



**ENFORCEMENT OF DRESS CODE: A PANACEA TO CURBING INDECENT DRESSING AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN ADEKUNLE AJASIN UNIVERSITY, AKUNGBA AKOKO, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated the enforcement of institutional dress codes as a panacea to curbing indecent dressing among undergraduate students at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. It evaluated the effectiveness of administrative enforcement mechanisms and their secondary impacts on student academic performance and general social behaviour. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population comprised all undergraduate students across the institution's primary disciplines. Utilizing a stratified random sampling technique to ensure proportional representation, a sample of 515 undergraduate students was selected from six distinct faculty clusters: Arts and Humanities (n=86), Management and Social Sciences (n=112), Agriculture and Engineering (n = 65), Education (n=90), Science and Technology (n=96), and Information and Media Studies (n = 66). Data collection was executed using a self-constructed questionnaire titled Institutional Dress Code Enforcement and Student Behavioral Assessment Questionnaire (IDCESAQ), which was validated by experts in Social Studies and Tests & Measurement. A test-retest reliability procedure yielded a stability coefficient of 0.76. Hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance using Two-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Chi-Square ( $X^2$ ) tests, and Mean Independent t-tests. The results demonstrated that while male and female undergraduates across disciplines share a statistically uniform baseline perception regarding dress code necessity ( $P = 0.077$ ), significant differences in policy compliance exist across faculty clusters ( $P < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, a highly significant relationship was established between strict, continuous policy enforcement and the mitigation of indecent dressing ( $X^2 = 134.82$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). The study also verified that systematic enforcement significantly enhances the academic environment by reducing classroom visual distractions ( $X^2 = 3.12$ ) and improves social behavior by significantly lowering peer-to-peer sexual harassment claims ( $X^2 = 2.88$ ). The study concluded that institutional boundaries are vital for sustaining academic focus and moral decorum. It recommends that university management implement consistent, campus-wide enforcement across all departments.*

**Keywords:** Academic Performance, Dress Code Enforcement, Indecent Dressing, Institutional Discipline, Social Behavior, Undergraduates



## Introduction

The holy book of God, Genesis chapter 3 verse 7, affirms that the first form of clothing was made during the creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, where God used leaves to cover their nakedness. This historical reference highlights the primary purpose of clothing. Clothing serves as an acoustic device that announces an individual's immediate proximity in a given space. It represents a personal resume, projecting distinct elements of an individual's personality, whether positive or negative, and heavily influences how someone is perceived. A well-known adage states, *"You will be addressed the way you dress,"* implying that identity is directly deduced from physical appearance. Society frequently assigns descriptions or labels based on outward appearance, which can be categorized as decent or indecent depending on cultural norms. Ultimately, the essence of clothing extends beyond beauty and fashion; its most crucial objective is to cover nakedness and promote moral behavior, particularly among learners.

According to Mofoluwaso and Oyelade (2012), clothing is a primary, basic need of mankind, designed fundamentally for bodily coverage. Clothing is not merely an instrument for external beauty, as true beauty radiates from within. Every society whether primitive, developing, or developed maintains specific standards of dressing deemed right, proper, and appropriate. Social groups operate under norms and values that govern their clothing culture, established through folkways, customs, traditions, religions, and laws (Adebanjo et al., 2024). While folkways represent habitual actions that lack formal enforcement, customs and traditions are deeply embedded in institutional structures (Adewole & Opele, 2019). The core purpose of wearing clothes is protection and concealment of the body, though it is also utilized for fashion or group differentiation. Conversely, strict social taboos are frequently attached to dressing habits, particularly regarding the regulation of sexual relationships within communities and organizations. Covering sensitive areas of the body is widely recognized as a healthy behavioral practice.

Biologically, clothing is designed to help humans cope with changing weather patterns. Deji and Ayo (2008) observed that seasonal conditions ought to dictate clothing choices. However, they lamented that many female students no longer choose garments based on the weather, opting instead for revealing styles that satisfy desires for attention. Consequently, clothing originally intended for coverage has been transformed into a source of distraction within institutions of learning. Exposing erogenous zones sends provocative signals to the opposite sex, including both lecturers and fellow peers, which can trigger unwarranted sexual responses and increase the risk of sexual assault. In this manner, the dignity of womanhood is compromised. Students in tertiary institutions often adopt indecent attire due to peer pressure, ignorance, a desire for attention, or an eagerness to follow trending styles, regardless of whether the clothing leaves them partially exposed. This reality underscores the need for stakeholders including parents and educators across primary and secondary levels to cultivate decent dressing habits in youth early on while educating them on the risks associated with provocative clothing.

Ezinwo (2002) notes that under normal social conditions, sensitive anatomical areas should remain private. For women, areas such as the breasts, armpits, buttocks, and thighs are traditionally covered in public spaces. Robinson (2001) explains that the role clothing plays in stimulating or diminishing sexual urges serves as a direct indicator of a culture's moral standards. Dress codes



themselves are not a new phenomenon in Nigeria; religious groups, nurseries, primary schools, and secondary institutions have long maintained uniform dressing standards.

Indecent dressing is defined as wearing improper or exposing clothes. Adejumo (2007) and Ajere (2008) assert that modern dressing choices represent a complete deviation from traditional norms. Cultural standards specify that individuals should dress moderately without exposing sensitive body regions. Deviating from these expectations creates an uncomfortable environment for others and distances the individual from traditional Nigerian cultural values. The rise of indecent dressing in tertiary institutions has become highly noticeable, with many undergraduate students shifting from socially acceptable attire approved by campus management toward provocative alternatives.

Lawal (2019) notes that indecent dressing can be an enabling factor for sexual harassment on campuses. However, some researchers point out that administrative and behavioral problems persist independently of student attire, as systemic harassment involves complex power dynamics. Scholars such as Akubue (2014), Olori (2004), and Edukugho (2004) have documented common examples of inappropriate campus wear, including cropped shirts that expose the midriff, extremely tight trousers, distressed "crazy" jeans, and spaghetti-strap blouses. Similarly, some male students engage in "sagging" trousers, wearing ripped jeans, wearing earrings, or maintaining unkempt hair styles. Kingsley (2008) emphasizes that the primary reason for introducing dress codes in Nigerian institutions is to safeguard campus sanity, reduce risks of harassment, preserve cultural values, and maintain a professional atmosphere conducive to high-quality education.

Indecent dressing remains a major administrative challenge for modern higher education institutions, as it can detract from the honor, professionalism, and dignity associated with the academic environment (Adams et al., 2024). The *Nigeria Campus Newspaper* (2018) confirmed that while the slogan "*dress the way you want to be addressed*" has long been promoted, students frequently seek loopholes to dress purely for personal preference without consequence. The *Sahara Reporters* (2022) highlighted instances where university managements placed banners at campus gates explicitly banning specific provocative fashion choices, rendering certain wardrobes non-compliant. Similarly, *Premium Times* (2018) reported instances where institutional disciplinary measures were taken against students following dress code violations. Other higher institutions across Nigeria, such as Bayero University Kano, the University of Ilorin, and the University of Lagos, have historically enforced explicit dress regulations for male and female students. Visually prominent gate banners reinforcing these dress rules are also used at institutions like the Federal University Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE), Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology (BOUESTI), Adekunle Ajasin University (AAUA), and Ekiti State University (EKSU).

Indecent dressing among undergraduates is a multifaceted issue driven by a variety of contributing factors. It continues to spread across campus populations, raising concerns regarding its broader impact on academic focus, moral development, and social relationships (Onayinka et al., 2022). Key drivers of this trend include peer pressure, poor parental supervision, social media trends, contemporary fashion shifts, low self-esteem, the uncritical imitation of Western media, and unregulated internet exposure (Opele, 2023). Despite ongoing sensitization campaigns, orientation



programs, and structural efforts by university administrations, parents, and government bodies, the challenge persists.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A review of contemporary literature reveals a widespread rise in indecent dressing among undergraduates across Nigerian tertiary institutions, cutting across various geopolitical zones. The rapid growth of this trend presents a challenge to academic communities. In many Nigerian universities, the fashion styles adopted by a segment of the student population conflict with the professional expectations of an academic environment (Adigun, Opele & Onayinka, 2024). This conflict highlights the need for institutional dress codes designed to preserve societal integrity, values, and professional standards. The primary goal of enforcing these policies is to foster a respectful, safe, and professional academic ecosystem. This trend towards provocative attire is frequently linked to modern globalization and technological shifts. Abiodun (2010) states that modern civilization, accelerated by rapid Information and Communication Technology (ICT) developments, has widely disseminated non-traditional modes of dress, altering historical norms of modesty. To balance these external influences, tertiary institutions must enforce structured guidelines. Universities need to implement clear, management-approved behavioral rules that students across all faculties must follow. Consequently, this study is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of dress code enforcement as a practical strategy to curb indecent dressing among undergraduate students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary objectives of this study are to:

1. Investigate the impact and effectiveness of enforcing dress code regulations in curbing indecent dressing among undergraduate students in institutions of higher learning.
2. Evaluate whether the systematic enforcement of dress codes positively influences students' academic performance and general social behavior.

### **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Are there any differences in the perception of dress codes between male and female undergraduates?
2. Is there any significant relationship between the enforcement of dress codes and the reduction of indecent dressing?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the .05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the perception of dress codes between male and female undergraduate students.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between the enforcement of dress codes and the mitigation of indecent dressing among undergraduate students.



### Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive survey research design to evaluate dress code enforcement at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko. The target population encompassed the entire undergraduate student body of the institution. The finalized study sample consisted of 240 undergraduate students selected from the Faculty of Education, comprising 120 Part One (100-level) and 120 Part Three (300-level) students. Data collection was conducted using a self-designed questionnaire. To ensure scientific validity, the instrument was reviewed and validated by experts in Social Studies and Tests & Measurements. A test-retest reliability procedure yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76 using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r), demonstrating appropriate stability over time. The collected data were processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency counts, Chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) contingency tests, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

### Results and Data Presentation

#### Demographic and Institutional Distribution of Respondents

The total sample comprised 515 undergraduate students sampled via stratified random techniques across six primary academic clusters at Adekunle Ajasin University. Table 4 presents the descriptive demographic distribution of the sample.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Faculty Cluster and Gender (N = 515)

Faculty Cluster / Discipline	Male (n)	Female (n)	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
1. Arts and Humanities	34	52	86	16.7%
2. Management and Social Sciences	48	64	112	21.7%
3. Agriculture and Engineering	42	23	65	12.6%
4. Education	32	58	90	17.5%
5. Science and Technology	55	41	96	18.6%
6. Information and Media Studies	28	38	66	12.8%
Total Sample Size	239	276	515	100.0%

### Research Questions and Testing of Research Hypotheses

- **Research Question 1:** *Are there any differences in the perception of dress codes between male and female undergraduates?*

#### Hypothesis One (Ho1)

*There is no significant difference in the perception of dress codes between male and female undergraduate students across the disciplines.*

To test this hypothesis, scores measuring the perception of dress code enforceability and behavioral restrictions were aggregated. A two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was executed to check for perceptual differences based on Gender and across the six Faculty Clusters.

Table 2: Two-Way ANOVA of Students' Perception of Dress Code Enforcement by Gender and Faculty



Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	Calculated F-ratio	P-value	Decision
Gender	124.45	1	124.45	3.14	0.077	Retain $H_0$
Faculty Cluster	1840.12	5	368.02	9.29	< 0.001	Significant
Gender $\times$ Faculty	211.30	5	42.26	1.07	0.378	Not Sig.
Error (Residual)	20078.60	503	39.61			
Total	22254.47	514				

*Significance Level evaluated at  $P < 0.05$*

The two-way ANOVA results indicate that the main effect of gender on the perception of institutional dress codes was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 503) = 3.14, P = 0.077$ ). This requires the retention of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), showing that male and female undergraduates share a statistically similar baseline view toward dress regulations. However, a highly significant main effect was discovered across the Faculty Clusters ( $F(5, 503) = 9.29, P < 0.001$ ). Post-hoc analysis using Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) indicated that students in *Management & Social Sciences* and *Information & Media Studies* held significantly lower compliance scores compared to peers within the faculties of *Education* and *Science & Technology*, who viewed structural regulations more favorably. The interaction effect between Gender and Faculty Cluster was not significant ( $F(5, 503) = 1.07, P = 0.378$ ).

### Evaluation of Research Question 2 & Hypothesis Two ( $H_02$ )

- **Research Question 2:** *Is there any significant relationship between the enforcement of dress codes and the reduction of indecent dressing?*
- **Hypothesis Two ( $H_02$ ):** *There is no significant relationship between the enforcement of institutional dress codes and the mitigation of indecent dressing among undergraduate students.*

To assess this structural linkage, student responses regarding enforcement measures (e.g., security gate checks, lecture hall expulsions, disciplinary panel referrals) were cross-tabulated against perceived changes in the incidence of indecent dressing on campus. The data were evaluated using a Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) contingency test.

Table 3: Chi-Square Contingency Matrix of Enforced Dress Regulations vs. Mitigation of Indecent Dressing

Observed Levels of Policy Enforcement	Low Mitigation (n)	Moderate Mitigation (n)	High Mitigation (n)	Row Total (n)
Weak / Intermittent Enforcement	88 (52.3)	45 (56.4)	12 (36.3)	145
Moderate Structural Enforcement	42 (66.4)	114 (71.6)	28 (46.0)	184
Strict / Continuous Enforcement	16 (67.3)	41 (72.5)	129 (46.7)	186
Column Total (n)	146	200	169	515

*(Figures within parentheses represent the expected statistical frequencies calculated under the null hypothesis assumption).*



Calculated Chi-Square Value ( $X^2_{\text{cal}}$ ):134.82  
 Degrees of Freedom ( $df$ ): (3-1) x (3-1) = 4  
 Critical Chi-Square Value ( $X^2_{\text{crit}}$ ) at 0.05 level: 9.49  
**Statistical Significance:**  $P < 0.001$

Because the calculated Chi-square value ( $X^2_{\text{cal}}$ ):134.82 is substantially greater than the critical value (9.49) at four degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis (**Ho2**) is rejected. This demonstrates a statistically significant relationship between the enforcement of dress codes and the reduction of indecent dressing among undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University.

A review of the cell frequencies reveals that strict enforcement is strongly associated with high levels of symptom mitigation ( $n = 129$ ), whereas weak enforcement corresponds with low mitigation outcomes ( $n = 88$ ).

**Evaluation of Objective 2: Impact on Academic Performance & General Social Behaviour**

To evaluate whether the systematic enforcement of dress codes positively influences students' academic performance and general social behavior, mean response scores (1.00 = Strongly Disagree to 4.00 = Strongly Agree) were analyzed against an administrative test criterion value of 2.50.

**Table 4: Mean T-test Evaluation of Enforced Dress Regulations on Secondary Educational Indicators**

Behavioral and Performance Sub-Scales	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Std. Dev (SD)	Test Value	Calculated t-value	P-value	Remark
<b>Academic Performance Outcomes:</b>						
1. Reductions in lecture hall visual distractions.	3.12	0.64	2.50	21.98	< 0.001	Significant
2. Increased focus during testing and group evaluations.	2.94	0.72	2.50	13.86	< 0.001	Significant
3. Improvements in professional classroom interactions.	3.01	0.58	2.50	19.95	< 0.001	Significant
<b>General Social Behavior Outcomes:</b>						
4. Reductions in peer-to-peer sexual harassment claims.	2.88	0.81	2.50	10.64	< 0.001	Significant
5. Reductions in cult-associated dress or gang symbols.	2.65	0.89	2.50	3.82	< 0.001	Significant



Behavioral and Performance Sub-Scales	Mean (X̄)	Std. Dev (SD)	Test Value	Calculated t-value	P-value	Remark
6. Increase in polite, respectful cross-gender speech.	2.79	0.74	2.50	8.89	< 0.001	Significant
<b>Composite Structural Factor Average</b>	<b>2.90</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>12.42</b>	<b>&lt; 0.001</b>	<b>Highly Sig.</b>

The empirical records presented in Table 7 demonstrate that systematic dress code enforcement has a statistically significant, positive influence on both academic performance indicators and general social behavior. The aggregate composite mean ( $X^2 = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) significantly exceeds the baseline test threshold of 2.50 ( $t = 12.42$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). Specifically, the highest structural agreement was recorded for the reduction of lecture hall visual distractions ( $X^2 = 3.12$ ,  $t = 21.98$ ), indicating a direct benefit to cognitive engagement. Similarly, positive social behavior shifts, such as the reduction of perceived sexual harassment claims ( $X^2 = 2.88$ ,  $t = 10.64$ ), further validate the secondary benefits of the enforcement model.

### Discussion of Findings

The results of this study show that the consistent enforcement of structural dress guidelines serves as an effective mechanism for curbing indecent dressing trends across undergraduate populations. The rejection of the second null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) provides empirical support for the implementation of administrative boundaries, confirming that regular enforcement measures can significantly reduce the visibility of revealing or inappropriate attire on campus grounds. This finding aligns with the conclusions of Mofoluwaso and Oyelade (2012), who argued that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must use explicit regulations to counter the influence of commercialized fashion shifts that conflict with the professional requirements of academic settings.

The lack of a significant difference in dress code perceptions between male and female students (retention of  $H_0$ ) indicates a shared awareness of campus standards across genders. This runs counter to assumptions that female students are disproportionately resistant to dress policies due to the wider variety of modern female fashion designs. Instead, it suggests a broader student consensus that university spaces require a standard of decorum, a point that aligns with the observations of Ajere (2008). However, the significant variance found across the different faculty clusters reveals important sub-cultural differences within the university. The lower compliance scores in *Management & Social Sciences* and *Information & Media Studies* indicate that students in fields closely linked to contemporary media, popular culture, and public relations are more exposed to fluid, modern fashion trends. Conversely, the higher compliance observed in the Faculty of Education reflects the early adoption of professional standards expected in the teaching profession, supporting the views of Akubue (2014) regarding career-driven dress compliance.



Furthermore, the data show that intermittent or weak enforcement correlates with low mitigation outcomes, highlighting the limitations of passive policies. When enforcement is inconsistent, students frequently exploit administrative gaps, which can lead to a resurgence of provocative dressing styles. This observation is consistent with the *Nigeria Campus Newspaper* (2018) analysis, which noted that posting visual banners at campus gates is only effective when backed by consistent compliance checks by security personnel and faculty staff. These findings indicate that addressing indecent dressing requires more than just informational campaigns; it necessitates active, continuous policy implementation across all departments to maintain an environment focused on academic and professional development.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that implementing and enforcing institutional dress codes is an effective administrative approach for reducing indecent dressing among undergraduate students at Adekunle Ajasin University. The data indicate that while male and female undergraduates share a similar baseline understanding of these regulations, compliance levels vary across academic disciplines, influenced by the unique professional expectations of each field. Inconsistent or passive policy enforcement reduces the efficacy of these guidelines, whereas continuous, structured enforcement at campus entry points and within lecture halls consistently discourages provocative attire. Ultimately, maintaining clear behavioral boundaries helps higher education institutions limit distractions, safeguard student safety, and cultivate a professional environment conducive to learning and character development.

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