



## Clothing care challenges and their impact on society

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**Abstract:** *The study looked at the problems that employees in the Ho Municipality's banking, health, and education sectors have with their outerwear. The goal is to investigate their clothing maintenance issues. The association between workers' understanding of the directions on garment care labels and their adherence to the instructions was theorized to exist. 130 respondents from the three sectors were chosen using simple random sampling, and information was acquired using a questionnaire instrument. Data was analyzed with the SPSS and Chi-square statistics presented in the frequency percentage distribution tables. Their clothing care challenges were time constraint, fatigue, unavailability of laundries in the community, and lack of knowledge of clothing care label instructions. The results from the hypothesis test show that there is a significant relationship between the knowledge of respondents and adherence to clothing care label instructions. The study recommends that clothing care lessons be emphasized in basic school Home Economics to ensure that all students receive basic knowledge in clothing care early in life; entrepreneurs are encouraged to open more laundries and mending shops in communities to assist workers.*

**Key Words:** *Clothing/clothes, work clothes, outer garments, challenges, workers.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Clothing is one of the fundamental necessities that all humans have, and it's a very significant one. People in all civilizations utilize clothing for a variety of purposes, and every event calls for the wearing of garments, whether they are modern or prehistoric (Boateng- Sampong & Gyan, 2005). In actuality, clothing covers a larger portion of the human body than is visible, and what is perceived as a person is mostly that person's clothing. Priest and Pullen (1990) estimated that between 75,000 and 100,000 years ago, people first began to wear garments. Despite the lack of written records at the time, we may still learn about how people dressed by examining artifacts like cave drawings, tools, antique fabrics, and ornaments. This demonstrates that wearing clothing is not a contemporary culture but rather has roots in antiquity. As a fundamental human necessity, clothing has a significant impact on one's health and social standing (Ukpore, 2006; Arubayi, 2003). Additionally, the Ghana Home Economic Association (GHEA) (1990) defined clothes as the various articles of clothing, accessories, and ornaments that people around the world wear on their bodies. GHEA further explained that clothing is needed by individuals for such purposes as casual wear, work wear, and occasional wear. According to Forster (2014), it is abnormal to step out of one's room into society without clothing. Turner and Bowker (2001) added that the choice of clothes can communicate responsibility, status, power, and the ability to be successful. Clothing is therefore a very important asset. Various attempts have been made to explain why people wear clothes. However, four major theories, which are not mutually exclusive, have been used to explain the reasons behind clothing use. According to Forster (2014), such theories include modesty, protection, adornment, and identification. Wallace (1995) advised that clothing power should not be underestimated because it is used to realize and validate one's self as one communicates thoughts, values, attitudes, or feelings to others and receives both verbal and non-verbal responses from others. Johnson and Foster (1998) and Anyakoha and Eluwa (1999) added that the use of clothing goes beyond a mere covering for the body and that it can also modify personal appearance. It is true that one cannot always "tell a book by its cover". However, appearance is very important. An appearance can create a good or bad impression on the people one meets, and it is vital to both an individual and others (Miller & Miller, 1997). Through clothing, one is able to see if someone is a male or female. On the other hand, one's clothing can damage a person's physical appearance and other people's impressions of him or her and also influence the behavior of other people. Many important goals in life, such as the ability to get and keep a good job, depend on the impressions we make on others. These impressions are determined at least, in part, by our grooming habits and therefore the clothing we wear. The clothing consumption process consists of several stages, including acquisition, maintenance, use and storage, and disposal (Winakor, 1969).



Although each stage is relevant to sustainable clothing consumption, the second stage (maintenance) seems particularly essential to extending the life span of clothing products. Aalto (1998) argued that in choices regarding textile care, environmental viewpoints are not the primary criteria, rather viewpoints that are visual or connected with self-esteem and lifestyle may prevail. Before purchasing a clothing article, one should determine what care will be needed as well as the time involved in the care at home. Klepp (2011) added that maintaining clothing saves money, hence the cost of care should be a consideration in purchasing a garment. Anyakoha and Eluwa (2005) indicated that poor care of clothing spoils clothes by making them smell badly and sometimes cause fading in the colour. For consumers to maintain their clothing well enough to preserve its freshness, they need to have the necessary care knowledge and skills and apply them. The making and wearing of clothing has drawn a lot of attention, so study also has to pay attention to how to care for clothing, though perhaps not in the same way that preserves its freshness and lengthens its useful life. As a result, there are few studies that look at consumer behavior in relation to apparel care. This is the paradox that the study aimed to analyze using data collected from formal employees in Ghana's Volta Region's Ho Municipality. Hence, a study is required to identify the difficulties in clothing maintenance. The goal is to investigate the workers' issues with apparel maintenance.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The literature is divided into theoretical and empirical sections.

### Theoretical Framework

Although there is no specific theory on how to care for clothing, Maslow's theory of needs can be used to understand human requirements and how they are met for comfort and pleasure. As a result, the hypothesis was used in the study to help comprehend and explain why employees need to pay close attention to their appearance, particularly what they wear to work. The Hierarchy of Needs Theory by Maslow (1943)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory has its roots in the early 19th century and was originally reviewed by McLeod (2014). Specifically, Maslow theorized that people have five types of needs and that these are activated in a hierarchical manner. This means that these needs are arranged in a specific order from the lowest to the highest, such that the lowest order need must be fulfilled before the next order need is triggered and the process continues (McLeod, 2014).

According to Maslow, physiological needs are the needs at the bottom of the triangle and comprise food, shelter, clothing, etc., which are the lowest order of needs and most basic (McLeod, 2014). The Maslow Hierarchy of Needs theory is of interest in the present study because it can be used to explain the position of clothing in the lives of workers in the Ho Municipality. It is a fact that clothing is a basic need in human life, as expressed by Forster (2014), that it's abnormal to step out of one's room into society without clothing. This means that one cannot commute naked to work without clothing. These establish the fact that much attention should be given to what some individuals wear due to its influence on individual health and status (Ukpore, 2006; Arubayi, 2003).

### The Challenges of Maintaining Clothes

There are several challenges consumers face in the day-to-day care of clothes. Many difficulties with clothing care can be traced to improper care by the consumer. European researchers have identified clothing repair, storage of clothes, and less frequent laundry of clothes as essential components of sustainable clothing consumption (Fisher, 2008).

### Clothing Repair Challenges

Forster (2014) identified different ways of mending as patching, darning, re-stitching, replacing and re-fixing fasteners. All these methods require skills or time to get them done well.

### Laundry challenges

Laundry involves a wide range of activities such as sorting, washing, bluing, drying, ironing, and airing (Forster, 2014). Each stage could pose a challenge to consumers of textile products. The impact of hard water on laundry washing is a challenge. Water is always an important commodity in any type of laundry. Hardness in laundry water is a problem because it is the minerals in the water that cause it to interfere with the cleaning action of detergents (Pakula & Stamminger, 2010). Where consumers have access to only hard water for washing, it is possible they would face the same problem. The majority of laundry instructions are indicated on clothing labels to guide consumers in selecting the correct method of care for their clothes; however, most consumers do not follow instructions on care labels due to a lack of understanding of their meanings and applications.



### Clothes Storage Challenges

Storage is an important component in the care and maintenance of clothing. However, it is a component frequently overlooked until a problem occurs. Several challenges associated with clothing storage are due to an inability to follow appropriate packing procedures, lack of a storage facility, and how clothes are packed for travel end up affecting the life and look of the wardrobe (Forster, 2014). Forster suggested that before clothes are stored, they should be completely free from dirt, oils, perfume, starch, fabric softeners, detergents, and hard water deposits to prevent discoloration or staining.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHOD:

A descriptive survey method was adapted for this study. The researcher considered the descriptive survey design appropriate since it involved collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study as observed. In addition, the researcher chose this design considering the desire to acquire first-hand data from the respondents to formulate rational and sound conclusions and recommendations for the study. The Ho Municipal Assembly is one of the five (5) municipalities in the Volta Region which were established by Legislative Instrument (L.I) 2074 of 2012. The population was 1,300 males and females. This includes workers from the education, banking, and health sectors in the Ho Municipality.

**3.1. Sampling Procedures:** The methods of sampling used for this study were stratified, probability proportional to size, and simple random technique.

**3.2. Instrument for Data Collection:** The instrument is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A of the questionnaire gathered information about the respondents' biographical data. Here, respondents were asked questions about sex and age. Section B covered questions on the educational levels of respondents. In Section C, respondents were asked to indicate clothing care challenges they faced.

**3.3. Data Analysis:** To arrive at an effective statistical presentation and for effective analysis, copies of the questionnaire were serially numbered to facilitate identity and accuracy. This precaution was taken to ensure quick detection of any source of error in the tabulation of data. The analysis was categorized with regards to the following headings; gender, age, level of education, , clothing and care challenges of workers. The responses made by the respondents to each set of items in the questionnaire were coded manually and fed into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23, to generate frequency and percentage distribution tables, for the data analysis.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

#### Section A: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents:

The demographic data of the respondents covered their gender, age ranges, and educational levels. These characteristics were significant in this study because they could have an influence on the clothing care needs of the workers. Regarding gender, 52.0% were male while 48.0% were female. The distributions show a fair presentation of both genders.

**Table 1: Age Ranges of the Respondents**

Age Range	Freq.	%
20-30 years	56	43.0
31-40 years	56	43.0
41-50 years	10	8.0
Above 50 years	8	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field data (2016).**

Table 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents of the study. The table shows that 43% of the respondents were between the ages of 20 and 30 years old and 31–40 years old, respectively. Among the respondents, 8% and 6% were between the ages of 41–50 years, and more than 50 years. These findings show that the majority of the respondents were at their youthful ages. This result is in conformity with the researcher's expectation because the active working class in Ghana is generally between 15-49 years old (GLSS 6, 2012/2013).



**Table 2: Educational Levels of the Respondents**

Educational level	Freq.	%
Diploma	40	31.0
Higher Nation Diploma	16	12.0
First Degree	74	57.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field data (2016).**

Table 2 shows a description of the educational levels of respondents. The table suggests that 57% of respondents had a first degree, while 31% had a diploma, and 12% had a national diploma as their highest qualifications. The educational levels of the respondents made it easy for them to understand and answer the questionnaire without much assistance.

### Clothing care needs of the workers

**Research Question:** *What are the clothing care challenges of the workers?*

The respondents were given a list of challenges to select from and an open-ended question to give them the opportunity to indicate other challenges that could not be identified by the researcher. The results are presented in table 6.

**Table 3: Clothing Care Challenges of the Respondents.**

Care challenges	Freq	%*	Rank
Time constraint	99	76.0	1 <sup>st</sup>
Unavailability of commercial laundries in the community	92	70.0	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Fatigue	90	69.0	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Inability understand clothing care label instructions	79	61.0	4 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of requisite skills to repair damaged clothes	68	52.0	5 <sup>th</sup>
Unavailability of clothing repair shops in the community	50	38.0	6 <sup>th</sup>
Unavailability of Mobile clothing repairers in the community	47	36.0	7 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of requisite tools to repair clothes	28	22.0	8 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of proper clothing storage facilities at home	20	15.0	9 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>439.0</b>	

\*Total > 130 due to multiple responses

**Source: Field data (2016).**

Table 3 shows the list of clothing care challenges respondents were facing. The majority of respondents (76%) were constrained by time constraints when caring for their clothes. Again, a majority of the respondents (70%) were challenged by the unavailability of laundries in their community. Fatigue was a challenge for 69% of them, while inability to understand clothing care label instructions was a problem for 61%. Lack of requisite skills and unavailability of clothing repair shops in the community were the challenges of 52% and 38% of respondents, respectively. The unavailability of mobile clothing repairers in the Ho community was a challenge for 36% of the respondents, while a lack of the requisite tools to repair clothes was stated as a challenge for 22% of them. Finally, 15% of the respondents were challenged by a lack of a proper clothing storage facility at home. According to the data presentation, the study reveals that time constraints were a major challenge for the majority of respondents because they spent the majority of their time at work rather than at home. Indeed, some of the care methods could be time-consuming for the workers. This finding confirms Forster's (2014) statement that time constraint could be a challenging factor for the repair technique chosen by a consumer. The next major challenge indicated was the unavailability of laundries in the Ho community. The Ho Municipality has only one commercial laundry, which is not able to satisfy the high demands of busy workers in the community. Klepp (2007) observed that people own more clothing and wash it more frequently. Definitely, the



respondents would have more work clothes to wear for the five days a week that they have to go to work and would want to keep them clean. With their busy schedules, they would definitely require clothing care assistance. Fatigue was a major challenge for workers who might not have washing machines to be used to care for their clothes or be able to access the services of commercial laundries and house help. According to the results of the study, sometimes it was difficult for some of the respondents to understand and follow care instructions to the letter in order to achieve quality care. Most of the respondents indicated that they were challenged with a lack of the requisite skills such as patching, darning, re-stitching, replacing and re-fixing fasteners, and tools to repair damage. In fact, there is no way a consumer can darn a hole in a garment effectively for the darning threads to be invisible if he/she has not learnt the skills. The respondents also expressed that they were faced with the problem of the unavailability of mobile clothing repairers in the Ho community. Formally, mobile clothing repairers were common in the community where the research was carried out, but nowadays their services are no longer available to community members. Finally, data from the result reveals that the lack of a proper clothing storage facility at home was the least challenge the workers faced in caring for their clothes. The workers were generally aware that storage of clothes is a significant aspect of clothing care or management. Marshall *et al.* (2004) emphasized the importance of clothing storage facilities in clothing care and stated that moths often damage clothes that are not stored properly and during storage, wire hangers that are rusted, and not covered can cause rust staining, while paint can peel off the metal part of hangers and snag delicate fabric.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions and recommendations were drawn:

1. The respondents' clothing care challenges were time constraint, lack of care knowledge and skills, commercial laundry and clothing repair services.
2. Entrepreneurs should open more laundries and mend shops to take advantage of the present need for such facilities in the municipality, as expressed by the respondents of this study.
3. Researchers should be considering workers who belong to other sectors that were not captured in this study for similar studies.

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