

LINKING DRESS CODES TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT: INSIGHTS FROM NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Abdullahi Miriam Onome

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Science Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17357524>

Abstract

This study was conducted to find out the relationship between indecent dressing and sexual harassment amongst undergraduates of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The study involved 200 undergraduates within the age range of 16 - 30 who were randomly selected. One way analysis of variance was used in testing the hypotheses formulated for the study. The result revealed among others that indecent dressing has an influence on the sexual harassment of undergraduates. It was suggested that public enlightenment programmes, seminar and conferences should be organized to highlight and discourage the demeaning consequence of indecent dressing prevalent among students in the higher institutions of learning as well as address the adverse effect of sexual harassment in the society.

Keywords: Indecent dressing, Sexual harassment, undergraduates, University

INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that human beings have different perception of things. Hence, perceptions of people with respect to indecent dressing are different. There is a high level of subjectivism in people understanding of what indecent dressing and sexual harassment is. It may be appealing to some people and unappealing to others. In most public places, some people wear things that reveal their privacy. This type of dressing pattern is what this study views as indecent dressing. Sentiments on indecent dressing and sexual harassment are religiously and culturally influenced and have greater consequences considering the volatile nature of religions. Dressing have lost most of its values in this age of unisex and gender cross over. Certain styles of dressing are regarded by many as a serious threat to cultural values of a society. Doubtlessly, in Nigeria, certain dressing styles/codes are alien. Some forms of indecent dressing are a product of modelling top movie stars. Sometimes, these movie stars dress to complement the parts they play in a movie. The trend in both local and foreign movies in terms of fashion has turned to be a model for many youths in Nigeria. This has constituted a meme among a greater proportion of Nigerian youths. From the religious perspective, people are expected to dress modesty especially the women. This is to avoid attracting unnecessary attention which in turn arouses sexual urge from other people. Before the fall of Adam, man (referring to both male and female) was ignorant of his nakedness. The awareness of this secret placed man in a position of seeing the need to covering the vital sensitive parts of their body. Women should not expose their vital parts by wearing short skirts, sleeveless clothes and transparent wears and so on. Sexual harassment can be caused by indiscriminate behaviour including having multiple sex partners. Indecent dressing can be used to gratify internal sexual pressure that is present within individuals. It is also related

to sexual harassment, accusation and rape. Whether in private or public places, code of dressing tends to give a perception of one's ability to preserve specific heritage and social values in the midst of modern civilization and technology. Over restriction of sexual desire may ignite more indecent dressing and ugly sexual behaviour where it creates more chances of using transparent clothes which make women more prone to sexual harassment because it can provoke the sexual desire of the opposite sex.

It is on the premise of the foregoing that the study sets to find out whether there is any significant relationship between indecent dressing and sexual harassment among students of Nasarawa State University and the extent of sexual harassment exhibited by the students of Nasarawa State University? Objectively the study is to thoroughly review how indecent dressing can predispose an individual to indulge in sexual behaviours and make them susceptible to infectious diseases. It also aims at examining the idea that indecent dressing relates to sexual harassment among undergraduates, the possible influences on the individual to indecent dress, negative sexual behaviours and the possibility of curbing the situation. Hence, there is no significant relationship between indecent dressing and sexual harassment among students of Nasarawa State University was formulated as the tentative answer to the above question.

THEORIES OF INDECENT DRESSING

There are theories that explain the concept and relationship between indecent dressing and sexual harassment. The following theories fall into two groups that deal with indecent dressing and sexual harassment. An attempt to explain the dimensions of indecent dressing, researchers, came up with the down theory, reductionism (biological) theory and psychosocial or self-efficacy theory.

The Down Theory (Theory of Sexy Dressing): The more commonly cited approach in the study of sexy or seductive dressing is the psycho-analytic model of down theory. The name of this theory comes from a Greek female legend "ELECTRA". She dreamt that all the end downs were crying at a grave. The downs at the grave were crying over the death of one of the downs who was Electra's sister. Electra's dream about her sister's death made her develop hatred for her sister because her sister received more attention from others than she did. Electra may have at a conscious state take delight in her sister death. Dressing to attract attention invariably leads undergraduates mostly the female gender to wear "funny" or "indecent" cloths that are seductive and revealing. Giving the opposite sex the impression of their readiness and availability for exploitation.

Biological (Sexual Selection) Theory: Reference of dominant looking man by the female as the near evaluate because of high testosterone level indicates strong genus. Studies that support this theory shows that male dominance increases when female is more fertilized. The expression of this fertility is shown in seductive and revealing dresses. This theory reveals that the frequency in wearing revealing and seductive dressing change over the menstrual circle days girls wear revealing clothes when they are fertile but the menstrual circle doesn't affect the way of dressing. The levels of those chemical messengers were much higher in those girls that preferred seductive and revealing dresses. Neutrophines are passionate love hormones and also the male, sex humorous testosterone was found to increase in love struck girls found

wearing revealing and seductive dresses. The love hormones (neutrophines) was replaced by the what is called cuddle hormone "Oxyrocin" when girls start wearing decent cloths. Girls with higher level of oestrogen are more attractive, they have prettier faces and more prominent body features. Estrogen during pukery can have, impact on appearance by affecting the tone, growth and skin texture.

Psycho Social Theory (Theory of Efficacy): This theory is pioneered by the works of Bandura (1993, 1996 and 1997) who defines self-confidence as the ability to recognize and execute the causes of a given course of action to solve a problem or accomplish a task. Thus some people have a stronger sense of self efficacy while others don't. Furthermore some have efficacy belief that encompasses many narrow efficacy beliefs and some belief that they are efficacies only in easier task. Bandura's self-efficacy theory focuses on expectancies of success; however Bandura distinguished between two kinds of expectancy beliefs; outcome expectations belief that certain behaviours will lead to certain outcomes such as the belief that revealing clothes and dresses will attract potential suitors using this theory, we found that contrary to general belief, girls who wear revealing and seductive dresses have low self-efficacy, trading themselves as cheap. They lack the confidence in the fact that attracting a male counterpart, they would be sufficiently satisfied with these efficacy expectations. According to Bandura they are four major determinants of goal setting behaviour: choice, motives, willingness to expect effort and persistence of the behaviour. Furthermore, self-efficacy also helps to determine how resistant these girls will be in the face of societal oppositions to their seductive dressing. These girls have also been found to have greater intrusive interest in indecent dressing and deep engrossment in their pervasive fantasies. They set challenges and bold goals and maintain strong commitment to them Mashegoene and colleagues also found that conversely girls with low self-efficacy also have low self-esteem and intelligent quotient.

Theory of Risky Sexual Harassment: There are various theoretical models that explain the origin, symptom consequences of sexual harassment. The following theories tend to explain sexual harassment. Three fold theory, exchange theory, belief theory reasoned action theory and self-efficiency theory they found focus on the effect of situational beliefs and cognitive aspects of sexual harassment on individual chances.

Researchers have found that global determinants can probably account for the reason individuals with high HIV/AIDS knowledge, continue to engage in sexual harassment. To correct for the limitations of the individual choice hypothesis a contextual analysis has been proposed emphasizing structural constraints to rational choice. According to this approach, sexual harassment must not be attributed to intrapsychic and personality factors alone. Hence base on the conclusions of the recent findings, this study has adopted the current theory explaining Sexual Sensation Seeking (SSS) models.

ORIGIN OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Most of the history of sexual harassment began in 1964 when congress passed title vii of the civil right act and created the equal employment opportunity commission. Constance Jones in her book, sexual harassment identified traced indecent dressing and sexual harassment back to the 1830s, when increased number of women began working in the textile mill in New England. She noted that printers in Boston

conducted campaign of intimidation to force women out of their jobs in that industry in 1835. However there was no term to describe this course of action as such because sexual harassment was coined by feminists in the 1960s. The consequences of sexual harassment have led to lecturers and other members of staff of tertiary institutions in Nigeria been dismissed. In 1992, a lecturer in the law faculty of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria in Kaduna State was dismissed over an allegation of sexual harassment against an undergraduate in his faculty. Also, the New Nigerian Newspaper reported that 13 teachers and the principal of Teachers' College, Jeda Ganye Local Government of Gongola (now Adamawa State) were suspended indefinitely for impregnating some students put in their care. Exchange theory development can be linked with behaviourism and the sociological behaviourism is concerned with the relationship between the effects of an actor's behaviour on the environment and the impact on the actors' behaviour. The founder of modern exchange theory George Humans, acknowledges that his exchange theory is derived from both behavioural science in psychology and the theory of rational choice in economics. He developed six propositions to explain this exchange theory. There is another theory called threefold theory, this posed question why people are victimized in one act and not others and some people are more vulnerable to victimization than others. This theory was proposed by Benjamin and Master. They said there are three factors to be identified in the vulnerability of victimization: Precipitating factor attracting and predisposing factor. Sexual Sensation Seeking Model (SSS) defines sexual harassment as the inclination to engage in advantageous and optionally stimulating sexual behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is survey. The participants for the study were drawn from the faculty of social sciences of Nasarawa State University. The faculty comprises of four departments namely: Psychology, Economics, Political Science and Sociology. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select a total of 200 undergraduates from the four departments in the faculty. Out of this, 114 were male while 86 were females. The statistical tool used to test the hypotheses formulated for this study was one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to find the relationship between the groups considered in this study.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed in the form of likert and nominal scales comprising two parts A and B. Section A comprises of the demographic data indicating the age, sex, and marital status of the respondents. Section B measured the dressing pattern of the respondents. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and were given general description of the study.

Completed copies of the questionnaire were collected after 15 minutes and the respondents were assured of strict confidentiality of any information given.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: General response on dress pattern and sexual harassment scale.

Decent/indecent sub-scale of dress pattern	Sexual harassment	
Mean	0.55	34.34
Std Dev.	0.986	9.571

Variance	0.972	91.611
Minimum	0	12
Maximum	3	

Source: Survey, 2011

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between indecent dressing and sexual harrassment among students of Nasarawa State University

Table 2: Decent/indecent dressing and sexual harassment

Dress	Freq.	Mean	Std Dev.	Standard
Decent	152	32.24	9.390	0.762
Indecent	48	32.08	9.912	1.431
Total	200	34.48	9.588	0.678

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 3: ANOVA table for decent/indecent dressing and sexual harassment

Variables	SS	DF	MS	F-ratior	Sig.
Within groups	362.780	1	362.780	4.006	0.05
Within groups	17931.140	198	90.56		
Total	18293.920	199			

Source: Survey 2011: SS = Sum of Square; DF = Degree of Freedom; MS = Mean Square

From the above table the calculated value is 4.006 which indicates that there is a significant difference between students who dress decently and those who dress indecently which implies that there is a significant relationship between indecent dressing and sexual harrassment among students of Nasarawa State University.

Table 4: Engagement in decent and indecent dressing

Gender	Number	Mean	Std Dev.	Sig
Male	114	6	0.850	0.080
Female	86	1.10	1.096	0.118
Total	200	0.88	0.986	0.070

Source: Survey 2011

Table 5: ANOVA table for decent and indecent sub scale of dress pattern on gender

Variables	SS	DF	MS	F-ratior	Sig.
Between group	9.784	1	9.784	10.545	0.001
With in groups	183.716	198	0.928		
Total	93.500	199			

Source: Survey 2011: SS = Sum of Square; DF = Degree of Freedom; MS = Mean Square From the above table the calculated value is shown to be 10.545 which indicate that female students engaged in higher level of indecent dressing than their male conterpart.

This also affirms that there is a significant relationship between indecent dressing and sexual harassment among students of Nasarawa State University.

Table 6: Sexual harassment on gender

Gender	Number	Mean	Std Dev.	Sig.
Male	114	32.12	8.942	0.838
Female	86	37.60	9.570	1.032
Total	200	34.48	9.588	0.678

Source: Survey 2011

Table 7: ANOVA table for sexual harassment on gender

Variables	SS	DF	MS	F-ratio	Sig.
Between group	1473.081	1	1473.081	17.340	0.000
With in groups	16820.839	198	84.954		
Total	18293.920	199			

Source: Survey 2011: SS = Sum of Square; DF = Degree of Freedom; MS = Mean Square

From the above table, the calculated value is 17.340 which indicates that male students engage in more sexual harassment compared to the female counterparts. In line with other findings of the study, the analysis from the above table reveals that there is a significant relationship between indecent dressing and sexual harassment among students of Nasarawa State University. The observation is in relation with the study of Bojos and Marguet (2000) to support the down theory which support the evidence that those who dress indecently on campus experience disturbances in parent child relationship on the developing child sense of self, having reassurance and positive responses to look and physical accomplishments and also without this they become unsecured. This insecurity is expressed periodically in an inflated and dramatized appearance to attract male admirers.

In view of the above observations, Bachamas et al (2002) find out that the experience campus girls go through when wearing skimpy and revealing dresses was associated with the expectations of compliments, wishes and demands to be gratified. A study conducted in South African University showed that rewards gained from these expectations reinforce attitude of wearing seductive and revealing dresses which subsequent become norms. Carvajal (2000) finds out that indecent dressing in females holds maladaptive ideal about themselves with the view that they discovered that these beliefs held by these girls hamper them to perceive their experiences realistically and encounter problem when they dress indecently, clashing with the experiences of failure in a relationship. Although male students dress indecently, but are actually prominent in females, based on the fact that they want to look attractive.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research on indecent dressing and sexual harassment among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi has developed a link between indecent dressing and sexual harassment and has concluded that an individual's sexual harassment most often leads to unprotected sex, having multiple sex partners and

placing them at a high level of contacting all forms of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) as well as unwanted pregnancy. Based on the above the introduction of dress code on the campuses which regulates how students should dress should be established and properly enforced. This done, the rate of moral decadence on campuses will be eradicated. For instance in the University of Abuja and Nasarawa State University, Keffi students who dress indecently were not allowed to gain entrance into the University premises. Also, the faculty of Law in most of the Universities in Nigeria have imbedded the culture of a particular dress-code and students strictly adhered to it.

However, a compulsory course on the consequences of immorality or indecent dressing can also be introduced; the essence is to institute the philosophy of good behaviour and proper self expression amongst students in universities and other higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. More so enlightenment campaign and seminars can be introduced as a weekly programme by religious groups and other various youth empowerment societal clubs on campuses with concern on the issues of dressing, sexual harassment, morality and the effects of the ungodly behaviour on the youth and on their future.

REFERENCES

- Bachamas, F. and Eijenden, V. D. (2002). Dress pattern in Caribbean Universities. *Journal of personality and sexual behaviour* 6 (42), 531-532.
- Bachamas, F. (1996). Reward in indecent dressing. *Journal of personality and Social Psychology*, 8, 28-37.
- Bandura, A. (1993). Psychosocial theory. *Journal of Personality and Social psychology*, 5, 122-143
- Bandura, A. (1996). Theory of risking sexual harassment. *Journal of personality and Social Psychology*, 8, 67-97.
- Bandura, A. (1997). Theory of self-Efficacy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 9, 76107.
- Eijenden, V. D (2000). Psychological aspects of indecent dressing, *American psychologists*, 53, 983984.
- Ejenden V. D. and Ritzer, K. M. (2000). Pathological aspect of indecent Dressing *American Sociologist Review*, 51, 347-363
- Ellis, A. (1993). Risky behaviour and sensation seeking the American. *Journal of Psychiatric*, 162, 224-226.