

# IDENTIFICATION OF LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS IN NIGERIAN YOUTHS USING CLOTHING SELECTION RULES: A GUIDE TO COUNSELLORS

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## **Abstract**

*The major purpose of this study was to identify the leadership characteristics in Nigerian youths using clothing selection rules as a guide to counsellors. Two important clothing selection rules were identified, and these are the rule of conformity and the rule of individuality. The study also identified the various conformity and individualism characteristics in clothing selections. A survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study was the National Diploma students in year two of Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Department of Delta State Polytechnic Ogwashi-uku. These individuals were thirty-two (32) in number. The population formed the sample of this study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analysed using frequency distribution and mean. Major findings include the fact that some people like being their selves when it comes to dressing, among others. Recommendations based on the findings were also made in the study.*

## **Introduction**

The choice of what to wear is a very important aspect of human life that has a lot to say about an individual. Learning why people wear the clothes they wear and what influences their clothing decisions will help guidance counsellors to advise youths on how to live their lives and what are best for them. Arthur (2020) noted that clothes can be a window into the social world, which is bound by a tacit set of rules, customs, conventions, and rituals that guide face-to-face interaction. According to Psychologist World (2021) the clothes an individual wears sends a powerful signal to other people projecting the self-image that the individual wants to display.

Identifying leadership characters and destructive characters in an individual is something that should be done very early in an individual's life. This is most important when the individual has come of age where he or she makes his or her own decisions and is also held liable for any mistakes he or she made. This stage in every individual's life is the youth stage. Identification of leadership characteristics is the action of recognizing and naming a particular attitude and relating it to the act of leadership in the society. It is the ability to recognize an act and to be able to say what it is in relation

to leading and following. It is possible to use a youth's clothing choices to know the kind of leadership image that the individual is portraying.

The youths of every society are the future of that society for a better leadership in future. Wehmeyer, Agran, and Hughes, 1998 in Regents of the University of Minnesota (2010) explained that youth leadership is part of youth development process and supports the young person in developing the ability to guide or direct others on a course of action, influence the opinion and behaviours of others, and serve as a role model. Regents of the University of Minnesota (2010) added that youth development is a process that prepares a young person to meet the challenges of adolescents and adulthood and achieve his or her full potential. Youths are those individuals who are usually between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. Most youths conform to what is readily available in the society.

Conformity is an act of following other people to do whatever they are doing, especially in fashion. Levine (2020) explained that conformity is the process whereby people change their attitudes, actions, or perceptions to more closely match those held by groups to which they belong or want to belong or by groups whose approval they desire. Conformity encourages socialization, and socialization involves the imitation of other people in the community. Fashion followers like socialization, these are fashion conformers who follow the individualists to make a fashion popular.

Individualists are people that always initiate actions for other people to imitate. Irving (2015) emphasized that servant leaders help to create a place for individuality in their work with their teams. This means that leaders who are individualistic in nature happen to express themselves and allow other people around them to do the same. Individualistic people tend to initiate actions and refuse to conform to norms in the society. Individuality also means having an exclusive or distinctive characteristic or quality that not everyone else has. Individuality consists of characteristics such as uniqueness, originality, risk-taking, independence, and assertiveness; all these can be expressed through apparel, accessories and clothing choices (Marshall, *et al* 2000).

In clothing selection, it is important that one understands what is already in existence in the society. However, for most groups, the regulation of personal appearance goes beyond clothing as clothing functions as an effective means of nonverbal communication (Arthur2020).It is important for guidance counsellors to recognise that an individual's clothing selection determines the personality of that individual. Every human being has his or her individual personality, composed of a unique set of personality traits which he or she wants to show off with clothing. With this, Arthur (2020) disclosed that clothing is a symbol of social control as it controls the external body. In conclusions, people use clothes to communicate thoughts, feelings, expressions and this makes clothing selections to makes up an individual's self-image.

In clothing selections, two personalities exist, these are individualists and the conformers. Individualists are important for fashion innovations while conformers are important to maintain a fashion trend. Clothing characteristics can be used to show

leadership characters in youths considering conformity and individualism in their clothing selections. This makes conformity and individualism in clothing selections very important in counselling youths. Kaiser, (2020) pointed out that through appearance style (personal interpretations of, and resistances to, fashion), individuals announce who they are and who they hope to become.

There is need for proper counselling channels, if it is hoped that Nigerian youths can make any difference in leadership considering what the trend among older politicians in Nigeria is already. Counselling is the advice and support that is given to people to help them deal with problems and make important decisions. Roy (2011) explained that counselling in its spirit and essence is generative, it aims at assisting the individual to develop, such that he becomes psychologically mature and is capable at realizing his potentials optimally. This makes counselling to be very important in the lives of every Nigerian youth.

With the knowledge of clothing characteristics and expressions, a counsellor can know the advice that can be offered to a youth. By mere looking at the individual's clothing choices on several meeting occasions, the counsellor will be able to know the kind of a person the youth is and of course who he or she would like to be in future and be able to advise the youth appropriately. It is important for individuals to be studied in order to find out the influences these personalities have on their clothing and from this the kinds of people they are can easily be dictated.

Individuals that follow norms are looked at as followers and not leaders. In personality formation, these individuals do what they see other individuals in the society do. That means that when corruption becomes the order of the day, they follow suit. These individuals need good models in the society to be good and when the models in the society are bad, these set of youths end up being bad too.

It is important for the counsellor to advise youths that follow the norms over the imitation of wrong models in the society. This is not just applied to clothing alone but also to leadership character formations in the society. These individuals that follow the norms always have the desire to be identified with a group, they are always loyal to the ideas of that group and they show solidarity to the activities of that group whether those activities are good or bad. It is important for the counsellor to advise such youths against flowing with a group even when the activities of such groups are bad and they tend to emulate models in the society even when the model is known for wrong acts in the society. The interest of these set of youths is in the popularity of the individual or the group whether the popularity came from wrong or right acts is not of interest to such youths.

Characteristics of individualism include uniqueness, originality, risk-taking, independence, and assertiveness. These characters when observed in any persons clothing selection shows that the individual rarely follow what everybody in the public does. They tend to exhibit what they like and appreciate to the society so that everybody will understand their rejection of what is publicly accepted. They tend to be unique in

their own ways. They look original not imitating anybody. They tend to take a lot of risks coming up with new styles that has to be tried to see how they can be accepted by the public not minding the cost of such costumes. They do not depend on other people's perception of what is good or bad. They have this strong desire and confidence to express their opinions so that people take notice of them.

These individualists are natural leaders. It is left for the counsellor to advice youths that show individualistic characteristics properly so that they do not over act to situations. They should be made to understand that the opinion of other individuals should be put into considerations while acting in any circumstance so that they do not end up being dictators.

This clothing expressions are very important because when most youths are interviewed on the kind of a person they will like to be, they tend to lie to please their interviewer but clothing selections say what the individual might never like to say about him or herself. This is basically why it is important to counsel youths on formation of leadership characteristics using conformity and individualism in their clothing selections.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is evident in the world around that there is no certain way through which an individual can be known to be a good leader. Good or bad leaders are known when they are already ruling. This does not give room for corrections before choosing the individual to rule. Considering this fact, it is important to identify some characters in individuals that will help people to make good choices of good leaders before voting them to rule. This is why there is need to identify some good leadership characters in Nigerian youths using clothing selection rules. With this knowledge, individuals will learn to say who a good leader can be and who can end up following the already existing trend and therefore end up being like the already existing good or bad leaders as the already existing case may be.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of this study was to identify some leadership characters in Nigerian youths using clothing selection rules. Specifically, the study identified

1. conformity characteristics seen from clothing selections
2. individualism characteristics seen from clothing selections

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the conformity characteristics seen from clothing selections?
2. What are the individualism characteristics seen from clothing selections?

## **Methodology**

**Area of Study:** The study was carried out in Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Department of Delta State Polytechnic Ogwashi-Uku. This is one of the state Polytechnics in Delta State, Nigeria. Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Department of the polytechnic was chosen because there are a good number of youths in the department who are also assumed to be knowledgeable in fashion and clothing.

**Population of the Study:** The population for this study are the National Diploma students in year two of Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Department of Delta State Polytechnic Ogwashi-uku. These individuals were thirty-two (32) in number. These were the number of National Diploma students in year two that registered with the school Information Communication Technology (ICT) centre in 2016/2017 session (Delta State Polytechnic ICT centre 2014). This population was chosen because they are mostly young people who are between the ages of eighteen to thirty five. They were also chosen from Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Department because they are assumed to be knowledgeable in clothing and fashion.

**Sample and Sampling Technique:** The population formed the sample of this study. This is because the number of this group of individuals is few; therefore the entire population was used for the study.

**Instrument for Data Collection:** The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. It was developed based on the purpose of the study and intensive review of literature. It contained thirty-one (31) questions and was validated by experts in related fields. Test-retest reliability was used to test the reliability of the instrument. The coefficient of reliability obtained is +0.8

**Method of Data Collection:** Thirty-two (32) copies of the instrument were administered directly to the group. These thirty-two (32) copies were completed correctly and returned, which indicates a 100% return. Guidance was given to the respondents in the collection of the data.

**Method of Data Analysis:** Frequency distribution and mean were used for data analysis. The mean scores were used to determine the perceived importance level expressed on a 4-point scale for each of the items. A mean rating of 2.50 was used for decision making.

**Table 1: Mean Responses on Conformity Characteristics in Clothing Selections**

S/N	Characteristics	Mean	Remark
1.	I dress up well to satisfy my need for a feeling of belonging	3.28	Agreed
2.	I dress up well in order to have union with fellow human beings	2.84	Agreed
3.	I dress up well just because I want to be identified with others	2.69	Agreed
4.	I dress up in order to obey the collective cultures of my people	3.00	Agreed
5.	I like dressing up in uniforms	2.78	Agreed
6.	I like following an already existing fashion of my group	2.41	Disagreed
7.	I like being faithful in my support of a particular fashion or mode of dressings	3.50	Agreed
8.	I like maintaining fashion rules with time	3.41	Agreed
9.	I like making my clothing choices based on what the market offers	2.81	Agreed
10.	I like trying to be fashionable by going for what is available as that is best for me	3.56	Agreed
11.	My fashion position is often defined by my associations	2.84	Agreed
12.	I like solidarity in dressing	3.00	Agreed
13.	I make clothing selections based on what others wear	2.19	Disagreed
14.	I like it when other people follow the same fashion trend	3.19	Agreed

Table 1 shows that conformity characteristics include the fact that youths dress up well to satisfy their need for a feeling of belonging, they dress up well in order to have union with fellow human beings, among others.

**Table 2: Mean Responses on Individualism Characteristics in Clothing Selections**

S/N	Individualism Features	Mean	Remark
1.	I like looking out for clothing articles that has not yet been in existence	3.53	Agreed
2.	I tend to wear the new fads in town first before leaving them for the imitators of style to carry on with the fashion	3.16	Agreed
3.	I like being myself when it comes to dressing	3.88	Agreed
4.	I like dressing without being influenced by other people's views	3.31	Agreed
5.	I like being the first to wear a style and I get tired of it to experiment to find the next trend	3.00	Agreed
6.	I dress without being influenced by the other people around	3.34	Agreed
7.	I dress constantly without caring about the details in dressing	1.94	Disagreed
8.	I like dressing in order to maintain the quality of being new and interesting in a way that is different	3.41	Agreed
9.	I like dressing away from anything that has existed before	2.63	Agreed
10.	I am always ready to bear the consequences of introducing new fads into the market no matter what it might cost to do that	2.81	Agreed
11.	I like seeking information about fashion	3.53	Agreed
12.	I am free from the influences of other human beings when it comes to dressing	3.13	Agreed
13.	I make my own decisions over my dressings	3.47	Agreed
14.	I rely on myself when it comes to fashion	3.41	Agreed
15.	I obtain satisfactions directly without the mediation of other people when it comes to dressing	3.34	Agreed
16.	I go for things that suit me without considering what the new fad in the market is	3.34	Agreed
17.	I always like to express my opinion when it comes to dressing	3.69	Agreed

Table 2 shows that individualistic characteristics include the fact that youths like looking out for clothing articles that has not yet been in existence, youths also tend to wear the new fads in town first before leaving them for the imitators of style (conformers) to carry on with the fashion, among others.

**Findings:** The study identified the following:

- A. Twelve (12) conformity characteristics seen from clothing selections (see Table 1)
- B. Sixteen (16) individualism characteristics seen from clothing selections (see Table 2)

### **Discussion of Findings**

The respondents agreed that they dress up well to satisfy their needs for a feeling of belonging and they also dress up well in order to have union with fellow human beings. These shows that they like following the norms. Norms shape behaviour and thinking differently according to network composition (Barman-Adhikari, Hsu, Begun and Rice 2017). This involves an individual maintaining a standard pattern of behaviour that is considered normal in a society. Norm formation helps to improve the clothing of some individuals. [Huang](#) (2009) explained that as something becomes more fashionable, more people will follow suit, wearing and styling along with whatever is current fashion. In norm formation, mass media dictates one's sense of taste and style.

The respondents also agreed that they dress up well just because they want to be identified with others, they dress up in order to obey the collective cultures of their people and they like dressing up in uniforms. These shows that youths like to be identified with others in their group. Individuals that do not know the best clothing items to wear are given the opportunity to look good by wearing what others in his or her group wear. It helps individuals to follow an already existing fashion of their group and still look nice and feel relaxed in the group.

The respondents also agreed that they like being faithful in their support of a particular fashion or mode of dressings, and, they like maintaining fashion rules with time. These shows that they always dress in loyalty to a particular clothing rule. Staff (2009) noted that loyalty is increasingly important among youths. With this, individuals who do not know what is best for them to wear just become loyal to anything that the markets have to offer at any given time. People who show loyalty tend to make their choices based on what the market offers.

The respondents also agreed that they like making clothing choices based on what the market offers and they like trying to be fashionable by going for what is available as that is best for them. According to Huang (2009) individuals are controlled by what they can buy in shops. Many people trying to be fashionable tend to go for what is available thinking that it is best for them. These individuals can make clothing selections based on what others wear. It can also be because other groups of people follow the same fashion trend.

The respondents also agreed that their fashion position is often defined by their associations because they like solidarity in dressing and they like it when other people follow the same fashion trend with them. This is a support by one person or group of people for another because they share feelings, opinions, and aims. One's fashion position is often defined by association and solidarity of acts in every society. Young people's participation is also very important: allowing them to participate actively and to be involved in projects contributes to a sense of belonging and solidarity (Spriet 2019). They like to belong to a group and act in solidarity to the beliefs of that group. In the case of individualism in clothing selections, the respondents agreed that they that they like looking out for clothing articles that has not yet been in existence and they tend to wear the new fads in town first before leaving them for the imitators of style to carry on with the fashion. These shows that youths like being unique in their dressings. Vassar (2010) emphasized that sense of uniqueness relates directly to the sense of self and self-worth. Vassar (2010) explained that it is significantly important to acknowledge youth's uniqueness.

The respondents also agreed that they like being themselves when it comes to dressing and they claim to like dressing without being influenced by other people's views, they like being the first to wear a style and they get tired of it to experiment to find the next trend, they like to dress without being influenced by the other people around. That means that they like to be original in their dressings. It involves an individual being himself and doing things without being influenced by other people's views but acts without considering other people's personal thoughts. Orientation of young people should stress the development of initiative, responsibility, and the search for originality (Moussa 2014). People who are original tend to select their clothing in order to maintain the quality of being new and interesting in a way that is different from anything that has existed before. They are clothing innovators and tend to initiate new styles for the conformers to carry on with the trend.

The respondents also agreed that they like dressing in order to maintain the quality of being new and interesting in a way that is different, and, they like dressing away from anything that has existed before. This shows that they like being inventive in their dressings. According to Moussa (2014), young inventors are not dangerous disturbers of the established order, but harbingers of a better world. With this, the respondents disagreed that they dress constantly without caring about the details in dressing.

The respondents also agreed that they are always ready to bear the consequences of introducing new fads into the market no matter what it might cost to do that, and, they make their own decisions over their dressings. These means that they like to take risk while choosing their dressing. This supports the views of Gazzaniga (2012) which emphasized that youths engage in a wide range of risky behaviours that older peers shun, and at enormous cost. Risk-taking is the act of doing something without being afraid of a negative result.

The respondents also agreed that they are free from the influences of other human beings when it comes to dressing, they rely on their selves when it comes to fashion, they also obtain satisfactions directly without the mediation of other people when it comes to dressing, and, they also go for things that suit them without considering what the new fad in the market is. These shows that they like being independent in their dressing. Walinga and Stangor (2014) explained that as youths develop more advanced patterns of reasoning and a stronger sense of self, they seek to forge their own independent identities. When someone is independent in dressing, it means that the person knows social norms but will never want to practice them. Of course, something that was for an individual who is independent could eventually become fashion, when it is exposed to more people. That is exactly what makes the independent people innovators of fashion.

The respondents also agreed that they always like seeking information about fashion and they prefer to express their opinion when it comes to dressing. This shows that they like to be assertive in their dressing. Care (2019) explained that assertiveness is an attitude of mind, but there are outward signs that one can learn in order to show that to other people. Being assertive means to be able to stand up for one's own beliefs and needs without neglecting other people (Care 2019). Individualists have this as one of their basic characteristics. It helps them to be the first to wear any style of fashion because of their innovativeness and the desire to express their opinions. These individuals have a way of making their clothing selections to be accepted by other individuals in the society. They are always the target of clothing marketers.

## **Conclusions**

Considering the findings of this study, the counsellor has a lot of works to do, this is because the respondents were neither here nor there from their responses. Meanwhile in clothing selections, one must either be a conformer or an individualist. With this, there is need for closer monitoring of the youths by the counsellor before learning whether the individual is a conformer or individualist in nature. This is because asking questions will not give a true picture of who the youth actually is as was observed in the results of this study. Despite the protests in 2020 by Nigerian youths against corrupt leaders, Nigeria will most probably remain at the same level if the youths are not properly guided to make the difference that is expected. This is because looking at the results of this study, it was observed that the youths do not even know where they stand. Everybody responded to whatever is available and this is not what is needed to make a proper and positive change needed in politics in Nigeria,

This calls for serious work by counsellors, educators and good willed individuals to help the youths to be able to identify their stand, and make them not to be pushed by whatever that is available. If they are not well guided, they will continue in the same line of their predecessors making the nation to remain in the same corruption from generation to generation.

This makes the use of clothing cues very important to youths' guidance counsellors. This is because what words can not say about an individual's characters, clothes say them. When an individual is a conformer, it is possible for that individual to follow the existing trend among the ruling class but when the individual is individualist, then there is hope for a change in the opposite direction of leadership in the individual. This makes clothing selection of individuals, especially youths in the society a good way of identifying leadership characteristics in youths and this will go a long way helping a guidance counsellor to give better advice to young people in the Nigerian Society.

### **Recommendations:**

The following recommendations were made from the study:

1. Youth counsellors should be trained on the use of various cues like clothing cues in the analysis of characters and not just using interviews to learn about an individual because such cues say exactly what the individual might never want to say.
2. Students should use such clothing cues to choose their leaders in social gatherings especially in things like students union government elections because most good leaders are assumed to be individualistic in their clothing selections.

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