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## Influence of Western Films on Students' Dressing Pattern at Taraba State University, Jalingo

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Communication, according to Lucas (2014), is fundamentally a human attribute that involves the generation, packaging and transmission of ideas or symbols by a source to a receiver with an expected impact or feedback. Amoruwa (2008) elaborates on this stating that communication could be said to be a process whereby the ideas, feelings, emotions, perceptions, images and opinions of a person are transmitted to another. In these submissions, the source brings to bear on the decoder some impact which he (source) purposefully or unknowingly intends. Here the source transmits stimuli to modify the behaviour of others. The stimuli transmitted may be ideas, feelings, and images among others. When the stimuli is in image form, then one of the two forms of communication is applied, namely the non-verbal communication.

The non-verbal communication is usually perceived visually and emotionally. According to Lucas (2014), this form of communication which is also called "visual communication" is hinged on sight and symbols. Amoruwa (2008) notes that one of the most obvious forms of visual communication is dressing and that dressing conveys various signals in the visual

perception level of both the *dresser* and those who observe them. The adage which states "the way you dress is the way you will be addressed" becomes effective here. Jennifer and Molly (2002) have observed that costumes convey messages that point to an era, stages, status, and profession, among others. They see costume as a technical term for dress in the performing arts as in the stage (theatre) film and television.

Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) see dressing or costume as having vital role in the art of communication. They identify six (6) objectives of dressing/costumes among which are these three: a) indicating historical period of a play and the locale in which it is set; b) indicating the nature of individual character or group in a play; their stations in life, their occupations, their personalities (their age, their perspective to life); and c) showing relationship among characters, separating major characters from minor ones, contrasting one group from another.

Stressing the role of costumes or dress, Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) further submit that:

costume (dress) play a significant role in daily life. People wear cloths not only for comfort but to convey information about themselves. If we look around us, we are actually surrounded by costumes; the formal, subdued uniform of a police officer, the sparkling outfit of marching at a football game; sports gear, such as hockey and baseball uniforms; caps and gowns at a graduation; a priest's cassock; brightly colored bathing suits at a swimming pool....

One of the channels used for transmitting visual stimuli is the film. Dress or costume on stage, film and television is a necessary complementary adjunct (Wilson and Goldfarb, 2002). It is a fact that the costumes worn by actors and actresses in films are copied by people of various ages and professions across the globe. Therefore, this study is set to investigate the influence the costumes worn by actors/actresses in western films have on the dressing patterns of students of Taraba State University, Jalingo.

## II. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Western films:** This is defined as motion pictures produced by the western world, used in this

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research to imply American films such as horror, romance, thriller, drama, etc.

- *Students*: Youth between the ages of 18 to 39 who have penchant for change and are undergraduates in Taraba state university, Jalingo.
- *Pattern*: This is the way in which a person performs his/her activities or functions in life. It can also be seen as the repeated or regular way in which something happens or is done like in dressing in a peculiar manner.
- *Corporate/Cocktail dressing*: in this study implies Suits, Skirts and Blouse, long frock/gown, shirts, trousers and tie, safari jacket
- *Hip Hop/Hippies*: this ranges from – Ass down, spaghetti dress, mini skirt, body hug, sleeveless tops, jeans, jacket and trousers, T- shirts, combat trousers, baggy shorts.
- *Hairstyles/Makeup*: In this study implies eyes shadows, rouge, Rastafarian, rosy chicks, skin cut, waves/jerry curls, Afro hairstyles, ponk, wigs/attachment earrings/bangles/neckless, and hand band

### III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It has been noted in recent times that there has been a change as regards the mode of dressing of young people. Omede (2011) observes that indecent appearance has come to characterize the dress pattern of many students on the campuses of higher institutions in Nigeria. There is hardly any higher institution of learning in this country that is not faced with this nausea. The way students on campuses of learning, particularly the female ones, dress seductively leaves much to be desired. What the girls call skirts that they wear is just "one inch" longer than their pants. When they put on such dresses, they struggle to sit down, mount a motorbike, cross gutters or even pick anything from the ground.

These students copy foreign fashion from the screen and such dressing styles are often at variance with the students' cultural orientation. Therefore, this research intends to identify the various dressing patterns usually portrayed in the western films and which students of Taraba State University are imitating in their fashion outlook.

### IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

- Ascertain the level of exposure of Taraba State University students to American Films
- To ascertain the American film genre students of Taraba State University expose themselves to the most.

- Identify the various dressing patterns students of Taraba State University copy from their exposure to western films.
- Evaluate reasons for the students' adoption of foreign dressing patterns portrayed in western films
- Suggest ways by which students could be dissuaded from imitating foreign dressing patterns that are not in consonance with their cultural values.

### V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the problem and the objectives of the study, the following research questions have been drawn to guide the study.

- To what extent are students of Taraba State University exposed to western films?
- What are the American film genre students of Taraba State University expose themselves to the most?
- What are the various dressing patterns students of Taraba State University copy from their exposure to western films?
- What are the reasons for students' adoption of foreign dressing patterns portrayed in western films?
- In what ways could students be dissuaded from imitating foreign dressing patterns that do not align with their cultural values?

### VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

Film is a powerful instrument that can build or destroy people's culture due to its conversational nature. It also plays a role in the daily lives of men and women in the way they perceive issues and conduct their own lives (Aldana 2004, p.1). A lot of research, especially in developed countries, suggests that visual media e.g Television/Film influence a range of attitudes and behaviors among youths. Huesmann & Taylor (2003) are of the view that television/film have authority over young people's decision. They assert that youth just accept what the television /film tells them without question. Keyes (2000, p.1) raised fears about the negative influence that films have on youth culture that "Students are particularly vulnerable to outside influence from their films sets because their values and ideals have not yet fully developed". Thus, they are prone to alteration by any slightest means. Chari (2005) adds that their world is erected by the stories they hear, see and tell. TV/Film, as a medium, has influence on the dressing of students (Nelson, and McLeod. 2005).

Films play a significant role in this process which gives credence to the fact that who should determine what should shape people's perception and how this is done in any society is an issue of significance. Therefore, film, in terms of fashion, has influenced the students to believe in a particular way of dressing. The kind of clothes used in acting, music

performance and advertisement are presented to the society as the best dressing to make one look good.

Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) found that attractiveness of the movie character associated with the rating of female character with their wishful identification could lead to modeling effect in terms of the appearance of women. Therefore, women are more likely to consciously model their own appearance after the model character. This leads to making TV character appealing as role models to young adults, especially women. This in turn gives an emphasis on the unique connection between audience and media figures. According to Dominick (2005, p 8) "throughout history, films have been collectors, producers and distributors of social knowledge". He emphasized this notion by explaining that "the three defining features of films are that first, they attract the most specialized group of audience, and second, films are the most in tune with demographic, economic and social trends. Finally, films can influence social trends".

## VII. INDECENT (INFORMAL) DRESSING SHOWN IN AMERICAN FILMS

The following are some types of indecent dressing depicted in the Western films.

(1). Sleeveless tops (2). Body hugs (3). Knickers (4). Transparent clothes (6). Bogus fashion jewelry (7). Spaghetti tops (8). Off shoulders (9). Wicket Straps (10). Mono Straps (11). Mini Skirts (12). Dress and Skirt with slit above the knees (13). Tight trousers and dresses (14) T-Shirts and jean which carry immoral embossed messages. (15). All clothes that reveal sensitive parts of the body such as the back, chest, belly, upper arms and buttocks. (16). Rosy Chicks (17). Eye Shadow (18). Excessive Lipsticks (19). Rastafarian hairstyles (20). Nail attachments.

American informal dressing projected on movies are seen as indecent because when students wear them they appear half nude; the trousers and shirts are skimpy which reveals their tummy, body hug which shows all the contours in their body frames or mini-skirt with a see-through tops. Although male students wear shirts and trousers, the trousers are bigger in sizes compared to their nominal sizes, and are pushed down almost below their buttocks in what they call 'ass-down'.

## VIII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories are of great relevance in every academic work. This study is anchored on Social Learning theory. The theory was propounded by Albert Bandura who was a psychologist at Stanford University. The theory suggests that much learning takes place through observing the behaviour of others (Anaeto,

Onabanjo, & Osifeso, 2008, p.). Bandura (1986) has proposed that:

Individuals develop general behaviour and attitudes by modeling the behaviour of others. Individuals learn or model behaviour, values, attitudes, and skills through the observation of other individuals, or through observations of electronic or print media. This coincides with the effect of mass media on its audience, not only confined to the behaviour of others in the vicinity.

Based on this theory, people learn from observation first before they actually carry out certain actions. Therefore, through exposure to films, students acquire knowledge on fashion/styles worn by actors and actresses in films; as such they chose role models who influence their perception, attitude and behavioral patterns and desires in terms of dressing.

## IX. METHODOLOGY

The researcher used survey method. Two hundred and twenty questionnaire copies were distributed to undergraduate students of Taraba State University. The purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used. Purposively, eight departments (Mass Communication, Economics, Physics, Geography, Biological Sciences, Sociology, Administration and Planning) were selected from four faculties namely science, education, arts/social sciences and agriculture respectively. These departments were chosen based on certain characteristics observed by the researcher. The researcher observed practically that students from the selected departments have more flair for dressing patterns than students from any other department in the institution. Simple random sampling was used to select two hundred and twenty (220) respondents. The researcher distributed 27 questionnaire copies to students in each of the aforementioned departments. Students were met after lectures and given the questionnaire to fill. The researcher waited for the respondents to fill the questionnaire and retrieved them. Pie chart was employed for presentation of data while SPSS version 20 was used for the analysis of data which consists of frequency counts and simple percentages.

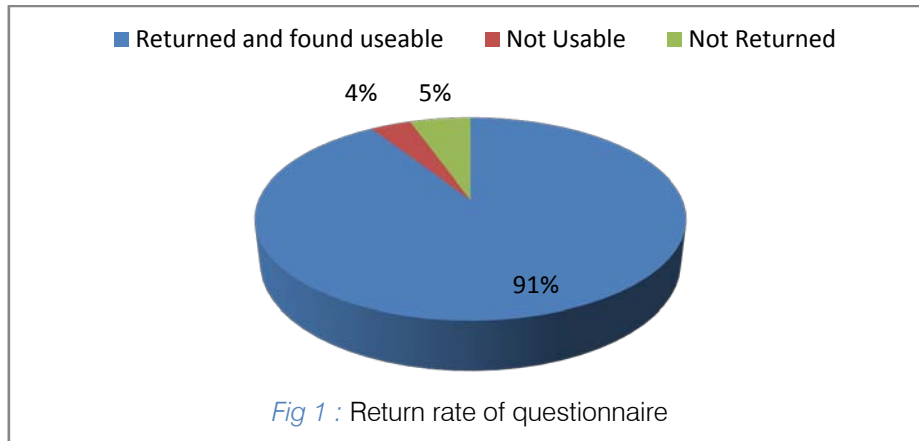
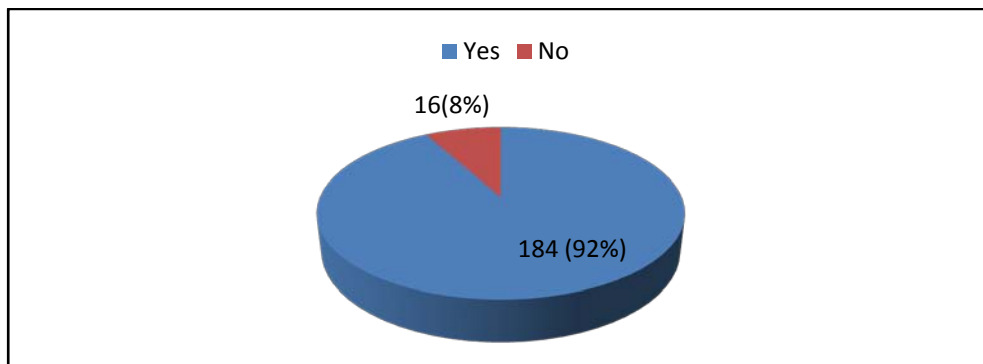
*Presentation and analysis of findings*

Figure 1 above shows that the return rate of the questionnaire is 91% while the mortality rate is 10%. This implies that, 220 questionnaire copies were distributed and 200 were duly filled and retrieved. This is appreciable because the copies returned are

considered adequate to represent the population. Therefore, the presentation and analysis of data that were obtained from the questionnaire was based on the two hundred copies that were returned and found usable.

*Answers to research questions*

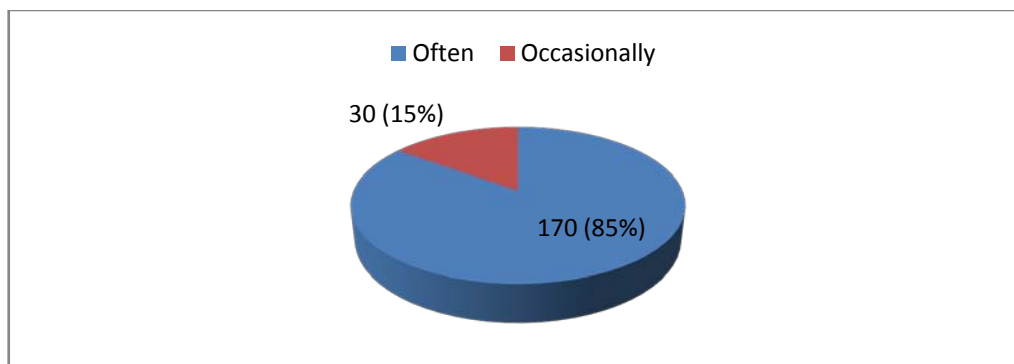
*Research question one: To what extent are students of Taraba State University exposed to American films?*



*Fig 2 : Do you have access to American films?*

Figure 1 above shows the information gathered on whether students of Taraba State University have access to American films. Based on the responses, 184 respondents representing 92% have access to

American films, whereas, 16 respondents representing 8% do not have access to American films. This implies that most students of Taraba State University have access to American films at one point or the other.



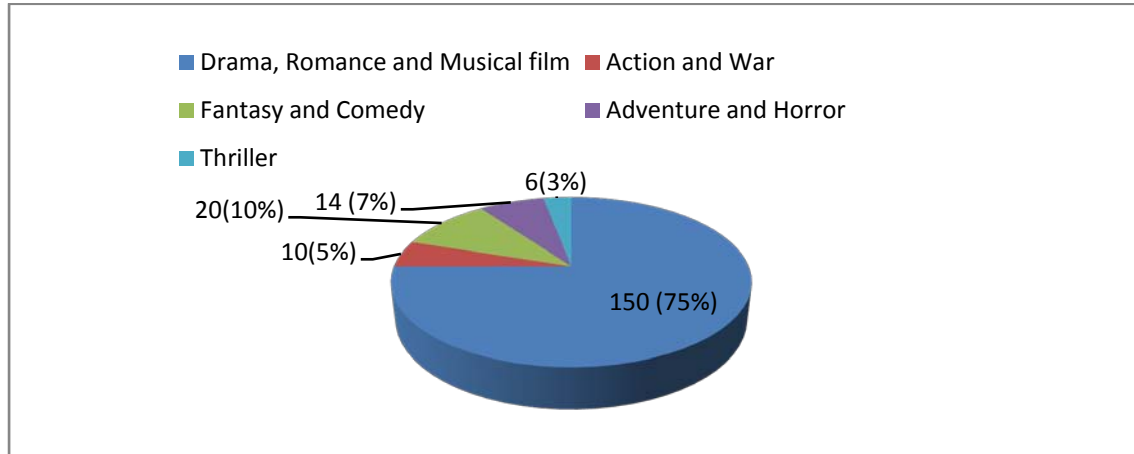
*Fig 3 : How regular do you watch American films?*



Fig 3 above shows the frequency of exposure of respondents to American films. Eighty-five per cent (170 respondents) consented that they watch American films often, while 30 respondents representing 15% agreed

that they watch American films occasionally. This means that most of the respondents watch American films often which could be the reason for the massive influence of the films on the respondents.

*Research Question 2 : What are the American film genre students of Taraba State University expose themselves to the most?*

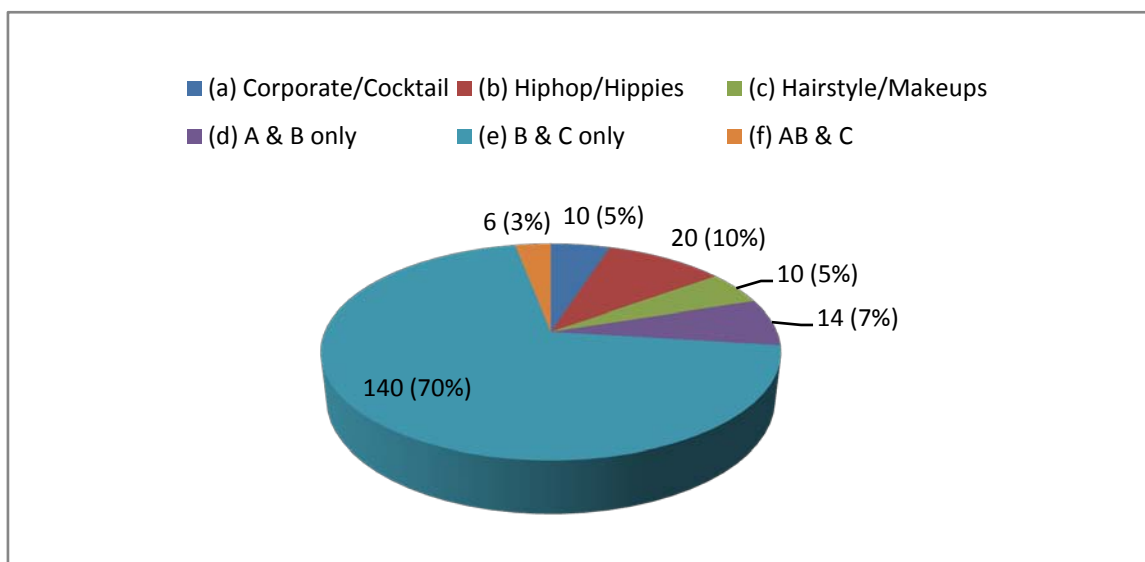


*Fig 4 : Which American film genre do you expose yourself to the most?*

Fig 4 above shows the genre of American films that the respondents expose themselves to. A hundred and fifty respondents representing 75% opined that they watch romance, drama and musical films more than any other forms of American films. This could be due to the kind of costumes used in such movies that captivate the hearts and minds of the youths. Twenty respondents representing 10% agreed they watch Fantasy and

Comedy, 14 respondents representing 7% indicated adventure and horror, 10 respondents making 5% concurred to action and war, whereas 6 respondents agreed they watch thriller films the most. This implies that Romance, Drama and Musical films are most preferred film by the respondents. Therefore, they expose themselves to such types of American films than any other.

*Research question three: What are the various dressing patterns students of Taraba State University copy from their exposure to western films?*



*Fig 5 : What categories of American dressing do youths imitate the most?*

The chart above shows the pattern of dressing in American films students imitate the most. One hundred and forty respondents representing 70% opined that the hairstyles/ make ups and hip hop/hippies are the most imitated form of dressing by students who watch American films. Twenty respondents representing 10% agreed to Hip hop/Hippies, 14 respondents representing 7% agreed to corporate/cocktail and hip hop/hippies only while 10 respondents representing 5% agreed to corporate/

cocktail only, and 6 respondents representing 3% agreed that corporate/cocktail, hip hop/hippies and hairstyles/make-up are being imitated by students the most. From the foregoing, it could be deduced that hairstyles/make ups and hip hop/hippies are the most imitated forms of dressing by students who watch American films. This could be as a result of the ever changing fashionable nature of these kinds of dressing.

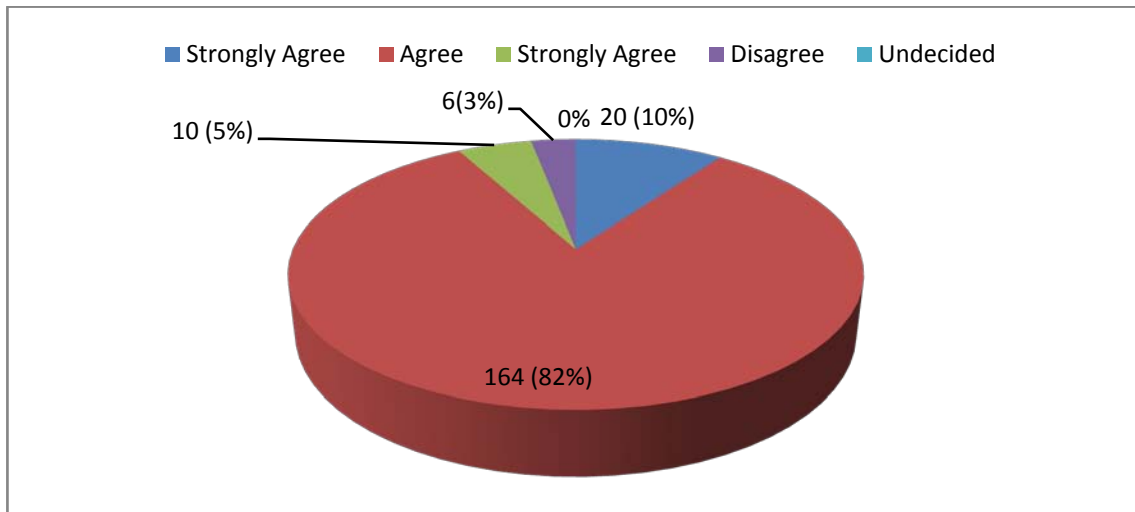


Fig 6 : What you see on American films influences your dressing mode?

Figure 6 above shows the influence of American films on youth dressing. A hundred and sixty four respondents (82%) agreed that American film influences their dressing. Twenty respondents (10%) strongly agreed that American films influence their dressing, while 10 (5%) respondents strongly disagreed that their

dressing is influenced by American films, and 6 (3%) respondents disagreed with the assertion that American films influence youth dressing. This implies that to a large extent American films influence the dressing style/pattern of students in tertiary institutions like Taraba State University.

*Research question four: What are the reasons for students' adoption of foreign dressing patterns portrayed in western films?*

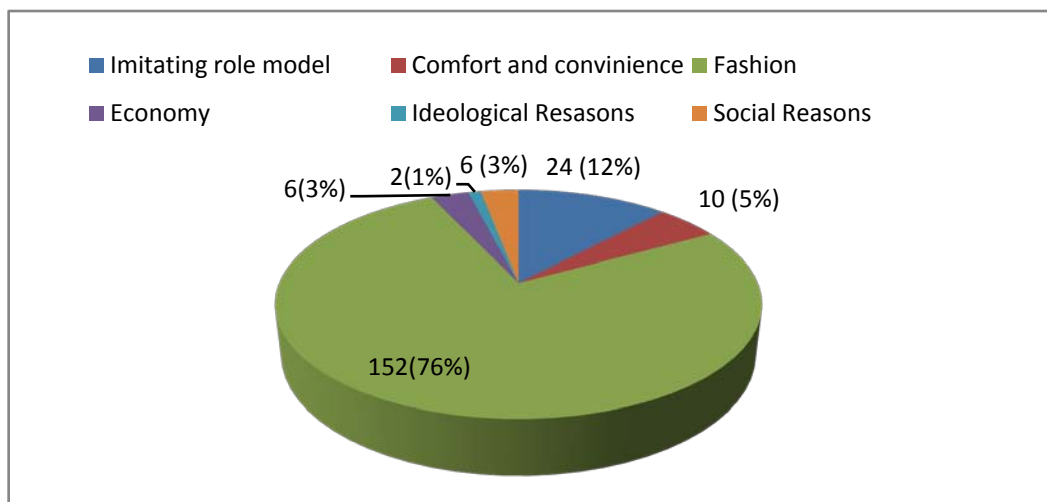


Fig 7 : What are your reasons for the preferred dress style?

Figure 7 above shows the reasons for respondent's preferred dress style. One hundred and fifty-two of the respondents representing 76% gave fashion as the reasons behind their preferred dress style. Twenty four respondents representing 15% agreed to imitating role model, 10 respondents making 5% opined to comfort/convenience, 6 respondents representing 3% agreed to economic reasons and 6 other respondents representing 3% agreed to social reasons as to why they preferred the dress styles. This implies that most youth's preference for dressing style in American films is due to fashion. Some of them also do so to imitate role model/movie stars.

*Research question five: In what ways could students be dissuaded from imitating foreign dressing patterns that do not align with their cultural values?*

The following are suggestions given by the respondents on how youth dressings can be changed especially from copying foreign patterns.

1. Setting and enforcing strict dressing code in tertiary institutions like Taraba State University.
2. Proper Parenting and Counseling
3. Uncompromising religious teachings through regular sermons or preaching as well as counseling; Pastors and Imams should insist on the need for decent dressing.
4. Formation of campus brigade to stand against indecent dressing by sensitizing and promoting good moral values among students.
5. Making judicious use of the mass media via jingles that promote moral values and the sanctity of sex and produce programmes that sample opinions of Nigerians on indecent dressing.

## X. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Findings of this study clearly show that western films (American films) influence youth dressing style and preference. Findings further reveal that most of the students in Taraba state University are exposed to American films and they regularly watch them. Exploring the most viewed forms of American movies by the respondents; the study reveals that the drama, romance and musical movies are most preferred by students than any other one. Findings further reveal that students imitate the hip hop/hippies and the hairstyles/makes ups more than any other forms of dressing projected in American films. This is because the different forms of costumes and dressing used in these kinds of movies are appealing to the students who watch them. Weitzer & Kubrin (2004) have noted that films are able to provide knowledge on fashion/dressing to the audience because films are highly visual and seeing something in a film may have an impact on them. According to Mohammed, 2006 and Saodah (2006), films affect not only the knowledge of the audience, but also the attitudes such as the desire for products and brand

preferences. This study reveals that films, to some extent, are very influential on youth clothes shopping behaviour especially for the adolescents and the young adult group.

Findings further indicate that students imitate these forms of dressing due to the trends in fashion as well as imitation of a role model. Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) found that attractiveness of the movie character associated with the rating of female character with their wishful identification could lead to modeling effect in terms of the appearance of the women. Therefore, women are more likely to consciously model their own appearance after the model character. This study has proved that students, irrespective of sex, do dress to imitate role models they watch in films.

Findings further reveal that it is possible for students to be dissuaded from indecent dressing they are exposed to in western films and these could be done through setting and enforcing strict dressing code in tertiary institutions, proper parenting and counseling, and formation of campus brigade to curb indecent dressing.

## XI. CONCLUSION

American films exert great influence on the dressing pattern of students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria as this study shows. The hip hop/hippies and makeup/hairstyles have become the order of the day as students see these forms of dressing as the best fashion without paying any regard to their cultural norms, thereby imitating whatever they see on screen which mostly contradicts their cultural values and norms.

### Recommendations

Against this backdrop, this paper proffers the following recommendations.

- (i) Universities and other tertiary institutions should take the issue of dress code seriously by penalizing students who are found wanting.
- (ii) As it is often said, "charity begins at home". Parents should take time to teach their wards good morals relating to dressing as emphasized in African society. Parents and guardians should openly frown at indecent dressing projected on television before their children.
- (iii) Programmes that sample opinions of Nigerians on indecent dressing should be regularly featured in the mass media in addition to debate on the issue by students in institutions of learning as a means of effective sensitization.

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