



## Examining the Nexus of Human Ecology and Functional Apparel among Home Economics Students in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria.

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**Abstract.** This study examines the nexus between human ecology and functional apparel among Home Economics students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. Human ecology emphasizes the dynamic relationship between individuals and their environments, while apparel serves as both a functional and expressive medium reflecting personal, cultural, and environmental values. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a population of 300 respondents drawn from Lagos State University of Education, University of Lagos, and College of Education (Technical), Akoka. A structured online questionnaire was used to gather data on factors influencing apparel preference and the functionality of clothing to students' environments. Data were analyzed using Chi-square and Friedman's tests. Findings revealed significant factors influencing apparel choices, including values, cultural identity, peer group influence, institutional dress codes, climate, and fashion trends ( $\chi^2 = 300.297$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Similarly, apparel functionality, comfort, environmental adaptability, eco-friendliness, and suitability for academic and social activities was found to significantly affect students' environmental engagement and performance ( $\chi^2 = 1311.781$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The study concludes that Home Economics students' apparel preferences are shaped by a complex interaction of ecological, socio-cultural, and technological factors. It recommends the adoption of functional and eco-friendly clothing aligned with environmental conditions and institutional standards to promote comfort, identity, and professional development.

**Keywords:** Human Ecology, Functional Apparel, Home Economics, Lagos State, Tertiary Institutions, Fashion Trends, Eco-friendly Clothing

### 1. Introduction

Human Ecology is an interdisciplinary field that examines the dynamic relationship between humans and their environments encompassing cultural, social, economic and environmental dimensions (Roderick 2024), Sean and Ludomir, 2023, Wydawnictwo 2013). It is a term used to describe a field of study whose guiding philosophy derives from an ecosystem perspective (Roster, 2024, Soo and Yoo-Kyound, 2019). Apparel refers to items worn to cover the body. Terms such as clothing and attire are synonymous. Apparels are worn for modesty, adornment and protection from the elements of the weather (Gilligan 2023). It transmits information about the wearer's systematically allowing individuals to communicate their personality, values, and identity to the world. Apparel when worn convey subtle cues about the wearer's cultural background, social status and lifestyle preferences, shaping the way others perceive and interact with the wearer. It is a powerful form of self-expression (Chola, Kanyati and Mwanza 2023). Apparels on the other hand can be functional when it transcends traditional clothing features to enhance performance, comfort and protection (Azonuche, 2024, Rosie Laure and Christ, 2021, Robio and Bye 2020, Ju and Jeongwha, 2013). It can be used to protect the wearer from the elements such as wind, sun or cold. For example, functional clothings are clothing that protects against extremely hazardous environments, provides thermal insulation, protect individuals against sun burns and wind damages.

Functional clothings are used for work, school, cooking or sporting activities (Hephzibah, Kehinde and Ugobodaga, 2024, Oladokun, 2024, Walaiye2023,

Okeke, 2023, Meital 2023, Korieocha 2022). Suitable clothing to a great extent determines functional clothing value by comfort to the wearer, mobility, protection from hazards, health and safety. Originally, clothing serves the purpose of protecting the wearers and expressing roles but specific garment function determines necessary clothing design and physical characteristic features that allow freedom and match motion (Xue, Lei and Xiangpang, 2024, Azonuche, Okomwa and Ogbongomi, 2022). Home Economics is an academic subject that prepares students for life skills related to sustainable lifestyles to students in Lagos State Tertiary Institutions. It is the field of research and education to be self-sufficient adults and covers cooking, finances, mending clothing, dress-making, fostering child development, interior design wood working and a host of others (Crain, 2023, Soyomba, 2023, Adebayo Oluwadare and Olubukola 2022, Jaana and Paivi, 2022). So understanding how students apparel align with their ecological environment is essential. There are certain factors influencing apparel preference in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. These include values, climate, socio-cultural identities, institutional dress codes, technological advancements in apparel design and fashion trends (Azonuche, 2024, Roster 2024, Sonali and Linda, 2017). The activities within this environment engaged by Home Economics students include academic, social and casual activities. Therefore, apparel chosen for these activities should act as a mediator between students and their academic, social environment (Adebayo, Oluwadare and Olubukola 2022, Jaana and Paivi, 2022).

Values are viewed as enduring beliefs about desired end-states or modes of conduct that guide human behavior. Personal values are theorized to influence attitudes and behaviors and they represent attitude towards tradition or foreign shopping behavior on clothing. Which may be due to environmental or socially conscious values such as buying eco-friendly apparel or recycled apparel (Roster 2024, Jin, Abdullah, Mohammed, Marvello, Norzalita, 2024, Jiddi and Niehm, 2017). Students of Home Economics have long recognized the significance of clothing as a signal to connectedness in order to distinguish themselves from others. They adopt styles of clothing that express their particular distinct identity for aesthetics and quality as well are core requirement, product composition, branding, price, style, fit and colour (Roster, 2024, Crain, 2023, Adebayo, Oluwadare and Olubukola 2022). Lagos State has a tropical climate. For students clothing to be functional, clothes and textiles should absorb stain, sweat and microbes to prevent increased odour generation and bacterial colourization during the hot season as well as

protect individuals from cold during the cold weather (Ubeleit-Nte 2024, Yinka 2024, Iwalaiye, 2023, Robin and Bye, 2020). Textile microorganism can cause staining, fabric deterioration and even physical irritation such as skin allergies or infections which affects emotional well-being and one self-esteem. Since textile and skin contact are an influential part of cutaneous environment therefore functional clothing are essential such as cotton. Unlike wool and synthetic fibres like polyesters and nylon that can worsen these conditions (Azonuche, 2024, Robina and Bye, 2020, Ju and Jeongwha, 2013). Hot climate can be very hot and uncomfortable, the type of clothes worn affects how well air circulates and heat and moisture evaporate then both skin temperatures and discomfort increase. Home Economics students should go for breathable materials like cotton, linen, chambray or jersey. For dresses, tops and skirts or trousers, skirts, shorts, made of this fabric. Avoid clothing from polyester, wool, rayon, nylon or silk because they are not breathable materials. They cause heat and retain body odours. Fabrics like pastels and lighter colours absorb less sun than dark colours. Dark colours trap heat and makes one feel hotter. Workout clothes should be made from breathable fabrics. Choose loose and flowing silhouette like kaftan, wide leg trousers, maxi dresses (Oladokun, 2024, Ubelejit-Nte, 2024, Okeke – Korieocha, 2022, Hephzibah, Kehidne and Ugbo-daga, 2024). Comfortable shoes are a must for working out. Such as sandals, flip-flops or breathable walking shoes, wide brimmed hat or a cap to protect the wearer from the sun as well as sunglasses and sunscreen, a scarf or shawl can also be useful for covering up for protection against the sun or dust, rock light weight accessories for comfort (Arnob, Tareque, Reazuddin and Abubakar, 2024, Oladoun 2024, Zuberu 2019). During the rainy season hoodies are functional because they are thick enough to keep students warm. Shorts are ideal because of floods. Boots that are appropriate for walking on wet grass or muddy floor, students need one, put on cros since they are plastic and waterproof, skinny jeans and boots are stylish combinations, they look chic (Oladokun, 2024, Okeke-Kerieocha, 2024, Iwalaiye, 2023). Darker colours such as black, brown, are usually preferred over light shades. Try brighter, bold colours, these can be mood boosting on those gray dreary days. Style shorts with sneakers and sandals. Get a raincoat but heels should be avoided, leather shoes, long skirts and dresses. Wear jellies – those solid rubber shoes, choose low maintenance fabrics and kimonos. Grab the most vibrant stuff in your closet and experiment with colour combinations.

A neutral pair of shoes will provide some balance. Choose stockings or skin socks that suit your skin

tones (Okeke Okorieocha, 2024, Iwalaiye, 2023, Zuberu 2019). Functional clothing is also influenced by the environment to showcase socio-cultural identity of students by incorporating elements like traditional Yoruba attire like gele, buba and iro for women, agbada, Sokoto and cap for men, with vibrant colours and traditional accessories like beads, coral necklaces or intricate designed gele (head wraps) add depth for cultural expression. Blending traditional elements into contemporary streetwear by incorporating aso-oke patterns into t-shirts or traditional motifs into casual wear shows unique Lagos Identity (Azonuche, 2024, Dairo, 2023, Ogundare, 2023). Students can wear to suit different occasions. Gender dynamics also play a role in the way student dress to conform, to blend in, to fix pre-convened moulds and to identify their social status and designed with activities and roles typically associated with each gender in mind. In tertiary institutions girls can wear short and trousers but boys cannot wear ladies' attire (Rabio and Penelope, 2024, Yinko, 2023, Ogundare, 2023, Okosa, 2023). The role of peer group environment as an influencing factor in purchasing decisions is well established among students in tertiary institutions, students feel comfortable and relaxed among their peers and are motivated in everything they do. The factors influencing peer groups affiliation as concerned clothing are brand, current fashion, self-satisfaction, ease of wear, attractive appearance, figure type, ease of task performance, activities, protection and safety (Anomche, 2024, Fabio and Penelope, 2024, Filade, Bello, Uwaoma, Anuanene and Nwangbunika, 2019, Fadare, Zarma, Fadare, Bademosi and Amanum, 2021). Tertiary institutions in Lagos State have attempted to define specific dress codes through various mechanisms such as laying down laws and considering evaluation to define specific dress code (Ubelejit-Nte, 2024, Yinka, 2024, Ogundare, 2023, Okosa, 2023). Wearing stylishly torn jeans, trousers, lowriding jeans, sagging dirty inner wears or attending lectures in pajamas with a pair of bathroom slippers may elicit strong social disapproval. In addition to conveying one's affiliation or orientation, clothes express people's distinction, social and personal traits (Moyosere and Abiodun, 2023, Ubelejit, 2024, Abiri, 2019).

Also wearing transparent, revealing or indecent clothing with obscene messages, extremely tight fitting, face cap and complete face covering, distracting shoes like stiletto heels are not functional (Ubelejit, 2024, Moyosere and Abiodun, 2023, Abiri, 2019). What is functional and appropriate for students include corporate wears, smart casual clothes, traditional prints such as Ankara and updated traditional styles like buba and Sokoto (Olaito, 2024,

Tunbosun, 2023, Okosa, 2023, Dairo, 2023). Customer behavior has changed across many sectors including that of Home Economics students as a result of fast development of digital technology, in the fashion industry. For fashion brands to market their goods, interact with customers and affect purchasing behavior, social media platforms have emerged as potential tools such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Fashion influencers, Twitter, Pinterest, Fashion tendencies and sale using e-commerce and connecting fast to customers. The development of fashion technology in fashion from various angles. Sustainability is not only a trend but also a lifestyle choice for both students as consumers and the industry (Priya and Mehasoni, 2024, Islam, 2022, Deanna, 2021, Moyosere, Abiodun 2023). Technology has made a mark on the fashion industry. With the advent of online shopping, social media and virtual try-on technology, the way in which people purse and purchase fashion has changed exponentially. It has also created new fabrics and techniques leading to the development of innovative and sustainable fashion (Fiona, 2023, Islam, 2022, Deanna, 2021). Technology has enabled the creation of biodegradable plastics which can be used to create clothing and accessories that are more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Also allow the creation of recycled materials such as recycled clothing and accessories that are more sustainable in the context of e-commerce, an array of virtual try-on tools enables students to shop with greater assurance and efficiency and students can just buy anything (Claudia, 2025, Meital, 2023, Moyosere and Abiodun, 2023, Fiona, 2023). Fashion trends also influence apparel selection or purchase. Home Economics students love to wear trendy clothes and fashion trends keep changing student's wardrobe (Surana, 2020). It is important to select clothing items that cover figure flaws or camouflage aspects of the body that are problematic (Arubani, Awowede and Agadagba, 2024).

However, for Home Economics students to perform their duties as students and future professionals. Fabric and style chosen should be functional to conform to their activities within the school environment. This will have a greater effect on their perception of school climate making them feel a sense of belonging and autonomy with less anxiety and increase resilience and academic engagement (Xue, Lei and Xiangfang, 2024, Azonuche, 2022, Aaron, Michael, Bryant and Evin, 2020).

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Home Economics students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State are involved with lots of activities which

include academics, social and casual activities. Students can be influenced with choices of apparels for these activities by their values, cultural identity, peer group influence, university dress code, technology and fashion trend which will not necessarily be functional. Students are not also aware that, Home Economics students need to consider their activities, weather and environment by choosing functional apparels, even when apparels are bought offline or online, they must be eco-friendly and conform to the environmental requirements.

### 1.2 Objectives of the Study

- To examine the nexus influencing apparel preferences among Home Economics Students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria.
- To examine the nexus of the functionality of apparels to the activities of Home Economics in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria.

### 1.3 Research Questions

- What are the nexus influencing apparel preferences of Home Economics students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria?
- What are the nexus of the functionalities of apparels to the environment of Home Economics students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria?

### 1.4 Research Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant factor influencing apparel preferences of Home Economic Students in tertiary institutions in Lagos state, Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant functionality of apparel to the environment of Home Economics students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria.

## 2. Methodology

**Research design:** Descriptive Survey design was adopted for the study.

**Area of study:** The area of the study was Lagos state university of Education, Ijanikin, University of Lagos,

Akoka and College of education, (technical), Akoka, Lagos state.

**Population of the study:** The population of the study consisted of 300 respondents. 120 from Lagos state university of Education, Oto/Ijanikin, 150 respondents from university of Lagos Akoka, 30 from College of Education (Technical) Home Economics students, totaling 300.

**Method of data collection:** A structured questionnaire was the main instrument used in the collection of data for the research titled Examining the nexus of human ecology and functional apparel among home economics students in tertiary institutions in Lagos state, Nigeria, in which respondents were to answer yes, no and undecided. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, section A and B. Section A was on the bio-data of the respondents, while section B had 20 items, 10, was on factors influencing apparel preferences of Home Economics Students, 10 was on functionality of apparels to the environment of Home Economics Students, totaling 20 items. It was an online questionnaire, using Google form.

**Research Validity:** The questionnaire was given contact and face validity by 2 experts in the research area.

**Method of Data Analysis:** All the responses were collected and analyzed using Chi-square and Friedman's test. The results are presented below.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant factor influencing apparel preferences of Home Economic Students in tertiary institutions in Lagos state, Nigeria.

**Table 1:** Factors influencing apparel preferences of Home Economics Students

S/N	Statement (n=300)	Yes (%)	No (%)	U (%)	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$ (p-value)
1	Environment determines what to wear	270 (90)	30 (10)	0 (0)	5.15	300.297 (<0.001)
2	I am influenced by my values in choosing apparel	270 (90)	0 (0)	30 (10)	5.25	
3	Because I want to stand out	270 (90)	30 (10)	0 (0)	5.15	
4	Climate determines the texture of fabric to purchase	300 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.65	
5	Lagos State climate requires fabrics that allow moisture to evaporate	240 (80)	30 (10)	30 (10)	5.75	
6	Cultural identity influences apparel preference	270 (90)	30 (10)	0 (0)	5.15	
7	The peer group environment influences apparel preference	210 (70)	90 (30)	0 (0)	6.00	
8	The university dress code does not allow to express individuality	270 (90)	30 (10)	0 (0)	5.10	
9	I buy clothes online	180 (60)	90 (30)	30 (10)	6.65	
10	I follow fashion trends	210 (70)	60 (20)	30 (10)	6.15	

\* Significant at 5% level; U=Undecided

The Chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 300.297$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) from the Friedman’s test implies that there are significant factors influencing apparel preferences of Home Economic Students in tertiary institutions in Lagos state, Nigeria ( $p < 0.05$ ). Among these factors are values in choosing apparel, standing out, climate, cultural identity, peer group, university dress code environment, and fashion trend.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant functionality of apparel to the environment of home Economics students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria.

**Table 2:** Functionality of apparels to the environment of Home Economics Students

S/N	Statement (n=300)	Yes (%)	No (%)	U (%)	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$ (p-value)
1	What you wear must be functional to activities	300 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.75	1311.781 (<0.001)
2	The apparel must be comfortable for all activities	300 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.75	
3	These will allow to perform daily tasks well	300 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.75	
4	Fabrics that trap moisture in a hot climate cause body odour	300 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.75	
5	I prefer light-coloured apparel	186 (62)	114 (38)	0 (0)	6.65	
6	Avoid dark colours as Home Economics Students	75 (25)	75 (25)	150 (50)	8.56	
7	Comfortable shoes are to be worn by Home Economics students	261 (87)	39 (13)	0 (0)	5.27	
8	Dress codes are prescribed by the university authority to prepare us as professionals	225 (75)	36 (12)	39 (13)	6.06	
9	Apparel bought offline or online should be eco-friendly	300 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.75	
10	Apparel worn must be functional and conform to the environmental requirements	300 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.75	

\* Significant at 5% level

The Chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 1311.781$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) from the Friedman’s test indicates that there are significant functionalities of apparel to the environment of home economics students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria ( $p < 0.05$ ). these functionalities include moisture trapping, comfortable shoes, eco-friendly, and conformity to environmental requirements.

### 3. Discussion of Findings

**Table I** was on the nexus influencing apparel preference among Home Economics students in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. Out of 300 respondents, 270 (90) answered yes, that environment determines what to wear, 30 (10) answered no. This is in line with (Crain 2023, Soyombo, 2023, Adebayo, Oluwa and Olubukola, 2022, Jaana and Paivi, 2022). 270 (90) answered yes,

they are influenced by their values in choosing apparel as noted by (Roster, 2024, Jin, Abdullah, Mohammed, Marvello, Norzalita, 2024, Diddi and Niehm, 2017). 270 (90) answered yes, because they want to stand out, 30 (10) answered no. As observed by (Roster, 2024, Crain, 2023, Adebayo, Oluwadare and Olubukola, 2022), 300 (100) answered yes, climate determines the texture of fabric to purchase as opined by (Ubelejit – Nte, 2024, Yinka, 2024, Iwalaiye, 2023, Robin and Bye, 2020), 240 (80) answered yes, Lagos state climate requires fabrics that allow moisture to evaporate, 30 (10) answered no, 30 (10) were undecided. As noted by (Azonuch, 2024, Oladokun, 2024, Ubelejit – Nte, 2024, Okeke – Korieocha, 2022, Hephzibab, Kehinde and Ubodaga 2024). 270 (90) answered yes, cultural identity influences apparel preferences. 30 (10) answered no. As noted by (Azonuch 2024, Dairo, 2023, Ogundare, 2023). 210 (70) answered yes, peer group environment influences apparel preferences, 90 (30) answered no as observed by (Anoruche, 2024, Fabio and Penolope, 2024, Filade, Bello, Uwaoma, Anwanene, and Nwangburuka, 2019, Fadare, Zarma, Bademosi and Amanum, 2021). 270 (90) answered yes, the university dress code does not allow students express their individuality, 30 (10) answered no. This is in line with (Ubelejit – Nte, 2024, Yinka, 2024, Ogundare, 2023, Okosa, 2023, Moyosere and Abiodun, 2023). 180 (60) answered yes, they buy clothes online, 90 (30) answered no, 30 (10) were undecided as noted by Priya and Nehasoni, 2024, Islam, 2022, Fiona, 2023, Deanna, 2021, Moyosere and Abiodun, 2023). 210 (70) answered yes, they follow fashion trends as opined by (Claudia, 2025, Meital, 2023, Moyosere and Abiodun, 2023, Fiona, 2023, Surana, 2020).

**Table II** was on the nexus of the functionality of apparel to the environment of Home Economics Students. 300 (100) answered yes, what you wear must be functional to the activities as observed by (Hephzibah, Kehinde and Ugbodaga, 2024, Oladokun, 2024, Iwalaiye, 2023, Okeke – Korieocha, 2023, Meital, 2023, Okeke – Korieocha, 2022). 300 (100) answered yes, apparel must be comfortable for all activities as noted by (Xue, Lei and Diangfang, 2024, Azonuche, Okonwa and Ogbonyomi, 2022). 300 (100) answered yes, this will allow students to perform their daily tasks well as opined by (Crain, 2023, Soyombo, 2023, Adebayo, Oluwadare, and Olubukola, 2022, Jaana and Paivi, 2022). 300 (100) answered yes, fabric that trap moisture in hot climate cause body odour as observed by (Oladokun, 2024, Ubelejit – Nte, 2024, Olaeke – Korieocha, 2022, Hephazibah, Kehinde and Ubodaga, 2024). 186 (62) answered yes, they prefer light – coloured apparel, 144 (38) answered no as noted by (Yinka, 2024, Oladokun, 2024, Hepzibah,

Kehinde and Ugbodago, 2024). 75 (25) answered yes, dark coloured apparel to be avoided by Home Economics students, 75 (25) answered no, 150 (50) were undecided. Probably because they are not aware dark colors trap heat. This is contrary to (Oladokun, 2024, Ubelejit – Nte, 2024, Okeke – Korieocha, 2022, Hephzibah, Kehinde and Ugbodaga, 2024). 261 (87) answered yes, comfortable shoes are to be worn by Home Economics Students, 39 (13) answered no, this is in line with (Arnob, Tareque, Reazuddin and Abdullar 2024, Oladokun, 2024, Zubeni, 2019). 225 (75) answered yes, dress codes are prescribed by the university authority to prepare students as professionals, 36 (10) answered no, 39 (13) were undecided. As noted by (Olaito, 2024, Tunbosun, 2023, Okosa, 2023, Dairo, 2023). 300 (100) answered yes, appatel bought offline or online should be eco-friendly as noted by (Priya and Nehasoni, 2024, Islam, 2022, Deanna, 2021, Moyosere and Abiodun, 2023). 300 (100) answered yes, appatel worn must be functional and conform to the environmental requirements. This is in line with (Oladokun, 2024, Kehinde and Ugbodaga, 2024, Okeke – Okorieocha, 2024, Iwalaiye, 2023, Aarun, Micheal, Byrand, and Evin, 2020)

#### 4. Conclusion

The nexus of Human Ecology and functional apparel among Home Economics students in tertiary institutions in Lagos state, Nigeria is that, students are engaged in academics, social and casual activities in which their apparel are influenced by many factors such as values, cultural identity, peer group influence, university dress code, technology and fashion trends. However, clothes for the various activities can be selected to be functional within the school climate from the fabric and style to the accessories even with all these influences. These will make them feel a sense of belonging and autonomy with less anxiety and increase resilience with their academic engagements.

#### 5. Recommendations

In view of the foregoing the following recommendations were made:

- Home Economics students should choose fabric texture that suits Lagos climate.
- Home Economics students should wear what is functional and appropriate for students within the university system.
- Clothes bought off line or on line should be eco – friendly.

- Accessories chosen should be comfortable and functional for Home Economics Students.

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