

# **Enhancing Conducive Learning Environment For Female Undergraduate Students In Kebbi State University Of Science And Technology, Aliero**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The project aimed at enhancing an enabling learning environment for female undergraduate students in Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero. The objectives were to find the relationships between Dress Code and; Attitudes of Students, academic performance and community perceptions among KSUSTA students. Using both qualitative and quantitative techniques, the research was a descriptive survey which was carried out in different phases; the population comprised of 949 students in four (4) Faculties with nineteen (19) departments and of those residing in the student hostels were 780. Samples of 144 female undergraduate students drawn from 780 hostel residents were drawn using simple random and multistage sampling techniques. The instruments used are close ended questionnaire, in-depth interview and focus group discussions (FGD). The validity of the quantitative instrument was determined by experts in Test, Measurement and Evaluation from the Faculty of Education and Extension Services Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, while that of the qualitative was determined using content validity. The reliability test was carried out using test re test and administration of the proposed schedules on a wide range of respondents accordingly. Data was gathered through personal administration of questionnaires, participant observations by the researchers and the conduct of FGDs across the range of respondents and participants. Chi square and descriptive statistics were employed to analyse data. The findings indicated that dress code, male students' attitudes towards girls among others affect the conduciveness of the learning environment. It was recommended that more needs to be provided as regards dress ethics to safeguard female students in the pursuit of knowledge on KSUSTA campus.

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## **I. Introduction**

An enabling learning environment should be that which presents in the wake of time safety, conduciveness, social ethics, values and morals to mention but a few. It is a space provided for achievable teaching/learning situations which should be governed by the laws of the land, through an exemplary curriculum, school rules and regulations. This is because an institution of learning is expected to be a miniature of every society. An enabling learning environment serves as a ground for the formation and reformation of individuals, institutions and the society as a whole. An institution of learning provides for the needs of the society. This therefore brings us to why the need for assurance and re-assurance of the provisions for safety alongside accountable reasons as to why parents should accord a corresponding opportunity to young girls (with boys) the enabling opportunity to enrol in higher institutions of learning.

Ensuring that girls and women achieve the positive educational outcomes necessary for their successful integration into the labour market, develop appropriate technical and personal skills and are able to make informed decisions about their future requires non-discriminatory education and training. Indecent dressing for instance has been a menace of major concern in most institutions; among both males and females, the immediate and extended communities of the university community. Thus, every institution provides what is required to form a part of decent dressing and otherwise. A University is a formal setting which requires formal physical appearance for lecture attendance, free movements within the campus community and for one to uphold his/her self-respect amidst counterparts.

Like every other higher institution of learning, Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero (KSUSTA) is no exception in having the flair to produce academically and morally sound graduates. Learning and the upholding of ethical values informs one of the reasons for the phrase "in character and learning" on most academic certificates. This implies that university education is supposed to be an all-round

reformation centre for excellence. This research is prompted as a result of poor and disheartening dress codes/ indecent/inappropriate dressing among young undergraduate students, poor sanitary condition in halls of residence, lack of self-respect and respect for others and poor academic performance. It is paramount to note that improper dressing leads to a host of problems; indiscipline, lack of concentration on primary/academic purposes, opposite sex attraction, sexual harassment, unhealthy living, continuous negative perception on university education among societies and so on.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Framework**

The research is a female-based project saddled with the intentions to identify problems which affect women in Nigerian universities, specifically, KSUSTA. Thus, the project employed the conflict and feminist theories in explaining and establishing the nature of the problems faced by women. The problems of women are best understood by women themselves, this therefore justifies why the study “projects” female undergraduate students as they are either directly or indirectly affected by the issues at stake.

### **Dress Code and Female Education in Tertiary Institutions**

A student’s style of dress could be a reflection of the individual’s preference; such preference must be selected within the constraints of reasonable rules and appropriate standards that are consistent with the maintenance of an effective learning atmosphere and good personal hygiene (Asaju, 2013). Josephine and Joseph (2016) opined that the desire to be among the best and most current has created some kind of trendy competitions among ladies. As they try to outdo each other in style lines and fashionable wears, other problems and challenges come up which invariably affect teaching and learning atmosphere. They added that, quality education and fashion could project and promote social, economic and moral development although many are concerned with fashion trends that appear to be a deviation of the true Nigerian culture. Josephine and Joseph (2016) therefore, defined indecent dressing as that which can be understood based on the prevailing norms and acceptable ways of dressing relative to the society in which it is being perpetrated. The Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero (2020) stated that it shall also serve as a protector and guardian of our culture, moral and ethical values. Consequently, students are strongly advised to dress decently and conduct themselves with respect.

### **Enabling Environment**

Terry (2018) stated that in creating conducive learning environment, divergent sources is a necessity. The fibre of formal learning should come from a variety of sources like professional and cultural mentors, the community, content experts outside education and even the students themselves. Ruby (2019) observed that there are three main aspects to be considered in the creation of a positive learning environment: physical environment, emotional environment and respectful and supportive environment. The student’s dress code is part of physical environment. Anand, (2020) opined that one of the most important factors in the learning process is the presence of a good learning environment.

### **Sanitary Issues and Female Education**

The lack of appropriate sanitary facilities may discourage students generally from attending schools, female students in particular. Ezeji (2013) reported that, most tertiary institutions in Nigeria do not have adequate basic sanitary facilities: basic water supply, latrine or toilets while in some Universities the latrines/toilets are heavily used, filthy and dirty. Water supply and some sanitary facilities which are available are not in use or are locked up and are made inaccessible to students. The absence of basic sanitary facilities however, leads to poor hygiene habits hence, human illnesses such as diarrhoea, toilet disease and other infectious diseases and so on. World Health Organisation (2008) report showed that poor sanitation and its consequences particularly ill health adversely affect school participation, lowers enrolment rate, increases absenteeism and contributes to poor classroom performance thereby decreasing learning capacities among students.

## **III. Aims and Objectives**

The objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the relationship between dress code and attitudes of students in KSUSTA?
2. To find out the relationship between dress code and academic performance of students in KSUSTA?
3. To find out the relationship between dress code and social perception of students in KSUSTA?

### Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses raised include:

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between dress code and attitudes of students in KSUSTA

**H02:** There is no significant relationship between dress code and academic performance of students in KSUSTA

**H03:** There is no significant relationship between dress code and social perception of students KSUSTA.

### IV. Methodology

The design is a descriptive survey; the choice of descriptive survey is to ensure a wide coverage of the study area as surveys of this nature provide for the inclusion of people's opinions, attitudes and ideas in current and recurrent situations. The population for the study comprised of the four (4) Faculties with nineteen (19) departments in KSUSTA and two existing halls of residence being occupied by female undergraduate students. The total number of the female undergraduate students in the Faculties as at the time of the study (2019) was 949 and of those residents at the Halls of residence were 780. A sample of 144 female undergraduate students was drawn using multi stage and simple random sampling. The sample is the representation of only the female undergraduate students who are resident on the KSUSTA main campus. The instruments used are a self-designed close ended questionnaire, in-depth interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) schedules. The validity of the quantitative instrument was determined by experts in Test, Measurement and Evaluation from the Faculty of Education and Extension Services of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto while that of the qualitative was determined using content validity. The reliability test was carried out using test re test. The use of multiple instruments and the administration of the sampled schedules on a wide range of respondents accordingly ensued the reliability of the qualitative instrument. Thus, the Spearman Rank Order was used to arrive at an index of 0.76 which also showed reliability of the quantitative instruments. Data was gathered through personal administration of questionnaires, in-depth interviews and the conduct of FGDs by the researchers across the range of respondents and participants. Chi square and descriptive statistics were employed to analyse data collected from both the quantitative and qualitative data respectively. In the qualitative data the responses were coded and grouped under subthemes and were analysed based on the already stated objectives.

### V. Data Analysis

#### Quantitative Analysis

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between dress codes and attitudes of students in KSUSTA

**Table 1: Relationship between Dress Code and Attitudes of Students in KSUSTA t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means**

<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	23.71528                      6.590278
Variance	38.19109                      6.998786
Observations	144                              144
Pearson Correlation	-0.55725
Hypothesized Difference	Mean 0
Df	143
t Stat	25.80656
P(T<=t) one-tail	5.66E-56
t Critical one-tail	1.655579
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.13E-55
t Critical two-tail	1.976692

**Source: Field-work 2020**

The results from table 1 indicates 23.7 positive and 6.5 negative on Dress Code and Attitudes of students in KSUSTA, which shows a positive correlation with t-value at 25.80656 which means that the null hypothesis is rejected as there is a significant relationship between dress codes and attitudes of students in KSUSTA.

**H02:** There is no significant relationship between dress code and academic performance of students in KSUSTA

**Table 2: Relationship between Dress Code and Academic Performance of Students**

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	10.92361	7.5
Variance	22.14098	4.867133
Observations	144	144
Pearson Correlation	-0.60661	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	143	
t Stat	6.528363	
P(T<=t) one-tail	5.4E-10	
t Critical one-tail	1.655579	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.08E-09	
t Critical two-tail	1.976692	

Source: Field-work 2020

The results from table 2 on Dress Code and Academic Performance of students in KSUSTA shows a slight correlation with t-value at 6.528363 which means the null hypotheses is rejected as there is a relationship between dress code and academic performance of students in KSUSTA.

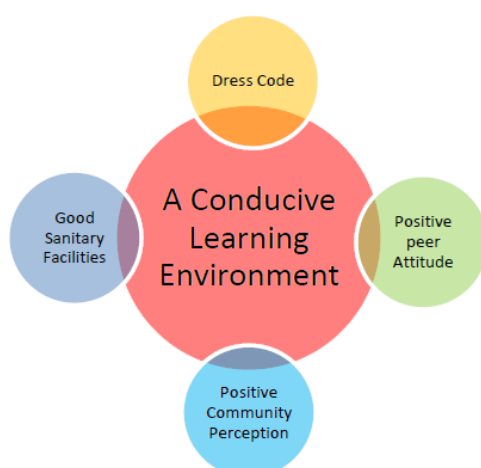
**HO3:** There is no significant relationship between dress code and social perception of students in KSUSTA

**Table 3: Relationship between Dress Code and Social Perception**

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	14.48611	6.611111
Variance	31.30051	6.686869
Observations	144	144
Pearson Correlation	-0.61184	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	143	
t Stat	12.66313	
P(T<=t) one-tail	2.02E-25	
t Critical one-tail	1.655579	
P(T<=t) two-tail	4.04E-25	
t Critical two-tail	1.976692	

Source: Field-work 2020

The results from table 3 on Dress Code and Social Perception of KSUSTA shows a marginal correlation with t-value at 12.66313 which means the null hypothesis is rejected, as there is a relationship between student's dress code and the social perception in KSUSTA.



**Figure 1: Showing a Conducive Learning Environment for Female Undergraduate Students**

### **Qualitative Analysis**

The results from the in-depth interviews are incorporated in that of the FGDs. The findings were coded and presented under subthemes that comprise of; Types of Dress Code and Attitudes of students in KSUSTA; Dress Code and Female students' Performance and Effect of Hygiene on Academic Performance. The idea of dress code is supposed to be a phenomenon which whether consciously or unconsciously a people consider to be a part of. Understanding what to wear, where and how to wear it is what makes the personality of every individual complete. The undergraduate female students in KSUSTA are not unaware of the kinds of dresses to wear for every activity irrespective of religion or cultural affiliations.

### **Types of Dress Code and Attitudes of Students in KSUSTA**

The students are found to be inclined toward a similar pattern of dress code: female students in KSUSTA generally like to wear native wears, hijab, flat shoes, trousers, veils, jeans and tops. Weave on and wigs are mostly worn by Christian students to complement their dressing. One of the participants in an FGD pointed out that;

Girls like corporate dresses for attending lectures; they are generally neat and have a colour sense. Other common dresses are native long skirts and blouses, hijabs, long veils, no makeup and flat shoes which serve as official dresses for attending lectures (21 Years, UG IV, Education Biology, Block E resident)

The respondents were of the opinion that wearing tight clothes or extremely fitted outfits, noisy heels, bangles, rings, heavy makeup, unkept or very fashionable hairdo and some other things which are wrong to attend lectures, distract attention of both lecturers and students. The respondents also observed that, students in KSUSTA do not wear heavy makeup except when attending the mosque for prayers on Fridays or attending Church services on Sundays and or celebrating birthdays. A respondent maintained that, 'Make up generally consumes a lot of time. I have no issues with dressing and do not wear harsh makeup to classroom or for lectures' (19 Years, UG II, Biochemistry, Block F resident)

Attitudes of both the male students and lecturers are viewed from the perceptions they have and the actions exhibited which either support or negate female students' participation in university education. These inferences are drawn from the participants and respondents who have expressed with mixed feelings the attitudes of their male counterparts and those of their lecturers either within or outside the classroom.

#### **Dress Code and Academic Performance**

The respondents and participants agreed to the fact that, excessive dressing contributes to students lack of performance and participation in classroom activities. Most students who engage in such acts are found to miss lectures or classroom activities by either arriving the lecture hall late or by being sent out of the lecture rooms by the lecturers as a result of their modes of dressing or late coming. An FGD participant pointed out that;

Dress code affects lectures where students use lecture time dressing up; students loose tests while being sent out of the class because of the way they dress. It is often very embarrassing not just to the person concerned

but the entire girls in that class as you find students especially boys passing derogative comments about such kind of girls. (20 Years, UG IV, Mathematics, Block E resident)

Thus, female undergraduate students have blamed the unpleasant reactions on mostly female students' mode of dressing, girlish attitudes, poor academic performance and the concern for material gains. A respondent stated that;

Such poor dress attitudes encourage harassment; violate school rules; get lecturers angry and it poses threat to academics from lecturers to students. Also, such poor dress culture causes sexual harassment among students; girls dressing at night most often cause distractions for not just male but female students also (19 Years, UG III, Chemistry Department, Block F)

However, the attitudes of lecturers are not farfetched from the manners and codes of accepted and non-accepted dresses among female undergraduate students in KSUSTA. Lecturers do not differentiate among student's gender when asking questions in the class; when questions are asked during lectures boys respond more often than girls this is because girls are shy, afraid and sometimes lack good command of English. Although when a lecturer knows a student by name he or she often calls out the names when they want to ask questions in the classroom. Undergraduate female students are distracted as they gist in the hostel about who and who dates them among their counterparts and their lecturers. A respondent observed that "girls approach lecturers as crushes and these crushes encourage female students to attend lectures well dressed with makeup" (19 Years, UG II, Microbiology Department, Block F). These categories of students are said to sit on front rows just to attract the attention of the lecturer. Obviously, this attitude affects learning and students' performance.

### **Dress Code vs Parents and Community Perceptions**

Dress patterns and attitudes among female undergraduate students is a strong determinant for girls' participation in higher education. Responding on how changes in students' mode of dressing relate to parents or community members perceptions, the participants were of the opinion that most students dress differently from the way they dress at home. Indicating that students are good at copying other people's dress patterns not minding the differences and possible consequences of negative transformations; one finds students abandoning hijabs for veils, body covering attires for skimpy outfits, African natural hair weaving to fixing of attachments and long braids which most often attract the sensations of the opposite sex. General conducts and negative change in attitudes affect relationships; it discourages males from marrying university students or graduates; discourages parents from allowing their wards to attend universities and so on.

The respondents were of the opinion that KSUSTA is still considered a good place to study especially as it within the State for students that are indigenes and for the non-indigenes they find Kebbi State to be relatively peaceful despite the security challenges bedeviling the country as a whole. It could be observed according to a respondent that 'family and community members and friends are attracted to us because of our mode of dressing and manner of interaction (20 Years, Microbiology Department, UG III, Block E). Another participant in a related development pointed out that;

Many girls living in our communities would want to study in KSUSTA. The initial discouragement was from home and this is because of stories circulated on the cases of rape and sexual harassment in Secondary Schools and in some higher institutions of learning. KSUSTA is still a good place for girls to study compared to other institutions where we hear of such cases of harassment (22 Years, Physics Department, UGIV, Postgraduate Hostel)

## **VI. Discussions of Findings**

The findings in hypothesis one is in agreement with the results of Zembazemba (2017), who carried out a study on students' attitudes towards dress codes and revealed that the overall student's attitudes were in conformity with the college dress codes, with exception of only a few students who were violating the college dress code.

The findings in hypothesis two contradicts the results of Sanborn (2015) who stated that academically, after many studies, it shows that students who wear dress code do not perform better academically than somebody without a dress code/uniform. And a study conducted from 1994 to 2002 at 64 high schools in Ohio which also found that wearing uniforms or following dress codes had improved graduation, behaviour and attendance rates but had no effect on academic performance.

The findings in hypothesis three concords with the work of Kaveh, Moradi & Zadeh (2017) who observed that the overall way of dressing is important from the social functions of dressing; and university students and professors in particular, have a specific position among the public. In other words, people consider students and professors to be different from other organisations and social institutions and have different expectation from them. A large proportion of this effect occurs during confrontations, simple interactions, and observations. These seemingly simple observations have a great impact on the public judgments, attitudes, and

patterns of behaviour. Thus, elegance and dressing pattern of the academics (both students and staff) are of great importance.

### **VII. Summary of Major Findings**

The major findings of the study include:

1. There is significant relationship between dress code and attitude of female undergraduate students in Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero
2. There is significant relationship between dress code and academic performance of female undergraduate students in Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero
3. There is significant relationship between dress code and community perception of female undergraduate students in Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero

### **VIII. Conclusions**

The study concludes that there is a need for the enforcement of certain rules and regulations on students' dress code and attitudes as to how sanity would be maintained for the provision of conducive learning environment for female undergraduate students in KSUSTA.

### **IX. Recommendation**

The study recommends that;

1. There is the need for the University management to enforce strict penalties on dress code defaulters among not only female undergraduate students but as well their male counterparts
2. There is the need for the University management to constitute a standard committee which will comprise of mostly female academic and non-academic staff to handle women related issues on KSUSTA campus especially as it will affect the conduciveness of the environment to encourage academic performance
3. There is the need for the University to organise constantly programmes that will encourage collaborations with its immediate environment and environs to foster good working relationships that may encourage girls' enrolment

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