

Features Preferred by Primary School Children in School Uniforms

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Abstract: *In today's world, clothing plays an important role irrespective of the cultures. Clothing is the most intimate environment as it can be carried everywhere with an individual, creating its own room within a room and its own climate within the larger climate of our surroundings. In comparison to adults, children need different clothing as they are involved in extraordinary activities with many body movements. Children need clothing which is capable of providing comfort within a garment, protection from associated risks in outdoor activities and functionality to do activities faster besides being attractive in all fashion terms. If clothing is uncomfortable for children, it may become a constant irritation and may interfere with an individual's ability to concentrate in classroom. It may either be physical and physiological problem. From present study it was found that children preferred cotton patterned fabric with shades of green and blue for their school uniforms because of its light weight, absorbing capacity and comfort ability. Girls preferred features like peterpan collar, Set in sleeves, Back yoke, patch pockets on the front left panel and pleats for skirt, flaps for belt and pockets on side seam, few of them preferred pinafore style of uniform. Boys even preferred shirt with pocket at left panel, raglan sleeve and back yoke. Short with flaps and set in pockets were their preferences. This survey has revealed many facts about school uniform which were causing dissatisfaction among children.*

Keywords: Primary school children, Materials and colours preferred, Functional features and Constructional choices for uniforms.

1. Introduction

The relationship of clothing to the human body, to other objects that come in contact with it, and to the large environment of a room or the great outdoor has fascinated people for centuries. Many clothing items function as environment by providing shelter and protection to the human body. School uniforms serve several important functions. Many believe the uniform to be an accurate reflection of a school's discipline standards. In response to growing levels of violence in schools, many parents, teachers, and school officials have come to see school uniforms as one positive and creative way to reduce problems associated with discipline and increase school safety. For these reasons uniforms are becoming an increasingly popular application in today's society. However clothing should be able to fulfil the requirements of the wearer while working in different conditions even in abnormal situations, especially in case of children's, part of their performance is reflected by their clothing, due to the continuous body movements, Children require a school uniform which is comfortable, functional without hindering their talents and activities. At the same time the design should suit all the needs of the children as well as the school authorities.

Present survey study reveals clothing preferences for designing suitable school uniform for primary school children at different schools of Hyderabad.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted in different schools of Hyderabad. The devices for the collection of data consisted of pre tested questionnaire. Questionnaire was developed to illicit information from parents and teachers regarding features in school uniforms. It consisted of general information of the

child, details about the features of the present uniform, style, problems associated, preferences of the style and features to be included in the present uniform. Data was collected from hundred students (50 girls and 50 boys) including their parents and teachers of different schools in Hyderabad through a pretested questionnaire. Their perception with regard to present uniform colour, texture, and comfort of wear, pattern or design, style, silhouette, print, embellishments were collected and evaluated. Apart from this the opinion on an ideal school uniform and their preferences such as its length, design, sleeves, collar styles, colour preferences and most suitable fabric according to the parents, teachers and children was collected. Frequency, percentages and overall mean scores was used to find out the clothing preferences for school uniforms by primary school children.

3. Results

Perception and preferences of respondents with regard to school uniform

1. Type of uniform preferred
2. Features present in the regular uniform
3. Child satisfaction with the type of uniform
4. Features preferred by children in uniforms
5. Fasteners used and preferred by children in their uniforms
6. Materials used for uniform
7. Parts of the uniform causing discomfort to children
8. Parts of the uniform wears out easily
9. Durability of uniform
10. Colour combination preferred

Table 1: Type of uniform preferred by girls and boys

Frequency and percentage distribution of type of uniforms girls and boys favoured

Table 1 (Values in numerical scores) n=100 (50 girls and 50 boys)

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
A. Type of uniform – girls		
a) Pinafore & Shirt	30	60
b) Skirts (half/full/both) & shirt	20	40
c) Culotte skirt & shirt	-	-
d) Shirt /Trousers	-	-
e) Salwar kameez	-	-
f) Churidhar pyjama	-	-
B. Type of uniform – boys		
a) Shirt and Pant	-	-
b) Shirt and Shorts	50	100
c) Sweater vest with short or pant	-	-
Special Uniform for sports and NCC Girls		
a) Culottes skirt and shirt	60	60
b) Shirt and skirt	-	-
c) Pinafore	20	20
d) Shirt and Short	-	-
e) Salwar Kameez	20	20
Special Uniform for sports and NCC Boys		
a) Shirt and pant	30	30
b) Shirt and short	70	70
c) Sweater vest with pant or short	-	-

According to the data collected, around 70 percent girls were comfortable with pinafore and shirt style. While around 30 percent preferred skirt and shirt uniform. Cent percent boys preferred wearing shirt and short type of uniform. When the respondents were asked about the special uniform preference, most of the children around eighty percent of the school children were having sports uniforms as a special uniform while 20 percent of the children had NCC uniform. Majority of girls preferred culottes as a sports uniform, while boys were comfortable with shirt and short uniform.

Table 2: Features present in the Regular Uniform (Values in numerical scores) n=100

Features	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Color	-	73	27	-
Texture of the uniform	-	70	30	-
Comfort of wear	-	-	40	60
Pattern or design	-	80	20	-
Style	-	73	27	-
Silhouette	-	45	15	40

It was evident from the above table that the colour combination of the present uniform was rated as good by 73 percent of the students. While 27 percent rated their uniform colour as fair. With regard to the texture of the present uniform, 70 percent rated their uniform texture as good while a few rated as fair. Regarding comfort of their garments, 40 percent felt fairly comfortable in their existing uniform, while 60 percent of children were not finding the present uniform comfortable. 45 percent of the children rated their present uniform pattern, style and silhouette as good, while the rest of them rated as fair and poor.

By considering the above data, it could be concluded that the children were not comfortable in their school uniforms, even though the other features were satisfactory.

Table 3: Child Satisfaction with the type of Uniform (Values in numerical scores) n=100

S.No	Factors evaluated	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Highly satisfied	-	-
2.	Satisfied	43	43
3.	Fairly satisfied	4	4
4.	Not satisfied	53	53

Data in table no 4 depicts the child satisfaction with the type of uniform. Around 43 per cent of children were satisfied with their present uniform. While 53 percent of the children were not satisfied with their uniform for reasons like poor sweat absorbing capacity of present uniform while involving in physical activities.

Table 4: Features preferred by children in uniforms (Values in numerical scores) n=100

Factor	Features	Percentage
a) Sleeve	Full length	14
	$\frac{3}{4}$ th sleeve	-
	Short sleeve	86
b) Pocket placement on shirt	On Left panel	90
	On right panel	-
	Both the sides	10
c) Pocket placement on short / pant / skirt	Side seam	100
	Front Pocket (Like 6 pocket denim)	-
	Back Pocket	-
		-
d) Type of pocket	Flap pocket	12
	Set in pocket	73
	Bound pocket	-
	Hip pocket	5
	Welt pocket	-
e) Collar	Mandarin	-
	Flat Raised collar	-
	Full roll collar	-
	Half roll collar	-
	Shawl collar	-
	Shirt collar	-
	Peterpan collar	78
	22	
f) Type of neck line	Square	-
	Round	-
	V neck	-

The above table clearly shows the choice of functional details in uniforms, around 86 percent children preferred short sleeves. While a very few 14 percent opted for full length sleeves. Most of the children preferred pocket placement on the left panel of shirt and set in pockets (seam pockets) on both the sides of short (knickers) and skirt. While 78 percent children preferred shirt collar, the rest of the children especially girls preferred peterpan collar.

Table 5: Fasteners used and preferred by children in their uniforms

(Values in numerical scores) n=100 50 girls and 50 boys

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Fasteners		
For shirt (boys and girls)		
a) Small buttons	100	100
b) Press buttons	-	-
For short (boys)		
a) Zipper	50	100
b) Large button	50	100

c) Elastic	30	60
For skirt and pinafore (girls)		
a)Hooks	30	60
b)Press buttons	-	-
c) Elastic	20	40

With regard to the fasteners, most of the school uniforms possessed zippers, large buttons and elastic for boy's shorts/knickers. Hooks were used for girls skirt and pinafore. The shirts of both girls and boys had small button fasteners. However, children were purely satisfied with the type of fasteners used for their school uniforms.

Table 6: Materials used for uniform
(Values in numerical scores) n=100

S.No	Factor	Percentage
Materials presently used for uniform		
a.	Cotton/polyester	88
b.	Binny cotton	22
Fabric blends preferred for uniform		
a.	Cotton	60
b.	Cotton/polyester	23
c.	Polyester	17
d.	Cotton/wool blend	-
Fabric preferred for uniforms		
a.	Plain fabric	21
b.	Patterned fabric	79
Textile design preferred		
a.	Checks	35
b.	Stripes	65
c.	Plaids	-
d.	Floral prints	-
e.	Dots	-
f.	Any other	-

As per the data collected from the parents of primary school children maximum no of the uniforms were of cotton/polyester blend and very few uniforms were of binny cotton. Because of the cotton polyester blend in the uniforms children felt uncomfortable while involving in different activities as the absorbing capacity of the polyester blends is very low.

With regard to their preferences for specialized uniform, maximum number of parents and children preferred cotton because of its light weight, absorbing capacity and comfort ability. With regard to the fabric pattern preference most of the respondents preferred to have patterned fabric for school uniform. As shown in the table stripe fabrics were preferred by most of the parents and children. Few preferred plain fabrics also.

Table 7: Parts of the Uniform causing discomfort to children
(Values in numerical scores) n=100

Part of the uniform	Frequency	Percentage
A) Neckline	-	-
B) Collar	-	-
C) Crotch line	12	12
D) Sleeve	58	58
E) Waist line	30	30

As per the information collected, most of the children were feeling uncomfortable with the misfit of the uniforms at

sleeve parts, crotch line and waist line. They were finding major problem in fitting at these three parts as they did not allow free movement. Majority of the children were feeling uncomfortable with the present uniform. The rest of them found the uniforms fairly comfortable. The reasons expressed by respondents were:

- Use of polyester blend in the currently used uniforms
- Non –stretchable nature of the fabrics used.

As these aspects of clothing were considered as basic quality requirements for school uniforms, children could not feel comfortable while involving in physical activities with the present uniform. This might be the reason for their dissatisfaction. Majority of the children (87 percent) could easily put on and put off their uniform/garment by themselves, while the rest of them needed assistance.

Regarding the type of closures/openings, most of the children were feeling comfortable and could manage openings with centre front for shirt. They expressed that the openings in the present uniform were convenient for them as they were able to manage by themselves.

Table 8: Parts of the uniform wears out easily
(Values in numerical scores) n=100

S.No	Factor	Percentage
Part of uniform wears out easily		
a.	Collars	63
b.	Pockets	37
c.	Sleeves	63

When the respondents were asked about the part of the uniform that wears out easily parents of students responded that collars and sleeves were the areas that wear out easily compared to the other parts of the uniform due to involvement of children in physical activities.

Table 9: Durability of uniform
(Values in numerical scores) n=100

S.No	Factor	Percentage
Durability of the present uniform		
a.	More than two years	-
b.	Two years	22
c.	One year	88

As per the data given in the above table school uniforms were durable from 1 year to two years. Because of the low quality fabric and blends of polyester used for the uniforms, very less durability was noticed. Most of the mothers expressed that the uniforms fade out easily with in no time.

Table 10: Colour combinations
(Values in numerical scores) n=100

S.No	Factors	Percentage
Colour preferred by most of the respondents		
Tints and shades of		
a.	Red	10
b.	Yellow	6
c.	Blue	43
d.	Green	31
e.	White	2
f.	Black	8

As shown in the above table tints and shades of green was preferred by maximum number of children followed by blue. Very few preferred tints and shades of red and yellow.

4. Conclusion

Based on the preferences of the primary school Children (girls and boys) regarding school uniform following guidelines were developed for suitable uniform designing selection in terms of choice of material, construction and functional details

Choice of Material

- Soft 100 percent cotton woven fabric that don't irritate or rub the skin
- To maintain the body temperature, light weight absorbent fabrics that breathe to let body perspiration escape should be used, Cotton fabric is suitable for uniforms as it is light weight, good absorbing capacity and comfort ability.
- The fabric chosen for the uniforms should be durable and should have good colour fastness
- Ease of care should be of prime importance in styling school uniforms hence fabrics that don't need much ironing such as durable press cotton should be used.
- Stripe fabrics were preferred by most of the parents and children

Constructional Aspects

- Garment should be proportionate to the primary school children and garment construction should not irritate them.
- All the seams must be narrow, flat and well trimmed to avoid skin irritation.
- Uniform should be loose and semi fitted for their comfort
- Type of silhouette preferred by girls is shirt and pinafore, Shirt and Skirt . Boys preferred Shirt and Short silhouette
- Shirt and bifurcated skirts were preferred by most of the girls for special uniforms like sports and NCC.
- Collar and the sleeve areas are the major parts where tension is applied and wear out easily compared to the other parts due to involvement of children in physical activities.
- Loose and adjustable waistlines; elastic allowance should not be too tight.
- Collars and sleeves should be planned which wont execute pressure on the seams.
- Ample seam allowance for alterations if needed
- Shirts have kimono or raglan sleeves or back pleats to allow for shoulder movement.

Functional aspects

- Features like zippers, large buttons and elastic for boy's shorts/knickers. Hooks were preferred for girls skirt and pinafore. Small button fasteners for shirts of both girls and boys.
- Centre front opening for shirts that are easy to get on and get off
- Shades of green and blue are much preferred by students for uniforms
- Eighty nine percent parents preferred to have alterations/minor modifications in the present uniform

design to suit their children to perform activities in a much effective way

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