



Becoming like them: Sociological Analysis of Celebrity Dress-Style and Student Dressing Behaviour within Selected Universities in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract. Dressing has become a lifestyle especially among young adults, whose external influence cut an image from actors and celebrities who often act as idols to their behaviour. This study examines the relationship between celebrity dressing styles and students' clothing choices within the university environment. The Herbert Kelman Social influence theory was adopted for the study as it established the nexus between the interplay of normative lifestyle and imitation among students. Being an explanatory and a cross-sectional research design, the study triangulated a mixed method of data collection (qualitative and quantitative) using a semi-structured questionnaire and in-depth interview guide on a one-time survey method in 2 selected universities (namely: University of Benin and Benson Idahosa University). 240 respondents were systematically selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. It was discovered that most of the lifestyles of the students were tailored in line with their favourite celebrities and role models. Secondly, imitating friends' dressing styles has become a norm among students due to the confidence it creates and sometimes alters the student's lifestyle. The study therefore advocates that universities and related tertiary institutions should regulate the dressing behaviour of students to reflect the ideal standard behaviour after schooling.

Keywords: Behaviour; Celebrity; Dressing; lifestyle; Students

1. Introduction

Dressing, often used interchangeably with clothing, conveys cultural norms and behaviours within any community. As noted, clothing operates as a symbolic medium of expression, shaping first impressions and reflecting personal values (Uwakwe, 2010). Youth, in particular, are significantly influenced in their clothing

choices by popular fashion trends, especially those promoted by celebrities through various media platforms like magazines, television, and social media (Ibrahim, 2013). These platforms showcase designer-driven styles that young people often aspire to emulate. The influence of celebrity fashion on youth is profound, playing a central role in shaping not only individual identities but also the social landscape globally. The styles people choose to wear frequently serve as indicators of broader social values and trends (Anyakoha & Eluwa, 2008).

Thus, clothing can be understood as a reflection of individual and collective behaviour, shaped by external forces such as cultural icons or natural environments. Ojo (2024) describes dressing as an evolving form of behaviour, one that carries identity and is shaped by influential forces. She elaborates that dressing is both learned and adaptable, transmitted through interactions and communication, making external influences critical to its development. In this sense, celebrity fashion acts as a powerful force, continually reshaping youth identities through both direct influence and mediated exposure. As such, clothing choices are not merely personal but are also shaped by a broader, culturally influenced network of ideas and representations that celebrities and media perpetuate.

Celebrities, known for their wide recognition both locally and globally, are frequently admired and even idolized by fans who are mostly adolescents due to the media effect (Chia and Poo, 2009). As public figures, they have assumed the role of role models, especially influencing today's youth. Okere and Uwon (2012) note that young people often look up to celebrities for guidance in fashion, lifestyle, and personal values. Adolescence is a complex developmental phase characterized by intense change, self-discovery, and

often a need to feel accepted and connected within social groups. This desire for belonging has led many youths to turn to celebrities, viewed as trendsetters, for cues on how to dress and behave (Ojo, 2024). By emulating celebrity dress styles and behaviours, young people find a pathway to shape their identities and navigate social expectations.

The impact of celebrity culture on youth extends beyond fashion alone, as young people tend to integrate and mimic the choices of public figures in various aspects of life. This dynamic illustrates how celebrity-driven trends significantly shape the social behaviours and self-expression of today's youth, influencing their pursuit of acceptance and identity. According to Taylor and Stern, as well as Wess (2004) in Cyril De Run, Butt, and Yen Nee (2010), young adults are notably more susceptible to celebrity influence than older individuals, particularly in terms of imitating celebrities' clothing styles and behaviours. Teenagers, who are at a formative stage, often replicate the traits and dress styles of celebrities as a means of self-expression and social alignment. This propensity underscores how celebrity dress and behaviour patterns resonate strongly with youth, guiding their stylistic choices and shaping their social interactions and self-image.

The tertiary institution has been a breeding ground for young adults whose quest for academic knowledge and character learning is eminent and Omede (2011) opined that there is hardly any tertiary institution in this country that is not facing this sickening problem of poorly or indecent dressing. He stressed further that the way students on campuses particularly the females, dress seductively leaves much to be desired. It could be asserted that dressing is not just for clothing purposes but for adornments (Appiah and Schall, 2016). Hence the need to dress properly irrespective of sex as most male students dress poorly by sagging their trouser or pants as well as showing their underwear. It is therefore pertinent that this study seeks to examine the sociological analysis of celebrity dress style and student dressing behaviour within selected Universities in Edo state, Nigeria.

1.1 Objective of the Study

- To explore the social media influence of celebrity fashion trends among undergraduate students in selected Universities in Benin City.
- To investigate the celebrity influence on undergraduate clothing and socialization level in selected Universities in Benin City.

- To assess the potential implications of celebrity dressing styles on the self-image and confidence of students in selected Universities in Benin City.

1.2 Scope of the Study

The study was limited to one government university and one private university in Benin City. The government-based is the University of Benin and the Private based is Benson Idahosa University.

2. Brief Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Social media has reshaped how people connect, enabling influences to transcend geographical boundaries, especially among adolescents. Studies indicate that young people frequently draw their fashion inspiration from celebrities and public figures (Tsai & Chang, 2007; Danielson, 2013; Bairrada et al., 2019). This trend suggests that adolescents view celebrities as key figures for style inspiration, often looking to them as role models in developing their personal identity and self-expression. Beyond clothing, these public figures set benchmarks for appearance and behaviour that young people may try to emulate.

Empirical findings by Bian and Moutinho (2011) highlight the significant effect of celebrity endorsements on brand perception and purchase intentions. When a celebrity's image resonates with a brand, consumers often develop a stronger connection to both the brand and the celebrity. This effect is particularly pronounced among undergraduate students, who are navigating social dynamics that drive them to express individual identities while also desiring peer acceptance. For many young people, replicating the styles and behaviours of admired celebrities serves the dual purpose of fitting in socially and expressing their uniqueness. Therefore, the aspiration among adolescents to imitate their favourite celebrities underscores the strong influence that media and celebrity culture exert over their identity formation and consumer behaviour.

Leckie et al. (2016) emphasized that young consumers frequently seek inspiration from celebrities when making fashion choices, with students particularly influenced by celebrities who resonate with their personal aspirations. This indicates that style preferences serve a dual role, not only offering aesthetic appeal but also signalling membership within specific social groups or subcultures. According to Ojo (2024), well-known celebrities, including Tiwa

Savage, Wizkid, Davido, Rema, Beyoncé, Rihanna, Simone Biles, Jay-Z, Kanye West, and Asake, have had a notable impact on students' fashion sense and overall behaviour. For these students, adopting the style of a favoured celebrity can reflect both admiration and a desire to align with the celebrity's identity and lifestyle.

Furthermore, Ojo (2024) highlights that while many students credit celebrities like Kim Kardashian, Nicole Richie, Bobrisky, Naira Marley, James Brown, and Olakunle Churchill for influencing their lifestyle choices, peer influence, prevailing trends, and environmental factors also shape these attitudes and behaviours. This broader spectrum of influences suggests that while students may adopt certain fashion and lifestyle elements from admired celebrities, they are also swayed by their immediate social contexts. In this context, Hester and Hehman (2023) affirmed that dress create first impression and can be seen as either a virtue or a vice, often reflecting one's personality. Over time, dressing styles have evolved considerably due to advancements in technology, social shifts, and cultural exchanges. The interplay of celebrity influence, social dynamics, and individual personality demonstrates the complex factors shaping contemporary youth identity and fashion choices.

Research by Efremov, Kertakova, and Kuzmanovska, (2021) highlights that expressing personality through clothing, especially by celebrities and influencers, captures attention and evokes emotions, emphasizing its role in balancing expressiveness and conveying confidence. These emotional responses foster a stronger connection with the content, increasing the likelihood of adopting associated trends. Among undergraduate students, this influence is particularly noticeable, as they are often guided by aesthetics in their fashion choices. Exposure to celebrity fashion choices does not just shape students' style preferences but also plays a role in developing their self-image and confidence (Ojo, 2024). When students resonate with the styles promoted by celebrities and influencers,

they are more likely to integrate these trends into their personal wardrobe, enhancing their self-perception and boosting confidence. Thus, the visual appeal and aspirational nature of celebrity-driven fashion trends serve as powerful motivators, encouraging students to adopt styles that reflect their identity and promote a more positive self-image.

2.1 Theoretical Orientation

The social influence theory by Herbert Kelman in 1958 posited that the idea that people are heavily influenced by the thoughts and actions of others is a social reality. Kelman (1974) defined social influence as a behavioural change within social settings induced by one person or a group of people. The theory postulates that there are three models of social influence namely compliance, identification, and internalization.

Compliance is when people appear to agree with others while keeping their dissenting opinions private. Identification is when people are influenced by someone who is liked and respected, such as a celebrity.

Internalization is when people accept a belief or behaviour and agree both publicly and privately.

3. Study Methodology

The study adopts a cross-sectional and descriptive research design and makes use of both qualitative and quantitative methods and instruments (Semi-structured questionnaire and an in-depth interview guide) for data collection on 232 respondents systematically selected from 2 selected Universities namely: the University of Benin and Benin Idahosa University. Using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and Thematic Content analysis for the qualitative data.

4. Findings

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (N=232)

Sex	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	56	24.1
	Female	176	75.9
Age	16-20 years	86	37.1
	21-25 years	120	51.7
	26 years +	26	11.2
Marital status	Single	228	98.3
	Married	04	01.7
Level	100	26	11.2
	200	58	25.0
	300	80	34.5
	400	28	12.1
	500	40	17.2

Fieldwork, 2024

The result from Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents were female, comprising 75.9% of the entire respondents. While the males constitute 24.1%. This indicates a significant gender disparity, with females dominating the sample population as regards the subject matter. On the age distribution, the result shows that the largest age group was 21–25 years (51.7%), accounting for over half of the respondents. This was followed by age 16-20 years with 37.1% and the least among the respondents are those above 26 years with 11.2%. The overwhelming majority of respondents claimed to be single (98.3%), with only a small minority (1.7%) being married. On the academic level, it shows that the highest representation came from the 300-level students (34.5%), followed by 200-level students (25%). Together, these two groups accounted for nearly 60% of the sample. The least represented were the 100-level students (11.2%) and 400-level students (12.1%). This distribution may suggest that the study captured a wide range of academic levels but leaned more toward middle-level students (200 and 300 levels).

How does social media model student fashion style in the university	Response	Frequency	Percentage
	Create a decent dressing style	148	63.8
	Create new dressing habit	56	24.1
	Alter the rational upbringing of student	20	08.6
	Adopting a foreign fashion style	08	03.4
Celebrities influence my dressing style on campus	Strongly agree	22	09.5
	Agree	44	18.9
	Neutral	78	33.8
	Disagree	60	25.9
	Strongly disagree	28	12.1
What motivates you to follow celebrity fashion styles	Inspiration from their overall appearance	42	18.1
	Desire to fit in with peers	16	06.9
	Personal admiration for specific celebrities	88	37.9
	Trends and popularity on social media	28	12.1
	Others	16	06.9
How Social media's rise influences celebrity fashion on students' dressing behaviour	Regular updating of actors' clothing	46	19.8
	Current fashion trend	28	12.1
	Constant updating of designers' clothing	68	29.3
	Update of new fashion styles	64	27.6
	Others	26	11.2
The most utilized social media handle preferred by the student	Instagram	140	60.3
	TikTok	62	26.7
	Twitter (X)	20	08.6
	Others	10	04.3

Fieldwork, 2024

The data presented in Table 2 explores the influence of social media on the adoption of celebrity fashion trends and its impact on undergraduate students' dressing behaviours. It anchored on four key principles namely; the modelling of student fashion styles, the degree of celebrity influence, the mechanisms of influence, and the preferred social media platforms for fashion engagement. On social media's role in modelling student fashion styles, the result shows that Creating a decent dressing style was the most frequently noted response with 63.8%. Followed by Creating new dressing habits constituting 24.1%, this indicates a significant subset of students adopting novel styles inspired by social media. While altering the rational upbringing of students (8.6%) and adopting foreign fashion styles (3.4%) were less prominent among the responses. This data suggests that social media primarily encourages decency and experimentation in dressing, while the adoption of foreign styles and potential negative impacts (e.g., altering upbringing) are relatively minor concerns.

On celebrities' influence on students' dressing styles, while 28.5% of respondents (strongly agree and agree) recognize a direct impact of celebrities on their dressing style, a substantial proportion (33.6%) remained neutral, and 38% (disagree and strongly disagree) denied this influence. This division indicates that celebrity fashion impacts some students while leaving others unaffected, likely depending on personal preferences and cultural factors. Next is the motivations behind following celebrity fashion trends, personal admiration for specific celebrities constitutes 37.9% of the most frequent motivation, followed by inspiration from their overall appearance with 18.1%. This reflects the aesthetic appeal of celebrity fashion. Others include; trends and popularity on social media with 12.1%, and desire to fit in with peers constitute 6.9%, same as other motivation with 6.9%.

On the mechanisms of social media’s influence on students’ dressing behaviour, the result shows that constant updating of designers’ clothing (29.3%) emerged as the most cited influence, and update of new fashion styles (27.6%) closely followed, emphasizing the role of social media in introducing innovative trends. Others include regular updating of actors' clothing (19.8%) and current fashion trends (12.1%). Other influences accounted for 11.2% of the entire respondent’s response. Next is the preferred social media platforms for fashion engagement by the students, Instagram was the most utilized platform (60.3%), followed by TikTok ranked second, with 26.7% and Twitter (X) and other platforms were less favoured, with 8.6% and 4.3% respectively. Instagram’s dominance underscores its position as the leading platform for fashion-related content, while TikTok’s rise highlights the increasing role of dynamic, video-based media in shaping trends.

In complementing the above assertion, a participant explains further when she said:
 “As someone who fancies celebrity fashion, I find myself scrolling through the social media pages of different celebrities to get style inspirations before shopping for clothes or picking outing clothes.” (IDI- 400lvl female student -1/11/24).

From another dimension, another participant said:
 I began to dress modestly after I followed posts and videos of the Gospel singer Mercy Chinwo. via various social media handle. And this has a great impact in my outing and confidence level” (IDI- 300lvl female student, -1/11/24)
 From a desperate level of a student, she said:
 I came across a dance video of Khloegram on Tiktok, it was a joggers and matching cropped hoodie, the color combination stood out to and I found the style appealing. I got the exact joggers and hoodie that weekend.” I am a desperate lover of celebrity clothing style. (IDI- 400lvl female student-1/11/24)

Table 3: Investigate the celebrity influence on undergraduate clothing and socialization level in selected Universities in Benin City (N=232)

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Celebrity endorsements influenced my clothing and accessory purchases	Yes	168	72.4
	No	64	27.6
Which of the celebrity greatly influenced you	Jay-Z	18	10.7
	Pastor Chris Oyakilome	22	13.1
	Beyonce	25	14.9
	Sinach	15	8.9
	Samsong	21	12.5
	Lady Gaga	14	8.3
	Rihanna	28	16.7
	Others	25	14.9
To what extent did it influence your clothing and accessory purchase	Extremely	42	18.1
	Very much	60	25.9
	Moderately	18	7.8
	A little	48	20.7
	Not at all	64	27.6
How has the influenced clothing and accessories shaped my identity expression.	Makes me stand out	42	18.1
	Makes me unique	38	16.4
	Boost my confidence level	22	9.5
	Gives me bold expression	47	20.3
	Nothing much as usual	19	8.2
Does your clothing boost confidence in associating with peers	Yes	161	69.4
	No	28	12.1
	To some extent	43	18.5

Fieldwork, 2024

Results from Table 3 reveal that 72.4% of the respondents acknowledged that celebrity endorsements influenced their clothing and accessory purchases, while 27.6% of the respondents reported no influence. On Celebrity-Specific Influence Analysis the result reveals that the most Influential Celebrity was Rihanna with 16.7% among other respondents, demonstrating her widespread appeal as a global icon known for her music, fashion brand (Fenty), and personal style. Next was Beyoncé (14.9%) and Others (14.9%). Some Religious Figures were also Influencers among whom were Pastor Chris Oyakhilome with (13.1%) and Samsong as he constitutes 12.5%. Their influence indicates the intersection of religion and lifestyle in the surveyed universities. The celebrities with lower response include Jay-Z (10.7%), Sinach (8.9%) and Lady Gaga (8.3%). Jay-Z's influence might reflect a more niche appeal, possibly resonating with fans of hip-hop culture while Sinach’s influence as a gospel musician reflects her appeal to a specific

audience within the demographic. However, Lady Gaga, despite being a global pop icon, may have less localized appeal due to cultural or stylistic differences.

Among those influenced by celebrity endorsements, the distribution reveals that while a significant proportion experienced strong influence ("extremely" or "very much" categories, totaling 44%), a smaller segment reported moderate (7.8%) to minimal influence with 20.7%. The group that claimed no influence aligns with those who indicated no initial impact. On the impact of influenced clothing on identity expression, the data suggests that the dominant themes are individuality ("stand out," "unique") and self-assurance ("boost confidence," "bold expression"). Together, these categories account for 64.3% of responses, indicating that identity-related benefits are a key driver of such consumer choices. When asked if their clothing boosted confidence in associating with peers, majority of respondents agreed that their clothing enhances their confidence constituting 69.4%, further highlighting the social importance of attire. A smaller proportion (18.5%) acknowledged a partial effect, while only a minority (12.1%) denied any relationship.

In line with the above data a participant complemented the above narrative by saying:

As much as I want to emulate celebrities, I agree that whatever trend promoted by them is authentic, I will try my best to get if not the original but a near copy. My attitude is greatly influenced by great celebrities.” (IDI- 400lv1 female student-1/11/24)

Another participant said:

“I feel more confident when my clothing choice aligns with current fashion trends.it makes me stand out and gives me the boldness to be outspoken” (IDI- 400lv1 female student-5/11/24).

Table 4: Assess the potential implications of celebrity dressing styles on students behaviour in selected Universities in Benin City (N=232)

Are there implication for imitating celebrity dressing style	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Are there implication for imitating celebrity dressing style	Yes	200	86.2
	No	32	13.8
Are the implication positive or negative	Positive	84	42.0
	Negative	63	31.5
	Both	53	26.5
Possible implication of imitating celebrity dressing style	Sociable	42	21.0
	Feeling confident	32	16.0
	Feeling updated	38	19.0
	Acting worldly	41	20.5
	Feeling standout	47	23.5
Does your clothing boost confidence in associating with peers	Yes	143	61.6
	No	28	12.1
	To some extent	61	26.3

Fieldwork, 2024

From the table 4 above on the implications for imitating celebrity dressing styles a significant majority of respondents (86.2%,) acknowledge implications associated with imitating celebrity dressing styles. While only 13.8% do not perceive any implications. Next is on the nature of the implication, where a notable portion of students view the implications of imitating celebrity dressing styles as beneficial (Positive) with 42% and 31.5% of the respondents feel a negative implication. However, both positive and negative implication make up 26.5%. This group highlights the dual nature of the phenomenon, reflecting a nuanced understanding of its benefits and potential challenges. Consequently, on the specific implications of imitating celebrity dressing styles. Feeling Standout (23.5%) constitute the highest response rate, followed by sociability

(21%) and acting worldly (20.5%) reflecting students' perception that adopting celebrity styles helps them appear cosmopolitan and culturally aware. 19% of the respondents affirmed that they “feel updated” and 16% of the respondents agreed that they feel confident.

In establishing the nexus between clothing and confidence in peer interaction, 6.6% of the respondents affirm that their clothing positively impacts their confidence in associating with peers and 12.1% of the respondents do not perceive a link between clothing and confidence, suggesting variability in the influence of fashion on personal confidence. However, A moderate proportion (26.3%) indicates partial influence. Reflecting that clothing and confidence may be situational or context-dependent.

In buttressing the above data on the positive note, a participant gave a narrative that:

My imitation of a celebrity has made me recognizable not only in my class but in my faculty, I feel confident and it has boosted my level of acceptance among my peers. I cannot settle for less. (IDI- 400 level – Male student-5/11/2024).

On the negative dimension, a particular participant said:

“Adopting celebrity fashion trends has had no impact on my self-image and confidence.” (IDI- 300lvl female student-1/11/24)

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study reveals social media's significant role in shaping students' fashion behaviours, primarily through celebrity influence. Instagram leads as the preferred platform, with musical celebrity driving the trend. It was also revealed that Celebrity-inspired clothing boosts identity expression, though impacts vary based on personal and cultural factors. The Motivations include admiration and aesthetic appeal, fostering decency, individuality, and confidence in dressing especially within the university corridor which is a micro subset of a larger community. It is there on this basis of this that the study advocates that:

- Universities should integrate workshops, seminars, or courses on ethical and culturally inclusive fashion into their extracurricular programs.
- Families should engage in open discussions with their children about the influence of celebrities and social media on lifestyle choices, including fashion.
- Universities and societal organizations should partner with influencers to promote messages that blend fashion with decency, confidence, and cultural appreciation.
- Student organizations can create peer-led initiatives like fashion shows or contests that emphasize creativity, sustainability, and inclusivity.
- Universities should collaborate with sociologists and psychologists to study evolving fashion influences and educate students about the dual implications of celebrity trends. As these will bridge the gap between individual expression, societal influence, and cultural values, benefiting students, families, and the broader community

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