# World Scientific News

# Clothing challenges for school-age children and the role of home economics education in Nigerian primary schools

**I. Nkeiruka Nwabah[1], C. Ozioma Azubuike[2],***

[1]Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin,
Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

[2]Department of Home Economics / Hospitality Management and Toursim,
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria

*E-mail address: ozycee24@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT**

The study investigated clothing challenges for school-aged children and the role of Home Economics Education in Nigerian primary schools. Four research objectives guided the study. The population comprised all 24, 422, 918 school-aged primary school children in Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was employed in selecting the sample of 500 pupils for the study. The reliability index of the instrument was 0.78. structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean and standard t-test were used in analyzing the data. The results show among others, that comfort is the reason for many clothing selection and children prefer clothing that do not scratch.

*Keywords*: Clothing Selection; School-age; Home Economics Education; Primary; Role

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Clothing is a major aspect of physical appearance. It includes features as dressing, shoes, handbags, accessories or ornaments worn by people in order to protect, adorn or to communicate an intent (Clarie, 2005). People all over the world have traditionally used

clothing for comfort and protection. According to Webery (1996), the physical condition of school-age can be an important factor in selecting the right type of clothing.

Generally, children within the age range of six to nine years do react about their clothings. Children's clothing is for children who have not yet grown to full height (Horyn, 2012). Children clothing is often more casual than adult clothing, fit for play and rest. Children grow at different rate. By observing the physical development of the school-age children therefore, parents will find clues that will help in selecting attractive, comfortable and fit for a maximum time period. This becomes a prerequisite for selecting clothes for school-age children. Though, children grows at different rate, there are many similarities among school-age children in early primary school-age group. The physical appearance of the school-age children growth is slow but steady. According to Stones (2011), growth rate of school-age children is slow but steady.

This slow rate means that clothing sizes would not be outgrown so quickly. Infact, by observation, everyday clothing is usually worn out before it is outgrown. The body of school-age children within 6 and 9 years get taller but not much bulky. Therefore, when selecting clothes for them, separates, short-sleeved garments, dresses without waistlines allows for lengthwise growth and this will fit the child for a longer time.

In selecting clothes, parents make choices. But sometimes, children are permitted to make choices and selection. When children are allowed to make clothing selection, their confidence is strengthened. According to Paoletti (2012), confidence is strengthened when the children has the opportunity to make decisions in selection. Guiding the child in clothing selection may further increase the child's awareness of colour, pattern coordination, weather condition and selection of clothing that is appropriate for activities. Hence in making choices in clothing selection; Jill (2008) asserted that early school-age children are not too young to start making some decisions about clothing purchases.

As parents shop clothing with their children, they should endevour to point out fabrics and garments that are acceptable as far as durability and price is concerned, then let the child make the final decision as to which to buy. When the children are between ages 8 and 9, they begin to make a few of their own selection. The selection may be poor, but children learn more by making mistakes. Guest (2011) agreed that there may be some poor choices of clothing when they make mistakes. Guest (2011) stated that if children make error in clothing purchase, parents should avoid being too quick to correct it. In selections of clothing, children do have likes and dislikes. Home Economics Education plays role in clothes selection by school-age children.

Home Economics Education is a field of formal study including such topics as consumer education, interior design, home furnishing, handicrafts, sewing, cothing and textiles amongst others (International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE, 2008). This teaches pupils and students how to properly run a family environment, selecting clothings and make best choices (Nwabah, 2013). Home Economics Education teacher follow the syllabus to promote effective clothing selection from childhood, in the primary schools so that the pupils will understand fabrics, their functions, reactions when worn and understand how to select clothes. The education of children on clothing selection therefore becomes very important.

If a child is asked about his or her clothing likes or dislikes, the chances are that comfort is the reason for many choices of selection. School-age children are physically active and would not want any form of restriction when playing at home in school.

According to Wade (2010), school-age children are active physically and do not want to be hampered by clothing during an activity or play.

Children prefer fabrics that do not scratch. It becomes important therefore, to select favourite and acceptable clothing for children. Children between the ages of 6 to 9 years, in clothing decisions appear not to want a lot of clothings. They prefer just a few favourite clothing that are comfortable to wear and similar to those worn by other children. Aldrich (2011) stated that function and design must meet at the right proportions in children's clothing for it to be popular, comfortable and accepted. According to Stone (2011), the clothes that are acceptable and appears to be their favourites are; clothes that allows for wearing, clothes that do not cause accidents, easy to wash, separate (tops and bottoms rather one-piece garments), clothes that provide more flexible and give them chance to express themselves by mixing and jumping, and the clothes their friends are wearing. The clothes that children are happy to wear is the school uniform.

School uniform or school clothing is a practice which dates to the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the United Kingdom. It is believed that Christ Hospital school in London is 1552 was the first school to use a school uniform (McCourt, 2013). The practice of having school uniform has been adopted by many schools and is now common in many parts of the world. Uniform in schools, including the school-age children uniform can be regarded as promoting social equality among pupils and students. Button (2010) stated that uniform are required in many schools. School uniforms vary from a standard issue T-shirt to rigorous requirements for many items of formal wear in private and public schools. School uniform is worn for identity and for uniformity of the pupils. Fabrics used for clothes do have characteristics. The characteristic makes the differences on individual wearer. The question and worry is-what are the reactions of the school-age children on their different dressing articles, (Casual, outing clothes and Uniform)?

The characteristics of a fabric speak of the like of the fabrics. Fabrics react differently to heat, sun, washing, handling, chemicals, weather among others. The reactions are thus, because fabrics are made different source. Brando (2008) stated that the four main sources are animal (wool, silk) vegetable (cotton, flax, jute), mineral (asbestos), glass fibre and synthetic (nylon, polyester, acyclic). Balter (2009) stated that fabrics are made from many material-animal plant and synthetic. Alaec, Arias, Sjodin and Bergman (2003), asserted that clothing cause itching to the skin, if fabric is made from synthetic or rough in nature. It is important therefore to choose the right fabric to prevent itching. Casual, outing clothing and school uniforms should be selected to soothe the geographical conditions and the child for comfort.

Clothing challenges is a major worry in this study. The school-age children appear casual, outing clothes and uniforms. The children are quick to develop rashes and itches on their body, especially when the sum comes out. When the sun comes out, the children start having unpleasant feeling on their skin. The feeling make them want scratch. If the clothing is not removed, the area of the scratch may turn red spots. A sign of bad reaction to fabric. Cotton fabrics are cool to touch and absorbent in nature, so is cooling to the skin. Geographical conditions and occasion should therefore guide the choice of clothing for school-age children.

According Wright (2003), some factors should guide mothers in the choice of school-age children clothing includes; geographical conditions, occasion of what the clothes will be used for age, texture, fabric type and wash ability of the clothing.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose was to investigate clothing challenges for school-age children and the role of Home Economics Education in Nigerian primary schools. Specifically, the study determined the following;

- clothing preferences of school-age children in Nigeria
- characteristics of fabrics worn by school-age children in Nigeria
- clothing challenges of school-age children in Nigeria
- the roles of Home Economics Education in clothes selection of school-age children in Nigeria.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the clothing preferences of school-age children in Nigeria?
2. What are the characteristics of fabrics worn by school-age children in Nigeria?
3. What are the clothing challenges of school-age children in Nigeria?
4. What is the role of Home Economics in clothing of school-age children in Nigeria?

**Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference between male and female clothingselection of school-age children in Nigeria.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

**Area and Design of Study:** The study was carried out in Edo and Delta State. The choice of Edo and Delta States was borne out of the fact that the needed attributes for the research exists in them, that university staff schools have home economics laboratories and Home Economics teachers. The study was a survey design.

**Population of the Study:** The population of the study comprised of all 24, 422, 918 primary school children in Nigeria. (source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

**Sample for the Study:** Out of the thirty six states in nigeria, two states were used for this study. In doing this, simple random sampling was used. The thirty-six states were written in pieces of paper. These papers were in turn folded and mixed up and someone who was not among the research team was told to be picking the slip of papers without replacement. From this, two states emerged. They are Edo and Delta state. But the total number was 500 primary school pupils that is; 250 from each state. The selected schools were the university staff schools that had Home Economics Laboratory and Home Economics teachers.

**Instrument for Data Collection**

Thirty two item questionnaires were developed for the study. The questionnaire has four sections, each section addressing each of the research purposes. The questionnaire was face validated by two experts in Home Economics Unit. Thirty pieces of questionnaire was produced initially and was trial tested using two states (Ondo and Bayelsa) with reliability

index of 0.78. These states were not among the one selected as sample. The first set of questionnaire was in ranking form.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Data was obtained by the researcher and two female research assistants out of 500 questionnaires distributed 470were correctly filled and considered valid for the study. The questionnaire items were coded and scored for use in data analysis. The analysis was done using mean and standard deviation. t-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significances; a criterion mean of 2.50 was used as acceptable level. The questionnaire items 1-13 was ranked.

## 3. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

**Research Question 1:** What are the clothing preferences of school-age children, ages 6 to 9 in Nigeria?

**Table 1.** Mean response and ranked on clothingpreferences by school-age children ages in Nigeria.

| S/N | Clothing Preferences | Mean | Rank | Remark |
|-----|----------------------|------|------|--------|
| 1 | I prefer clothes I can remove easily | 3.33 | 4th | Appropriate |
| 2 | I prefer clothes that will not make him fall | 3.02 | 7th | Appropriate |
| 3 | I prefer clothes that is easy to wash | 3.58 | 1st | Appropriate |
| 4 | I prefer separate tops and bottoms | 2.62 | 11th | Appropriate |
| 5 | I prefer clothes to allow for easy walk and play | 2.67 | 10th | Appropriate |
| 6 | I prefers same clothes my friends are wearing | 2.57 | 13th | Appropriate |
| 7 | I do not mind wearing tattered jeans | 3.58 | 1st | Appropriate |
| 8 | I do not mind wearing patched jeans | 3.09 | 6th | Appropriate |
| 9 | I prefer a particular type of shoes worn by his friends | 3.02 | 7th | Appropriate |
| 10 | I prefer blue jeans | 3.31 | 5th | Appropriate |
| 11 | I prefer garments with pockets | 3.33 | 4th | Appropriate |
| 12 | I prefer dress that I can off quickly | 3.34 | 3rd | Appropriate |
| 13 | I prefer small prints dresses | 2.81 | 9th | Appropriate |

Table 1 shows high preference of mean response and rank of school-age children's clothing preference in Nigeria. This is commendable because it shows that the school-age children can select the clothing they wear and dose have clothes preference. In ranking, the table shows that school-age children prefer clothes that are easy to wash, prefer wearing tattered jeans and clothes they can off quickly.

**Research Question 2:** What are the acceptable characteristics of fabrics worn by school-age childrenin Nigeria?

**Table 2.** Mean Response on acceptable characteristics of fabrics worn by school-age children in Nigeria.

| S/N | Clothing Characteristics | Mean | SD | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I am more comfortable with cotton dresses | 3.64 | .718 | Agree |
| 2 | Cotton fabrics absorbs moisture when I sweat | 3.14 | 1.047 | Agree |
| 3 | Cotton fabrics are cool to my skin | 2.91 | 1.053 | Agree |
| 4 | Cotton fabrics irons well when I ironed | 2.57 | 1.087 | Agree |
| 5 | Synthetic fabrics absorbs my sweat | 2.41 | 1.282 | Disagree |
| 6 | Wool is only good for warmth when am cold | 2.50 | 1.191 | Agree |
| 7 | Synthetic fabrics are good for school uniform | 1.88 | 1.017 | Disagree |

Table 2 revealed that school-age children in Nigeria accepted the characteristics of fabrics worn by them in items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7with mean 3.64, 3.14, 2.91, 2.57 and 2.50 respectively and disagreed with items 5 and 8 with mean 2.41 and 1.88. The results show that cotton fabrics are more accepted by school-age children than synthetic fabrics. These shows the characteristics of cotton fabrics are acceptable by the school age-children in Nigeria through observation and feelings.

**Research Question 3:** What are the challenges associated with the use of clothing by school-age children in Nigeria?

**Table 3.** Mean Responses on Challenges associated with the use of clothing by school-age childrenin Nigeria.

| S/N | Clothes Challenges | Mean | SD | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I hate clothes that scratch my body | 2.09 | 1.288 | Agree |

| 2 | I do not like shirts and dresses that are tight | 2.30 | 1.245 | Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | I do not like dresses and shirts that are too tight in armholes | 2.23 | 1.192 | Agree |
| 4 | I hate dresses, shirt, and pants that are itchy | 2.24 | 1.165 | Agree |
| 5 | Shoes that have slippery soles can make me fall | 2.37 | 1.328 | Agree |
| 6 | I hate stockings that are loose | 2.19 | 1.254 | Agree |
| 7 | I dislike dresses that are hard to pull off | 2.38 | 1.306 | Agree |
| 8 | I do not like knickers that have too wide legs | 2.38 | 1.248 | Agree |

Table 3 shows overall high agreement over the suggested challenges assorted with the clothing of school-age children in Nigeria. This goes to show that children generally do not like to wear clothing that cause discomfort to them.

**Research Question 4:** What is the role of Home Economics Education on clothing selection of school-age childrenin Nigeria?

**Table 4.** Mean Responses on Role of Home Economics Education on Clothing Selection of School-Age Childrenin Nigeria.

| S/N | **Role of Home Economics Education** | **Mean** | **SD** | **Decision** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | My Home Economics teacher taught me about fabrics | 2.35 | 1.234 | Disagree |
| 2 | My Home Economics teachers taught me the characteristics of different fabrics | 2.00 | 1.306 | Disagree |
| 3 | My Home Economics teacher taught me how to carry out test to identify different fabrics | 2.21 | 1.162 | Disagree |
| 4 | My Home Economics teacher taught me how to sew different stitches of fabrics | 3.50 | 1.191 | Agree |

Table 4 shows mean response of school-age children on the role of Home Economics Education on the clothing selection of school-age children in Nigeria.Tables 4 revealed that majority of the respondents were not taught about fabrics in school. Mean items 1 (2.35), 2 (2.00), and 3 (2.21) confirms this fact. Items 4 with mean 3.50 agreed that Home Economics teachers taught the school-age children, ages 6 to 9 only how to sew stitches of fabrics in school. This shows that Home Economics teachers do not teach Home Economics curriculum in full in primary school.

**Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference between male and female clothing selection of school-age children in Nigeria.

**Table 5.** t-test Analysis of Male and Female Clothing Selection of School-age Children in Nigeria.

| Group | N | | Std deviation | Std error of mean | t-cal | dif | Sig. 2 tailed | a |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 230 | 3.207 | 0.65266 | 0.09261 | 0.595 | 1067 | 0.552 | 0.05 |
| Male | 270 | 3.120 | 645715 | 0.09155 | | | | |

Table 5 shows mean value of 3.207 for female pupils clothing selection, since the value of significant level (0.552) for two-tailed test is greater than the probability level (0.05), hence, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis. This means that there are no noticeable differences between the clothing selection of male and female primary school pupils in Nigeria.

**Findings**

The following findings were made;

i. School-age children can select clothing they wear and dose have clothes preferences.
ii. School-age children have challenges associated with the use of clothing. For example, there are clothes that are not good to their skin.
iii. School-age children generally do not like clothes that give them discomfort
iv. Home Economics teachers do not teach the whole Home Economics curriculum in the primary schools.
v. There are no significant differences in clothing selection of male and female school-age children in Nigerian Primary school.

## 4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of findings is centered on the data presented by the research questions of the study (see Table 1, 2, 3 and 4). The mean on clothes preference by school-age children, ages 6 to 9 in Nigeria, shows that the children agreed with all the suggested items on clothes preferences.

This is in agreement with Wade (2010), who stated that school-age children are active physically and do not want to be hampered by clothing during an activity or play. Wade (2010) continued that children prefer fabrics that do not scratch.

Aldrich (2011) added that function and design must meet the right proportions in children's clothing for it to be popular, comfortable and accepted. It therefore becomes important to select favourite and preferred clothes for children. The findings of the study also showed that the suggested characteristics of fabrics worn by school-age children in Nigeria; majority of the school-age children agreed the suggestions while some disagreed on two suggested items. The finding shows that through observations and feelings, clothing characteristics were shown. In agreement, Paoletti (2012), stated that confidence is strengthened when the children has the opportunity to make decisions in selection guiding the children. Therefore, in clothing selection may further increase their awareness of the clothing characteristics, colour, pattern coordination, weather condition and selection of clothing that is appropriate for activities. Jill (2008) in support asserted that early school-age children are too young to start making some decisions about clothing purchases.

The findings of the study further shows challenges associated with the use of clothing by school-age children. The data revealed that all the respondents agreed with the suggested challenges associated with eh use of clothing by the school-age children in Nigeria. Characteristics of a fabric speaks of the like of the fabrics. Fabrics react differently to heat, sun, wash, handling, chemicals, weather amongst others. Brando (2008), agreed that the four sources of fabrics are animal (wool, silk), vegetable (cotton, flax, jute), mineral (asbestos), glass fibre and synthetic (nylon, polyester, acylotic).

Alaec, Arias, Sjodin and Bergman (2003) agreed that synthetic fabrics have characteristics of causing itching to the skin. It is important therefore, that fabrics for school-age children are chosen, considering the country's weather condition. Finally, the study showed that Home Economics teachers in primary school only teach the pupils how to sew stitches. The syllabus is not followed. Nwabah (2013) asserted that Home Economics teachers should follow the Home Economics syllabus to promote effective clothing selection from childhood in primary schools, so that they will understand fabrics, their functions and reaction when worn. Finally, the study revealed that clothing selection was not gender skewed. Hence, Weber (1990) confirmed that gender has an insignificant effect on clothing selection.

## 5. CONCLUSION

School-age children, ages 6 to 9 do react about their clothings but generally want the ones their friends are wearing. In clothing selection, school-age children are not too young to start making some decisions about clothing purchases. As parents shop clothing with their children, they should endeavour to point out fabrics and garments that are acceptable as far as durability and price is concerned, and then let the children make the final decision as to which to buy. Home Economics teachers should follow the school syllabus and teach the children everything about fabric to help the children understand all information they need about fabrics and clothings.

**Recommendations**

Based on the study, the following recommendations were made;

- In view of the fact, parents should allow children make some decisions in clothing selections and purchases.

- Children should be taught about fibres, fabrics and their characteristics in primary schools so that they can have good knowledge of fibres and fabrics.
- Parents should endeavour to point out clothes that are durable during selection.
- School heads should consult Home Economics teachers to help select clothing according to the geographical conditions.

## References

[1]   Alaee, M., Arias, P., Sjodin, A. & Bergman, A. (2003). An Overview of commercially used Brominated Flame retardants, their applications, their use patterns in different countries/regions and possible modes of release. *Journal of Environmental International.* Vol. 29 (6).

[2]   Aldrich, W. (2011). Metric pattern cutting for children's wear and baby wear. USA Blackwell Publishing

[3]   Balter, M. (2009). Clothes make the (hu) man science. http://dx.doi.org. retrieved 17/5/16

[4]   Brandon, K. (2008). Piezoelectric Nanowires Turn Fabrics into Power Source. Wired News, New York.

[5]   Button, P.S.C. (2010). Uniform (Division II). Button Country, Georgia, USA.

[6]   Clarie, C. (2005). Selecting safe and stylish new born and infant baby clothing. http://www.articlealley.com. Retrieved 11/8/16

[7]   Guest, K. (2011). Girls will be girls: the battle for our children's hearts and minds this Christmas. The independent, London.

[8]   Horyn, C. (2012). The rise of designer children's lines. The New York Times.

[9]   International Federation for Home Economics, IFHE (1980). Position statement in *International Journal of Home Economics,* Vol. 1, Issue 1. http://www.ifhe.org retrieved 1/5/2016

[10]  Jill, C. (2008). 1801 to the present. The Green Wood Encyclopedia of clothing through History, Greenwood Publishing Group, USA.

[11]  McCourt, L. (2013). School uniform policy in Scotland, England, Wales and the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service. Ierland.

[12]  Nwabah, N. I. (2013). Effect of Constructivist Instriction, Four-step approach on the Achievement and Retention in Pattern Drafting by Nigeria Certificate in Education Home Economics Students in South-South Zone, Nigeria. University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.

[13]  Paoletti, B. J. (2012). Pink and blue: Telling the boys from the girls in america. Indiana University Press.

[14] Stone, J. (2011). Consumer choices selecting clothes for school-age children, ages 6 to 9.Lowa State University, University Extension, Aimies, Lowa

[15] Wade, L. (2010). Why not gender neutral clothes. http://thesocietiespages.org/sociamages/y-no-gender-neutral-clothes. Retrieved 17/5/16

[16] Weber, J. (1990). Clothing Fashion, Fabric Construction (2nd Ed), New York, Longman Publishers.

[17] Wrights, S. (2003). Tools for raising responsible children: section 5. New Mexico State.