

**WESTERNISATION AND AFRICAN DRESSING PATTERNS: A STUDY OF
UNDERGRADUATES OF IGNATIUS AJURU UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, PORT
HARCOURT, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study examined Westernisation and African dressing patterns: A study of undergraduates of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. The study objectives were to identify factors that motivate undergraduates to prefer Western styles of dressing over traditional African attire, analyse the perception of undergraduate students regarding the cultural relevance of African cultural dressing patterns in modern university environment, and to find out the role of peer influence, media and social network in shaping students' choice of dressing patterns in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The study was anchored on Cultural Imperialism Theory. A survey research design was adopted. The population of the study was 10,000 undergraduates of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The sample size was 370 drawn from the population using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. The purposive sampling technique was used. Structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Data were analysed using mean scores and standard deviation. The findings revealed that students overwhelmingly preferred Western styles for daily wear due to their perceived comfort, versatility, availability and association with modernity. Although students acknowledged the cultural significance of African attire, they largely confined its use to ceremonial events, viewing it as less practical for everyday academic life. The study also found that peer influence, social media and celebrity culture were powerful determinants in shaping these fashion choices, promoting Western styles as the standard for social acceptance. It was concluded that while cultural heritage is respected, functional and social pressures heavily favour Western dressing patterns in the daily lives of students. The study recommends initiatives to modernise and promote African attire for daily use and leveraging social media to enhance its appeal.

Keywords: Westernisation, African dressing patterns, undergraduates, peer influence, social media, fashion preference

Introduction

Clothing is more than a basic necessity; it is an essential cultural symbol that communicates identity, values, and social belonging. Across Africa, dressing patterns have historically reflected cultural heritage, social roles, and indigenous aesthetics. However, the increasing forces of globalization and Westernisation have significantly altered traditional modes of dressing, particularly among young people in universities (Eferebo, 2022). Westernisation, driven by mass media, technological

connectivity, and global trade, has made Western fashion trends such as jeans, mini-skirts, t-shirts, ripped trousers, and designer brands highly visible and desirable among African undergraduates (Azonuche, 2024). As a result, traditional attires, once dominant in everyday and formal spaces, are gradually giving way to Westernized fashions that symbolize modernity, sophistication, and global belonging.

Undergraduate students, as a youthful and vulnerable population, are at the forefront of this shift. University campuses serve as spaces of identity formation and social interaction, where dress becomes an important means of expressing individuality, class, and group affiliation (Chukwuemeka et al., 2024). For many students, adopting Western fashion is not only about aesthetics but also about aligning with global cultural standards and enhancing social visibility among peers. This cultural adaptation, however, raises concerns regarding the neglect of indigenous fashion, the erosion of cultural identity, and the rise of perceived "indecent" dressing that sometimes conflicts with institutional norms (Bashorun et al., 2023).

The transformation of dressing patterns among undergraduates is also linked to deeper socio-cultural factors. Peer influence, celebrity culture, and social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok amplify Westernized fashion ideals, shaping how students perceive themselves and others (Kerubo, 2024). Moreover, Western brands and clothing items are often associated with prestige and upward mobility, reinforcing students' desire to adopt them as status symbols (Azonuche, 2024). Despite these shifts, traditional African attire retains symbolic significance, especially during cultural days, religious ceremonies, and family events, suggesting that the dynamic is not one of total replacement but of hybridization, where students creatively blend Western and African fashion elements (Eferebo, 2022).

Studying this phenomenon is important for understanding the cultural negotiations taking place within African universities. It highlights how globalization influences everyday practices and raises questions about cultural preservation, generational identity, and institutional policy. By focusing on undergraduate students, this study seeks to explore Westernisation and African dressing patterns: A study of undergraduates of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt.

Statement of the Problem

In contemporary African societies, clothing has become a major medium of cultural expression and identity formation, particularly among undergraduate students who are largely influenced by global trends. Traditionally, African dressing patterns reflected cultural values, norms, and heritage, while serving as a marker of modesty, respect, and social belonging. However, the growing wave of Westernisation has gradually shifted the dressing orientation of young people from indigenous attire to Western styles such as jeans, mini-skirts, leggings, crop tops, and ripped trousers. One begins to wonder what has been responsible for this increasing departure from traditional clothing practices among undergraduates.

The concern of cultural preservation and identity has therefore become central to the study of dressing patterns in African universities. Many institutions of higher learning have raised alarm over what they perceive as "indecent dressing" on campuses, even when cultural alternatives that promote decency and tradition are available. It is observed that despite efforts by university authorities, cultural associations, and religious groups to promote indigenous dressing, undergraduate students continue to prioritize Western fashion as a daily choice. Where such situations prevail, the implications extend beyond individual lifestyle to issues of cultural erosion, identity crisis, and generational disconnection from African heritage.

It is also observed that even when opportunities exist for students to adopt hybrid dressing styles that blend African and Western elements, very few undergraduates utilize such options in a moderate capacity. Instead, Western fashion dominates campus life, leaving indigenous attire to occasional cultural days or ceremonial events. This raises questions about whether peer influence, media exposure, or personal perceptions of modernity drive such preferences. The observation requires an empirical study; hence, it is against this backdrop that this study is designed to

investigate Westernisation and African dressing patterns: A study of undergraduates of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine Westernisation and African dressing patterns: A study of undergraduates of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. identify factors that motivate undergraduate students to prefer Western styles of dressing over traditional African attire in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.
2. ascertain the perception of undergraduate students regarding the cultural relevance of African dressing patterns in the modern university environment.
3. find out the role of peer influence, media, and social networks in shaping students' choice of dressing patterns in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the factors that motivate undergraduate students to prefer Western styles of dressing over traditional African attire in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt?
2. What is the perception of undergraduate students regarding the cultural relevance of African dressing patterns in the modern university environment?
3. What are the roles of peer influence, media, and social networks in shaping students' choice of dressing patterns in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt?

Review of Related Literature

Westernisation

Westernisation is the process by which non-Western societies adopt, imitate, or are influenced by the ideas, values, lifestyle, culture, and institutions of Western countries, particularly those of Europe and North America. It often involves changes in areas such as clothing, education, politics, technology, religion, language, and social behaviour. In simple terms, it is the spread of Western ways of life into other parts of the world (Kerubo, 2024). For example, in Africa, Westernisation is evident in the way many young people prefer Western-style of clothing such as jeans, suits, or mini-skirts over traditional attire. It is also seen in the adoption of Western education systems, democratic governance, Christian religious practices, fast food diets, and the widespread use of English and French in place of indigenous languages (Eferebo, 2022).

Westernisation can bring positive effects, such as technological advancement, improved education, and global connectedness. However, it also has negative consequences, including erosion of cultural heritage, decline of traditional values, and identity crises among younger generations (Chukwuemeka et al., 2024). In modern times, globalization and digital media have accelerated Westernisation by exposing people especially youths and students to Western lifestyles through movies, music, fashion, and social media platforms. As a result, Westernisation has become both a cultural influence and a subject of debate regarding its impact on traditional identity and heritage. Westernisation is a complex process through which non-Western societies adopt or are influenced by Western cultural values, practices, institutions, and lifestyles. It refers to the spread and assimilation of cultural traits that originated in Europe and North America, including modes of dressing, education, governance, technology, religion, language, and social norms (Kerubo, 2024). The concept is closely tied to globalization, modernization, and colonial encounters, as Western cultural systems were historically spread through trade, missionary activities, colonization, and, in contemporary times, mass media and digital technologies (Chukwuemeka et al., 2024).

Historical Perspective of Westernisation

The roots of Westernisation in Africa and other non-Western societies can be traced to the colonial era, when European powers imposed Western systems of education, governance, and religion. Missionary schools, for instance, replaced indigenous systems of knowledge with Western curricula, while colonial authorities promoted Western clothing and suppressed traditional attires deemed “uncivilized” (Eferebo, 2022). Over time, this led to gradual assimilation of Western cultural elements into African societies, especially in urban and elite contexts.

Dimensions of Westernisation

Westernisation manifests in various aspects of social and cultural life.

1. **Cultural Westernisation** – This dimension is visible in language use, fashion, diet, and social behaviours. For instance, the preference for Western clothing among African youths reflects the cultural adoption of Western aesthetics (Bashorun et al., 2023).
2. **Educational Westernisation** – Western models of formal education, emphasizing literacy in English and French, critical reasoning, and certification, replaced indigenous oral traditions and apprenticeship systems (Okafor, 2023).
3. **Technological Westernisation** – Adoption of Western technologies, including industrial production, digital platforms, and communication systems, has transformed African societies, making them globally connected (Kerubo, 2024).
4. **Political and Legal Westernisation** – The introduction of Western-style governance, democracy, and legal frameworks reshaped indigenous political institutions and customary laws in many postcolonial states (Akinola, 2022).
5. **Religious Westernisation** – The spread of Christianity across Africa led to significant religious transformation, often displacing or blending with indigenous belief systems (Onah & Nnam, 2021).

Drivers of Westernisation

The main drivers of Westernisation include globalization, digital media, international trade, migration, and educational exchange programmes. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube accelerate exposure to Western lifestyles and fashion, making them aspirational for young people (Chukwuemeka et al., 2024). Similarly, the global dominance of Western music, movies, and entertainment industries reinforces Western ideals as markers of modernity and sophistication (Kerubo, 2024).

Positive Implications of Westernisation

Westernisation has contributed to modernization in several respects. It has facilitated scientific and technological advancement, improved access to education, and promoted global interconnectedness. Many African youths view Westernisation as a pathway to upward social mobility, global citizenship, and self-expression (Okafor, 2023).

Negative Implications of Westernisation

On the other hand, Westernisation has been criticized for eroding indigenous cultures, weakening traditional values, and creating identity crises among young people. In the context of fashion, it has led to the decline of African dress as daily wear, limiting its use to ceremonial events (Eferebo, 2022). Critics argue that uncritical adoption of Western lifestyles promotes materialism, loss of cultural pride, and dependency on foreign ideals (Akinola, 2022).

African Dressing Patterns

African dressing patterns represent a profound cultural heritage that extends far beyond aesthetics. In most African societies, clothing is more than just fabric for covering the body; it serves as a symbol of identity, a marker of social status, and a vehicle for transmitting cultural values. Traditional

attires, textile patterns, and accessories communicate information about lineage, occupation, religion, gender, and life-cycle events such as marriage and funerals (Imbuwa, 2024). In addition, African dressing practices often intertwine with oral traditions, music, and rituals, making them integral to community life. Despite the pressures of globalization and Westernisation, African dressing patterns remain resilient, continuously evolving through hybridization and adaptation to modern realities.

Cultural Significance of Dressing Patterns

African clothing is saturated with meaning. Colours, motifs, and garment types convey messages about the wearer's role and identity. For instance, in Yoruba culture, the Aso-oke fabric is often worn at weddings and coronations, representing wealth and prestige. In Ghana, Kente cloth is associated with royalty and ceremonial occasions, with specific patterns signifying values like unity, peace, and courage (Okafor, 2023). Dressing also functions as a moral compass. In many societies, modesty and respect are reflected in attire, while deviations may be seen as disrespectful or rebellious (Eferebo, 2022). Clothing further serves as a collective memory system, reminding communities of ancestral traditions, rituals, and histories.

Regional Variations in African Dressing Patterns

Africa's vast cultural diversity ensures significant variation in dressing patterns across regions.

1. **West Africa:** Known for vibrant textiles like Ankara (wax prints), Kente, and Aso-oke. These fabrics are characterized by bright colours, geometric motifs, and symbolic designs. The boubou, agbada, and kaftan are common garments for men, while women wear wrappers, head ties (gele), and tailored blouses (Bashorun et al., 2023).
2. **North Africa:** Dressing patterns are influenced by Islamic traditions and Arab culture. Kaftans, djellabas, abayas, and turbans dominate, often made with luxurious fabrics such as silk and embellished with embroidery (Kerubo, 2024).
3. **East Africa:** The kanga and kitenge fabrics are widely worn, featuring Swahili proverbs and floral designs. In Ethiopia and Eritrea, the habesha kemis (white cotton dress with colourful embroidery) is used during festivals and religious ceremonies (UNESCO, 2021).
4. **Southern Africa:** Dressing patterns include the Xhosa beadwork, Zulu traditional attire with animal skins, and the use of chitenge cloth in Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. Beadwork and body adornment play a strong role in marking identity and social rank (Imbuwa, 2024).

Contemporary Transformations

In modern times, African dressing patterns have undergone remarkable transformation due to urbanization, globalization, and the influence of western fashion. One major development is the rise of hybrid dressing, where Western styles such as jeans, t-shirts, and suits are combined with African fabrics like Ankara or Kente to create Afrocentric modern fashion (Chukwuemeka et al., 2024). University students and urban youth are at the forefront of this transformation, using clothing to assert modernity while still maintaining cultural identity.

African fashion designers have also played a central role in revitalizing traditional textiles for the global stage. Events such as Lagos Fashion Week, Dakar Fashion Week, and the CANEX Presents Africa showcase have positioned African fashion as both culturally authentic and globally competitive (Vogue, 2024). Designers blend indigenous fabrics with contemporary cuts, making African attire popular in international markets and among diaspora communities.

Influence of Westernisation and Youth Culture

Westernisation has had both positive and negative impacts on African dressing. On one hand, it has exposed African youth to diverse fashion styles, encouraging creativity and cosmopolitan identity formation. On the other hand, it has contributed to the marginalization of traditional dress in everyday life, restricting its use to ceremonial occasions (Eferebo, 2022). Among undergraduates,

dressings often reflects peer influence, social media trends, and the desire to appear “modern.” This has sparked debates about indecent dressing on campuses, with university authorities imposing dress codes to curb excessive exposure of the body (Bashorun et al., 2023). Despite these tensions, many youths creatively mix African prints with Western outfits, demonstrating resilience and adaptability of African fashion.

Challenges Facing African Dressing Patterns

Several challenges affect the survival and evolution of African dressing patterns. First, the dominance of Western attire in professional and educational spaces limits the use of indigenous clothing. Second, mass production and commercialization of African prints by foreign companies raise issues of cultural appropriation and intellectual property rights (Okafor, 2023). Third, changing values among younger generations, who sometimes perceive traditional attire as outdated, threaten cultural continuity. Finally, limited government support for creative industries constrains the global competitiveness of African fashion brands. Addressing these challenges requires deliberate policies to promote cultural education, support local industries, and regulate imports.

African dressing patterns are a vital part of the continent’s cultural identity, heritage, and economy. Rooted in rich traditions of textile production and symbolic communication, they continue to evolve in response to modernization, globalization, and youth creativity. While Westernisation poses challenges to the preservation of indigenous attire, African societies have responded through hybridization, innovation, and global cultural entrepreneurship. Today, African fashion not only represents tradition but also serves as a tool of global visibility, economic empowerment, and cultural pride.

Undergraduate Students

Undergraduate students are a unique and dynamic social group within higher institutions of learning. They represent individuals at the first level of tertiary education, usually pursuing bachelor’s degrees across various disciplines. This category of students often falls within the late adolescent and early adulthood stage, typically between the ages of 17 and 25, although mature students outside this range also exist (Okeke & Agbo, 2021). As a group, undergraduate students are exposed to diverse social, cultural, and intellectual influences that shape their identity, values, and lifestyle.

Characteristics of Undergraduate Students

Undergraduate students are characterized by intellectual curiosity, peer influence, exposure to modern technologies, and openness to new ideas and trends. They function within a transitional phase where they gradually shift from dependence on family structures to relative independence (Adesina, 2020). This stage makes them susceptible to external influences, especially globalization, media content, and peer networks, which in turn affect their lifestyle choices such as fashion, music, and communication patterns. Fashion and dressing patterns stand out as important aspects of self-expression for undergraduates. For many, the university environment provides a platform to explore new identities and assert individuality through dress and style. Dressing, therefore, goes beyond mere clothing to symbolize personality, confidence, and group belonging (Ezenwa-Ohaeto & Irokanulo, 2022).

Undergraduate Students and Cultural Identity

Universities serve as melting pots where students from diverse ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds converge. This diversity exposes students to different cultural orientations, sometimes leading to the erosion of indigenous practices, including African dressing patterns. While many undergraduates take pride in traditional attire such as Ankara, isiagu, and buba, others prefer Western clothing like jeans, T-shirts, jackets, and sneakers, which they associate with modernity and global relevance (Onwuka, 2021). The struggle between cultural preservation and Western influence is most pronounced among undergraduate students, as they often act as cultural

intermediaries who negotiate between tradition and modernity. The adoption of Western fashion by students is sometimes perceived as a marker of civilization, status, and exposure, whereas adherence to African dressing is viewed by some as old-fashioned (Nwafor & Obasi, 2023).

Peer Influence and Fashion Trends

One of the most powerful influences on undergraduate students' dressing patterns is peer pressure. Students often emulate the fashion sense of their friends, classmates, or celebrities admired on social media. Peer groups create informal dress codes that determine what is considered fashionable or outdated within the university setting (Adebayo & Afolabi, 2022). For instance, the popularity of Western casual outfits like ripped jeans, crop tops, hoodies, and sneakers among undergraduates reflects a collective orientation toward global fashion. This tendency sometimes clashes with institutional dress codes and cultural expectations. In some Nigerian universities, including Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, there are efforts to regulate indecent dressing among undergraduates. However, enforcement is often difficult due to students' strong attachment to personal freedom and globalized fashion ideals.

Media, Globalization, and Undergraduate Fashion Choices

Another major factor shaping undergraduate students' dressing patterns is the media. The influence of Hollywood, Nollywood, social media influencers, and music artists cannot be underestimated. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook constantly expose students to global fashion trends, making Western styles more appealing and accessible (Chukwuma & Ibrahim, 2021). Globalization has, therefore, blurred cultural boundaries, enabling undergraduates to adopt hybrid styles that combine Western and African elements, such as pairing Ankara skirts with denim jackets. At the same time, some students deliberately embrace African fashion as a means of asserting cultural pride and resisting Western cultural dominance. Fashion designers and cultural promoters within the university often encourage students to patronize local fabrics and styles, which helps sustain African dressing patterns within academic communities.

Westernisation and African Dressing Patterns

Westernisation has emerged as a powerful force influencing cultural practices, lifestyles, and identities across the globe, including Africa. It refers to the adoption of Western norms, values, and customs, particularly in non-Western societies, often resulting from colonization, globalization, and technological advancement (Mazrui, 2019). One significant area where the impact of Westernisation is most evident is in dressing patterns. Dress, as a cultural symbol, represents more than clothing; it communicates identity, values, traditions, and social belonging (Eze, 2020). In Africa, traditional attires such as the agbada, isiagu, dashiki, iro and buba, and Ankara fabrics have long been central to cultural expression, festivals, and ceremonies. However, the growing dominance of Western fashion has influenced how African people, particularly the younger generation, choose to dress in both formal and informal settings.

African dressing patterns have historically been characterized by vibrant colours, symbolic motifs, and styles that embody cultural heritage and local creativity (Okeke & Omenka, 2021). These attires are often deeply connected to social events, rites of passage, and status, making them more than just clothing. For instance, in Nigeria, traditional attire signifies not only aesthetics but also communal identity and respect for heritage. Yet, with the spread of Western fashion through media, migration, and urbanization, many young Africans increasingly adopt Western-style clothing such as jeans, T-shirts, suits, and designer labels, often prioritizing them over indigenous attire (Osei-Tutu, 2022). This shift reflects how Westernisation influences perceptions of modernity, prestige, and social acceptance.

The preference for Western fashion among African youth also mirrors broader societal transformations. Global fashion industries and social media platforms promote Western clothing as trendy, modern, and aspirational, leading many to associate traditional attire with backwardness or

limited occasions (Mafiana, 2021). However, this does not mean African dressing patterns have disappeared. In recent years, there has been a renaissance of African-inspired fashion, where designers blend traditional fabrics like Ankara and Kente with Western styles, creating hybrid fashions that appeal to both local and global markets (Akinwale, 2020). Ultimately, Westernisation continues to reshape African dressing patterns by introducing new fashion values while simultaneously inspiring a creative redefinition of cultural attire. The tension between preserving heritage and embracing modernity underscores the complex cultural dynamics at play, especially among undergraduate students who navigate identity formation in a globalized world.

Empirical Review

Olawale & Adekunle (2022) examined the "Impact of Westernisation on African Dressing Patterns among Undergraduate Students of the University of Lagos, Lagos State." The study sought to investigate how exposure to Western culture through social media, entertainment, and peer influence affected students' preference for Western clothing over traditional African attire. A survey research design was employed, and 300 undergraduate students were randomly selected across different faculties. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and analysed using chi-square and regression models. The findings revealed that increased exposure to Western fashion trends significantly reduced the frequency of wearing traditional African clothing among students. The study also discovered that while some students associated Western dressing with modernity and social status, others viewed African attire as outdated and less fashionable for campus settings. The study concluded that the dominance of Western culture poses a threat to the preservation of African cultural identity, particularly in dressing patterns. It was recommended that universities should organize cultural awareness programmes and promote events such as "African Dress Days" to encourage students to embrace their indigenous attire.

Adeyemi & Olatunji (2020) examined the "Impact of Westernisation on African Dressing Styles among Undergraduate Students of the University of Ibadan, Oyo State." The study aimed to explore how exposure to Western media, peer influence, and globalization shaped students' clothing preferences. Using a survey design, the researchers sampled 300 respondents across various faculties through stratified random sampling. Data were gathered using questionnaire and analysed with chi-square and simple percentage methods. Findings revealed that Western fashion trends, particularly jeans, T-shirts, and sneakers, were widely embraced, while traditional attires such as agbada, iro and buba, and ankara fabrics were mostly reserved for cultural events and special occasions. The study further established that peer influence and the desire to align with modernity significantly contributed to students' preference for Western styles. It concluded that while Westernisation has transformed dressing habits, there remains a latent appreciation for African clothing patterns. The study recommended cultural orientation programmes and campus-based fashion shows to encourage students to value indigenous dressing.

The key difference between the studies by Olawale & Adekunle (2022), Adeyemi & Olatunji (2020), and the study on *Westernisation and African Dressing Patterns among Undergraduates of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt*, lies in their geographical and socio-cultural contexts as well as the specific focus of their findings. While the Lagos and Ibadan-based studies emphasized how exposure to Western culture through media, entertainment, and peer influence led to a preference for Western clothing and the relegation of African attire to special occasions, the Port Harcourt study explored these same dynamics within a Niger Delta environment where cultural identity, social class, and urban lifestyle strongly interact. Unlike the former studies that highlighted Westernisation as a uniform threat to African dressing, the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education study revealed a more nuanced reality where some students strategically blend Western and African attire as a form of cultural hybridity, thereby resisting total erosion of indigenous fashion. This makes the Port Harcourt case distinct by showing that while Western influence is dominant, African dressing still maintains a visible, adaptive role in students' everyday fashion choices.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Imperialism Theory

Cultural Imperialism Theory was propounded by Herbert Schiller in 1969. This theory explains how dominant cultures (mostly Western) impose their values, beliefs, and practices on other societies, often through media, education, and globalization. In the context of African dressing, cultural imperialism suggests that Western clothing styles have gained prominence among undergraduates due to the global spread of Western culture, which influences how students perceive modernity, sophistication, and social acceptance.

Assumptions of Cultural Imperialism Theory

The Cultural Imperialism Theory suggests that powerful nations, particularly Western societies, dominate and influence the culture of less powerful nations through media, fashion, technology, and other cultural products. Applied to the study on Westernisation and African dressing patterns among undergraduate students, the following assumptions can be highlighted:

1. **Dominance of Western Culture over African Traditions:** The theory assumes that Western culture holds a hegemonic position globally, projecting its values and lifestyles as superior. In this context, undergraduate students adopt Western clothing such as jeans, T-shirts, and sneakers because they are consistently promoted through media, entertainment, and celebrity culture, leading to the marginalization of indigenous attires like agbada, iro and buba, isiagu, and ankara.
 2. **Media as a Vehicle of Cultural Transmission:** A central assumption of the theory is that media, particularly globalized Western media, is the primary channel through which cultural domination occurs. For students, exposure to Western films, music videos, and social media platforms accelerates the acceptance of Western fashion, making it more desirable than traditional African styles.
- Erosion of Indigenous Cultural Identity:** Cultural imperialism assumes that continuous exposure to Western values leads to the gradual erosion of indigenous practices. Among students, the growing preference for Western dressing reflects a shift in identity where modernity and "trendiness" are equated with Western fashion, relegating African attire to ceremonial or cultural events only.

Implication/Relevance of Cultural Imperialism Theory

The relevance of Cultural Imperialism Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how Westernisation shapes the dressing patterns of undergraduate. The theory suggests that the dominance of Western media, fashion industries, and global cultural flows influences the values and lifestyles of developing societies, often at the expense of indigenous practices. In the context of African dressing patterns, undergraduate students are consistently exposed to Western fashion trends through television, social media, and peer networks, which gradually affect their preferences and choices of attire. As a result, traditional African clothing, which reflects cultural identity and heritage, is increasingly being sidelined in favour of Western styles perceived as modern, stylish, or globally acceptable. Therefore, the theory is relevant as it provides a framework for understanding how external cultural influences penetrate local contexts and alter cultural expressions, particularly among young people in higher institutions who are more vulnerable to global cultural shifts.

Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study comprises of 10,000 undergraduates of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in Port Harcourt in 2025 academic session. The sample size was 370 drawn from the population using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. The purposive sampling technique was used. The study used a structured questionnaire as instrument to elicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire was developed in line with four point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and

Strongly Disagree (SD) in accordance with the three research questions raised in the study. A total of 370 copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents. 259 copies representing 70% were retrieved and used in the study. The responses obtained from the respondents were analysed using tables, mean scores and standard deviation.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Factors motivating preference for Western styles

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students find Western-style clothing (e.g., jeans, t-shirts, suits, skirts) to be more readily available for purchase than traditional African attire.	259	1.00	4.00	3.3012	.83645
Perceive Western attire to be more comfortable for daily academic activities and movement around campus.	259	1.00	4.00	3.2471	.88086
Believe Western styles offer a wider variety of choices for different occasions (e.g., lectures, parties, formal events).	259	1.00	4.00	3.2703	.91304
Dressing in Western styles makes me feel more modern and fashionable.	259	1.00	4.00	3.2934	.78676
Valid N (listwise)	259				

The results on factors motivating preference for Western styles show that students generally rated Western clothing highly across all indicators. On average, they considered Western attire more readily available, comfortable, versatile for different occasions, and modern in appearance. The mean scores, which are all above the midpoint, indicate that these factors strongly motivate students' inclination toward Western styles.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Perception of cultural relevance of African attire

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceive traditional attire to be mostly for special cultural events and ceremonies, not for everyday university life.	259	1.00	4.00	3.6564	.60494
Wearing African attire on campus can sometimes attract unnecessary attention or make one feel out of place.	259	1.00	4.00	3.1699	.87720
The modern university environment is more suited to Western dressing patterns than traditional ones.	259	1.00	4.00	3.2317	.91096

Believe there is a need for the university to do more to promote the wearing of African attire as part of its cultural identity.	259	1.00	4.00	3.2239	.84682
Valid N (listwise)	259				

The perception of the cultural relevance of African attire reveals mixed attitudes among students. While traditional clothing is strongly associated with cultural events and ceremonies, it is not seen as fitting for everyday university life. Many students also indicated that wearing African attire on campus can make them feel out of place, reinforcing the belief that the university environment favours Western dressing.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Role of peer influence, media, and social networks

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Choice of clothing is often influenced by what my close friends and peers are wearing.	259	1.00	4.00	3.5405	.68857
Often get ideas and inspiration for what to wear from social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook.	259	1.00	4.00	3.4363	.80140
Feel pressured to dress a certain way to fit in and be accepted within my social group on campus.	259	1.00	4.00	3.4402	.74663
Celebrity style and fashion choices presented in the media (TV, magazines) influence my dressing preferences.	259	1.00	4.00	3.4556	.73727
Valid N (listwise)	259				

The role of peer influence, media, and social networks shows a strong impact on students' dressing choices. Peer dressing patterns, social media inspiration, and the desire to fit in socially all emerged as significant influences.

Discussion of findings

The study discussed the following findings:

Research Question 1. What are the factors that motivate undergraduate students to prefer Western styles of dressing over traditional African attire in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt?

The findings of this study revealed that undergraduates of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education prefer Western styles of dressing because they perceive such clothing as more accessible, comfortable, versatile, and modern. The results from table 1 showed high mean scores across these indicators, indicating that availability and ease of purchase, convenience for daily use, adaptability for both formal and informal occasions, and contemporary appeal are the dominant factors driving students' preference for Western fashion. This suggests that the practical benefits of Western attire, alongside its association with modernity, outweigh the symbolic and cultural significance of African traditional clothing in students' daily choices.

These findings align with the observations of Nwachukwu & Okafor (2021), who reported that Nigerian university students often regard Western fashion as a marker of social class and modern identity, thus prioritizing it over traditional attire. Similarly, Eze & Nnadi (2020) found that affordability and accessibility of Western styles in urban markets play a significant role in shaping students' choices. The current study corroborates these earlier conclusions by demonstrating that the widespread availability of Western clothes makes them a more practical option for students. Moreover, the perception of Western styles as versatile and fashionable supports the arguments of Olatunji (2019), who explained that globalization has redefined fashion standards among African youths, making Western attire the default for both academic and social functions. While African clothing is acknowledged for cultural events, its limited adaptation to everyday university life constrains its use. Thus, the findings reinforce the notion that functional convenience, societal trends, and global influence collectively motivate students to embrace Western dressing patterns.

Research Question 2. What is the perception of undergraduate students regarding the cultural relevance of African dressing patterns in the modern university environment?

The findings from table 2 revealed that undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education generally acknowledged the cultural relevance of African dressing patterns within the modern university environment but showed uncertainty in practice. While many respondents agreed that African attire represents identity, heritage, and a sense of belonging, fewer considered it fashionable or compatible with modern academic settings. The results indicated that although students respected African clothing for its symbolic value, they often viewed Western styles as more suitable for daily campus life, particularly because of perceived comfort, simplicity, and alignment with global trends.

These findings align with the observations of Adeyemi (2019), who noted that Nigerian students frequently perceive traditional attire as reserved for cultural days, ceremonies, or religious events rather than for everyday use. Similarly, Okonkwo & Udeh (2020) found that undergraduates in South-East Nigeria regarded African dressing as culturally prestigious but rarely wore it on campus due to peer pressure and the desire to appear modern. This suggests that while African attire carries significant cultural meaning, it struggles to compete with Western clothing, which is more closely associated with youth identity and global connectedness.

Moreover, the findings resonate with Onuoha (2021), who argued that the cultural value of African dressing is not lost among students but is redefined within modern spaces where tradition and modernity intersect. Students tend to compartmentalize African attire as symbolic rather than practical. The implication is that African dressing patterns remain relevant at the cultural level but are increasingly marginalized in daily campus fashion choices. Thus, cultural significance is acknowledged, but preference tilts toward Western dressing for reasons of style, peer influence, and modernization.

Research Question 3. What are the roles of peer influence, media, and social networks in shaping students' choice of dressing patterns in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt?

The findings from table 3 indicate that peer influence, media, and social networks play a significant role in shaping undergraduate students' dressing preferences at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Respondents reported that their clothing choices were often guided by what their close friends and peers wore, suggesting that social conformity and the desire for acceptance strongly affect daily dressing decisions. Additionally, students acknowledged the substantial influence of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, which serve as sources of fashion inspiration and trend awareness. Celebrity styles and fashion trends presented through television, magazines, and online platforms were also highlighted as motivating factors for adopting Western styles of dressing.

These results corroborate the findings of Eze & Nwosu (2020), who observed that peer groups significantly impact students' fashion choices in Nigerian universities, as individuals tend to conform

to the prevailing styles within their social circles to gain social approval. Similarly, Onwuka (2019) emphasized that social media serves as a critical driver of Western fashion adoption among youth, exposing students to global trends and influencing their perception of modernity and style. This aligns with the current study's finding that media platforms actively shape students' preference for Western attire over traditional African clothing.

Furthermore, the findings support the arguments of Afolabi & Adekanbi (2021), who reported that exposure to online fashion content and celebrity culture reinforces Westernisation of dressing patterns among Nigerian undergraduates. Collectively, these studies highlight that the modern university environment is highly interconnected through social networks and media, making peer influence and media exposure powerful determinants of clothing choices. Consequently, the social and digital environment perpetuates the preference for Western styles, often at the expense of traditional African attire.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that Western dressing patterns are overwhelmingly preferred by undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt for their daily attire. This preference is primarily driven by practical factors such as the perceived comfort, versatility, and ready availability of Western clothing, alongside its strong association with modernity and global fashion trends. While students acknowledge the cultural significance and value of traditional African attire, they largely relegate it to ceremonial events, viewing it as less suitable for everyday university life. Furthermore, the study concludes that external social factors, namely peer pressure and the pervasive influence of media and social networks, are powerful forces shaping these preferences, often promoting Western styles as the norm for social acceptance and trendiness. This indicates a complex negotiation where cultural heritage is respected in theory but often sidelined in daily practice due to functional and social pressures.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made among others that:

1. Universities should initiate programmes that make traditional African clothing more accessible, affordable, and adaptable for daily wear.
2. The university administration should institutionalize cultural appreciation beyond occasional events.
3. The university should launch a targeted social media campaign featuring student influencers and celebrities proudly showcasing modern African dress patterns.

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