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**PRACTICES ADOPTED BY FAMILIES FOR PROVIDING
CLOTHING FOR CHILDREN (3-8 YEARS) IN RURAL AREA OF
IKWO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EBONYI STATE**



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PRACTICES ADOPTED BY FAMILIES FOR PROVIDING CLOTHING FOR CHILDREN (3-8 YEARS) IN RURAL AREA OF IKWO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA

Akubue Benedette N.¹, Nwadi Calister L.²,

David Esther I.³, and Imaku Veronica N.⁴ Nwodo Mary O.⁵ Omebe Chinyere A.⁶

1, 3 & 4 Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, akubuebenedette@gmail.com

2. University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

Purpose: The study investigated the clothing selection practices for children among families in Ikwo Local Government Area, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Three specific purposes such as to identify (1) The People that select clothing for children in Ikwo local government area. (2) The factors considered by the families while selecting clothing for children in the area of study (3) features considered by the families while selecting clothing for the children were stated. Three corresponding research questions and two null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study.

Methodology: A structured questionnaire was used and the questionnaire was validated by three experts. Cronbach Alpha reliability test which yielded 0.89 was applied. The population was 214, 969 members of families. Multi-stage sampling technique (Yaro Yamen sampling techniques, proportionate stratified random sampling, and purposive sampling techniques) were used to select sample size of 200 respondents. Mean statistic and standard deviation were used to analyze data.

Results: Finding showed that only fathers and mothers select clothing for children in Ikwo local government area. many factors and features such as climate change fashion in vogue, colour of the clothes texture and set of the fabric among others are not considered while selecting clothes for children in the area of study.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practices: Based on the findings, recommendations were made that economic empowerment program sponsored by Ebonyi State government should be extended to Ikwo local government area and that Home Economists in Ebonyi State should carry out enlightenment talk on the right ways to select clothing for children in the area of study.

Keywords: *Families, Children, Selection, Practice and Clothing.*

INTRODUCTION

Anything worn on the body for protection, communication, adornment, self-expression and even for decoration is regarded as clothing. Anyakoha (2015) defined clothing as any article placed on the body in order to protect and beautify it. It includes items such as clothes of various types-blouse, gown, shirt, trouser, lingerie and accessories like watches hair-do, earrings, shoes, hand-bag, necklace and even walking stick as clothing. In the content of this study, therefore, clothing envelops anything placed on the body for aesthetic, climatic, cultural value etc. Clothing is regarded as an essential need of man. No man can go about in the public, even for few seconds without one type of clothing or the other, otherwise, the person is regarded as being insane. Clothing is therefore, absolutely necessary for man at all ages and categories. Clothing is the only basic needs that the utilization is basically restricted to human beings only. Children, adult and aged alike need clothing every moment of their lives for various purposes. Agbo and Uniom (2011) noted that the purpose of wearing clothing is for protection of the body from harsh climatic condition such as rainfall, insects, chemicals and other unfriendly environment like keeping the sun from burning and dehydrating the skin during intensive heat period. Clothing is also used as adornment, as a statement of socio-economic status and as a non-verbal communication. Clothing performs the function of personal identification by expressing the individual personality in the society. Clothing talks about the wearer and gives people clue about the value of others.

Anikweze (2016) Stated that clothing is used for the expression of individual taste and life style. It helps one to feel attractive and promotes self-confidence. One of the important functions of clothing is for protection, thus Hertig (2011) maintained that workers such as firefighters, soldiers, policemen among others use clothing for the protection and reduce the level of risk while at work. In the same suit, medical staff use facemask, hand glove, laboratory coat to protect the risk of infection and provide hygienic barrier from patient to staff. Clothing uniform and accessories identify people as member of a particular group and prison workers. This is obvious in uniform for military and para-military workers like soldiers, policemen, customs, airline person workers among others. The accessories like emblem and bandage show the status or rank of individuals within the group. Clothing and its matching accessories such as shoes, handbag jewelry enhance clothes to improve people's appearance and admiration. Eze and Nnadi (2014) stated that clothing gives a feeling of self-confidence and sense of wellbeing. Eze et al (2011) further stated that a well-dressed child attracts the attention of adult in the public. Chrishine (2015) added that favourable comment and admiration of a child's clothing increases the ego of the child. Children, especially, early childhood or pre-schooler are very active and conscious of what they wear.

A child is a person from birth to adolescent. United Nation convention (2017) reported that a child is a human being below the age of eighteen (18) years. A child is generally referred to as a human being between the stage of developmental period of infancy to maturity. In some stages of growth, children do not have understanding and maturity to take good decisions about their environment and concerns, rather depend on the family members. The stages of children according to Chrishine (2016) are infancy (birth – 2 years), early childhood or preschooler (3-8) years, middle childhood (9-11) years and adolescent (12-18) years. This study focuses on early childhood stage (3-8) years children. Most children have begun to attend school at this stage. Experiences and interactions with

the world outside home have increased. Children at this stage become increasingly curious about the surrounding and often want to emulate everybody and everything within the environment, Particularly, the mode of dressing of peers and adults within and outside the family. The children are wholly dependent on members of the family to solve problems and provide their clothing needs.

Family is defined in various ways. Daly (2010) defined family as a group of persons directly linked by kin connection, adult members which assume responsibilities of caring for children in the family. Anyakoha (2015) defined family as a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption and often characterized by common residence and economic cooperation. A family therefore, is defined as group of two or more individuals related by birth marriage or adoption residing or may not reside in the same environment. It is not very easy to identify a world widely accepted single definition of family. Traditionally, family must involve male and female, though, family come in various types. The types of family, according to Anyakoha (2015) include nuclear, polygamous, extended, single, blended, adoptive and foster family. Families may differ in terms of social, culture, environmental and economic status but for the purpose of this study, family is seen as two or more people who share goals and value, have long commitment to one another and live in a house or common compound. This is the type of family that operates in the area of study. Nuclear and polygamous types of families are widely adopted in Ikwo Local government Area particularly and Nigeria in general.

Clothing selection for children are done by parents particularly the fathers, though mothers may help. Duba (2018) Stated that one of the primary roles of a father is to provide the basic needs of man to family. Clothing is one of the basic needs. Children at early childhood stage need clothing that will give them free movement and comfort. The fabric should be breathable, washable and strong to withstand many rounds of wearing, washing and tear from play and tumble of children at early childhood age. The texture should be soft and non-irritating with warm colors and sets. Good features such as opening like hook and eye, bounding, opening well fixed collars and so on are very important.

Occasion, or the use of the clothing and age are considered when selecting clothing for children, clothing selection for children depends on occasions such as school, sports, birthday parties, home activities etc. (Anyakoha 2015). These clothing are changed from time to time. Children, especially, early childhood of both sexes prefer bright colorful dresses for all occasions. Children feel comfortable, happy and confidence on clothing of good choice.

It is observed that children clothing habit in Ikwo local government area is very shabby. The children in the rural area of Ikwo wear oversized dresses, torn slippers and sandals. Clothing selection is not based on height and age of children. The early childhood age in Ikwo local government area wear the same pair of slippers to school, church and work bare footed as observed by the researchers while at home. Elome and Chukwu (2014) stated that children in rural areas of Ebonyi and Enugu States are neither fed nor clothed properly. Clothing are not selected according to weather change. A child in the area of study wears a particular dress all year round till the dress is old and torn (Elome and Chukwu, 2014). This inappropriate selection of children's clothing in Ikwo local government area has serious negative effect on the children. The children suffer from inferiority complex and are reluctant to play or associate with their peers from urban areas (Elome and

Chukwu, 2014) Elome and Chukwu also noted that children suffer various diseases such as cough, running nose, Pneumonia, and other communicable diseases which resulted from improper clothing of the children especially during climatic changes. The study therefore, focuses on the assessment of the clothing selection practices for children among families in Ikwo local government area, in Ebonyi State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate clothing selection practices among families in Ikwo local government area in Ebonyi State. Specially, the study sought to identify:

1. Identify the people that select clothing for children in Ikwo local government area.
2. Factors that should be considered by families while selecting clothing for children in Ikwo Local Government Area.
3. Features considered by families while selecting clothing for children in the area of study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study;

1. What are the people that select clothing for children in Ikwo local government area, Ebonyi State?
2. What factors in the selection of clothing for children that are considered by families in the study area?
3. What is the feature in clothing selection for children that are considered by families in Ikwo Local Government Area?

Hypotheses

The following two null hypotheses formed the basis of the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance;

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of females and males in the families on the factors that affect clothing selection for children

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of females and males in the families on the person that select clothing for children in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

This study employed the survey descriptive research design.

Area of Study

The area of the study is Ikwo local government area, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Ikwo Local government area is one of the rural areas in the Ebonyi State. The area is made up of five communities, Mgbaborm Echara, Alike, Nweka and Okpuituma Communities. Ebonyi state, Ikwo local government Area in particular, has harsh weather. The area is very hot during the dry season.

Population for the Study

The population of Ikwo local government area as reported in National population census (2006) is 214, 969 people. Most of the adults (parents) are peasant farmers and petty traders with less education.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The researchers used multi-stage sampling technique to obtain the sample which is made up of males and females (adults) in the families. Stage 1: Yaro Yamen sampling technique was used to select 410 from the entire population of 214,969 adults. Stage 2: Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to obtain 82 adults which constitute the respondents from each of the five communities in Ikwo local government area. Stage 3: Purposive sampling technique was used to select twenty (20) adults (males) and twenty (20) (females) from the 82 males and females already selected from each of the five communities making the sample size of 200 respondents.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection for this study was a structure questionnaire drafted based on the specific objectives. The researcher's development the questionnaire after extensive literature review. Items on the questionnaire were based on the 4-point scale of strongly agree (4) Agreed (3) Disagreed (2) Strongly Disagreed (1). The instrument was subject to validation by three experts in Home Economic department, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The reliability of the instrument was determined using cronbach alpha and the coefficient of 0.89 was obtained.

Data Collection

A total of 200 copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researchers and one research assistant. The entire questionnaire of 200 were retrieved.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, any mean score values of 2.50 and above were considered agreed while mean score values below 2.50 cut-off point set for the study were regarded disagreed. The null hypotheses were analyzed using t-test at significant level of 0.05.

FINDINGS OF STUDY

1. Only parents (father and mother) select clothing for children in Ikwo local government Area.
2. Factors such as economic status of parents, culture, age are considered when selecting clothing in the area of study. Climatic condition, children's desires as well as fashion in vogue are not considered by families when selecting clothing for children in the area of study.
3. Important features in children's clothing such as color, texture of the fabric, designs and lines are not considered when selecting children's clothing in the area of study.

Table 1: Mean responses on the persons that select clothing for children in Ikwo Local Government Area (N = 200).

S/N	Person that select clothing for children	Mean for male \bar{x}_1	Mean for female \bar{x}_2	Over all mean \bar{x}_g	SD	Remark
1	Father only	2.40	2.00	2.25	0.97	Disagreed
2	Mother only	2.10	2.05	2.07	0.94	Disagreed
3	Father and mother	3.10	3.40	3.25	0.79	Agreed
4	Elder sisters	2.10	2.10	2.10	0.68	Disagreed
5	Elder brothers	2.10	2.40	2.25	0.69	Disagreed
6	In-law	1.10	1.15	1.12	0.08	Disagreed

Mean for Value x_g = overall mean mean value for male \bar{x}_1 mean value for female = \bar{x}_2
SD = Standard deviation

Table 1 shows that only item number three scored mean value above 2.50 cut-off point set for the study, which implies that fathers and mothers are the only people that select clothing for children in Ikwo local government area. Five other items scored mean value below the cut-off point. This indicates that father only, mother only, elder sisters, elder brothers and in-laws do not select clothing for children in the area of study.

Table 2: Mean responses on the factors that affect clothing selection for children that are adopted in the area of study (No =200).

S/N	Factors in the selection of children clothing	Mean for male \bar{x}_1	Mean for female \bar{x}_2	Over all mean \bar{x}_g	SD	Remark
1	Age of the child	2.55	2.60	2.57	0.98	Agreed
2	Economic status of parents	3.20	3.10	3.15	0.89	Agreed
3	Sex of the child	3.10	3.15	3.12	0.86	Agreed
4	Culture of the area	2.50	2.50	2.50	0.67	Agreed
5	Fashion in vogue	2.10	2.10	2.10	0.61	Disagreed
6	Climatic condition	2.15	2.05	2.32	0.57	Disagreed
7	Durability of the fabric	3.10	3.15	3.12	0.76	Agreed
8	Demand and clothing desire of children	1.10	1.20	1.15	0.58	Disagreed

9	Height of children are always considered	2.00	2.20	2.10	0.79	Disagreed
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Table 2 shows that five items scored mean value of 2.50 and above. This indicates that the respondents consider age, economic status of the parents, sex of the child, culture of the area and the devability of the fabric. Four items scored mean value below 2.50 cut-off point set for the study. The respondents disagreed that climatic condition, demand and clothing desires of children, height of the children and fashion in vogue as factors the families in the area on study consider while selecting clothing for children.

Table 3: Mean responses on features necessary in children clothing which families in Ikwo local government area adopt.

S/N	Necessary features in children's clothing	Mean for male \bar{x}_1	Mean for female \bar{x}_2	Over mean \bar{x}_g	SD	Remark
1	Colours of the fabric /dress	2.10	2.15	2.12	0.91	Disagreed
2	Texture of the fabric	2.30	2.25	2.27	0.81	Disagreed
3	Designs on the fabric	2.00	2.10	2.15	0.72	Disagreed
4	Amount and position of opening on the dress	2.00	2.10	2.15	0.72	Disagreed
5	Free from wrinkle	2.00	1.90	1.95	0.57	Disagreed
6	Enough allowance on the body of the wearer	2.60	2.50	2.55	0.97	Agreed

Table 3 shows that only one item scored mean value above 2.50 cut-off point set for the study. This implies that clothing selected for the children in the area of study have enough allowance. Five items scored mean values below 2.50 cut-off point. This implies that colour, texture of the fabric, openings on the dress and design are not considered while selecting children's clothing in the area of study.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Clothing is important component of the physical body protection and enhancement of appearance. Appropriate clothing consumption involves effective selection and utilization of accessories. Table 1 reveals that fathers and mothers are the only people that select clothing for children among families in Ikwo local government areas. Melissa (2016) opined that parents must provide for clothing and other materials for the family members. It is the responsibility of parents to organize everything around the home including feeding and buying new clothes for family members (Malin 2016). Mother should participate fully in selecting, buying and caring for family clothing. The finding also reveals that in-laws, elder brothers and sister do not take part in the selection of children's clothing in the area of study. Rachel (2018) has different view

and she noted that siblings and friends can select clothing for children more judiciously than parents in the rural village because technology has brought societies around the world in close contact through internet. There is rapid communication to the better clothing market through internet service which enables one to buy good clothing at minimum price. Anyakoha (2015) noted that the role of each family member leads to the smooth running in the home, therefore, elder brothers and sister tend to involve in the selection of clothing for children. The non-involvement of siblings in the selection of clothing in the area of study may be the reason the clothing selection and habit in the area is clumsy.

Result of the finding presented in table 2 reveals that age of the child, economic status of the parents, durability of the fabric and culture of the families in the area of study are the factors that are considered when selecting for children. This is on line with Lindsay and Hempsey (2014) that low socio-economic groups give importance to durability and price while selecting clothes rather than fashion and beauty of the dress. Lindsay et al (2014) further stated that different clothing sizes and styles are required for different age groups. Clothing selection should be compatible to age and personality of the child. The finding also reveals that children's clothing are not selected in the area of the study based on the fashion in vogue, climatic condition of the area, height of the children and demand and clothing desires of the children. This response is in contrary to the view of Steel, Kidd and Brown (2012) that clothing for children are changed as climatic condition of an area changes. Steel et al (2012) maintained that light weight clothes made out of cotton and polyester fabric are suitable for children in hot weather while heavy woolen clothes are suitable for cold season. They maintained that a child on oversized clothing look lumpy while a child on under clothing tend to be diminished both in real size and credibility.

Hamlet, Jean, Dorea, Yactayo, Biey and Vankerhove (2018) noted that improper clothing selection habit results to diseases associated with bad weather. Hamlet et al further stated that yellow fever virus is a vector borne endemic to Africa which are dependent on climate change, particularly, to poorly dressed individual.

The finding in table 3 reveals that most important features are not considered by families in Ikwo local government area in selection of clothing for children. Colours of the fabric, texture amount and position of opening and roughness of the fabric are not considered when selecting clothing for children in the study area. Elome and Chukwu (2014) stated that rural dwellers over look important characteristics of children's, clothes such as colours, design and lines. Children's clothes pucker and wrinkle resulting to unwelcome appearance on the child. The finding is also in deviance to the view of Rachel (2018) who stated that bright colours in clothes are aspect of sight that help children to distinguish forms and categorize clothes and other objects. Colours in clothing affects children mood and behaviour. Rachel (2018) noted that primary colours in children's clothing is associated with motivation, induces cheerfulness and stimulate the memory of children.

CONCLUSION

Clothing selection is not properly done among families in Ikwo local government area. Parents are the only people that select clothing for children. Elder sisters and brother are not involved in the clothing selection. Important feature required in children's dresses are neglected while selecting clothes for children. The effect of colour in children's dresses cannot be over looked. Pink colour for instance, has the ability to create a calming atmosphere. The climatic factor in clothing selection is very important, though, not considered among families in the area of study. Soft and non-irritating texture is the foremost consideration when selecting clothes for children but families in Ikwo local government area do not regard texture while selecting clothes for children. This improper clothing selection practice in the area of study impacts the children's self-esteem so negatively that it can possibly lead to depression.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There should be extension of various projects on economic empowerment sponsored by Ebonyi State government such as; family succor programme organized by the wife of the governor of Ebonyi State, Sustainable Development Goal and Women in Agriculture to Ikwo Local Government Area. This will enable families in Ikwo local government area to improve their financial status.
2. Home Economists in Ebonyi State should organize enlightenment talk programme, through Ebonyi State Home Economics Association, to sensitize families in Ikwo local government area on the importance of proper clothing of children and adults in general.

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