

The influence of celebrity dress styles on the dressing patterns of Nigerian undergraduates

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Abstract

This paper seeks to ascertain the influence of celebrity dressing styles on the dressing patterns of Nigerian undergraduates. The sample population consists of undergraduates between the ages of 17 and 26 from Delta State University, Abraka and the data are obtained through the use of questionnaire and observation methods. The findings, among others, show that the phenomena of celebrity culture has become a reality in Nigeria and that students' dressing patterns are greatly influenced by imitation of western celebrity dress patterns. The study also shows that students derive psychological satisfaction using clothing similar to those of celebrities and dressing like celebrities makes them appear sociable. This has negative effects on their academics as it leads to lack of focus, lack of concentration which in turns leads to high failure rate, high carry over rate and high drop-out rate. The study concludes by recommending that all hands be on deck to curb this menace that has eaten deep into our society. Parents, churches, university authorities, media houses should make concerted efforts to solve this problem.

Keywords: celebrities, dress patterns, influence, indecent dressing, negative effects

Introduction

An individual's dressing presents visible cues to the character of the wearer. It indicates his/her interest, values, attitudes, habits, temperaments, trust worthiness and integrity, all of which make up one's personality. An individual's dressing also reflects his/her attitude and this attitude is often learnt from family and peer groups are molded over time by societal, family and educational experience. Obilo and Okugo (qtd in Antonia Obeta and Bridget Uwah 245) observe that Nigerian public universities are battling with the wave of indecent dressing among students. They explain that the situation as the reign of skimpy dresses on campuses which have turned many campuses to fashion runways. *Dress to kill* is now a popular slogan in lecture halls as students pay more attention to looking sexy and classy than looking responsible, forgetting the purpose of coming to the university in the first place.

Indecent dressing by students is a major challenge in Nigerian Universities today. The way students on campuses of learning dress, particularly the females, leave much to be desired. They put on sleeveless tops, transparent clothes, tight trousers and dresses, and clothes that reveal sensitive parts of the body such as the breasts, chest, belly, upper arms and buttocks. This style of dressing is not limited to girls alone. Boys on campus plait, dye and perm their hair, wear long and bushy beard, wear dreadlocks and T-shirts which carry immoral messages, pierce their ears and move around in sagging trousers. Students have two sets of clothes: the set they were at home and the ones they wear on campus. This pattern of dressing makes these students seem irresponsible and defeats the very essence of clothing which is protecting/covering the body. Egwim considers indecent dressing as:

The attitude of someone, male or female that dresses to show off parts of the body such as the breasts, buttocks or even the underwear particularly those of the ladies that need to be covered. This exposure is obviously a deliberate act to look sensuous, tantalizing and stimulating so as to draw the attention of the opposite sex and is more prevalent among singles. (13)

Several reasons have been put forward as the causes of this problem ranging from poor parenting, peer pressure, wrong value importation and indiscipline. One other factor responsible for this poor dressing behaviour is the influence of celebrity dress styles. Celebrities are well known personalities who are famous as a result of their achievements. They are seen in movies, news, magazine and posters. They include names like Opral Winifrey, Tyra Banks, Omawumi, Davido, Kim Kardashian, Tiwa Savage and Tuface Idibia. Young people, especially university students, look up to these celebrities for many different reasons. For girls, it is usually for beauty and extravagant styles that famous women have. For boys, it is their lifestyles and fashion sense. Award shows like the Grammys also inspire students' fashion. After these shows, magazines and celebrity bloggers cover who was the 'best dressed' and who was the 'worst dressed'. Students watch these programmes and learn what they should and should not wear. *Teen Vogue* has ten weekly best-dressed celebrities who are well known to Nigerian students. They look through the pictures of the celebrities who are their role models and age mates, who wear designer brands and styles and they want to look like them. Social media and television also play a huge role on how

celebrities influence these students. There are shows dedicated to celebrity fashion such as E! Network, Fashion Police and How Do I Look? Students watch these programmes and are influenced by the opinion of these celebrity hosts.

Furthermore, these dresses and accessories of celebrities are usually imported and found in high exclusive stores or boutiques with high price tags on them. Students who are still dependent on parents rush to buy such clothing and often resort to credit purchasing which becomes detrimental to their academic needs. Students who cannot afford the high prices in those boutiques go in search of the cheapest look alike just to have some form of identity with celebrities. These students are so engaged with beauty, fashion trends and social activities on campuses at the expense of their studies.

Olagunju, in a study of the dressing pattern of female students, links indecent dressing to health related problems while Madlela (qtd in ChikezieUzuegbunam 138) investigates the representation of male and female celebrities on magazine covers and how this influences teenagers living in the UAE. The findings reveal that the youths emulate the celebrities' behavior as they see them as trend-setters and believe their behavior to be the acceptable norm for men and women in the society. Similarly, Apuke in a study of the influence of television on the dressing patterns of youths finds out that youths develop interest on dresses worn by celebrities they see on television most especially Western films and that hip hop and make up/hairstyle are the most imitated forms of dressing by youths. On the effects of indecent dressing, Chukwudi and Gbakorun investigate the relationship between indecent dressing and sexual harassment among undergraduates of Nassarawa State University, Keffi .

They suggest the introduction of dress codes on campuses of learning to regulate the way students dress.

Atenah Beatrice Opokua et al (54-73) examine the trend of dressing among students of tertiary institutions in Ghana. Using students of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and University of Education, Winneba. The study shows, among things, that this trend of dressing is geared towards the exposure of sensitive parts, tighter dressing, over dressing and under dressing for lectures. It also reveals that both male and female students' choices of dressing are influenced by foreign influence, social media and peer pressure.

In a similar study, Grace Enomfon Akpan (358-365) investigated indecent dressing and its effects on undergraduate students of the University of Uyo. According to the author, indecent dressing, like other social vices such as drug abuse, cultism and prostitution, has become a major moral misconduct among students of Nigerian Tertiary Institutions resulting in poor academic performance. Based on a study population of two hundred and forty students, the findings also indicate that 62% of the participants know that indecent dressing is rampant in the society and that all dressing patterns that do not conform to the societal norms, a particular occasion and those that are too flamboyant constitute indecent dressing. The study also shows that the mass media has been a significant contributor to indecent dressing as over half of the respondents indicate that many forms of dressing are copied from role models and celebrities. It recommends that the government and school authorities should set up committees and laws to regulate and monitor images and programmes broadcast by the mass media.

In yet another study, Jacob Omede (228-233) looks at indecent dressing among students of Kogi State College of

Education, Ankpa focusing on the different forms of dressing and the reasons why students dress indecently. The study identifies fading values, peer pressure, wrong use of the internet, poor parenting as some of the reasons. The study recommends, amongst others, that Nigerian celebrities be cautioned by film production regulatory bodies to be modest and dress like the Nigerians that they are. It also advises that Nigerian films be domesticated to reflect and promote Nigeria's rich culture, represented by her dress patterns. This present study contributes to the above literature by investigating the influence of celebrity dress patterns on the undergraduates of Delta State University, Abraka.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design with the data collected through the use of questionnaire. The target population for this study consists of one hundred and eighty four 200 level, 300 level and 100 level students from five Departments in the Faculties of Arts, Social Sciences and Education .This population is preferred due to the fact that they are dominated by youths whose mode of dressing is mostly influenced by this trend. According to the Students' Division of Delta State University, it is estimated that the entire student population as at 2017/2018 session stands at eight thousand. Out of this figure, two hundred students were selected to constitute the sample for this study and from this figure, only one hundred and eighty four copies of the questionnaire were returned.

The Questionnaire for this study consists of 17 items. It had an introductory letter, Section A for the demographic characteristics of the respondents and Section B to collect information about the study. A four point Likert scale was used to

assess the responses: Strong Agree (4), Agree(3), Strongly Disagree(2), Disagree (1).The data generated from the questionnaire were coded, summarized and analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages while chi-square statistical tool was used to test the null hypotheses at 05 levels of significance.

Results and discussion

This study reveals the age, gender and class of the students who participated in the survey. The age range of the students was between 16–26 with a mean age of 21 ± 8.45 years. Specifically, 36% (66) of the students were between the ages 16-18 years, 40% (74) of them were between the ages of 18-20 years while 17% (31) of them were between the ages of 20-25 years. Only 7% (13) of the 184 students were between the ages of 25-26 years. For gender differentiation, out of the 184, 79 (43%) were male while 105(57%) were female. Of the 184 students, 41% of them accounting for 75 students were in 300 level, 31% accounting for 57 students were in 200 level while 28% of them accounting 52 students were freshmen.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the extent of Celebrity dress influencing students dressing patterns among DELSU Students

| | SD | | D | | A | | SA | | N = 184 X±SD |
|---|----|------|---|------|----|-------|-----|-------|-----------------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | |
| Clothing enhances my level of socialization on campus | 13 | 7.1% | 8 | 4.3% | 54 | 29.3% | 109 | 59.2% | 3.41±0.87* |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|-----|-------|------------|
| Celebrities dressing styles make students appreciable and sociable | 7 | 3.7% | 31 | 16.6% | 82 | 43.9% | 67 | 35.8% | 3.12±0.81* |
| Love clothes with wide cleavage like that of celebrities. | 15 | 8.2% | 48 | 26.1% | 70 | 38.0% | 51 | 27.7% | 2.85±0.92 |
| Sleeveless dresses are part of my clothes in order to be like celebrities | 11 | 6.0% | 35 | 19.0% | 27 | 14.7% | 111 | 60.3% | 3.29±0.98* |
| Figure type is not usually considered when conforming to celebrity dressing styles | 43 | 23.0% | 38 | 20.3% | 54 | 28.9% | 52 | 27.8% | 2.61±0.24 |
| Selection of clothing is mostly based on celebrities out-fits for | 7 | 3.7% | 50 | 26.7% | 64 | 34.2% | 66 | 35.3% | 3.01±0.88* |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|------------|
| social belonging | | | | | | | | | |
| Programmes /events of celebrities on social media determine my selection of clothes | 47 | 25.1% | 81 | 43.3% | 25 | 13.4% | 34 | 18.2% | 2.25±0.12 |
| Clothing with celebrities names, pictures and logos enhances my social status | 41 | 22.4% | 65 | 35.5% | 34 | 18.6% | 43 | 23.5% | 2.43±0.34 |
| Social environment of the campus draws me towards celebrities dressing styles | 24 | 12.8% | 48 | 25.7% | 82 | 43.9% | 33 | 17.6% | 2.66±0.92 |
| Using similar clothing to celebrities gives psychological | 24 | 13.1% | 23 | 12.6% | 62 | 33.9% | 74 | 40.4% | 3.02±0.43* |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|-----|-------|------------|
| I satisfaction | | | | | | | | | |
| Dressing like celebrities gives a sense of identity | 10 | 5.3% | 21 | 11.2% | 52 | 27.8% | 104 | 55.6% | 3.34±0.88* |
| Using tight fitting outfits makes me look sexy like celebrities | 30 | 16.0% | 20 | 10.7% | 67 | 35.8% | 70 | 37.4% | 2.95±0.36 |
| Prefer to dress in the latest fashion introduced by celebrities | 7 | 3.8% | 14 | 7.7% | 99 | 54.1% | 63 | 34.4% | 3.19±0.73* |
| When dressed like celebrities it shows how sociable I am. | 0 | 0.0% | 10 | 5.3% | 59 | 31.6% | 118 | 63.1% | 3.58±0.59* |
| Hairstyles are also introduced by celebrities as latest fashion. | 0 | 0.0% | 14 | 7.7% | 84 | 45.9% | 85 | 46.4% | 3.39±0.63* |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|------------|
| Using sunglasses, belts chains etc make me dress like celebrities | 63 | 33.7% | 48 | 25.7% | 40 | 21.4% | 36 | 19.3% | 2.26±0.32 |
| Shoes, earrings similar to that of celebrities make me appear elegant. | 8 | 4.3% | 15 | 8.0% | 77 | 41.2% | 87 | 46.5% | 3.30±0.79* |
| Weighted Mean Value | | | | | | | | | 2.98±0.64 |

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation scores on the extent of influence celebrity dress styles have on DELSU students' pattern of dressing. The weighed mean and standard deviation of 2.98 ± 0.64 indicates that items scoring above the value imply respondents' agreement while items scoring below imply disagreement. The frequency and percentage presented in table 1 show respondents' level of response to each of the items. From the frequency and percentage scores, it is evident that respondents agree that celebrity dress styles do influence students' dressing patterns with over 50% of the students in agreement with fourteen items in the questionnaire. Specifically, the respondents believe that clothing enhances the level of socialization on campus and that fellow students appreciate and admire these clothes. The result also shows that some choice of clothing items such as sleeveless dresses, bum shorts, skimpy

dresses, figure hugging dresses among students are promoted by what celebrities wear. The respondents also agree that they love using celebrity clothing styles because it gives them some sense of identity. They claim to embrace the latest dressing trends introduced by celebrities because it shows how modern and sociable they are. Finally, the respondents agree that apart from using celebrities' style of shoes and jewelry which make them look elegant, they are not addicted to the use of celebrity sunglasses and belt chains.

Conclusion

The rate of indecent dressing by students on campus is causing a lot of concern to stakeholders in the education sector and members of the public. There has been an increase in the drop-out rate, carry over rate and outright failure rate. Many measures have been put in place by the university authorities in order to curb this menace including the establishment of dress codes and even preventing them from entering into lecture areas and offices and other restrictions. These measures have not solved the problem as students still attend lectures dressed in skimpy and revealing outfits that expose sensitive parts of their bodies.

In order to curb this problem, this study suggests the following: imposing stricter sanctions on indecently dressed students, empowering lecturers to prevent such students from entering into lecture halls and empowering administrative staff to prevent indecently dressed students from entering into their offices. Also, Nigerian celebrities should be cautioned by the film regulatory bodies to dress modestly and decently. The mass media also has a role to play. Radio and television stations, newspapers and magazines should discourage the display of

indecently dressed ladies. Programmes that promote moral values should always be aired and relayed.

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APPENDIX

Department of English & Literary Studies,
Delta State University University,
Abraka,
Delta State
24th January, 2019.

Dear Sir/Ma,

Request to respond to a questionnaire

I am a Postgraduate Student of the Department of English and Literature, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State conducting a research study on the influence of celebrity dress styles on the dressing patterns of undergraduates.

Kindly respond to the attached questionnaire objectively. The information will be treated confidentially and mainly used for research purposes.

Yours faithfully,

SECTION A: (BIO-DATA)

1. AGE:

a. 16-20 Years ()

- b. 21-25 years ()
- c. 26-30 years ()
- d. 31-36 years ()

2. SEX:

- a. Male ()
- b. Female ()

4. LEVELS:

- a. 1st Year ()
- b. 2nd Year ()
- c. 3rd Year ()

SECTION B: INFLUENCE OF CELEBRITIES

INSTRUCTIONS: Please tick the column that tallies with your opinion on each of the following items using the keys: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), DA (Disagree), SD (Strongly Disagree).

THE INFLUENCE OF CELEBRITIES' DRESSING STYLES ON STUDENTS' DRESSING

| S/N | QUESTIONS | SA | A | DA | SD |
|-----|--|----|---|----|----|
| 1 | Clothing enhances my level of socialization on campus | | | | |
| 2 | Dressing like celebrities makes students appear sociable | | | | |
| 3 | I love clothes with wide cleavage like that of celebrities dressing styles | | | | |
| 4 | Sleeveless dresses are part of my clothes in order to be like celebrities | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|---|--|--|--|--|
| 5 | Figure type is not usually considered when confirming to celebrity dressing styles | | | | |
| 6 | Selection of my clothing is mostly based on celebrities out-fits | | | | |
| 7 | Programmes featuring celebrities on social media determine my selection of clothes | | | | |
| 8 | Clothing items with celebrities names, pictures and logos enhances my social status | | | | |
| 9 | The social environment of the institution influences me towards celebrities dressing styles | | | | |
| 10 | Using clothing similar to those of celebrities gives me psychological satisfaction | | | | |
| 11 | Dressing like celebrities gives me a sense of identification | | | | |
| 12 | Using tight fitting outfit makes me look sexy like celebrities | | | | |
| 13 | I prefer to dress in the latest fashion introduced by celebrities | | | | |
| 14 | Dressing like celebrities shows how sociable I am | | | | |
| 15 | Hairstyles are also introduced by celebrities as latest fashion. | | | | |
| 16 | Using sunglasses, belts chains etc improve my dressing to be like celebrities | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|
| 17 | Shoes, earrings similar to that of celebrities make me appear elegant. | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|

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