

# Societal influence on peoples' choices of clothing in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State.

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**Abstract:** Society has a way of influencing the decisions made by people. This study investigated the influence of society on clothing selection among people in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria. The study achieved one specific objective upon which an hypothesis was set and was tested in the study. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Population of the study was 100 respondents which were selected through purposive sampling. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using simple regression. The finding showed that there was a statistically significant influence of society on people choices of clothing. It is good to dress right because you are addressed the way you dress and dressing forms part of one's identity. It is a finding that people select their clothing based on the expectations societies place on them. It is advisable of people to select clothing that best suit their body structure while adhering to societal demands. That is, it is not wrong to dress in a way accepted by the society but it is not ideal if it is out of fitting according to body shape which varies from person to person.

**Key Words:** Society, Choice of clothing, People choices.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The use of clothing is one of the most important factors that differentiates humans from animals and it is not only used to provide micro-climate for the wearers body but also to conceal the body and reveals its wearers' status and personality to others. It is a function of social milieu, personality and lifestyle. People communicate through the way they dress. It is impossible to wear clothes without transmitting social signals. Every costume tells a story, often a very subtle one, about its wearer. Since prehistoric times, people in almost all societies have worn some kind of clothing (McDermott & Pettijohn, 2011). Research survey has shown that clothing and appearance serves as a form of non-verbal communication which stimulates judgmental and behavioural response from others (Jain, Singh & Rankawat, 2011).

Throughout history, clothing has had great meaning. Clothing is anybody covering and appearance modification made on the human body. Clothing is a tangible impression of personal values and is recognized as one of the symbols of communication that leads to social acceptance and is important to the development of self-concept and individual's personality. Clothing is a factor in everyday human life and interactions with others. It can transmit a vast array of meanings such as identity, value, mood and attitude (Riungu, 2009). It is emphasized that clothing was a systematic means of transmitting information about the wearer, meaning that multiple messages might be sent to the perceiver. Ones appreciation of clothing will be broadened as one become more aware of the influences clothing has.

## 2. PROBLEM OF THE STUDY:

The need to look good and meet up with the trends in fashion has led a reasonable number of people into confusion on what to dress in since ones dressing is one of the things the society judges an individual. This is why Beaudoin and Lachance (2006) submitted that choice in clothing can communicate responsibility, status, power, and ability to be successful. The primary purpose of clothing was to provide protection and comfort to the body but following the trends in fashion and human expectations, these primary needs has not been the only determining factor for the choice of clothing among the people of Takum.

Looking good in a dress is a good idea but the question is whether people really select clothing for the purpose of providing protection and comfort as it is primarily meant to be while trying to look good in a dress? The desire to look good has led people especially teenagers to indecent dressing in the name of what-is-in-voke and fashion. It is based on this premise the study was embarked on to investigate the influence of society on people's choice of clothing in Takum Local Government area of Taraba State.

**2.1 Purpose of the study:** The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of society on clothing selection. The following hypothesis was tested in the study:

- i. There is no statistically significant influence of society on people's choice of clothing.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The society is an environment which influences peoples' choice of clothing through societal contents and factors like societal values and norms, culture, religion, fashion, relationships, leadership and economic state of the society. Hristova (2014) is of the view that a society's economic structure and its culture, or traditions and way of life, influence the clothing that its people wear. According to Riungu (2009), in many societies, religious laws regulate personal behaviour and permitted only members of an elite class to wear certain prestigious items of clothing. The society's culture such as norms, convention, customs religion, festivity, class, lifestyle and other subculture influence how individual consumers buy and use products, and help explain how groups of consumers behave. Lawan and Zanna (2013) opined that every group or society has a culture, and cultural influences on buying behaviour may vary greatly from place to place. Failure to adjust to these differences can result in ineffective marketing or embarrassing mistakes.

Analysis using descriptive statistics and chi square in Lawan and Zanna (2013) survey revealed that the society (opinion leaders, gate keepers, friends, family,) served as the main awareness window through which information and knowledge about clothes are obtained and selected by people. Societal norms (24.6%) were the highest determining factor for people's choice of clothing. This is so because such people would expectedly dress and exhibit behaviours (dressing mode) acceptable by the larger society for fear of being labeled deviants in the society. It is also in line with the submission of Dandaneau (2008) whose study revealed that societal norms are the major cultural factor that regulates the kind of clothes people buy and not adhering to it, often result in significant consequences, because an underlying social value or moral standard is violated.

Even in modern democracies, clothing may represent social standing. Clothing with a designer label tends to be relatively expensive, so it may function as an outward sign of a person's economic standing. Clothing most obviously defines a social role in the case of uniforms, such as those worn by police officers and nurses, and garments worn by clergy and other members of religious orders are placed by society (Rahman, 2014). Riungu (2009) summarized that the most outstanding psychological factors that determined her respondents' clothing selection and practices are related to be smart looking clothes (89%), styles acceptable by school community (66%), personal beliefs and values (62%) and beautiful clothes (59%). These were standard set by the society of her respondents by default.

Reiter (2012) reported in her work entitled 'young, educated and shopping-clothing, consumption and difference among the educated young in Krasnodar, Russian Federation' that people use clothing and dressing to differentiate themselves from others in the society. In the society, clothing is very closely tied to people's self-perception (Crane & Bovone, 2006) and people base their choices of clothing on judgments they expect from others when they are dressed in a certain way (Woodward, 2005). This reflects that status is commonly displayed through clothing (Schneider, 2006) which is based on societal standards. Riungu (2009) pointed out that, fashion is a dynamic collective process yet it influences individuals' lives in a distinctively personal way in the society. It is through the process of fashion that new styles are created, introduced to a consuming public and popularly accepted by that public. Societal values influence consumers' choice of clothing (Alooma & Lawan, 2013).

### 4. METHOD:

The research design adopted in this study was the descriptive survey research design. The study area was Takum Local Government Area which was created out of Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria. Takum is one of the 16 Local Government Areas in Taraba State and it is located in the Southern part of the State. It lies between latitude 6°30' and 8°30'N and longitude 9°10' and 11°10'E of the Greenwich Meridian with an area of 2,503Km<sup>2</sup> and a total population of 135,349 at the 2006 Census. Takum Local Government Area has its headquarters in Takum and it is bounded by Donga Local Government Area to the North, the Republic of Cameroon in the South/East and Ussa Local Government Area to the West (Aboki & Yuguda, 2013).

Takum Local Government has a tropical climate of 20°C to 32°C (minimum and maximum daily temperature). The study area receives an average of annual rainfall of 1020mm distributed over the four major districts (Takum, Rogo, Kashimbila and Chanchanji) and falls from April to November. The Takum area is drained by two major rivers, the Katsina-Ala and Donga, both of which lie within the Benue valley drainage basin (Aboki & Yuguda, 2013). The ethnic tribes in Takum are Jukum, Kuteb, Chamba, Ichen, Hausa, and Tiv. Apart from English Language, the primary language of the people is Hausa.

One hundred (100) respondents were purposively sampled including males and females from the age of 18 and beyond. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. A simple regression analysis was used for data analysis after being keyed into SPSS version 20.

### 5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS:

There is no statistically significant influence of society on people's choice of clothing. As measured from the analysis of the questionnaire, the independent variable was society while the dependent variable was people's choice

of clothing. To test the hypothesis, the test statistical technique adopted was simple regression. This result is presented in Table 1.

The result of the analysis in Table 1 showed that the correlation (R) coefficient of society and people’s choice of clothing is .61 which implied that, there existed a significant positive strong correlation between society and people’s choice of clothing. More so, the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of .25 showed that the variance in people’s choice of clothing can be accounted for by only 25% of societal influence. However, when the analysis of variance table was assessed, the result indicated Fcal. = .131 where P < .05 (P = .0002) and since P is less than .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This concluded that there was a statistically significant influence of society on people’s choice of clothing.

**TABLE 1**

**Regression coefficient of the predictive influence of society on people’s choice of clothing**

Regression Coefficient (R) = 0.610  
 (R<sup>2</sup>) = 0.250  
 Standard Error = 1.401

Analysis of variance

Source of variance	SS	df	MS	f-cal.	p-val.
Regression	0.257	1	0.257		
Residual	68.716	98	1.963	0.131	0.0002
Total	68.973	99			

N = 100; significant < .05

**6. DISCUSSION OF FINDING:**

The result of the analysis indicated that there was a statistically significant influence of society on people’s choice of clothing. This is corroborated by the finding of Lawan and Zanna (2013) who revealed that the society (opinion leaders, gate keepers, friends and family) served as the main awareness window through which information and knowledge about clothes are obtained and selected by people. The authors also found that societal norms were the highest determining factor for people’s choice of clothing showing that people would expectedly dress and exhibit behaviours (dressing mode) acceptable by the larger society for fear of being labelled deviants in the society.

This finding is also in line with the submission of Dandaneau (2008) whose study revealed that societal norms are the major cultural factor that regulates the kind of clothes people buy and not adhering to it, often result in significant consequences, because an underlying social value or moral standard is violated. To further support this finding, Riungu (2009) summarized that the most outstanding psychological factors that determine peoples’ clothing selection and practices are related to be smart looking clothes, styles acceptable by school community, personal beliefs and values as well as beautiful clothes. These were standard set by the society by default.

**7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is good to dress right because you are addressed the way you dress and dressing forms part of one’s identity. By way of summarizing this study, it is a finding that people select their clothing based on the expectations societies place on them. By conclusion, it can be stated that society has a way of influencing the decisions made by people just as it is established in this study. By way of recommendation, it is advisable of people to select clothing that best suit their body structure while adhering to societal demands. That is, it is not wrong to dress in a way accepted by the society but it is not ideal if it is out of fitting according to body shape which varies from person to person.

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