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## STUDENTS' DRESS CODE AND INDECENT DRESSING

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**Abstract:** *This paper seeks to address the phenomenon of decent dressing, indecent dressing, suggests decent dress codes for the students' and makes recommendations for decent dressing. It also advocates for the enforcement of decency orientation in the dressing of our youths in tertiary institutions in our fashion, mass media and online transactions.*

### Introduction

The incidence of moral decadence visibly expressed in the indecent dressing of our youths particularly in the tertiary institutions, need to be address. Decent dressing is dressing in an orderly manner considered morally essential for a proper standard of living. Indecent dressing is any form of dressing that does not conform with the acceptable moral standard of decent dressing. A saying goes thus; you will be addressed by the way you are dressed. Our non-verbal communication in the way we are dress determines our success or failure in our verbal transactions with people. There is also a wise saying that 'As a man thinketh, so he is'. Corruption of the mind is not only expressed in speech but also exhibited in our dressing and other behavioural tendencies.

### Communication and Dressing

The exchange of messages between and among human beings is known as communication. The nature of clothes we wear and style of fashion we put on is a form of non-verbal communication which definitely inspires a response positively or negatively from the public. In applying principles of communication psychology, we need to understand that human beings have certain needs to given times. These needs determine our behaviour and the goals we set for ourselves. At birth, we were naked and had need for clothing for protection. So also as adults, we need decent clothing for protection not indecent exposure. Abraham Maslow –a famous psychologist theory that human needs are based on a system of priorities, similar to the rungs of a ladder. Maslow uses five rungs' or classifications to describe the hierarchy of human needs.

- ✓ Rung 1- Basic Physical Needs: these are food, shelter and clothing, until these needs are met reasonable we think of little else.
- ✓ Rung 2 – Safety and Security Needs: that is, keeping ourselves from physical harm or mental abuse that threaten our peace of mind.
- ✓ Rung 3 – The need to Belong: we want to be a part of a group e.g. family, club, and social group in our teen years; we want to be “one of the gang”.
- ✓ Rung 4 – The need to be ‘Somebody’ i.e. we want to be recognized that we are good at doing something and we feel pleased at the recognition we received which meets the needs of our ego.
- ✓ Rung 5 – The need to help others and to be Creative: if we are reasonably to lose our anxieties and fears, we are more willing to help people who are still struggling on the lower rungs of the ladder; we become more creative and should be willing to improve the quality of life for all.

However, we discover that due to societal reasons and certain selfish interests some people's behaviour at certain levels fall short of expectation, such as when 'well-to-do' men/women (Aristos) exploit the innocence and poverty of the youth. Instead of being creative and providing useful assistance to the youths, they encourage them in immoral activities such as indecent dressing, prostitution, cultism and armed robbery.

### Decent Dressing

Decent dressing not only creates covering for decent attraction, it also paves way for favourable remarks from other people.

In a recent interview geared toward job appointment, two candidates surfaced for the job. Candidate A was a man dressed in flashy shirt, saggy trousers, big boots and dread lock. Candidate B was dressed in a smart shirt and trousers with matching tie, belt and shoes. It was not surprising that candidate B was able to influence the decision of the interview panel by his decent dressing and comportment, though, he was not with the best result, he got the job! Like other social vices such as prostitution, cultism and substance abuse, indecent dressing has become one of the major moral misconducts among youths in the society particularly in our tertiary institutions. All in the name of fashion, the females 'dress to kill' i.e. wear outrageous dress exposing parts of their bodies which are supposed to be covered: their breasts, the stomach, upper parts of their buttocks showing

tattoos and beads. They wear micro-mini skirts and gowns 4-5 inches above the knee, all these attempts are to make them 'sexually irresistible'.

### Advantages of Decent Dressing

As much as our needs determine our reaction so also our dressing and comportment speak a lot for us. There is no gainsaying the fact that you will be addressed by the way you are dressed.

Decent dressing avoids unnecessary self-exposure. It does not cause distractions neither is it suggestive of sex or violence.

It promotes goodwill, positive self concept and good institutional image.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that on TV Continental on Feb. 20, 2016, Vogue rates 'WHIZ KID' as Nigeria's best dressed pop star!

### Why Students Dress Indecently

Some of the reasons why students dress indecently are peer pressure, poor parenting, wrong use of the internet, wrong influence of the mass-media, and poor role models among others.

### The Effect of the Mass-Media on our Youths' Dressing

Kimberly B. Massey (edited): *In the Company of Others* by Dan Rothwell, has this to say on children's Rights: 'Children have the right to mass-media products that are designed to meet their needs and interest and foster their healthy physical, mental and emotional development. They should be protected from harmful media products, from commercial and other exploration at home, in school and at places of play, work or business. Nations should take steps to produce and contribute widely high quality cultured and entertainment materials created for children in their own languages as well as their culture'. In the United States of America, President Clinton exercised the Decency Law. The Decency Act President Clinton signed provides six figure fines and federal prison for people who make available indecent materials: words and images in online areas that may be accessible to minors.

A similar Decency Law if already in existence should be enacted in Nigeria if we are really serious about eradicating indecent dressing and actions in the country.

## Forms of Indecent Dressing

- *Sagging of trousers and Skirts.*
- *Exposing of private parts of the body*
- *Clothing suggestive of sex, including images, designs and graphics illustrations.*
- *Graphic designs on clothes suggestive of crime, violence and death.*
- *Skimpy clothes also known as 'fitted'.*
- *Strapless and short blouses.*
- *"Low waist" or 'ass down' trousers by boys and girls.*
- *Sleeveless shirts and blouses known as 'spaghetti' or 'off-shoulder'.*
- *Transparent clothes revealing certain parts of the body which are supposed to be hidden from the full glare of the public.*

## The Negative Impact of Indecent Dressing

- Some of them become rape victims
- Some are lured into prostitution and cultism
- Lack of focus on studies which lead to poor academic performance.
- Promotion of sexual harassment.
- Encourages verbal and non-verbal abuse not only from opposite sex but also from same sex e.g. homosexuality
- Seduction by the opposite sex and same sex.

## Dress Code for Students on Campus

Formal, smart and decent clothing should be worn on campus:

- ✓ Skirts and gowns worn by ladies should not be shorter than KNEE LENGTH
- ✓ No wearing of sleeveless shirt, blouse or gowns.
- ✓ No wearing of transparent clothing.
- ✓ No sagging of trousers- "low waist" or "ass down" by both male and female.
- ✓ No 'fitted', 'strapless and short blouses that expose the stomach, buttocks and breast.
- ✓ Males should not wear earrings or jewellery.
- ✓ No 'dreadlock' on the head.
- ✓ No wearing of 'spaghetti' or 'off-shoulder' exposing breasts.

## Conclusion

In order to curb indecent dressing on Nigerian campuses, practical initiatives must be embarked upon to educate the student populace about the potential consequences associated with it. The efforts of many tertiary institutions to reduce immoralities on Nigerian campuses are highly commendable. Today, dress codes and strict rules enforcing compliance of students have been introduced in colleges of education, polytechnics and universities across the country. However, dress codes can properly be enforced on campuses through the collective efforts of management, staff and security personnel of tertiary institutions.

## Recommendation

To further complement the efforts of the management of tertiary institutions in reducing widespread immorality on Nigerian campuses, the following measure needs to be taken:

- ✓ Parents should be good moral examples to their children: give them attention and regulate the films they watch at home. Through home videos, satellite images and other media agents, wrong values, fashions (modern, modest and immodest) are traded across cultures and nations.
- ✓ As agents of socialization, the mass media must promote good moral values. The display of indecently dressed young girls (nudity) in advertisements and business promotions should be discouraged. Radio and Television programmes that promote moral values and the sanctity of sex should always be transmitted.
- ✓ There is also the need to regulate the use of internet especially among youth, because majority of the youths are exposed to different kinds of immoral activities on the internet through pornographic videos, advertisements, fashion parades and music.
- ✓ Religious leaders must preach against immorality in the society, counsel and deliver those under demonic influence.
- ✓ In addition, there is the need for general orientation of staff and students on the need for good moral conduct. Students and members of staff should be educated on what is expected of them to ensure that they do not get used to values that are unduly antisocial.

The Nigerian tradition and culture places high moral value on decent dressing and frowns at nudity or immoral exposure of the body. The two religions also speak against indecent dressing and immorality. Our Muslims sisters cover their heads and bodies. The Bible says in I Corinthians 15:33 - "*Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners*". Yoruba adage also says "*Ohun ti a ba bo lo n n'yi* - precious things are not carelessly exposed" Our youth should shun indecent dressing and embrace morality and decent dressing.

### References

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