

Promoting Decent Clothing Among Home Economics Students In University Of Nigeria, Nsukka

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of Home Economics education in promoting decent clothing among female students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The study was guided by 4 objectives. Descriptive survey design was used and the study collected data from the entire population of 117 female Home Economics students at the faculty of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka. A structured questionnaire titled the decent dressing questionnaire (DDQ) was used to explore students' awareness of decent dressing, the challenges faced in acquiring clothing, and the socio-cultural factors influencing clothing choices. The findings reveal a high level of awareness among students regarding the importance of decent dressing ($\chi^2 > 2.50$). The findings show that students face significant challenges, including financial constraints, the inaccessibility of affordable and decent clothing options, and powerful peer pressure influencing decent dressing. The study concludes that awareness alone is insufficient to drive behavioral change. To effectively promote decent clothing, universities and Home Economics programs must address practical and socio-cultural forces that promote decent dressing. Recommendations include Home Economics professional should strengthen the clothing and textile component of Home Economics programs, Universities should organize periodic campaigns, seminars, and workshops that emphasize the moral, cultural and professional importance of decent dressing. University management should establish initiatives such as thrift shops, clothing exchange platforms and fashion partnership programs that make decent and affordable clothing accessible to students with financial challenges.

Keywords: Clothing Choices, Decent and indecent Clothing, Dress Code, moral values.

Introduction

Decent clothing is culturally contextualized attire that aligns with the modesty norms, social etiquette, and religious or traditional values prevalent within a specific society (Kaiser, 2022). It goes beyond mere fashion trends or appearance to embody values of modesty, self-respect, dignity and cultural propriety. Decent clothing refers to attire that aligns with accepted social, moral, and cultural standards of modesty within a particular community or society. It encompasses garments that promote positive self-image, uphold moral values

and reflect respect for oneself and others (Adebayo & Chukwu, 2023). Decent clothing is context-specific, varying across cultures and institutions, yet unified by its role in promoting discipline, decorum, and societal harmony (Ojo & Bello, 2022). In Nigeria, decent clothing varies according to the cultural group, in the south east, exposure of the body during traditional festivals and carnivals is seen as decent dressing to connote the cultural expectations while, in the northern part of Nigeria, exposure of the body is tied to religious beliefs and is seen as indecent

dressings. In the university environment, decent dressing serves not only as a reflection of character training and upbringing but also as a marker of social responsibility, moral uprightness, and professionalism (Olawale & Hassan, 2024). In Nigeria, where clothing carries significant cultural and moral symbolism, indecent dressing among female undergraduates has become a recurring issue of concern. The exposure of sensitive body parts, tight-fitting or transparent clothing and provocative fashion styles have sparked debates on morality, social values, and educational ethics (Okafor & Anya, 2022). Many institutions of higher learning have adopted dress codes to promote modesty and discipline, yet the enforcement and perception of these standards remain inconsistent and often contested (Abdulrahman, 2023). There exists a growing tension between modern fashion influences, global standards and traditional expectations of decency. Many undergraduate students are cut between cultural expectations, academic freedom that is associated within the confines of the university and; family and cultural expectations. The rise of social media and celebrity culture has further blurred the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable dressing, influencing clothing choices and perceptions of what is “fashionable” or “appropriate” (Nwankwo & Eze, 2023).

Decent clothing is not limited to outward appearance; it also reflects inner values of respect, responsibility, and self-awareness. It promotes personal dignity and contributes to positive societal impressions. Craik’s Decent Clothing Theory, (1994), explains that clothing serves as a social and cultural expression shaped by moral values, traditions and societal norms rather than mere functionality or aesthetics. The theory views “decency” in dressing as a cultural construct and concept that varies across

societies and is influenced by religion, gender expectations and class. In moral and traditional contexts such as Nigeria, decency in clothing reflects respectability and adherence to communal values. Craik’s theory underpins the present study by providing a framework for understanding how cultural expectations and institutional norms shape undergraduates’ dressing behaviors. It also highlights the role of education, particularly Home Economics education, in promoting awareness and self-regulation that balance modesty with personal expression. Thus, Craik’s theory serves as the analytical foundation for examining how educational influence can sustain decent dressing among students while respecting individual identity. According to Igwe and Adejumo (2024), decent dressing fosters a sense of discipline, enhances academic concentration and reduces negative attention or sexual harassment on campus. Moreover, it shapes identity formation and self-concept, particularly among female undergraduates who are at a transitional stage of social and psychological development (Eze & Mohammed, 2023). When educational environments fail to promote or enforce standards of decency, the institution risk producing graduates who undervalue the moral and professional implications of appearance in real-world interactions.

Home Economics as a discipline encompasses areas such as food and nutrition, family and child development, home management and home economics education. One of its vital components remains clothing and textiles, which focuses on grooming, appearance and dressing etiquette. Adebisi and Olanrewaju, (2023), show that clothing and textiles component in the study of home economics receives limited emphasis compared to other areas. As a result, many students complete Home

Economics education without a strong understanding of decent clothing principles or their implications for personal and social life. Integrating the values of decent clothing more intentionally into Home Economics education could therefore play a transformative role in shaping behavior, promoting cultural pride and curbing the rising trend of indecent dressing on campuses (Oluwafemi & Adeoye, 2024). Despite the growing discourse on morality and fashion, there remains a notable research gap concerning the pedagogical and behavioral influence of Home Economics education in promoting decent clothing among university students in Nigeria. Kaiser, (2022) and Kawamura, (2023), have focused on fashion trends, consumer behavior and cultural identity, with limited exploration of how Home Economics can actively instill and sustain values of decency in dressing among female students. Furthermore, while institutional dress codes exist, Eze and Mohammed, (2023), have examined the effectiveness of Home Economics education as a driver for behavioral change in dressing patterns.

This study seeks to examine the impact of Home Economics Education in promoting decent clothing among female students in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. It aims to highlight how the principles taught in clothing and textile education can influence students' understanding, attitudes and practices of clothing decency. Addressing this gap will not only enrich academic discourse but also contribute to educational policy, curriculum planning and value reorientation efforts across tertiary institutions. Ultimately, the findings will benefit students, parents, educators, and policymakers by reinforcing the role of education in promoting modesty, professionalism and cultural integrity in Nigerian society.

Statement of the Problem

Most Nigerian universities have established dress code to curtail indecent dressing and have created sanctions for students who fail to adhere to the stipulated rules of dressing. Decent clothing thus, has become an acceptable norm in many universities across Nigeria including the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Students therefore are expected to observe this dress code. Home Economics Education program is expected to provide students with requisite knowledge that will enable students observe decency in their choice of clothing and adopt best practices in daily life engagement. It is observed however, that female students indulge in indecent clothing probably because of out of ignorant of the appropriate clothing to wear and lack of skills to choose the correct clothing at the right time. It is observed that students wear clothes that barely cover their entire body thereby exposing some part of their body. It is either that students leave open their breasts, wear above-the-knee attire that exposes their laps, tattoo their bodies, boys wear feminine clothes and vice versa. Such indecent attire may seem to attract sexual harassment and cause unnecessary distractions. The tendency of female students to dress indecently suggest that there is need to provide students the right knowledge and attitude to observe the right dress code. Therefore, there is need to investigate the influence of Home Economics Education in promoting decent clothing among students in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to find out ways of promoting decent clothing among Home Economics students in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. investigate the level of awareness

- of the importance of decent dressing among Home Economics students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka
2. examined the socio-cultural factors that influence the perception of decent clothing among Home Economics students
3. identified the challenges Home Economics students face in acquiring decent clothing
4. explored the strategies Home Economics can better promote decent clothing among home economics students.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The survey research design will information from respondents opinion, perception and beliefs on decent dressing among home economics students.

Population

The population of the study is 117 Home Economics students in the Department of Home Economics Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka for the 2022/2023 academic session.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study is manageable and so all of the population was used in the study. Therefore, the census sampling was used.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled the decent dressing questionnaire. The questionnaire

was developed to elicit information on the four research questions guiding the study. It consists of 4 Sections using a 4 - point scale of preference. A 4-point rating scale was designed to measure the degree of agreement or disagreement. The options Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1) are weighted. Respondents are required to tick (") on the option that is mostly applicable. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Home Economics, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their comments and suggestions enabled further modifications of the questionnaire where necessary.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data obtained were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation. Any mean response of 2.50 and above means that respondents agreed with the item under consideration; while any mean response below 2.50 means that respondents disagreed with the item.

Results

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents on level of awareness of the importance of decent dressing among Home Economics students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The mean ratings ranged from 3.35 to 3.52 which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates that the level of awareness of the importance of decent dressing among Home Economics students is high. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.20 to 0.29 which are below 1.96 indicating that respondents were relatively in agreement in their responses.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Level of Awareness to the Importance of Decent Dressing Among Home Economics Students

S/N	Importance of Decent Dressing	$\bar{X}$	SI
1.	Clothing shields from the elements, like cold or heat.	3.52	.22
2.	Clothes help maintain social norms, providing a sense of privacy and modesty.	3.35	.29
3.	Clothing allows individuals to showcase their personality.	3.47	.27
4.	Specialized clothing, like safety gear or uniforms, serves specific purposes.	3.42	.28
5.	Clothing is an essential aspect of fashion and style.	3.48	.20
6.	Clothing can carry cultural, religious, or symbolic meanings.	3.50	.23
7.	Wearing certain clothes can influence how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us.	3.49	.20
8.	Clothing is tailored for various activities, like sportswear for exercise.	3.52	.23

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents on socio-cultural factors that influence the perception of decent clothing among Home Economics students. The mean values ranged from 3.33 to 3.46 which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates that respondents agreed with

all the socio-cultural factors that influence the perception of decent clothing among Home Economics students. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.29 to 0.54 which are below 1.96 indicating that respondents were relatively in agreement in their responses.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Perception of Decent Dressing Among Home Economics Students

	Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Perception of Decent Dressing among Home Economics Students	$\bar{X}$	SD
	Peer pressure	3.46	.29
1.	Lack or inadequate space for storing clothing	3.46	.29
2.	Adapting to varying weather conditions throughout the academic year	3.35	.49
3.	Body image concerns might affect students' confidence in choosing clothing	3.34	.45
4.	Cost of laundry services could limit the number of clothes students can maintain	3.35	.43
5.	Some students might lack knowledge about affordable fashion alternatives	3.33	.54
6.	Academic commitments, or extracurricular activities might leave students with limited time to shop for clothing.	3.46	.29

Data in Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents on the challenges Home Economics students face in acquiring decent clothing. The mean values ranged from 3.35 to 3.49 which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates that respondents agreed

with all the challenges Home Economics students face in acquiring decent clothing. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.23 to 0.30 which are below 1.96 indicating that respondents were relatively in agreement in their responses.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Challenges Home Economics Students Face in Acquiring Decent Dressing

S/N	Challenges of Acquiring decent Dressing among Students	$\bar{X}$	SD
1.	Financial constraints have hindered my ability to purchase decent clothing	3.37	.28
2.	Balancing the costs of clothing with other academic expenses	3.44	.25
3.	Clothing stores catering to my specific clothing needs are not accessible.	3.49	.24
4.	Decent clothing are not usually sold around the campus.	3.49	.23
5.	Decent clothing appears old-fashioned to students.	3.46	.29

Data in Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents on how Home Economics can better promote decent clothing among Home Economics students. The mean values ranged from 3.20 to 3.48 which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates that

respondents agreed with all the measures to better promote decent clothing among Home Economics students. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.28 to 0.62 which are below 1.96 indicating that respondents were relatively in agreement in their responses.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on how Home Economics can better Promote Decent Dressing Among Home Economics Students

S/N	Means of promoting decent clothing	$\bar{X}$	SD
1.	Creating platforms or events for students to exchange or acquire affordable second-hand clothing.	3.32	.38
2.	Organizing clothing drives or thrift store partnerships and create event where students can trade and donate clothing items	3.38	.41
3.	Setting up programs within the university to provide discounts for students in need.	3.39	.38
4.	Conducting workshops on budget-friendly fashion, where students can learn about styling tips.	3.20	.62
5.	Providing online resources highlighting affordable clothing options.	3.47	.28
6.	Offering guidance or resources for students who require specific attire.	3.40	.32
7.	Improving access to laundry facilities.	3.48	.30
8.	Offering guidance on professional attire.	3.40	.28
9.	Promoting body positivity to help students feel confident in their choices.	3.40	.32
10.	Providing time management resources to free up time for clothing-related needs.	3.36	.30
11.	Partnering with local stores or fashion brands to offer student discounts.	3.24	.27

Discussion

The study comprehensively examined the impact of Home Economics education in promoting decent clothing among female students at the University of

Nigeria, Nsukka, with a view to understanding how educational exposure influences awareness, perception, and practice of modest dressing. The findings

in Table 1 indicate a consistently high level of awareness among Home Economics students at University of Nigeria, Nsukka regarding the importance of decent dressing, as all items measuring awareness fell clearly above the mid-point of the scale and with very low variation. This suggests that students recognize multiple facets of clothing's. Dairo, (2023), supports the notion that awareness of clothing's role extends beyond purely functional concerns into identity, cultural belonging and professional presentation. It also aligns with Azonuche, (2024), showing young people's increase in recognizing clothing's role not only in self expression but in cultural identity and modesty.

Findings on Table 2 indicate that students agreed that peer influence, body-image concerns, cost and accessibility of clothing impact perceptions of decent dressing. Oyewole, (2023), studies in Nigeria and Africa emphasized peer and social media influences on dress sense among undergraduates. The influence of cost and access issues adds a structural dimension to the socio-cultural frame. Dairo, (2023), reports that working students in Nigerian universities negotiate dress norms under peer, economic and institutional pressures.

Findings on Table 3, students agreed that financial constraints, balancing clothing costs with academic expenses, limited access to appropriate clothing and perceptions of decent clothing as "old-fashioned" pose significant barriers. These results correspond with Azonuche, (2024), documenting that students' clothing choices are constrained by economic resources and campus-environment accessibility. This resonates with Dairo, (2023), studies in higher education contexts that highlight cost and accessibility as major impediments to modest or institutionally acceptable attire. When asked about how to promote decent

dressing in Table 4 students endorsed a range of institutional actions thrift programs, discount partnerships, workshops, online resources and body-positivity initiatives indicating readiness for structural support. This is consistent with Dairo, (2023), emphasizing the role of universities in shaping dress behaviors and providing supportive frameworks. This supports Nnubia, (2024), recent calls for curriculum and institutional approaches to address clothing literacy and sustainable fashion among students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Home Economics education plays a pivotal role in promoting decency, cultural preservation and self-respect among students by equipping students with the knowledge, values, and practical skills necessary for appropriate good grooming, appealing appearance and social and behavioral decorum. Integrating these educational principles into broader university and national curricula will contribute to moral reorientation, professional image development and a more value-driven youth culture. In view of the findings of the study, the following are recommendations are made:

1. Universities should organize periodic campaigns, seminars, and workshops that emphasize the moral, cultural, and professional importance of decent dressing. Clothing exchange platforms and fashion partnership programs can contribute to decent and affordable clothing accessible to students with financial challenges. Furthermore, Partnerships should be established between universities, local designers and fashion entrepreneurs to develop culturally inspired, affordable and stylish clothing options that align with decency norms and fashion appeal.

2. Parents, guardians, and religious institutions should collaborate with universities to reinforce positive dress culture, ensuring that moral upbringing aligns with institutional expectations.
3. Home Economics professional associations can collaborate with students' associations and serve a role models and ambassadors of decent dressing, using peer influence positively to shape clothing behaviors and discourage indecent trends on campus.

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