

*Assessment Of Dress
Sense Among Female
Teachers In The
Kumasi Metropolis*

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ABSTRACT

Sense conceptualizes the ability to perceive. Dress sense communicates the aptitude of a person to dress well in attractive combination of clothes that suits the individual and the occasion. The choice of a dress in a particular style and category makes a profound and enduring statement about a person's personality. Everyone dresses by how they wish to be perceived on the outside, or how they are feeling on the inside. This study assesses the Dress sense among a sample of female teachers in Kumasi. The study employs a descriptive cross sectional study design in the Kumasi Metropolis. The application of purposive sampling technique was adequate in selecting 60 female teachers in the (SHS) as research respondents. Data collected was analyzed descriptively with the qualitative data analyzed contently and thematically. The present generation of female teachers are generally very young and within the active work group. The majority thirty Percent (30%) of the respondents were between the ages of 20 – 30 with (66.7%) of the respondents being University graduates. There is no existing approved work wear for the teachers as no clothing choice from either GES or any other educational authority exist. The principal determinants for choosing Clothing for school were the style of garment (33.3%) and the cultural background and colour of the person (25%). 58.3% of female teachers assess the way they dress as self-centred and emotionally driven, an assessment based on preference for the style. Surprisingly the fabric type and figure types(8.5%) of the woman were less prioritize as considerations towards choosing clothing for school, a factor responsible for the often display of sensitive female parts during dressed. This study complements the body of literature on dress sense and determinants of dress among women with key emphasis on dress that gives a person a happy personal style. Female teachers of the SHS were found to be conscious of the appropriate clothing for schools; other specific occasions and they were generally aware of their figure types but paid little consideration to it. Teachers work wear should allow free movement and cover the cleavage, naval and the legs up to below knee level for short dresses.

Keywords: Teachers, Female, Dress, Fashion, Jewelleries, Ghanaian, Design, Fabrics, Sense, clothing, Body, Ntoma

1. INTRODUCTION

Dress sense is the ability to dress well in attractive combination of clothes that suits the individual. Dress is sometimes defined as one piece garment for a woman or girl that covers the body and extends down over the legs. It also forms part of the culture permeating everyday life and activity. Dress that an individual wears speaks to people about the identity of the person; it defines their sex, age, status as well as their occupation [1, 2]. Dress tells the story of the very qualities that makes an individual unique, thus the clothes an individual wears speaks about the personality and makes an easy identification.

Throughout history, clothing has reflected and continues to reflect the handicraft, skills, artistic imagination and cultural rituals of people [2]. In the Ghanaian context, the psychology for selecting clothing is expressed differently aside the natural phenomenon of body coverage and protection. There is a strong social pressure that one has to conform to when dressing in order to be socially accepted among his or her own group [3]

Every individual has certain clothing needs; these are based on several factors, such as the occupation of the individual, cultural background, social status, other identifiable activities and interest and family structure. Thus, the lifestyle of the individual affects clothing decisions. A work wear demands practical and comfortable clothes, they should be very simple, smart and durable [4] The concept and origin of dresses have variously stressed on the protection, modesty, improving appearance and social identification.[5]

Teachers have a lot of respect in the various communities in which they teach, hence the need to distinguish themselves from other members of the community [3]. The craze to be fashionable in the 21st Century has resulted in loss of control in the dress sense and lack of good grooming makes most females dress immodestly. The privilege Senior High School female teachers have in their clothing selection has called for most female teachers abusing that privilege- a trend that has resulted in many female teachers receiving heavy criticism for the way they dress for teaching.

The sociological views of clothing conceptualizes the function of clothing for identification, thus people select what clothes they wear and how they wear them so as to get others to make the proper identification of them. It is significant to note that identification of one another is facilitated by appearance and is this is often accomplished silently or nonverbally. In the opinion of Rouse[6] as expressed in her book "Understanding Fashion", people wear clothes in response to keeping themselves warm and protecting themselves from bad weather . It is further argued that clothing was borne out of necessity and that certain parts of the body are shameful and need to be covered [6, 7, 8]. A rather different position is presented by Social psychologist [9]. The choice on dress sense has been extended to principally go beyond body covering, as the ornamental potential of clothing is an important outlet for artistic drives and self-expression- a source of tremendous sensuous satisfaction for the person who wears it. Murray [10] in his study extends the argument by emphasizing that certain kinds of clothing are chosen for sexual attraction.

Though the general assumption of the basic function of clothing is covering one's nudity; how much of a person's nudity is a question of individual sense. It is not uncommon to note that clothing choice is made to attract the opposite sex in some situations. The aesthetic and cultural representations of dress are commented on in the in the book "Visual Design in Dress" 'by Davis [11]. A Persons decision on particular style or outfit is because of the way it looks on their personal features. [10]

Some studies have been done on the functions of dress and what constitute a modest dress with extant focus on the identification functions.[12,13] .Additionally some research works seem to have been conducted on

body cathexis- a degree of feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the various parts or processes of the body by the person wearing a dress [13,14] with findings showing the areas of greatest dissatisfaction for women being the hips and the chest for men.[15] .The body satisfaction of a woman decreases as the subject's perceived body type grows larger.

Most Women tend to possess more dysfunctional body image attitudes than men.[16]. Whiles dress sense presents the idea of dressing well in attractive combination of clothes, the colour and style of a person probably makes the most immediate and powerful impact and that clothes do not simply cover the body and protect a person from the elements – they make visual statement about how one view herself.

The study of dress sense in from both the sub –Saharan view point and the Ghanaian context is very limited. It is this vacuum of literature in terms of determinants of dress sense for female professionals like teachers that this research aims at bridging.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 DATA AND SAMPLE

The study employed a descriptive cross sectional design. The study was conducted in the Kumasi Metropolis within Abrepo, Amakom, Gyenyase, Tanoso, Tech area and Oduom suburbs of the Kumasi Metropolis in the Ashanti region. The population of teachers in metropolis according to the Regional education Directorate was estimated at one thousand five hundred (1500) teachers of which thirty-three percent 495(33%) were females and sixty-seven percent (67%) male .The sample for this study constituted twelve percent 60 (12%) of the total female teacher population in the metropolis. A total of 60 females who teach at the Senior High School level were purposely chosen for the analysis.

2.2 MEASURES

The dependent variable for the study was 'dress sense of female teachers' which was measured with the question 'What Do you Consider when Choosing Clothing for School'. This question was asked all female teachers in the Senior High Schools. The effects of socio-economic variables included socio-demographic and cultural variables such as age, marital status, and religion occupation, Educational Background .Other theoretically relevant socio-demographic variables that were examined included marital status (Single, married, Divorced, Widowed). Additional variables that were examined included Knowledge about their Figure Types, Choice of Clothing for Particular Occasions, Determinants of Appropriate clothing for specific functions; school church , funeral and Care of dress. These were assesses on a 1-5 likert scale

2.3 ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

The results of the study were analyzed descriptively and presented in tables and graphs. The Likert scale formed the basis of the structuring of the responses to the research items. It was used in ascribing quantitative

value to qualitative data, to make it amenable to statistical analysis. The scale consisted of an equal member of agreement / disagreement choices on either side of the neutral choice. The scoring of the instrument was done by grouping the responses and findings, converting them into percentage scores. The greater the percentage of responses the more it was accepted as the opinion pool of the population.

3. RESULTS

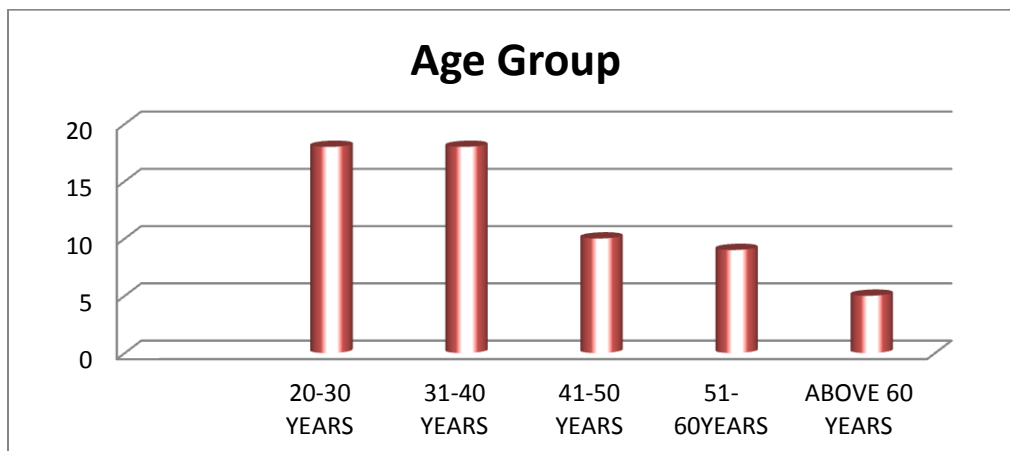
Descriptive statistics is provided I the Table 1 below for the demographic characteristics of the teachers surveyed.

Table 1.1: Socio-Demographic characteristics of female SHS Teachers

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age group(yrs)		
20-30	18	30%
31-40	18	30%
41-50	10	16.7
51-60	9	15.0
TOTAL	60	8.3
Marital Statuses		
Single	26	43
Married	22	36.7
Divorced	6	10
Widowed	6	10
TOTAL		
Educational Background		
JHS	0	0
SHS	0	0
DIPLOMA	20	33.3
GRADUATE AND ABOVE	40	66.7
TOTAL	60	100
Occupational Experience		
1 – 3 years	7	11.7
4 – 6 years	28	46.7
7– 10 years	20	33.3
10 years and above	5	8.3

Source: Authors field data 2014

The results as shown in table 1.1 reveals that the respondents were generally young and within the active working group. Thirty Percent (30%) of the respondents were between the ages of 20 – 30 and 31 – 40 years. This is shown graphically in fig 1 below



Majority of the respondents (43.3%) were not married. Some of the respondents found to be previously married but have divorced by the time the research was conducted. This cohort constituted (10%) while (10%) of the respondents was also widowed

About sixty-six percent (66.7%) of the respondents were found to be University graduates; thirty-three percent (33.3%) of the respondents had either attained or were still receiving their Diploma education. It was however surprising to note some teachers with diploma teaching at the Secondary level, a phenomena contrary to the GES policy and requirement for teaching at the Senior High School.

All the respondents sampled had educational background above basic and secondary school level. work experience from 1 to 3 years constituted eleven percent (11.67%), forty-six percent (46.67%) of the respondents had 4 to 6 years working experience, thirty-three percent (33.33%) of the respondents also had 6 to 10 years' experience on the field and the remaining eight percent (8.33%) had 10 year and above experience in teaching. The data collected clearly shows that the sampled respondents' cohort consists mainly of vibrant youth who understands and follow fashion

The history of Ghanaian fashion in relation to teacher's uniforms has no documented or recorded dress code for Senior High School (SHS) female teachers. This clearly shows that GES has given a level of responsibility to female teachers about their dress sense-something which is both a privilege and a responsibility on the part of teachers. Female teachers have privilege to dress at will as determined by their dress sense and a responsibility to dress well as equally dictated by ones dress sense. In terms of what considerations were factored in choosing clothing for school, female teachers were found to choose clothing with consideration on the style of garment since thirty-three percent (33.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed with additional twenty-five percent agreeing (25%) that cultural background and colour were what they considered respectively.

4. DISCUSSIONS

This finding supports Lippincott [17] that types and quality of clothes have been a way of distinguishing the nobility from the common person and that colour used for clothing forms a way of telling the status of the wearer. In the Ghanaian society one can easily tell what region or cultural background people are from by the way they dress. The findings in this study lay credence to the role of cultural sensitivities to defining the dress sense of Ghanaian women.

In effect, the choice of a cloth depending on the style goes miles to portray the heritage, occupation and status, self-expression and effect on behaviour of the wearer. A surprising finding from this study was the fact that respondents prioritize style of the cloth(33% approval) over figure type (8.3%) , a preference that has been documented as highly considered by women in deciding on their dress sense. [18].

The argument often advance had been that individuals might use clothing as a way to camouflage perceived figure faults or flaws and bring their bodies closer to their perceptions of the norm, thus temporarily improving body cathexis, or satisfaction with the body. The continued contention is that clothing may create a new and better perception of the body as the body image may be enhanced through aesthetic self-management.[19, 20,21]. The continued emphasis on body type is due to the prioritization women give to it for which some women take exercises to have lean shape and figure.

This finding contrasts such earlier positions that suggest the prioritization to body type in deciding on dress sense as against style of dress. The reason proffered could be that because the respondents are mostly teachers and educated, there is much emphasis on the style to identify them as unique.

The research findings brought to the fore that nearly sixty-seven percent (66.7%) of the respondents agreed they had fair knowledge about their figure types whereas the thirty-three percent (33.3%) of respondents did not agree that they had knowledge about their figure types

Table 1.2

Knowledge about figure type	Strongly agree/Agree Frequency	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Strongly disagree/Disagree frequency	Disagree or strongly disagree (%)
Ghanaians know figure types	40	66.7	20	33.3

Source: Authors field data 2014

The study showed that when it came to the appropriate dress for specific functions , female teachers mostly preferred wearing of Sleek dress and gowns for weddings. This was strongly agreed and agreed to by 35% and 58.3 % of female teachers. Kaba slit and tailored suit were less considered as it received 10% and 16.7% strong agreement and subsequent agreement

On the preferable dress to wear for church service, Fifty-five percent (55%) respondents strongly agreed that kaba and slit was appropriate, eighteen percent (18.3%) agreed that one piece dress was appropriate with thirteen percent (13.3%) of the respondents agreeing to tailored suit.

The contrasting finding is that most teachers have a difficulty sending the same dress they send to weddings to church, a finding which the answers or reasons go beyond the scope of this study. Kobene and Birisi received a unanimous approval as dress sense clothes for funerals.

With regards deciding on the appropriate clothing for school, Eighteen female teachers representing (30%) agreed to one piece dress, fifteen representing (25%) of the respondents agreed on tailored skirt and blouse. This suggests that female teachers have an idealized dress sense particular for school.

5. CONCLUSION

The GES could capitalize on this dress sense and offer a common dress code for female teachers in the senior high schools to give teachers the unique identify, prevent them from wearing dresses that may be deemed inappropriate by other authorities and students despite their personal interest and adherence to their unique dress sense.

The study is limited by the fact that it was conducted on only female teachers and more specifically those who teach at the Senior High school. Additionally the participants chose taught in urban school within the metropolis which could also influence their dress sense as compared to if they taught and stayed in rural senior high schools. Again the size of the sample may not be enough to generalise for the whole of Kumasi

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests with regards this study.

Authors' contributions

Maud Schall was the principal author and completed the literature review and discussion sections, and participated in the design of the study, she led in the design of the study, carried out the statistical analysis in addition to the creation of all the tables.

Appiah Seth Christopher Yaw helped in reading and proofing and manuscript drafts. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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