

Exegetical Analysis of 1timothy 2:9-10 and its Implications for Modest Dressing Among Christians in Nigeria

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Abstract

The issue of indecent dressing has become a focus of public attention in the contemporary days, especially Christians. It promotes blurring of gender and calls for an urgent biblical and theological response. Indecent dressing has become a serious issue in the society today. This study sought to examine and explore Pauline teaching on modest dressing through an exegetical analysis of 1Timothy 2:9-10 and draw out implications of the text for contemporary Christians. This study employed the literary method of exegesis in analysing 1Timothy 2:9-10. Relevant books and internet materials were also consulted. Findings include, modesty in dressing applies to both Christian men and women, and that improper dressing depicts insensibility and suggests shamelessness. It was recommended that, Adults in society should dress well, that is, decently, modesty and honourably to constitute good models for the younger generation. Religious leaders, mass media must promote decent dressing in the society.

Key words: Modesty, Masculine and Feminine, Modest Dressing, Nigeria Christians

Introduction

The question of how Christians ought to dress is no longer a matter of peripheral concern in the life of the contemporary Nigerian church. It has become, rather, an urgent, contested, and theologically consequential issue that strikes at the very heart of Christian identity, witness, and discipleship in a rapidly changing cultural landscape. Across denominational boundaries from Pentecostal and charismatic assemblies to mainline Protestant congregations and Roman Catholic parishes, Nigerian Christian communities are grappling with a crisis of appearance that reflects a deeper crisis of values, biblical literacy, and ecclesial accountability. The sanctuary, once considered a sacred space defined by reverence, holiness, and the conscious presentation of self before the living God, has in many Nigerian churches been progressively transformed into a theatre of sartorial exhibitionism, where the boundaries between sacred and secular, between modesty and sensuality, between worship and spectacle, have been dangerously eroded. The contemporary Nigerian society is a complex, rapidly urbanizing, and deeply globalized environment in which cultural identity is increasingly negotiated through consumption, appearance, and fashion. The penetration of Western and increasingly Westernized African popular culture, mediated through social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, as well as through Nollywood cinema, Afrobeats music videos, and international fashion trends has exercised a profound and largely uncritical influence on the dress culture of Nigerian Christians, particularly among the youth and young adult populations. Tight-fitting, body-revealing, and sexually suggestive attire, which in previous generations would have been considered wholly incompatible with Christian worship

and public Christian identity, is now routinely worn to church services, prayer meetings, and even ordination ceremonies without remonstrance, apology, or apparent awareness of incongruity. Low-cut necklines, transparent fabrics, skin-tight trousers, micro-mini skirts, backless dresses, and revealing blouses have become alarmingly common sights in Nigerian church, not only among lay members but occasionally among worship leaders and church officials who occupy conspicuous liturgical roles. This development is not merely an aesthetic or cultural matter, it is a theological crisis. Dress is never theologically neutral. The manner in which human beings clothe their bodies communicates profound messages about their understanding of themselves, their relationship to God, their attitude toward fellow worshippers, and their place within the community of faith. The human body, declared in Scripture to be the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19–20) and created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), is not a morally indifferent surface upon which any covering or absence of covering is equally acceptable. How a Christian presents his or her body in worship, in fellowship, and in public witness is a matter of profound theological significance, with direct implications for the integrity of the church's witness to a watching world. What makes the situation in Nigeria particularly troubling is the near-total absence of effective pastoral teaching and ecclesiastical accountability on the subject of Christian dressing. Many Nigerian pastors, caught between the desire to attract and retain members in an increasingly competitive religious marketplace and the prophetic obligation to call the church to holiness, have largely retreated into silence on the matter. Others have addressed the issue sporadically and without biblical depth issuing arbitrary dress codes that lack exegetical grounding and therefore carry little moral authority in the congregation. Still others have capitulated entirely to cultural pressure, redefining modesty in terms so elastic and accommodating that the concept has lost its normative content altogether. The result is a generation of Nigerian Christians who are biblically uninformed about the theological and ethical dimensions of dress, culturally conformed to standards that are incompatible with biblical holiness, and pastorally unguided in making decisions about their appearance as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The broader social consequences of this crisis are significant. The sexualization of appearance within the Nigerian church has contributed to an environment in which sexual temptation and moral failure are more, rather than less, prevalent among church members. Cases of sexual harassment, adultery, fornication, and moral compromise within Nigerian Christian communities reported with distressing frequency in both religious and secular media cannot be wholly dissociated from an environment in which the visual culture of the church has been allowed to drift unchecked toward the erotic and the sensational. Furthermore, the failure of some Nigerian church to model a distinctive, countercultural approach to dress has undermined its credibility and prophetic witness in a society that is itself deeply wounded by the commodification and objectification of the human body. It is against this urgent and deeply concerning backdrop that the present study undertakes an exegetical analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–10, a Pauline text that addresses with remarkable directness and theological richness the question of how Christian women and by extension, the broader Christian community ought to present themselves in dress and adornment. This passage, embedded in one of the Pastoral Epistles widely recognized for its concern with the ordering of church life, communal witness, and practical holiness, offers a biblically authoritative and theologically nuanced framework for addressing the dress crisis confronting the Nigerian church. The apostle Paul's instruction that women should adorn themselves "in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness with good works" (1 Tim. 2:9–10) constitutes a divine word addressed not merely to the first-century community at Ephesus but, through the canonical authority of Scripture, to every Christian community in every cultural context including twenty-first century Nigeria.

Existing scholarship on 1 Timothy 2:9–10 has devoted considerable attention to the feminist and gender-theological dimensions of the passage particularly the contested verses that follow (2:11–15) regarding women's silence and teaching roles in the church. While these are legitimate and important discussions, they have often overshadowed the equally significant and practically urgent ethical content of verses 9–10, which bear directly on the question of Christian identity as expressed through bodily appearance. Studies specifically focused on the dress implications of this passage within the Nigerian context remain comparatively underdeveloped in the existing literature, leaving a significant gap between the rich exegetical resources available in the text and the pressing pastoral needs of contemporary Nigerian Christianity. This study seeks to address that gap. The study therefore pursues the following objectives: to conduct a close exegetical analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–10 in its historical, literary, and theological context, to identify the theological principles governing Christian dress embedded in the Pauline instruction, to examine the contemporary dress culture among Nigerian Christians against the standard of these principles, and to articulate concrete, biblically grounded implications for the practice of modest dressing in the Nigerian church. In doing so, the study joins a growing conversation among African biblical scholars including Ukpong (2000), Dube (2001), Okure (2006), and Adamo (2011) who have insisted on the necessity of reading the New Testament in direct and transformative engagement with the lived realities of African Christian communities, bringing the authority and wisdom of Scripture into creative, critical dialogue with the specific challenges of African Christian experience.

Conceptual Analysis

i. Concept of Dressing

The word dress refers to outer garments or represents clothing in general for both men and women. Dresses apart from covering of nakedness also help one to differentiate between a male and a female. Dress serve as means of identification as well as a basis for gender distinction in all cultures. It is expected that one should be able to distinguish a male from a female by the cloth worn. A female differs from the male in very significant ways by nature, and this is incontrovertible. Physical features differ. Therefore, it is necessary to dress in a way that is appropriate for each gender. According to Onwochei, dress patterns are tailored to accommodate the inherent differences in human physical features positioned there by God, the ultimate designer. Any attempt to blur this is not only contrary to nature but also a form of confusion and an insult to God who made human beings uniquely different as male and female. Providentially, women are different from men in make-up and disposition. This point to the fact that, the creator made each gender distinct and unique, the maintenance of this gender difference is natural. This difference in gender is not a weakness, but a deliberate design that should bring about complementing each other. Any attempt to bring about confusion by way of dressing is contrary to nature, design, and functionality. Roach-Higgins and Eicher define dress as "an ensemble of body modification and supplements". This is a definition with a holistic approach to dress, incorporating all that concerns the body: body adornments, and body disfiguring. Which includes tattooing, hairstyles, skin colouring, piercing of ears, clothing or garments and accessories. Dress is regarded as a starting point for understanding a person's identity. A person's wears or dress is stress-free to see. As it is selected by the person, it exhibits some aspects of that person's identity; it gives information about how the person perceives himself or herself, or how he or she would like to be perceived. However, according to Roach-Higgins and Eicher, dress features for identities are dynamic, and they change proportionally to materials, economy, technology or societal apprehensions for preserving the natural environment, and or belief structures that shape ethical and aesthetics ideals for dress. People, through dress, are able to showcase their social and cultural distinctiveness.

Conventionally, dressing has been a universal symbol of gender differences, emphasizing social conceptions of masculinity and femininity. The word dress refers to outer garments or represents clothing in general for both men and women. Dresses apart from covering of nakedness also help one to differentiate between a male and a female. Dressing represents a symbolic intrusion into territory that crosses gender boundaries. Thus, it is as old as clothing itself. A sociologist Stephen Onaolapo states that: "This growing fashion is upsetting and disgraceful". He described the trend as a reflection of how much morals and values Nigeria, as a society, had lost to westernization and all its accompanying elements. He pointed out that if the development is not quickly tackled, more ugly trends that will threaten the survival of the society could arise in the years to come. Many of these trends being embraced by the youths are alien to the Nigerian society. But these types of behaviours have thrived because the value system has collapsed. Also, the sociologist opines that there is no civilization in a man dressing up and acting like a woman.

ii. Indecent Dressing

It is observed that, indecent dressing depicts insensibility, imprudence, irrationality, lack of self-control and mental issues. It thus suggests that anyone whose dressing manifests these qualities can be regarded as insensible, irrational, lacking discretion, having mental issues, and lacking self-control. Similar to the instance given earlier of the 'crazy jeans' and 'miniskirt wearers, some Christians especially, young men today sag their trousers. They intentionally allow the trousers to sag and so drag it up frequently to prevent it from completing falling off their bodies; some others walk haggardly to maintain the trousers in place on them. To most of these people, getting a belt to hold the trousers in place is not a problem. However, they prefer to go about sagging, all in the name of fashion, trying to copy as against the biblical and sensible way of dressing. People who wear miniskirt should go and have a rethink, for it does not seem to portray a sense of sensibleness to leave home wearing a miniskirt, and then get to the public.

Indecent Dressing in the Contemporary Society

Indecent dressing is the manner of clothing or personal appearance that is immodest, provocative, sexually suggestive, or inappropriate according to accepted moral, cultural, and biblical standards. Indecent dressing is a mode of appearance that violates the biblical principles of modesty, propriety, and self-control by using clothing or adornment in a manner that promotes sensuality, vanity, or social ostentation instead of reflecting godly character and Christian values. Indecent Dressing is an exposure which is obviously a deliberate act to look sensuous, tantalizing and stimulating so as to draw the attention of the opposite sex and is more prevalent among singles. Clothes play an indispensable role in aiding to recognize an individual's identity in human society unmistakably. Clothes are a means of communication; they reveal something about the wearer. Clothing always serves as a means of visual communication. Contemporary Fashion Trends refers to existing or current development or change in the style of clothes, cosmetics, or behaviour, which has become a prevailing tendency or direction in the way that people are behaving. Some of Indecent Dressing in the contemporary are: Sleeveless tops, body hugs, transparent clothes, bogus fashion jewellerys, spaghetti tops, off shoulders, wicket straps. Mono straps miniskirts, dress and skirts with slit above the knees, tight trousers and dresses. It is deplorable in every way and must be quickly looked into by society before it leads to more significant problems. It is imperative that Christians understand that individual views on the issue of adornment may be different. One Anita Kyaagba (an undergraduate) in a swift reaction was quoted to have said: "We are living in a free world, and so we are free to wear anything we want. Besides, since you didn't buy the clothes for me, who are you to tell me what to wear? I wear what makes me feel good. As a young girl, I follow the fashion trend. I wear the best in fashion, and if it accentuates some

parts of my body and my boyfriend likes it, I don't see anything wrong with it". In the contemporary global world, people's pattern of dressing has very little if any to do with ignorance or lack of clothes, it is a deliberate action. It has more to do with fashion considerations and a general rebellion against decent society's morals. Some are deviants who do not like conformity. They take pride in being labelled non-conformists. They do not like the feeling that someone or society is dictating to them. So, they can get as wild as can be and dare anyone to challenge them. Christians must strive to know the biblical principles that relate to all lifestyle and how every facet of life is impacted, not just in modest dressing but in day-to-day life and appearance. It is against the foregoing backdrop that this author considers a re-examination of the concept of modesty in dressing according to the Bible particularly in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 as a matter of exigency and draw some implications for contemporary Christians.

Effects of Indecent Dressing on the Society

This dress pattern among people causes distractions and disruptions. Many unethical things have been attributed to dress code and they include cultism, student not focused, poor academic performance. Constant breaking of rules and regulations, poor self-image, indecent dressing attracts insult and sexually harassment. Some ladies who dress indecently had one time or the other become victim of rape or lured into prostitution, used for ritual purpose, unable to complete their education,

Sexual Harassment: There is likelihood that ladies who dress indecently or provocatively may be prone to sexual harassment or rape. This form of dresses suggest that such ladies need attention and that they are irresponsible and so there are always irresponsible men to dialogue, lure, or force them to bed for sex.

Poor Academic Performance: Indecent Dressing can make students lose focus and easily be distracted in their academic work. Their concern may be how to look good and appear in the latest fashion. Some of them have carry over courses with the consequence of staying longer in the school than is normal to graduate, or they may graduate with very weak grades and some may not even graduate at all having outlived their studentship in the higher institution, this may lead to frustration and they become armed robbers, prostitutes, home or marriage breakers, drug addicts or traffickers.

Unwanted Pregnancy: ladies who dressed indecently may be raped or forced into sex and pregnancy may results. Such pregnancy is unwanted and this may hinder the lady's career. Some of these ladies who are faced with unwanted pregnancies resort to abortion, in some cases they may lose their lives as a result of dangerous abortion.

Prostitutions: Skimpy, transparent dresses are known indecent dressing has been considered as a major cause of the various assaults and sexual harassment recorded in the society overtime. Dress the way you want to be addressed which means that the way one dresses speaks a lot about the person. Indecent dressing is an abnormal way of dressing which shocks or offends people. That is, the act of dressing that exposes some of the vital parts of the body usually sexual organs that should be covered. Indecent dressing which is the prevailing fashion among Nigeria youth is a regulation of morality and also a misplacement of priority all in the name of modernity. As a result of civilization, most ladies dress half naked to occasions or lectures all in the name of fashion and are contrary to the prestige placed on African women. For instance, some ladies derive pleasure in wearing clothes such as miniskirts, bumper shorts, armless that directly expose one's body to the public and this might in some cases lead to sexual harassment.

Exegetical Study of Modest Dressing In 1 Timothy 2:9-10

1 Timothy 2:9 Ὡσαύτως [καὶ] γυναῖκας ἐν καταστολῇ κοσμίῳ μετὰ αἰδοῦς καὶ σωφροσύνης κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς, μὴ ἐν πλέγμασιν καὶ χρυσίῳ ἢ μαργαρίταις ἢ ἱματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ,

1 Timothy 2:10 ἀλλ' ὃ πρέπει γυναῖξιν ἐπαγγελλομέναις θεοσέβειαν, δι' ἔργων ἀγαθῶν.⁷

Translation

Also, that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire. But by good deeds, as beliefs women who profess religion.

Syntactical Analysis 1 Timothy 2:9-10

The Greek word Ὡσαύτως means also or likewise in English, the use of Ὡσαύτως could be regarded as an *equal sign* connecting verses 9 and 10 with verse 8, and the instructions to women as parallel to Paul's instructions to men. The Greek word κοσμεῖν can be taken as a second object to Βούλομαι from verse 8. It connotes that, when Paul offers specific instructions for men to pray, he does not assume women won't pray or even pray in worship (cf 1 Cor 11), but rather that public prayer in the worshipping community is a particular focus of men. This is just as true that men will also want to focus on decency and modesty (2:9, 10), but that these issues will be the special attention of women. Paul's second object to βούλομαι then, κοσμεῖν, has the original Greek sense of to put in order. In the New Testament, it only displays its original usage in the Parable of the 10 Virgins (Matt 25:7). Elsewhere it means to *adorn* either people or buildings. In the context of 1 Timothy 2 it applies well to women who have the outside and inside *well arranged*. Since this verse comes as a parallel to verse 8, it is best to understand the Greek word γυναῖκας which means *women* in English feminine gender was addressed in the text. In general, in the New Testament, it is better to take the Greek word γυνή as a general word for *female* which connotes female partner in marriage. While 1 Peter chapter 3 presents many similarities to these verses, those instructions are given explicitly to wives and husbands, as modelled by Sarah and Abraham¹⁰. The women, therefore, are the subjects who will be doing the adorning of themselves ἐν καταστολῇ κοσμίῳ. The Greek word καταστολή refers to the outward *deportment* in English, and it means modesty, conduct and public behaviour, that is respectable and honourable¹¹. Women are to be honoured and respected in the society, however, the way you dress, is the same way you will be addressed. Labelling this prescription (Modest Dressing) as an out-dated cultural form of sexism and repression misses the point of the context. Paul is simply shrewd enough to realize the outward appearance of a person reflects an inner attitude. Yoruba people will say *iri ni si, nise ni lojo* meaning, the way people see you is the way you will be treated. This is further explained by Paul's use of μετὰ αἰδοῦς καὶ σωφροσύνης. αἰδώς, which means *modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel* in the New Testament, it refers to moral feelings or opinions¹². The Greek word σωφροσύνη connotes *Sensible* in English, and it is a significance concept for Paul in the Pastoral Epistles. Its etymological meaning is *of sound mind*. The basic meaning of *sound judgment* represents the habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all the passions and desires¹³. It could denote the *rational* or *what is intellectually sound*, or *discretion*, that is, moderation and self-control. It is therefore, imperative for women to be moderate in their mode of dressing. Similarly, from the etymological meaning of σωφροσύνη, that is, *of sound mind*, and having the basic meaning as *sound judgment* which represents the habitual inner self-government, and denotes the rational or what is intellectually sound, or discretion, it could therefore be inferred that improper dressing depicts insensibility, imprudence, lack of self-control and mental issues. Paul was admonishing that Christian dressing should reflect sensibility, prudence, rationality, and self-control, as well as modesty. It thus connotes that a sensible, wise, rational, self-controlled and mentally sane person would dress in such a way that these qualities are

manifested. Furthermore, flamboyant hairstyle is associated with the lifestyle of prostitutes. Hence, wearing the hairstyles of a prostitute would disrepute the Ephesian church and dishonours the Lord, and would be a disposition of being sexually immoral. Flamboyant and extravagant hairstyles were associated with matrimonial infidelity and sexual promiscuity. Paul does not desire the Christian women in Ephesus to be connected to the lifestyle of prostitutes, which would disrepute the Christian community in that city and would bring shame to the Lord. The Greek word αἰδοῦς meaning *modesty* in English, it has ancient roots in the concept of *shame-fullness*, but by the time of Paul, the definition had evolved to mean *with reverence*, *with respect*, or *with reserve*¹⁴. It encompasses more than merely covering up. It presents a sense of self-evaluation and control resulting in an avoidance of whatever could cause shame. Charles Swindoll opines that, the idea is to avoid any manner of dress that suggests sensual appeal or sexual availability¹⁵. Charles opinion is very relevant to this work because in the contemporary days some ladies had been raped as a result of their indecent dressing. Some Christian women have clean/ pure mind but their mode of dressing suggest to other gender that they are way ward and sexy, so, they will be treated the same way. The Greek present tense of the verb κοσμίω which connotes *adorn* in English, it is a customary present used to signal an action that is to regularly occur. Here it denotes that Paul is ordering the Christian women in Ephesus to *make it a habit of adorning themselves* with proper clothing with modesty and self-control and not with braided hair and gold or pearls or expensive clothing¹⁶. The Greek clause μὴ ἐν πλέγμασιν καὶ χρυσίῳ ἢ μαργαρίταις ἢ ἱματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ, meaning *Not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments* in English, it is composed of the negative particle μὴ, that is, *not* and the preposition ἐν meaning *with* in English and its object is the dative neuter plural form of the noun πλέγμα, which means *braided hair* and the conjunction καὶ meaning *and* in English which is followed by the dative neuter singular form of the noun χρυσίῳ that is *gold* in English, and the particle of separation ἢ, *or* and the dative masculine plural form of the noun μαργαρίταις means *pearls* and the particle of separation ἢ, *or* and the dative masculine singular form of the noun ἱματισμῷ meaning *garments* and the dative masculine singular form of the adjective πολυτελεῖ, which is *costly*. This implies that what is expected of every woman is what was first said habitually adorning themselves with befitting clothing, with modesty and discreteness, and not to adorn themselves in braided hair, jewelleries and expensive clothing. It also implies that all these things negated are not depicting modesty and discreteness¹⁷. The strong adversative ἀλλά contrasts the good works with the immodest attire, making the *ultimate emphasis fall on good works*. The Greek verb πρέπει refers to something *fitting* or *suitable*, and with an indirect object becomes what “is fitting for someone”¹⁸. Therefore, half naked clothes are not suitable for Christian women who proclaim God’s glory on earth. Philip Towner picks up on the research of B. W. Winter’s research exploring a cultural phenomenon which he labels the “new woman” ethos gaining ground in Roman society at the time. This movement might be compared to a sexual revolution at the time of the first century AD. Towner further describes some of the basic elements: “Characteristic of this movement was a throwing off of the dress code (apparel, adornment, hairstyles) that symbolized respectability, sexual modesty, and fidelity to one’s husband. Equally characteristic was the desire of influential women to acquire for themselves and enjoy the freedom, normally restricted to men, to explore multiple sexual liaisons in association with dinner parties and banquets”¹⁹.

Literary Context of The Periscope

From the text, it is observed that the use of ὡσαύτως could be regarded as an equal sign connecting verses 9 and 10 with verse 8, and the instructions to women as parallel to Paul’s instructions to men. This parallelism thus implies that as men are instructed in the preceding verse (v. 8), so are the women being instructed here. It suggests that what follows for men in

verse 8 is expected of the women being referred to in verse 9, only that what is instructed of women in verse 9 is particular to women, and what is instructed of men in verse 8 is particular to men. This suggests that when Paul offers specific instructions for men to pray, he does not assume women would not pray or even pray in worship (cf. 1Cor 11). This is just as true that men will also want to focus on decency and modesty (2:9, 10), but that these issues will be the special attention of women. Paul is simply shrewd enough to realize the outward appearance of a person reflects an inner attitude. This is further explained by Paul, which has a sense of referring to moral feelings or opinions. It could therefore be inferred that the clothing, embroidery, and/or ornamental use of a person would show the kind of heart the person has. It would reflect the person's state of mind, spiritual state, and morality. Dressing provocatively or flamboyantly would be a rejection of how the Lord intends Christian women to conduct themselves and would reveal her sexual promiscuity and availability to men. The apostle wants the Christian women to habitually dress modestly and to be more engaged in performing good works which are pleasing to the Lord instead of being engaged with their outward appearance. Similarly, he also wants them to dress modestly and not suggestively or provocatively since this would misrepresent the Lord and offend the cause of Christ. He wants the comportment and conduct of the Christian women in Ephesus to positively influence the non-believers in that city just as he desires that the Christian men should influence the non-believers with corporate intercessory prayer. Towner postulates that, clothing and outer appearance were a reflection of moral values, so that adornment became the descriptor of the modest wife, and the language of adornment in this discourse was concerned not with clothing and jewellery as much as with behaviour...A particular dress code was in effect because, with her outer dress, the woman would signal either modesty and dignity or promiscuous availability. At this time the widely approved apparel of the wife was the *stola*, a robe-like garment made of much cloth. As a sign of marital decency and respectability, the *stola* presented an intentional contrast with the often more revealing and colourful clothing (*toga*) of the prostitute, designed to signify her shame but frequently used instead to advertise her wares. From Towner's comment, though he seems to regard the Greek word *γυνή* which means *wife* in English, his thoughts are relevant to the thought of the text. Women are thus to cover themselves very well, covering themselves with clothing that would conceal their wares. Their clothing and outer appearance is a pointer to their sense of moral values. So it is the excess and sensuality often attached to this focus on outward appearances which Paul forbids. The emphasis is on the inner attitude reflected by outward dress and behaviour. This implies that the outer dressing or appearance is a reflection of how their inner state is. In other words, a woman with a chaste and godly inner state would dress herself reflecting godliness and chastity. However, when a woman dresses like in a seductive way or in a way that reveals some sensitive parts of her body, one could decipher the state of her heart regarding this.

Application of The Text to The Contemporary Society

The current trend of dress, all in the name of fashion in contemporary times, calls for an urgent biblical and theological response. Although clothing is an integral part of material culture, it is difficult to draw the boundaries nowadays in the wake of globalization and technological advancement. The world, as it were, is being described in contemporary parlance as a global village. It has a far-reaching effect due to cultural interface, and it is bound to breed change. In the fashion industry, for instance, designers all over the globe keep rolling in all sorts of dress styles that communicate different messages to their teeming customers depending on their tastes. Many clothes are no longer designed with consideration for cultural factors but subject to the individual's desires or inclinations. An average contemporary fabric shopper goes for any style of dress that is said to be trending and not necessarily that it has to be culturally or religiously inclined.

The etymology of the word translated *modesty* has a connotation of *having a sense of shamefacedness*. Modest dressing is to be a sign that the women being addressed are shamefaced. This shamefacedness would prevent them from dressing in a way that would call undue attention on people to themselves. The idea is to avoid any manner of dress that would attract sensual suggestions or insinuate sexual availability. The professing of godliness, from the text, is not a mere-mouth profession, but it is done by means of the morally admirable actions characteristic of Christian women. The adornment of Christian women is to be of good deeds. This is what is befitting, proper and expected of them. It is through good lifestyle expected of Christian women that their inner adornment is revealed, and it is through it that the godliness they profess is truly seen. The basic principle of Scripture concerning outward adornment is modest dressing. Regardless of a Christian's taste or culture, he or she should be guided by this cardinal rule of modesty. Selection of clothes should be done in keeping with God's standard of holiness. The prescriptions of fashion have no bearing upon a Christian. People's guidelines should be God's word and His standard. Anything not becoming to holiness must be rejected. In every age, men and women have adorned and bejewelled their bodies. The desire to adorn the body with colourful cosmetics, costly jewellery and eye catching, seductive dressings is becoming the order of the day. The Bible reveals frequent calls to dress modestly and decently. Such a call is especially relevant when modest dressing and decency seem no longer in vogue, and nudity and sensuality are in place. The concept of modesty in dressing in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, if understood, accepted and practiced has the potential to salvage contemporary Christians from the precarious ruins the pressure of indecent dressing in the world is plunging them into and revive the church to be light bearers and godly models in a grossly perverse world. Hence, the inferences and implications drawn from the text should be employed and considered for biblical and godly living expected of Christians, especially as regarding dressing and other areas. A solution to indecent dressing is that adults in the society should dress well and honourably in order to constitute being good models for the younger generation. Children observe their parents and emulate their patterns of behaviour. The behaviour of parents gives impressions on their children more greatly than what they instruct them either to do or not to do. Parents should therefore teach their children the fundamentals they need to learn about the right values, attitudes and beliefs appreciated by the society by being good examples themselves. Parents, more especially women, should spend quality time with their children and counsel them on the type of clothe to purchase. Mothers should desist from buying skimpy and revealing clothes for the children. They should also regulate the type of films their children and wards watch at home. It is not enough carrying Bible around; Christianity should radiate in the parent's dressing and the children's. Moreover, a Christian should not draw attention to him or herself by being too unfashionable. A deliberate effort to be "unworldly" by being untidy or slovenly dressed attracts as much attention as being flashy. If the flesh cannot please itself by being extravagant, it will go to the other extreme and become severe. Dressing in an unconventional way in order to demonstrate Christian devotedness is to advertise one's own spirituality. There is no need for this. Christians should dress simply, modestly and discreetly, and the Holy Spirit living within will manifest the image of Christ readily. Do you not know that your body is a temple of Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Recommendations

- i. Christians should be guided by the Scriptural principle of discretion. Discretion essentially means to be carefully dressed. It implies that one should give thought and care to the selection of garments so that they convey a proper image.
- ii. Religious leaders should make emphasis on decent and appropriate dressing for each gender. They

should be clear and consistent with the truth of God's word without any ambiguity and unequivocally speak against indecent dressing.

iii. The principles of sound biblical and moral values should be taught and modelled right early to children by both parents and guardians to guide against Indecent Dressing.

iv. Educational institutions in Nigeria should come up with what they consider as appropriate dress code for both male and female students and should disallow any attempt of indecent dressing among students.

v. The government should come up with policies that will regulate the activities of Fashion and Entertainment industries to dissuade them from promoting Indecent Dressing

Conclusion

This study has examined 1 Timothy 2:9–10 as a scriptural and theological framework for addressing the phenomenon of indecent dressing among Nigerian Christians. Paul's counsel to Timothy that adornment should be marked by modesty, moderation, and good works rather than external ornamentation, offers a model that transcends its first-century Ephesian setting to speak meaningfully into a contemporary Nigerian context shaped by globalization, social media influence, and shifting standards of public decency. The analysis has shown that the passage does not advocate legalistic restriction but rather locates true Christian identity in character and conduct, with dress functioning as an outward signal of inward values. Applied to Nigeria, this suggests that pulpit and pedagogical responses to indecent dressing should avoid mere moralizing about hemlines and necklines, and instead cultivate a theology of the body and self-presentation rooted in discipleship, dignity, and communal witness. African theological voices reinforce this point, framing dress and public self-presentation as inseparable from questions of identity, respectability, and Christian witness within a shared communal ethic, not merely private, individual choice. Practically, the Pauline model invites Nigerian churches to move beyond reactive condemnation toward proactive discipleship: mentorship structures, intentional teaching on identity and modesty, and pastoral engagement that treats dress as one expression of a larger spiritual formation rather than an isolated behavioural infraction. Such an approach honours both the biblical text and the pastoral realities of the Nigerian church, offering a model that is doctrinally grounded yet culturally responsive. Ultimately, 1 Timothy 2:9–10 remains a durable resource for Nigerian Christian ethics not as a fixed dress code, but as an enduring call to align outward presentation with inward transformation, good works, and reverence for God.

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