

IDENTIFYING MODIFICATIONS THAT CAN BE MADE ON WOMEN'S OUTFITS FOR EASY LACTATION

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Abstract

The study identified the various modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation. Advantages of such modifications on women's outfit and the implications of not providing such modifications on women's outfits were also identified. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 58 Higher National Diploma students in Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Department of Delta State Polytechnic Ogwashi-uku Delta state Nigeria. There was no sampling so the entire population was involved in the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analysed using frequency counts and mean. Major findings include that lactating wears can be dressed up or down and they mostly have strong side and under-cup support for breasts among others. Recommendations based on the findings were also made.

There are new developments in almost all areas of life especially in clothing, fashion and modesty in dressing. This makes different individuals, especially women, to have a wide range of outfits from which choices can be made. These choices have led to new developments on the outfits of different groups of individuals in different societies. These new developments are good especially when they are not just styles but also have some functional purposes on the garment. The functional purposes of some adaptations on outfits are mostly observed on women's outfits. Considering this, it is important to identify modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation.

Identifying means to recognize and name something. It means to recognize something and being able to say what it is. Identifying the modifications that are needed on women's outfits to adapt those wears to suit lactating mothers is very important. This is because when these modifications are identified, it will be easier to introduce them into women's outfits and production of wears with such modifications will serve the very important purposes of making lactation easy for lactating mothers.

Lactating mothers who are also referred to as nursing mothers are those women that have just given birth to children and are still breast feeding their babies. Breast

feeding has been made so important in the life of every child to the extent that August 1st-7th is the World Health Organization's (WHO) Breast Feeding week (Danielle, 2012). WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding until a baby is six months old and continued breastfeeding with the addition of nutritious complementary foods for up to two years or more. Unfortunately, many societies have valued the hiding of breasts to the point that some mothers do not feel comfortable breastfeeding their babies in public (Granju 2012). This is the major reason why lactating mothers' wears are very important, because they influence the attitude and practice of breast feeding by these women. With appropriate modifications, these women can wear beautiful and proper fitted designed wears and still willingly breast feed their babies with ease any where any time.

The most vital asset to successful breastfeeding is an individual's attitude and commitment, so one must remove any obstacles to this goal. These obstacles are normally removed by providing very useful modifications on the wears of mothers who are breastfeeding their babies. The regular wears are not specifically designed for breastfeeding. This is because most women's breasts increase during pregnancy and a woman may find it necessary several weeks after birth to buy nursing brassieres. This was why Consumers Union, (2012) pointed out that every woman's body changes at different rates during pregnancy and after childbirth, and experts do not all agree on when one should get fit for nursing brassieres but the most important thing is for the child to be allowed access to breast milk at any point in time. This is because breast feeding is very important to the life of a new born baby as breast milk contains immunities that are passed from a mother to a child (Granju 2012). This is why there is need for special modifications on women's wears in order to make breast milks to be easily accessible to new born babies.

There are many advantages that can be achieved if appropriate modifications and provisions are made on wears of lactating mothers. Beyond the undeniable facts of the benefits of breast milk on a child's health, breastfeeding can be the core of the most important bond that a mother and child will ever develop and share. Granju (2012) explained that when a woman breastfeeds, hormones are produced in her body that help her relax and bond with her baby. It is also more difficult to lift a regular brassiere over the breast when preparing to breastfeed, thereby putting the breast tissues under extra pressure. This can increase the risk of clogged milk ducts and infection. This has made the wearing of nursing brassieres very necessary for lactating mothers.

There are many implications of lactating mothers developing negative attitudes towards breast feeding their babies. This can be due to inconveniences arising from inappropriate wears. These inappropriate wears can result to discomforts while breast feeding which may lead to stopping breast feeding of the babies earlier than it would have been. The benefits of breastfeeding have been well documented and they include immune and nutritional benefits for the baby (Danielle, 2012). The implication of not breast feeding a child exclusively includes exposing both mothers and babies to various diseases. Despite these disadvantages of not breast feeding a child exclusively, some

mothers may still stop breastfeeding earlier than they would have done especially when they are in public places (Danielle, 2012). This is because people who are against women breastfeeding in public places feel that it is indecent on women's part to do this in public (Maanasi 2017). If proper modifications were made on women's outfit to suit lactating mothers, breastfeeding will be made normal and easy anywhere anytime.

Statement of the Problem

Lactating mothers find it difficult maintaining exclusive breast feeding in some public places. Maanasi (2017) pointed out that women breastfeeding their babies in public or in open view is not something men and women like. Kelkar (2014) identified different types of reactions to women breastfeeding in public places to include disappointment, embarrassment, judgement, anger, among others. Despite the fact that this practice is legal or socially accepted in certain countries, yet some mothers are often reluctant to publicly breastfeed their babies due to negative comments or behaviour, people's objections and harassments (Maanasi 2017). This makes some mothers to shy away from breast feeding the children in public places leading to using ordinary milk or milk formulas instead of breast milk in such circumstances. This affects the maintenance of exclusive breastfeeding of children in some societies. That is why there is need to identify modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation.

Purpose of the Study:

The major purpose of this study is to identify modification that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation. Specifically, the study identified

1. modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation
2. advantages of such modifications on women's outfits
3. implications of not providing such modifications on women's outfits

Research Questions:

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation?
2. What are the advantages of such modifications on women's outfits?
3. What are the implications of not providing such modifications on women's outfits?

Methodology

Area of Study: The study was carried out in Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Department of Delta State Polytechnic Ogwashi-Uku. This is one of the state Polytechnics in Delta State, Nigeria. Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Department of the polytechnic was chosen because the department has a good number of women, most of whom are mothers who are also assumed to be knowledgeable in fashion and clothing.

Population of the Study: The population of this study are the Higher National Diploma students in Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Department of Delta State Polytechnic Ogwashi-uku. These individuals are fifty-eight (58) in number. These were the number of Higher National Diploma students that registered with the school Information Communication Technology (ICT) centre in 2013/2014 session (Delta State Polytechnic ICT centre 2014). This population was chosen because they were mostly married women who were assumed to have breastfed a baby or more in their lives. They were also chosen from Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Department because they are assumed to be knowledgeable in patterns, clothing and fashion and they have had previous experiences in this field since they have passed through Ordinary National Diploma Programmes in the same department of the same or different Polytechnics.

Sample and Sampling Technique: There was no sampling because the population size was small and manageable especially as it is a survey study.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. It was developed based on the purpose of the study and intensive review of literature. It contained thirty-four (34) items. The instrument was divided into two major parts: Part I and II. Part I sought information on the personal data of the respondents. Part II was sub-divided into three sections, sections A, B, and C: Section A obtained information on the modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation; section B obtained information on the advantages of such modifications on women's outfits; and, section C obtained information on the implications of not providing such modifications on women's outfits. The items of the questionnaire were structured on a five point rating scale. The scale was interpreted as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 5, Agree (A) = 4, Undecided (UN) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The instrument was validated by experts in related fields. The reliability of the instrument was determined by distributing it to ten (10) students in Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Department. Cronbach's Alpha reliability method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The coefficient of reliability obtained is +0.80

Method of Data Collection: Fifty (58) copies of the instrument were administered directly to the group. Forty-four (44) were completed correctly and returned, which indicates 76% return.

Method of Data Analysis: Frequency counts and mean statistic were used for data analysis. The mean scores were used to determine the perceived importance level expressed on a 5-point scale for each of the items. A mean rating of 3.50 was used for decision making. 3.50 was chosen because that was the upper limit of the mean.

Table 1: Mean Responses on Modifications that can be made on Women's Outfits for Easy Lactation

S/N	Modifications	Mean	Remark
1.	Dressing up and down motions	4.27	Agreed
2.	Strong side and under-cup support for breasts	3.77	Agreed
3.	An extra-wide back	3.41	Disagreed
4.	Soft cup brassieres	4.27	Agreed
5.	Regular maternity brassiere clasps for easy one-handed opening and closing	3.77	Agreed
6.	Singlet incorporated into long-sleeve wears	2.73	Disagreed
7.	Bolero style jacket that can be simply pulled aside	3.59	Agreed
8.	Adjustable brassiere straps	3.91	Agreed
9.	Specifically designed feeding shawls	3.82	Agreed
10.	Specially designed brassiere cups that include flaps which can be opened with one hand	3.91	Agreed
11.	Flaps usually held closed with a simple clasp or hook	3.68	Agreed
12.	Nursing brassieres designed with fuller cups, comfortable fabrics, and wider shoulder straps	3.68	Agreed
13.	Tank tops and T-shirts can have nursing brassieres that are built in to the garment	2.82	Disagreed
14.	There are also padded and plus-size nursing brassieres	4.05	Agreed
15.	Flaps that fasten between the cups at the centre of the brassieres	4.18	Agreed
16.	Zipppers under each brassiere cup	2.77	Disagreed
17.	Cross-over design on brassieres that allows the woman to slip her breast out	3.73	Agreed

Table 1 shows that the respondents accepted thirteen modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation and rejected four of the modifications. The modifications accepted include that lactating wears can be dressed up or down, among others. Among those modifications rejected was that lactating wears should have an extra-wide back.

Table 2: Mean Responses on Advantages of Such Modifications on Women's Outfits

S/N	Advantages	Mean	Remark
1.	Make breast feeding in public places to be easy	4.18	Agreed
2.	Easier to manage when travelling than infant formula	3.50	Agreed
3.	Protects modesty	3.27	Disagreed
4.	Facilitates breast access with minimal public disclosure	3.55	Agreed
5.	Reduces the use of great deal of resources on infant feeding	3.55	Agreed
6.	Reduces the production of a huge amount of waste from infant formulas	3.68	Agreed
7.	Provides additional support to women who are lactating	3.64	Agreed
8.	Permits comfortable breastfeeding without the need to remove the brassiere	3.27	Disagreed

9. Provide proper support and fit	4.41	Agreed
10. Nursing in various circumstances	3.55	Agreed

Table 2 shows that eight advantages such modifications on women's outfits are necessary while the remaining two were not. One of these advantages is that the wearing of these lactating wears can make breast feeding in public a little easier than preparing an infant formula. It was also disagreed that one of the advantages is to protect modesty.

Table 3: Mean Responses on Implications of not Providing Such Modifications on Women's Outfits

S/N	Implications	Mean	Remark
1.	Mothers may feel shy about public breastfeeding	3.77	Agreed
2.	Hiding to breastfeed	3.14	Disagreed
3.	Feeling guilty if they are unwilling to breast feed	3.50	Agreed
4.	Breaking into the taboo against showing breasts in public	3.23	Disagreed
5.	Robbing at night time feedings	3.32	Disagreed
6.	Lifting regular brassieres up over the breast to nurse can put a lot of pressure on breast tissues	3.27	Disagreed
7.	Inadequate support to breasts	3.14	Disagreed

Table 3 shows that two implications of not providing such modifications on women's outfits were accepted. These are that mothers may feel shy about public breastfeeding and they feel guilty if they are unwilling to breast feed. The remaining five modifications were not accepted by the respondents.

Findings: The study identified the following:

- A. Thirteen modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation (see Table 1)
- B. Eight advantages of such modifications on women's outfits (see Table 2)
- C. Two implications of not providing such modifications on women's outfits (see Table 3)

Discussion of Findings

The respondents were of the opinion that one of the modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation is that they can be dressed up or down, which made Wikipedia (2012) to state that some nursing brassieres are designed so that the entire brassiere can be easily pulled upward over the breast to allow an infant to feed. It was also agreed that there is always a strong side and under-cup support for breasts and there is always a regular maternity brassiere clasps for easy one-handed opening and closing and the brassieres have adjustable straps with soft cups. This supports the views of Wikipedia (2012) which pointed out that other adaptations on normal clothing include soft cup brassieres made of a blend of cotton and lycra with cups that stretch to

accommodate changes in breast sizes. The respondents disagreed that the modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation includes an extra-wide back and singlet incorporated into long-sleeve wears.

The respondents also agreed that modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation include the attachment of specifically designed feeding shawls; brassiere cups that include flaps which can be opened with one hand and held closed with a simple clasp or hook; nursing brassieres designed with fuller cups, comfortable fabrics, padded, with flaps that fasten between the cups at the centre; and, cross-over design on brassieres that allows the woman to slip her breast out with wider shoulder straps. Danielle, (2012) expressed preference to feeding shawls as it gives more control over some clothing options while Consumers Union (2012) explained that nursing brassieres look like regular brassieres, but the cups open or lower when pulled aside, or the closure is unsnapped, unzipped, or unhooked. Winder (2012) suggested that mothers should select brassieres that give them comfort with ease of opening and closing of the clips for breastfeeding while Rubenstein (2012) suggested the buying or making of brassieres that allows one to uncover one's breast at a time during breastfeeding. Even when Wikipedia (2012) pointed out that some outer wears like tank tops and T-shirts have nursing brassieres that are built in to the garment, and there are also padded and plus-size nursing brassieres, the respondents disagreed to the fact that tank tops and T-shirts have nursing brassieres that are built in to the garment. It was also disagreed that the presence of zippers under each brassiere cup are parts of the modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation.

It was agreed that some of the advantages of such modifications on women's outfits are that they make breast feeding in public a little easier thereby supporting Focus Technology (2012) who explained that breast feeding dresses make breast feeding in public a little bit easier and Noton (2012) pointed out that nursing brassieres allow a mother to easily expose her breast when breast feeding. Burby (2000) concluded that breastfeeding is easier than using formula. With this, Rubenstein (2012) emphasized that nursing clothes have openings that make it easier to nurse, especially in public places. As the respondents also agreed that breast feeding is easier to manage when travelling than infant formula, Danielle, (2012) added that such wears make breast feeding easier to manage when travelling than infant formula. This is because breast milk is always ready and comes in a nicer package than formula does (Burby 2000). Although Walsh (2009) added that for some women, the feelings of an infant suckling can be so pleasurable that they feel it is somehow wrong, yet Granju (2012) concluded that breast feeding is just what breasts are for. Of course, it was agreed that these wears provide proper support and fit and facilitates breast access with minimal public disclosure. The respondents agreed that breast feeding reduces the use of a great deal of resources on infant feeding and it also reduces the production of a huge amount of waste from infant formulas. In support of this fact, Granju (2012) explained that the production and consumption of formula uses a great deal of resources and produces a huge amount of

waste, but breastfeeding is great for the environment. Again, Nemours Foundation (2012) explained that breastfeeding helps to defend mother and child against infections, prevent allergies, and protect against a number of chronic conditions. The respondents also agreed that these wears facilitate nursing in various circumstances as they provide additional support to women who are lactating. This is because they were designed to support a woman's increased breast size during lactation and provide ready access to her breasts for nursing (Wikipedia, 2012). Despite these approvals by the respondents, it was disagreed that these wears help breast feeding mothers to protect their modesty which contradicts the views of Danielle, (2012) who stated that a range of options exist in lactating wears to protect modesty. They also disagreed that these wears permit comfortable breastfeeding without the need to remove the brassieres; this is probably because there must be a removal of brassieres for breastfeeding to take place.

The respondents agreed that one of the implications of not providing such modifications on women's outfits is that mothers may feel shy about public place breastfeeding. Granju (2012) emphasized that every time a mother breastfeeds in public, the mother is helping to encourage other women who feel shy over breast feeding in public. Although the respondents disagreed that lactating mothers hide to breast feed, Danielle, (2012) advised women to feel comfortable to feed in front of others. As much as Granju (2012) advised that women should not feel guilty if they are unable to breastfeed, but they should feel guilty if they are unwilling to do so. The respondents agreed that lactating mothers feel guilty if they are unwilling to breast feed.

Although Wikipedia (2012) explained that in some Western cultures, it is a taboo to expose ones breasts in public places during breastfeeding, the respondents still disagreed that one of the implications of not wearing lactating outfits is women breaking the taboo against showing breasts in public. It was also disagreed that robbing at night time feedings and also lifting regular brassieres up over the breast to nurse can put a lot of pressure on breast tissues. This was contrary to the views of Consumers Union (2012) which emphasized that lifting regular brassieres up over the breast to nurse can put a lot of pressure on breast tissues. Respondents also disagreed that one of the implications of not providing such modifications on women's outfits is inadequate support to breasts.

Conclusion:

The study identified thirteen (13) modifications that can be made on women's outfits for easy lactation. Eight (8) advantages of such modifications on women's outfit and two (2) implications of not providing such modifications on women's outfits were also identified in the study. Lactating wears are very important to nursing mothers, not just because they guarantee comforts during breast feeding but because they allow children to be breast fed as breastfeeding protects babies which made Granju (2012) to stress that breastfed children get sick less often.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. World Health Organization should make up television programmes that will help to relay information about lactating wears to mothers in the rural areas.
2. Religious organisations can buy such wears in bulk and share to lactating mothers so that decency can be maintained while breast feeding children in public places.
3. Antenatal classes in the hospitals should make efforts to bring such wears to the classes and teach pregnant women how to use each of them to achieve maximum comfort during breast feeding.

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