

## Opinion of Parents in Abraka, Delta State Nigeria on Dress Code and its Effect on Family Survival

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the research was to ascertain the opinions of parents of students in tertiary institutions on the dress code prescribed by some universities in the country and its effect on family survival. The population was made up of 300 parents irrespective of sex in Abraka Local Government Area of Delta State. The questionnaire was the instrument used and the data collected were analysed using mean statistics and percentages. Findings showed that the parents were in favour of the dress code but felt that the sanction is not commensurate with the offence. Implication for family survival are highlighted.

**Key words:** Opinion, parents, dress code, effect, family survival

### INTRODUCTION

Clothing is one of the basic needs of man. There is probably no sphere of human activity in which our values and life styles are more clearly reflected than the clothes we wear (Hoin, 1981). In every group, occupation or community there are certain accepted standard of dress that are considered right, proper and appropriate while other forms of clothing are looked upon as wrong. Improper or inappropriate (Hoin, 1981). She opined that in a group there are some social norms which governs the clothing behaviour of that group such as folkways, customs, more and laws.

Folkways are expected as the conventional way of doing things but are not enforced while customs are rooted in tradition and religion. More on the other hand are social norms or taboos, clothing habits that are related with the control of sexual relationship in a society are part of the mores of a group, organization or community. For instance it is considered a healthy practice to put on clothes that adequately cover certain sensitive parts of the body especially the erogenous zones. Ezinwo (2002) says it is one's husband, wife or medical personnel that are allowed with obvious reasons when necessary to see those sensitive areas. For a woman, her breast, armpit, buttock and thigh are to be covered especially public.

Mores are enforced through social sanctions. Taboos are negative mores and taboos vary from society to society. In other words, what is accepted to be decent, modest or appropriate clothing in one group may think of the garbs as sexually stimulating or provocative

(Edukugbo, 2004; Hoin, 1981). Violation of these social norms are looked upon as threat to welfare of the society and as a result carry strong sanction.

The role played by clothing in stimulating or diminishing sexual urge is symbolic of the moral standard of a given culture (Robinson, 2001). Indecent exposure of the body suggests careless life style and contrary to the values, ideas and norms of the Nigerian society and often attracts undue attention from male and female alike, provoking abuses, curses or rape.

Nigerian universities are facing problems associated with indecent dressing among undergraduates on campuses at an unprecedented rate. As a result, some of the universities have implemented dress code to counter the rills and to improve the quality of education (Ebonugwo, 2004; Robinson, 2001).

Dress code in Nigeria is not new religious groups, government workers, bankers, nursery, primary and secondary school students, marriage and burial ceremonies all have dress code. Most of the female undergraduates students have shifted from their socially approved mode of dressing to offensive and provocative styles. Various authors have emphasized this situation (Akube, 2003; Olori, 2004; Edukugbo, 2004; Ebonugwu, 2004).

Ezinwo (2002) and Akube (2002) are of the opinion that very skimpy skirts, short tight blouses that expose the stomach, tiny trousers, topless dresses and tops are some of the crazy styles copied from foreign culture. It is observed that, these undergraduate dresses in such a way that they live nothing for imagination of their beholder

and that through their dressing they willingly or unwillingly subject themselves to the opposite sex including students, lecturers and visitors to various forms of sexual embarrassment.

As the madness is creeping into the universities in leaps and bounds, the question that necessarily arise is how do parents view this situation? Ezinwo (2002) and Akubue (2002) also wondered for these undergraduates received adequate clothing culture from their parents and whether these undergraduates are in their right frame of mind when they are putting on those dress designs.

The Tertiary Institutions are citadels of learning. They have great deal of interaction with the government, undergraduates, parents and the public. It is believed that by the end of the student stay in the university that the graduate is found worthy in character and learning. Therefore, the university are delegated with the responsibility of maintaining an effective and orderly environment. Conduction for reaching and learning (Madrid and Garcia, 1999).

Some of the universities that have implemented the dress code are Bayero University, Kano (BUK) University of Maduguri, Usman Danfodio, Sokoto, Enugu State University of Technology (ESUT) University of Calabar (UNICAL), Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA); Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Ago-Iwoye, Univeristy of Ado-Ekiti (UNAD), University of Lagos (UNILAG), Lagos State University (LASU) (Ebonugwo, 2004; Edukugho, 2004).

The feature of the dress code involves mainly what the male and female students are not allowed to wear. They are:

- All tight fitting clothes - skirts, pair of trousers and blouses.
- All clothes which reveal sensitive parts of the body such as the chest, bust, upper arms and the buttocks e.g transparent clothing, spaghetti tops, wicker straps, mono strap, tubes, halter tops, one shoulder, show me your belly, dresses with slits above knee.
- Outfits such as knickers mini skirts and dresses.
- Inappropriate outfits such as party wear, beach wear and bathroom slippers should not be worn for lectures.
- Outfits such as T-shirt and Jeans that carry obscene and subliminal messages (Edukugho, 2004).

The sanction placed on student who violate the dress code will be that such student will be identified publicly. If they continue, they will be disgraced openly. After that, they will have their records endorsed, be

excluded from privileges like staying in the hostels, being recommended for scholarship or bursaries, job interviews and placement.

**Purpose of the study:** The principal purpose of this study is to ascertain the options of parents whose wards are in the universities concerning the importance of dress code prescribed by some universities in the country.

**Objective of the study:** Specifically this study elicited from parents whose wards are in universities their opinions on:

- The importance of dress code for the undergraduate students.
- The characteristic feature of the clothes banned.
- Why the banned clothes should not be worn on university campus.
- Whether the sanctions placed on wearing banned cloths is commensurate with the offence.

**Research questions:**

- What are the opinions of parents in Abraka on the importance of dress for undergraduates?
- What are the opinions of parent on the characteristic features of the clothes banned?
- What are the opinions of parents on why the banned clothes should not be worn on university campuses?
- Is the opinion of parents on the sanction commensurate to wearing banned cloths.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Areas of study:** The study was conducted in Obio Akpo Local Government Area of Rivers State of Nigeria. The area is densely populated and is made up of various ethnic groups. There are 3 tertiary institutions situated in the area. They are University of Science and Technology with about 300 lecturers, University of Port-Harcourt with about 300 lecturers and River State of Education with about 250 lecturers.

**Population:** The target population was parent in the educational sector of the economy whose wards are in tertiary institutions. The parents were between the age range of 45-55 and consist of lecturers who are married.

**Selection of the sample:** Parent irrespective of sex were randomly selected from University of Port Harcourt, University of science and technology and Rivers state college of Education. One hundred parent lecturers were

selected from each institution making a total of 300 respondents.

**Instrument:** The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed based on the research questions and literature review. Experts from the Department of Home Economics who are also parent validated the items.

**Data collection and analysis:** A total of 300 copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher and 5 home economists. In training to the respondents. All the 300 copies were completed and returned mean statistics and percentages were used in analyzing the data collected. The researcher used 2.0 and above as the level of acceptance mean while any factor with mean below 2.0 was rejected.

**RESULTS**

The findings are arranged under research questions 1: what are the opinions of parent in Warri on the importance of dress code for undergraduates.

Table 1 showed that a positive opinion of parents towards the importance of dress code on university campus. The mean rating was between 2.7-3.0.

**Research question 2:** What are the opinion of parents on the characteristics features of the clothe banned?

Table 2 shows the opinion of parent respondents in relation to the prescribed clothes. They all have mean of 3.0 which indicate that the dresses are not proper to be worn on university campuses.

**Research question 3:** What are the opinion of parents why the banned clothes should not be worn on university campus?

Table 1: The importance a dress code

	Mean	Remark
Reflect community value	3.0	Agreed
Create positive environment	2.7	Agreed
Promote students self respect	2.9	Agreed
Maintain classroom discipline	3.0	Agreed
Discourage peer pressure to buy extravagant clothing	3.0	Agreed
Improve scholastic achievement	2.9	Agreed
Help to introduce student into the world work	2.8	Agreed
Promote students attendance for lectures	2.8	Agreed
Creates opportunity for self expression	2.9	Agreed
Increase campus safety and security	3.0	Agreed
Ensures modest dressing	3.0	Agreed
Simplify dressing	3.0	Agreed
Minimize the cost on parents	3.0	Agreed

Table 2: Characteristics features of the clothes banned

	Mean	Remark
Tight fitting skirts, trousers and blouses	3.0	Agree
All clothes which reveals sensitive part of the body, chest, bust, upper arm, buttocks, such designs as spaghetti top, mono strap, tubes, halter, one shoulder, shows me your belly, transparent clothes	3.0	Agree
Skirts and dresses with slit above the knee	3.0	Agree
Inappropriate out fits such as party wears, beach wears, bathroom slippers	3.0	Agree
Outfit such as knickers, micro mini skirt and dresses	3.0	Agree
Outfit such as t-shirt and jeans which carry obscene messages	3.0	Agree

Table 3: Banned clothes

Reasons for banned clothes	Yes		No	
	N	(%)	N	(%)
Expose the erogenous zone	300	100	-	-
Do not reflect the seriousness of the student	283	94	17	6
Do not dignify	292	97	8	3
Do not reflect character moulding of academic institution	290	97	10	3
Lower the moral and academic standard of the institution	278	93	22	7
Do not reflect culture	295	98	5	2
Do not reflect family value, identity and standard	298	99	2	1
Make them look like social sex - workers	300	100	-	-
Face sexual harassment and rape	300	100	-	-
Are provocative to the beholder	300	100	-	-

Table 4: Sanction against indecent dressing sanction

	Yes		No	
	N	(%)	N	(%)
Identify them publicly	67	19	243	81
Disgrace them publicly	100	33	200	67
Have their records endorsed	50	17	250	33
Exclude them from staying in the hostel	50	17	250	33
Will not recommend them for (a)	56	19	244	81
Scholarship (b) Bursaries	53	18	247	82
Will not submit their names for job interview or placement	27	7	278	93

Table 3 shows that over 90% of parents are of the opinion that the clothes are provocative.

**Research question 4:** Is the opinion of parent on the sanction commensurate to wearing banned clothes?

Table 4 indicated that over 60% of parents said sanction is not commensurate with offence.

**DISCUSSION**

The result of the finding shows that dress code is important because it reflects community value, maintains discipline, discourage peer pressure to buy extravagant clothings. Increases campus safety and security, ensures modest dressing and minimizes the cost to parents.

According to Madrid and Garaia (1999) and Neal (2000) dresses code is very important because of the image, value and sanity it brings to the community.

The results of the findings also shows that the skirt,

dresses and trousers worn by undergraduate are very tight and with slit above the knee; shirts and jeans carry obscene messages. Some even wear party dresses, beach wear and bathroom slippers. This is consistent with Arkhust (2002) who said that clothing should fit the occasion for when it is worn.

This results also show that parents are of the opinion that the clothes proscribed are provocative because they expose the erogenous zone of the body makes them look like social sex workers make them face sexual harassment does not reflect family values; identity and standard; does not show culture; does not dignify and does not reflect character moulding of academic institution. This corresponds with Ezinwo (2002), Edukugho (2004) and Olori (2004) who said that the undergraduates dress provocatively and this is one of the cause of rape in University campuses.

The parents were of the opinion that the sanction is not commensurate with the offence one begins to wonder if parents whose wards fall victims might seek redress from the court. Restriction of dress that are elevated to the level of legal enforcement are usually those that are regarded as necessary for the maintenance of social, political or moral order. According to Hoin (1981) and Ebonnugwo (2004) most society such as USA, Uganda and most European countries have laws that regulate the degree of body exposure that is permissible in public.

**Implication for family survival:** The functions of the family are to produce and raise children and to provide psychological and economic support for its offspring (Smith and Apecilli, 1982). Within the introduction of the dress code, the family unit will be closer than before as the parents and their wards would want to discuss the merits and demerits of the dress code.

The dress code will help the family to accomplish the acquisition of the basic survival skills in relation to clothing. According to Smith and Apecilli (1982), these skills will help the family survive as a unit, care for its members and fit into its culture. It is hoped that parent will establish effective communication through which they can train their children cultural norms and socially approved ways of dressing and misdemeanors should be disciplined.

The dress code should make parent teach their children that clothes are worn to protect the body and conceal the erogenous zones. Also that ideal clothes to be worn should be those that will enhance personality, self-image and create favorable impression (Arkhust, 2002).

Through the dress code, parent will be able to check

on their children's wears both at school and at home. Unannounced check is important since some of the children do not take some of these provocative wears home.

Young parent will be able to teach their young children appropriate clothing styles to save the family from public embarrassment and as a result save family name (Olori, 2004).

Dress code will minimize the cost on parents to educate their children as most of them divert their allowances into buying clothes. It will maintain a sense of purpose by developing family values. It will eliminate social and emotional stress that will affect those who do not have.

Dress code will ensure good grooming habits and parents will be proud of their wards. It will make the student to be safety and appropriately dressed for school activities. Cleanliness, modesty and appropriateness in dress are important values which reflect family background, individual dignity through which both student and staff will represent the professional status of their respective discipline.

## CONCLUSION

From the findings, it is apparent that most of the parents of undergraduates in tertiary institutions are in favour of the dress code. They also feel that the banned clothes are inappropriate for campus wear and do not reflect character moulding of an academic institution neither do they reflect cultural norms and family values. However, the parent feel that the sanction is not commensurate with the offence.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Parent should look into their children's wardrobe and begin to adjust before the dress code catches up with them.
- Parents, governments and churches should begin to monitor what these children wear in order to add value to human dignity.
- Families should learn to budget for clothing needs and buying should be supervised.
- The media should advertise more of our cultural clothing.
- Although bifurcated garment for women as an outer in Nigeria has come to stay, these should be worn with modesty especially the trousers for those who patronize okada.

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