of dressing. It has shaped their perception so much so that those that are addicted to it take on the dress code of celebrities that they see and follow on social media. Sadly, some of these celebrities, though popular, are not good moral compasses to follow. Not a few students have the computer as the extension of their fingers. Thus, in keeping with current trend that appears to promote indecency in dressing, students tend to lend themselves to indecent dressing.

Peer Pressure: A child without solid moral upbringing is bound to be vulnerable to peer group influences. A need to belong and a fear of rejection have culminated in young adolescents’ involvement in unethical or immoral behavior without their knowledge (Okafor & Uwalaka, 2021). Peer pressure makes it difficult for a students to say no even in the midst of apparent vice. In contrast, a student with proper parental education is bound to possess the innate capacity to stand against social vices such as indecent dressing that threatens their moral and emotional health.

Erosion of societal values: Environmental stimulation has a way of either positively or negatively affecting a students’ growth. A student is an active member of a society. Thus, the happenings in the society to which a student is exposed has a way of influencing their conduct; manner of dressing inclusive. Thus, moral vices in the society such as corruption, indiscipline, prostitution among others take its toll on a student’s behavior. In similar vein, Ewulo (2016) observed that youngsters are swiftly

picking up on what they see transpire in their society. Within the Nigerian context, most of its rich values appears to be eroding way as a result of non-patronage and modernity (Sola, 2018). Contemporary youths have a hard time identifying these values. For instance, decent dress patterns appear to be paving way to the skimpy and seductive adornments that appear to be a current fad in recent times. Shockingly, some students who dress indecently do so out of blissful ignorance since nothing or nobody cautions them otherwise.

Poor self-worth. Poor self-worth could account for the trend of indecent dressing among university students. For instance, some students erroneously believe that the exposure of sensitive parts of their body will attract the opposite sex to themselves either for financial gain, good grades or for sexual satisfaction. Some female students who dress provocatively could do so to attract their male lecturers to make them do their bidding which includes giving them ‘sexually-transmitted grades’

Consequences of Indecent Dressing in Universities

The consequences of indecent dressing in Nigerian universities are far reaching. For instance, Ahmed (2015) averred that indecent dressing devalues a woman, while giving men the impression of carelessness. This is because, while it exposes what forms a woman’s pride, it makes the man look irresponsible. There are other possible consequences of indecent dressing in Nigerian universities. These include: sexual harassment, unwanted pregnancy and poor academic performance.

Sexual Harassment: Indecent dressing is one of the key consequences of indecent dressing. Supporting this claim, Omorogiuwa (2018) pointed out that indecent dressing is one of the commonest causes of assault as well as sexual harassment in society. It goes without saying that ladies who are given to indecent dressing are potential victims of sexual harassment. This is because, males are moved by visual stimulation; what males see entice them to the point of exploration. Thus, indecent dressing especially from the females is bound to attract randy males who will attempt to rape the ladies for sexual pleasure.

Unwanted Pregnancy: Indecent dressing among female students may make them victims of rape by male students and the logical consequence could unwanted pregnancy. Unwanted pregnancy may impair a students’ academic progress. Worse still, it could lead to their dropping out of school due to the shame of having a child out of wedlock or the stress of combining school with pregnancy.

Poor Academic Performance: Some university students who dress indecently tend to place their looks over and above their studies. This is because their primary focus is how to look trendy even if it is at the expense of their studies. Expectedly, some of them end up having carryovers; some even end up as over-stay students. Confirming this, Oga (2016) noted that much as some students graduate with poor grades, others may not even graduate because they have outlived their studentship for pass some required courses within a stipulated time.

Prostitution: There is the tendency for students who dress indecently to be lured into prostitution. This is apparently so, given that those who are into such vice see such students as willing tools for prostitution. Most students that are given to indecent dressing are presumed to be single and available for sexual exploitation for the maintenance of their life style or dress sense. Some of these students, as noted by Oli (2018), become armed robbers, prostitutes or home/marriage disruptors.

There are gaps in the findings of some researchers on the causes of indecent dressing among university students. For instance, Akpan (2018) used descriptive survey research design to investigate indecent dressing and its effects on 224 undergraduate students of University of Uyo and found that mass media significantly contributed to indecent dressing and that students perceived indecent dressing to have a significant negative implication on individuals. Similarly, Adebayo and Opute (2022) used descriptive survey research design to ascertain the problem of indecent dressing among 250 undergraduate students in the University of Benin and found that poor parenting to societal acceptance of indecent dressing as a norm greatly affected youths’ morality in the society. The deduction from the foregoing studies is that much as the two studies looked at the causes of indecent dressing in universities, none of them, explicitly and empirically beamed the searchlight on the effects of indecent dressing among university students. More so, none of the studies, to the knowledge of the researcher focused on Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Thus, it is with this understanding that the researcher deemed it expedient to use a self-developed questionnaire to find out from 300 undergraduate students, the causes and consequences

of indecent dressing in Nigeria tertiary institutions: A case study of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. In a bid to proffer answers to the afore-mentioned questions, the following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the causes of indecent dressing among undergraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?
2. What are the consequences of indecent dressing on undergraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

RESULTS

Table 1: Mean Scores of Respondents on the Causes of Indecent Dressing among Undergraduate Students.

S/N	I perceive that indecent dressing is caused by:	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Peer pressure.	3.05	0.73	Agree
2.	Poor parenting.	2.79	0.71	Agree
3.	Poor self-worth.	2.64	0.63	Agree
4.	Internet addiction.	3.13	0.75	Agree
5.	A feeling of wanting to belong.	2.96	0.64	Agree
6.	Fading societal value.	2.57	0.60	Agree
7.	Demonic influence.	2.48	0.52	Disagree
	Cluster Mean.	2.86	0.65	Agree

Table 1 shows that item 4 with a mean score of 3.13 has the highest mean score. This indicates that most of the respondents agreed that internet addiction is a major cause of indecent dressing. This is followed by item 1 with a mean score of 3.05 which shows that a good number of respondents are of the view that peer pressure causes internet addiction. This is followed by items 5, 2, 3 and 6 with mean scores of 2.96, 2.79, 2.64 and 2.57. Item 7 with lowest mean score of 2.48 shows that the least number of the respondents are of the opinion that demonic influence causes indecent dressing.

Table 2: Mean Scores of Respondents on the Consequences of Indecent Dressing on Undergraduate Students.

S/N	I perceive that the following are the consequences of indecent dressing:	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Sexual harassment.	2.92	0.80	Agree
2.	Tendency to be influenced to join cult.	2.39	0.61	Disagree
3.	Devalues a lady/guy.	2.54	0.68	Agree
4.	Tendency for a lady to be lured into prostitution.	2.83	0.76	Agree
5.	Poor academic achievement.	2.70	0.73	Agree
6.	Tendency to steal.	2.38	0.62	Disagree
7.	Unexpected pregnancy.	2.42	0.58	Disagree

Table 2 shows that item 1 with a mean score of 2.92 has the highest mean score. This indicates that most of the respondents agreed that sexual harassment is a major consequence of indecent dressing. This is followed by item 4 with a mean score of 2.83 which shows that a good number of respondents are of the view that tendency for a lady to be lured into prostitution is a consequence of indecent dressing. This is followed by items 5 and 3 with mean scores of 2.70 and 2.54. Items 6, 2 and 7 have low mean scores of 2.38, 2.39 and 2.42; showing that few respondents are of the opinion that tendency to steal, tendency to join cult and unexpected pregnancy are the consequences of indecent dressing.

Discussion

The revelation of the findings of the study is to the effect that indecent dressing among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka is caused peer pressure, poor parenting, poor self-worth, internet addiction, a feeling of wanting to belong as well as fading societal values. Apparently, an undergraduate students with good parental upbringing will likely not be predisposed to indecent dressing as the parents, being their first teachers would have taught them the virtues of decency. More so, addiction to internet exposes its addicts to different celebrities who are given to indecent dressing. These celebrities are sometimes perceived as the role models of these students. Thus, the students, in a bid to imitate their role models, get into indecent dressing. Peer pressure, poor self-worth, a feeling of wanting to belong and fading societal values have a way of predisposing students to indecent dressing. This is to the extent that when students watch their peers in school dress indecently, there is the tendency to want to associate with them. This, to all intent and purposes could be linked to the fact that the students lack self-worth and societal values. The findings of the current study are in agreement with Akpan (2018) who found that mass media significantly contributed to indecent dressing. In further agreement with the findings of the current study, Adebayo and Opute (2022) that poor parenting to societal acceptance of indecent dressing as a norm are causative factors of indecent dressing among undergraduate students. Going further, Oga (2016); Sola (2018) and Omorogiuwa (2018) observed that many adolescents that are given to indecent dressing do so as a result of their exposure to media, poor parenting/moral upbringing, peer pressure as well as desire to keep up with a particular social class.

The findings of the study further revealed that sexual harassment, devaluation of a lady/guy, tendency for a lady to be lured into prostitution and poor academic achievement are some of the consequences of indecent dressing among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This may not be separated from the fact that females who are given to indecent dressing are usually the victims of sexual harassment from randy male students and even lecturers. More so, female students that are given to indecent dressing run a risk of being devalued as they are seen as those who have no sense of pride for their body. Thus, it becomes easy to lure them into prostitution as their dress code gives the impression that they are favourably disposed to any act of prostitution. Ultimately, students that are given to indecent dressing have a likelihood of not doing well in their academics as they indulge themselves in other vices that rarely give them time for their studies. Corroborating the findings of the current study, Omorogiuwa (2018) pointed out that sexual harassment is one of the commonest effects of indecent dressing in the society. In further consonance with the current study, Ahmed (2015) averred that indecent dressing devalues a woman, while giving men the impression of carelessness. This is because, while it exposes what forms a woman's pride, it makes the man look irresponsible.

Conclusion

From the research findings, it is rather apparent that the absence of dress code has created an alarming rate of indecent dressing. It goes without saying that indecent dressing among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka is a huge source of worry to relevant stakeholders in the university community. Consequent upon the finding of the study, it was apparent that peer pressure, poor parenting, poor self-worth, internet addiction, a feeling of wanting to belong as well as fading societal values. It was further concluded that the consequences of indecent dressing are far-reaching and include: sexual harassment, devaluation of a lady/guy, tendency for a lady to be lured into prostitution and poor academic achievement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations were made. These include:

1. University administrators should see to the legalization and implementation of dress code that portrays decency so as to address the menace of indecent dressing.
2. Parent should teach their children/wards moral education since it is evident that indecent dressing bothers so much on morality. This is with a view to talking the incidence of indecent dressing among their wards.
3. Guidance counsellors should schedule counselling sessions for undergraduate students on the need to prioritize decency in their dress sense.

References

- Adebayo, P.A. & Opute, R.A. (2022). The problem of indecent dressing among undergraduate students in the University of Benin. *Benin Journal of Social Work and Community Development*, 5(1), 51-61.
- Ahmed, M.A. (2015). *Indecent dressing on campuses*. Retrieved on 22/12/21 from <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/daily/education>.
- Akpan, G.E. (2018). Effects of indecent dressing on undergraduate students of University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria. *International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health*, 5(2), 359-365.
- Ako, J. A. & Igbo H. I. (2013). Moral discipline issues among tertiary institution students in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Educational Psychologist*, 11(1), 198-205.
- Coji, R. (2014). *Dangers of indecent dressing*. Retrieved on 12/12/21 from <http://www.nico.gov.ng/index.php/category-list-2/270-dangers-of-indecent-dressing>.
- Egbule E. O. (2013). Counselling for appropriate dressing on campuses of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. *Delta Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 1 (1), 77-83.
- Ewulo, M. O. (2016). Students' dress code and indecent dressing. *Journal of Education and Policy Review*, 8(2), 21-26.
- Fareo, O. D. & Jackson, J. (2018). Indecent dressing among students of tertiary institutions in Adamawa State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Education and Social Science Research*, 1(4), 123-135.
- Kwanuba, Y., Sababa, L. K. & Filgona, J. (2020). Students' perception of indecent dressing in Adamawa State citadel of higher learning. *International Journal of Engineering and Science*, 10(10), 44-56.
- Oga, F. (2016). Abuja residents decry indecent dressing in places of worship. *Daily Trust*, Wednesday 26th. Accessed from <https://dailytrust.com/abuja-resident/s-decry-indecent-dressing-in-places-of-worship> on 29th November, 2021.
- Okafor, O.J. & Uwalaka, E. (2021). Indecent dressing among undergraduate students in Nigerian tertiary institutions: Implications for counselling. *Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 4(1), 22-36.
- Oli, N.P. (2017). Theoretical reflections on social determinants and effects of indecent dressing among female undergraduates in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. *International Journal of Health and Social Inquiry*, 3(1), 115-129.
- Oluwadare, O. O., Otunaiya, A. O. & Opeoluwa, S. R. (2020). Indecent dressing and its implications on academic performance of female undergraduates: Tai Solarin University of education experience. *International Journal of Management, Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict Studies (IJMSSPCS)*, 3(2), 31 –41.
- Omorogiuwa, T.B.E. (2018). Sexual harassment among University students in Nigeria: Prevalence, psychosocial factors and prevention. *Bangladesh Education Journal*, 17(2), 25-33.
- Omorogiuwa, T.B.E. (2020). A discourse of females' issues in Nigeria: Exploring the place of social work from the lens of policy advocacy. *Social Dialogue: International Association of Schools of Social Work*, 23, 34-38.
- Oyeleye A. (2013). Indecent dressing: A social malady. Retrieved on 12/07/17 from www.file/f/nation.html.
- Sola, O. (2018). Indecency dressing among youths in South-West Nigerian. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323700764>.