

## **DRESS CODE COMPLIANCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN THE FACULTY OF LAW, OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVER- SITY, ILE IFE**

**Prince ALADEGBOLA, Ade G., and Emily Adeloye (Ph.D),**  
*Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti*  
*(Adegbolap@yahoo.com 08062337330)*

### **Abstract**

*This study is meant to investigate the extent at which the undergraduates in the faculty of Law Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) comply with the university approved dress code. It is meant to investigate the position of the school authority in ensuring that the dress code is adhered unto by the students in the legal training. A total of 200 students that were randomly selected across the class levels in the Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University constituted the sample for the study. A self designed questionnaire entitled “Law Students and Dress (LSDC)” was used to collect data for the study. The two hypotheses raised and tested using t-test statistics were accepted in their null form. Findings from the study indicated that both the male and female Law undergraduates manifested the same attitude to dress code. Also revealed by the study was that the law students were not different in their compliance levels despite the differences in the class levels. It was finally recommended that the university management, particularly the authorities of the Faculty of Law should emphasise more on the necessity to comply by introducing some “hard to bear consequences”.*

**Keywords: Law, Faculty, Undergraduates.**

### **Introduction**

Faculty of law, like any other Faculty that handles professional disciplines like Medicine and Pharmacy, is specifically known for its specialties in training a particular professional body that constitutes a designated group of subjects referred to as legal students or in most cases “would be lawyers” “Law” is referred to as the totality of **modus operandi by which a particular community is ruled, the blue print of the interpersonal relationship that transpires among the individuals**

that constitute a particular society (Osaigie 2004). Faculty of law is the incubator through which the knowledge of torts, evidence and criminalities are hatched upon the Law subjects. Others like 'equity' and 'trust' that are more often than not regarded to be bones of contention and in most cases the sources of mayhem in the political, economic and religious worlds are incorporated in the study of Law as a profession. All these could only be managed by the Faculty of Law, the only body that is vested with the jurisdiction across the universe.

In an attempt to differentiate between the undergraduates in the various areas of discipline in most of the Nigerian tertiary institutions, the dressing patterns were designed to vary from one Faculty to the other. Boyede (2001) observed that this dress code varies from one university to the other in most of the Faculties across the tertiary institutions in Nigeria except "the Faculty of Law". This implies that the approved dress code of the Law students is across culture irrespective of the higher institution involved. This is unlike the Faculties of Engineering and Social Sciences whereby the students in a particular tertiary institution may be putting on colour green coverall or white garment on a red one and in another school, a red top on a black pair of trousers.

Nigerian male Law students nationwide would either appear in complete black shirt on a black trouser with a black suit on top or in white on the black with a neck tie to match. Lady Law students too must in a like manner comply also by appearing in either black or white top on a black skirt. This indeed is the dress code as approved by the 'Legends' in the Legal profession over a numberless decades ago (Alakija, 1992). The black on black symbolises the non pre-empting attribute of Law as a profession while the white on black and vice versa implies a fair dealing aspect of the profession (Alakija). Oshodi (2006) opined that identifying a Law student among the millions of undergraduates

is a task that is as easy as locating an albino in a market place.

However, even though it is revealed in literature that the unique dress code in the Faculty of Law is as old as Law as a profession itself, not much had been discussed about the attitude of the subjects in the noble profession concerning obedience to the outstanding rules that guide the profession, particularly the dress code (Putodi, 1999).

Based on the above, this study is meant to investigate the following: (i) the extent of the law students' compliance with the dress code (ii) the efforts of the school authority to enforce it as a must (iii) the penalties that are meant for deviants and the effect of such penalties on the learners' academic performances.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to find out the compliance of Nigerian undergraduates in the Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, to the dress code of the Faculty as described above.

Researches by Folorunsho and Olaoluwa (2009) revealed that Nigerian undergraduates are becoming unbecoming in their physical appearances nowadays. This may be because of the trends in civilisation or the advancement in the technical know-how that had been brought about by the western education. The African children as a whole appear to be deviating geometrically on daily bases from how they were being described by Ngugi (1962) in the first edition of "Weep Not Child" several decades ago. The African learners that were known for decency in terms of morality are now discovered to have bowed to the ugly culture of chest baring, sagging and mini-skirting. These seriously negate what the African culture used to be in the time past (Bankole 2008).

Nigerian learners, irrespective of educational levels seem not to be exonerated from the anathema of poor dressing and embarrassing physical outlooks that are being brought about by sub-

standard clothing. Investigations by Clifford (2006) revealed that the secondary school learners of both sexes across Nigeria nowadays have little or no regard for the school authority and hence no aorta of obedience. Where obedience is lacking, fear of the authority may be at large and there may not be respect for principles. It may not be surprising therefore that learners may, more often than not, go in their own choice in how they dress, minding not whether it is tenable before the authority or not.

Meanwhile, the researcher observed that more than 70% of research findings within the last two decades consistently lament the fast eroding traditional values in the aspect of moralities among the Nigerian learners and particularly in the areas of their societal membership. Alatika (2006) reported that an average Nigerian is invested with a greater tendency to disrespect culture than his counterparts in Asia if opportune to change an environment. The inevitable change of environment as a learner that had graduated from the secondary school could be the cause of most undergraduates' unhealthy attitude to some important areas of necessity like dressing. Noticeably, most of the Nigerian ladies that were used to flowing gowns abruptly change over to open neck-blouses with boobs that are tightly packed in an undersized brazzers in a way to forcefully show their nipples through the transparent materials. The boys too change from the "cover it all" baggy materials they were identified by to thigh showing jean trousers that expose the shapes of their manhood. Investigations by Jacob (2009) revealed that boys that 'sag' are the same in ratio with their female counterparts. These misdemeanors in terms of what to wear and how to wear it could be why other crimes like rape, sexual torture, sadism and sexual killings are common place all over Nigerian tertiary institutions of today, this is highly dehumanising that one begins to doubt if the culture of the colonial masters had in anyway assisted our original African culture at all. Few of the averagely decent traditional African may become highly disturbed and tends towards being very skeptical about whether it really worth it celebrating the nature of civilization that assisted Africans technologically but speedily relegated the African traditional values through

acculturations.

Indeed, the deviants always know how best to dress. A Law student that is putting on black on white may still deviate in the sowing standards. Law, being a noble profession is assumed to be a profession for a set of the noble ones. It therefore seems very unethical seeing Law students that 'sag' or leaving out the shirt without being toured in the trousers. Yet some lady law students more often than not appear in armless white or black top that exposes their shoulders, chest and ancillaries hence at times make them a prey to sexual harassment. This bad behaviour is in no doubt the concern of most of the authorities in Nigerian higher institutions today. Appearance inevitably shows the manner and many at times how a man dresses determines how he is addressed. These analogies seem not to exempt the Law learners in connection to their compliance to the Faculty stipulated dress code. It is based on this that the researcher wants to investigate the likely influence that the learners' sex and class levels man have on the tendency to comply to the Faculty dress code.

#### **The Problem**

It is observed that secondary school students as well as the learners in the Nigerian tertiary institutions are being reported as lagging behind in their areas of responsibilities in terms of compliances to rules and regulations as specified by the school authority (Bolakale, 2006). This seems to be sourced in disobedience among a greater percentage of the Nigerian learners. The disobedience is suspected to be the major reason for the noticeable rate in the skyrocketed rate of unacceptable behaviour among the learners' populace in the recent time. The uniform specifications in the Faculty of Law could be for identification purpose. It could also be symbolic in another form or the other. What matters is that it constitutes a rule, a regulation from the superior. It is more prestigious and orderly that the subjects to which such order is given obey it to the last letter without any reservation. Reports by Ofigba and Tundinu (2009) revealed that more than 70% of those learners do deviate inspite of all efforts

by the management to make a specific dress pattern a priority. A low level of compliance among the learners in Nigerian tertiary institutions in the areas of punctuality in classes, payment of school fees to time and abstinence from unregistered association was reported by Dairo (2004). The stiffneckedness of learners in these important aspects may jeopardize good learning and hence result in poor academic performances. Most learners that are being caught in the act of non-compliance in the Law classes are being sent out of the classes in the lecture hour. This could be why performances in some courses like Jurisprudence, Criminal Law and Law of Evidence are being reported as irritatingly low in most of the Nigerian universities (Olapade, 2005).

Research question

**What is the general attitude of Law students to the Faculty dress code in Obafemi Awolowo University?**

**Research Hypotheses**

- (1) Sex will not significantly influence the law learners in their compliance to dress code in the Faculty of Law.**
- (2) Learners' class levels will not significantly influence their compliances to the faculty of Law dress code.**

**Methodology**

The study is a descriptive research design of the survey type. 200 undergraduates were selected as the sample size for the study using stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used by the researcher was a self designed questionnaire titled 'Law Students and Dress Code (LSDC)'. The instrument is divided into two sections, A and B. Section A, the respondents' biodata while section B, 20 items designed to explore the learners' view concerning the approved white in black, black on black or black suit over white or black top with black skirt or trouser. The instrument was validated by giving it to three Law lecturers in the Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The experts reframed some items that were ambiguous and they unanimously agreed that the instrument was valid enough to be

used for the study. Cronbach Alpha formula was used in testing the reliability of the instrument. Cronbach Alpha correlation at 0.89 was recorded. It was considered to be high enough to establish the reliability of the instrument.

Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency counts and percentages were used in answering the research question raised 50% and above was considered as high while scores between 1 and 49.9% indicate negative compliance level to dress code. The two null hypotheses formulated were tested using mean and t-test statistics. The mean score of 2.50 and above indicate high level of compliance while the mean score below 2.50 indicated a low compliance.

### **Results**

**What is the general attitude of Law students to the Faculty dress code in Obafemi Awolowo University?**

**Table I**

**Percentage table showing the level of compliance of the law students to law dressing code.**

<b>Level of Compliance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>High (50% &amp; above)</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Low (0-49%)</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table I above shows that the law students in Obafemi Awolowo University manifest a high level of compliance to the dressing**

code in the faculty.

### Hypotheses Testing

$H_0$ : Sex will not significantly influence the Law learners in their compliance to the dress code in the Faculty.

**Table 2**

t-test analysis of the mean scores of Law undergraduates' compliance to the Faculty dress code based on Sex.

	Male	Female	
1			It is must to appear in law uniform while on campus
1.54	1.24	0.12	
2			Law uniform is a symbol of identity that must be adored by all Law students
3.27	3.29	0.129	
3.			It is quite normal and in fact a must to put on Law uniform even outside the campus
3.58	3.51	0.153	
4.			I am used to putting on my uniform as a Law student
3.32	3.12	0.317	
5.			I don't seem to have fulfilled all righteousness without my law uniform while on campus
3.28	3.30	0.330	

$P < 0.05$ , critical t value = 1.96, NS – significant

Table 2 shows that the Law students were not different in their levels of compliance inspite of sex difference. It is evident in the items above that the undergraduates were of the same positive opinion in favour of the dress code. The calculated t value in all the items is greater than the t critical at 1.96. The hypothesis that says sex will not significantly influence the law learners in



their compliance to the dress code in the law faculty is accepted.  
**H<sub>0</sub><sub>2</sub>: Learners' class levels will not significantly influence their compliances to the faculty of law dress code**

**Table 3 t-test analysis of undergraduate's compliance based on their class levels.**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t-cal</b>	<b>t-value</b>
<b>Low class level (100-300)</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15.84</b>	<b>0.47</b>	<b>1.99</b>
<b>High class level (400-500)</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>13.48</b>		

**P > 0.05**

Table 3 above reveals that calculated t-value at 0.47 is lower than the table value at 1.99. This implies that there is no significant difference between the law undergraduates in their level of compliance to the faculty dress code inspite of the learners' class level differences the hypothesis that says learners class levels will not significantly influence their compliances to the faculty of law dress code is accepted.

### **Discussion**

The study revealed that Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates in the Faculty of Law have a very high level of compliances to the dress code in the faculty. The Law students were not influenced in their compliances inspite of the sex and class levels differences. The high esteem at which both male and female undergraduates in the Faculty of Law of the great Obafemi Awolowo University hold the faculty dress code may not be far from the fact that an oath of allegiance was signed to that effect at the point of matriculation. Defiling this oath as stated in the oath incurs dismissal as a penalty. The fact that class levels make no difference in the students' compliance status may not baffle the researchers. This could be because the fearful oath that seems to guide the decision to be obedient and truthful to such important rule is always signed at the point of entry as a Law student (100 level) the names of those that were being penalized over a disregard for such regulations or the other are written in the Faculty's black book and published in the faculty journal. This would definitely call them to order as no one would

want to lose his/her studentship.

**Notwithstanding the high level of compliance recorded in the study, it was yet revealed that about 22% of the learners manifest a low level compliance to the faculty dress code.**

#### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

**Based on the above findings, it is concluded that the undergraduates in the Legal profession had a high level of compliance to dress code rules. It is recommended that undergraduates in other discipline could as well borrow a leaf from their counterparts in the legal profession for the purposes of uniformity and quicker identification. Also, it is recommended that the Faculty bigwigs should leave no stone unturned in dealing ruthlessly with whoever is caught in the act of disregarding this rule. By so doing, maximum percentage of compliance would be ascertained. Periodic and random inspection must be carried out on the Law students particularly in Legal System, Law of Evidence and Law of Contract classes whereby all Law students are expected to**

be present. Any liable student must not be left off the hook.

#### References

- Alakija, L.,(1992). Social support and conformity: The role of independent assessment. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 7*, 48-58.
- Alatika,B. (2006). Do negative cognitive styles confer vulnerability to conformity? *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 8*, 120-129).
- Boyede,W.(2001). *Conformity: A psychological interpretation*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Bankole, A.(2006). Trait-names: A Legal study, *Legal Monographs, 40* (Whole No. 211)
- Bolakale,A. (2006). Psychiatric classification of nonconformity to rules, *52*, 199-201
- Clifford,A.I. (2006), Reciprocity of interpersonal exchange. *Journal for Theory of Social Behaviour, 3*, 249-261.
- Dairo,A. (2004). Interaction with context during rule giving class exercise. *Cognition, 30*, 191-238.
- Altmann, G.T.(1999). Incremental interpretation at verbs: Restricting the domain of subsequent reference, *Cognition, 73*, 247-264
- Folorunsho,A. (2009). Stereotype susceptibility in adolescents: Effects of identity activation on quantitative performance, *Psychological Science, 10*, 320-329
- Jacob,A. A., (2009), *Ethical principles in the conduct of research with human participants*. Washington, DC
- Ngugi, W. (1962. *Weep not child* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) Bonarparte

- Press.
- Osagie, A. (2004) Ethical principles of conformity. *Sweden journal of psychologists*, 36, 633-638**
- Oshodi, A.E. (2006). Human behaviour and the implications on societal growth. Agbede Press.**
- Ofigba, A. & Tundinu, I. (2009). Effects of violent video games on disobedient behaviour of college students. *Journal of Psychological Science*, 12, 353-360**
- Olapade, T. (2005). Undergraduates' violence. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 27-51**
- Putodi, A. R. (1999). *Rules of the mind*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.**