DEVELOPMENT OF DRESS PATTERNS FOR WOMEN WITH FIGURE FLAWS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT: *The aim of this study was to produce dress patterns for women with figure flaws in Anambra State. A sample of ninety teaching and non-teaching female staff with obvious figure flaws falling into 3-size categories was purposively selected for the study. The study involved taking body measurements, drafting, adapting, altering, cutting out and assembling the garment pieces. After which garments were modeled by the models. Judges and the models assessed the clothing fit and wearing comfort. The obtained data from the assessment instruments were analyzed using mean. Findings from the study showed that the widest distribution of values indicative of figure flaws were found in the bust, waist, and hips. The widest alterations to the drafted patterns related to the hips, waist and bust. The average rating of the clothing fit and comfort by the judges and models were satisfactory respectively. The block patterns developed are recommended for professional tailors and fashion designers.*

KEYWORDS: development, dress patterns, women, figure, flaws, Anambra State

INTRODUCTION

Clothes worn by individuals have a way of influencing their appearance and so serve as the "Silent Language" which communicates through the use of visual- non- verbal symbol. According to Anyakaoha (2013), clothing includes dresses, accessories, hair- do, make- ups, handbags, shoes etc. thus, the garments or dresses that people generally put on can be called clothes. They include gowns, skirts, blouses, trousers, coats, skirts, buba etc.

Most Nigerian women like to possess a variety of clothes such as bolouses, skirts, coats, dresses, jackets etc but those that really appear fashionable endeavor to select only the clothes that match their figure types. Figure types is the different shapes seen on human beings or a representation of a person (Spenser, 1998). According to Total Sewing "Products" (1984), figure types are used on height and on back neck to waist length, eg Misses, Women's, Junior Petite. Thus, adult figure types are grouped according to heights and proportion. But Anyakoha, (1997) provides a more comprehensive analysis as she identified seven figure types that are easily recognizable among women. The figure types are proportionate tall and slender, short and plump, flat chest, large chest, large bust, short neck, long neck, and large hips . The best of the figure types is the proportionate. Any individual who does not fall into the proportionate figure type can be said to have a figure flaw.

Figure flaws refers to body features that are not balanced or regularly arranged either on opposite sides of a line or around a central point (Anikweze,2008). Such body features create unequal appearance or disarming in the person's figure. Bodies with figure flaws are characterized by dispassionate parts of the body such as flat chest, large bust, short neck, long neck and large hips (Anyakoha,1997). They also manifest abnormally plump, obese and heavy proportions of body flat distributed around the waist and the abdomen presenting unequal appearance or disharmony in the person's figure (Wikipedia, 2017). These figure flaws can cause difficulties in wearing and removing of garments except where appropriate adjustments have been made to obliterate the figure problems (Igbo, 2001). Anyakoha and Eluwa (1999) agreed that studying an individual's figure types and figure flaws help one to choose suitable and flattering clothing styles. Some women have natural figure flaws while others develop figure flaws because of child birth and consequently middle- age spread or weight gain especially around the waist.

The styles to be chosen and to avoid have also been suggested by Total Sewing Products (1984) and unless women with figure flaws adhere to such suggestions, they might find it very difficult to obtain fitting dresses from boutiques. Generally, dresses can be obtained as ready- to wear from the market as custom made or made – to measure (Oliver, Bickle and Slim, 1993). The ready to- wear dresses are based on standard patterns designed to suit any category of women according to their height and the sizes of their bust, waist, hips, shoulder, neck and other vital statistics (Compbell, 2004), Although figure and style are part of the principles considered by designers and makers of ready – to – wear dresses, some women still find it difficult to select garments from the market due to their peculiar figure problems. They therefore, prefer to go for custom – made or made – to – measure dresses.

They become customers to dress- makers who take their measurement and attempt to draft patterns according to their peculiar needs. Unfortunately, some of our dress – makers and tailor in Anambra State do not have adequate knowledge of figure types, proportion, rhythm, balance and other elements or principles of design. Consequently, they cannot provide the necessary adjustments to take care of figure flaws. Hence, there is the need to develop and design dress patterns for women with figure flaws in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this project is to develop dress patterns for selected women with figure flaws from Anambra State. Specifically; the study aimed at achieving the following;

1. Take body measurement of women with figure flaws and find average measurements grouped under the following categories: small, medium, and large.
2. Draft basic blocks by flat pattern method to fit problem areas of the women.
3. Adapte and alter the basic blocks to fit the problem areas of the women.
4. Construct nine dresses with the patterns to fit women with the flaws identified for nine women models in three size categories, that is three models from each size category; small (sizes 8 – 10), medium (sizes 12 – 16), and large (18 – 22).
5. Determine the appropriateness of the dresses on the different sizes as assessed by the judges.
6. Determine the appropriateness of the dresses on the different sizes as assessed by the models.

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METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quasi-experimental design. In this design, the control group is unavailable; therefore, it is not a true experimental design (Nworgu, 2015). The procedure used to carry out the study is as follows;
i. Taking measurements of women with observable figure problems to find average measurements
ii. Drafting basic blocks by flat pattern method to fit the problem areas
iii. Constructing nine dresses with the patterns to fit the problem areas
iv. Determine the appropriateness of the dresses on the different sizes by the judges
v. Determine the appropriateness of the dresses on the different sizes by its models.

Areas of the Study

The study was conducted in Anambra State. Anambra State is one of the states in South-Eastern part of Nigeria. The study took place in five public tertiary educational institutions in the state, namely; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Odimegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam; Federal Polytechnic Oko; Federal College of Education (Technical) Umunze; and Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nusgbe. The researchers selected their respondents among female teaching and non teaching staff in the identified institutions. They choose this area of study basically for operational case and enhanced access to research subjects from their work station. Based on the title of the project, all women with figure flaws in Anambra state constituted the population of the study.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sampling strategy utilized for the study was purposive sampling in order to reach only women with observable figure flaws. The samples for the study were obtained in stages. First stage of the sampling involved purposive sampling of 90 teaching and non-teaching female staff with obvious figure flaws. The body measurements of these women were taken and used to obtain average body measurements for women with figure flaws in three size categories of small, medium and large.

The second stage of the sampling involves purposive selection of a sample of nine (9) women who modeled the prototype garments. In selecting the sample of 9 women, care was taken to ensure the inclusion of the 3 categories of sizes small (6-10), medium (12-16), and large (18-12) (Kindersley). The selected women also manifested figure variables particularly in the size of busts, shape of shoulder, shape of tummy, shape of hips, shape of waist, shape of thigh and size of upper arm. The selection of the judges was based on their expertise.

Instrument for Data Collection

Five types of data collection instruments were developed for the study. These are;
i. Personal Measurement Chart for drafting patterns.
ii. Drafted patterns for bodice, skirts and sleeve.
iii. Constructing and assembling dresses.
iv. Assessment criteria chart for judges.
v. Assessment criteria chart for models.

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Validation of the Instruments

Face validity was obtained for the instruments for data collection by subjecting them to criteria appraisal of three experts in clothing. The experts scored the items on the different instruments in terms of relevance for the study using the 3 – point validation scale of very relevant -3 relevant -2 and irrelevant -1.

Reliability of the Instruments

To ascertain the reliability of the assessment criteria charts, a pilot test was carried out involving the researchers making three dresses for the three sizes. This was modeled by 3 women who did not form part of the study. The clothing fit was assessed with the assessment criteria charts by the researchers colleagues. The data collected were used to test the internal consistency of the items. Coefficient of 0.06 was obtained using Sperman – Brown formular.

Method of Data Collection

This involved taking body measurements, drafting, adapting, altering, cutting out, assembling the garment pieces, evaluating for fit and comfort, correcting and producing the final pattern pieces.

Method of Data Analysis

This involved the actual taking of body measurements of women with figure flaws, drafting of basic block patterns of bodice, sleeve, and skirt, adapting, altering, cutting and constructing foundation dresses, evaluating the dresses for fit and comfort, correcting and producing the final pattern pieces. Mean was used to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the results and analysis, the following findings were made:

1. The average body measurements for the subjects who are women with figure flaws were found as shown in Table 15 below. It is noted that bust measurements ranged from a mean of 83.3cm for small-sized women to a mean of 116.7cm for the large-sized women. For the waist, the range is from a mean of 73cm to a mean of 115cm for small size and large size respectively. The hips measured 92.3cm, mean for small size; 105cm, mean

Mean Body Measurements for the Three Sizes of Women with Figure Flaws

S/No	Variables	Mean for Small Size	Mean for Medium Size	Mean for Large Size
1	Bust	83.3	95	116.7
2	Waist	73	80.7	115
3	Hips	92.3	105	134.5
4	Nape/Back Waist Length (HL)	38.5	43.3	42.8
5	Shoulder (SH)	365.5	38	43.3
6	Front Full Length (FL)	66.3	68.5	74
7	Skirt Waist	69	80.7	112.5
8	Skirt Hips	92.7	105	134.5
9	Skirt Length (SKL)	98.3	100	106
10	Neck Circumference (NC)	37.7	39.2	40
11	Overarm/Sleeve Length (SL)	18.3	26.8	30.5
12	Scye Circumference	48.7	50	56.5
13	Biceps (BS)	32.2	34.5	45

2.   Evidence from the study shows that the widest distribution of values indicative of figure flaws were associated with the sizes of the bust, waist and hips. The range for bust measurements is from a minimum of 75cm for small size to a maximum of 130cm for large size. In the case of waist, the range is from 58cm which is the minimum for small size to 116cm which is the maximum for large size. As for the hips, the range is from 81cm minimum for small size to 140cm maximum for large size.

3.   The widest alterations to the drafted patterns related to the hips, waist and bust. This was expected judging from the foregoing finding of the variability of dimensions of figure flaws. The needed wide alterations were particularly typical of the women in the large size category.The first model in that group was an interesting case of figure flaws.The subject was tall and fat with exaggerated hips but with relatively small bust.

4.   The average rating of the clothing fit by the judges was 76.8% with a range of 7.8. The score was interpreted to imply satisfactory it. However, the shoulder slope was "Much too short".

5.   The models found the dresses comfortable to wear based on their mean score of 77.8% although with a wider range of 16.7. The range suggests a wider variability in the satisfaction scale of the individual women.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of this study warrants the following conclusions.

i.   Women with body proportions that deviate from normal have figure flaws. Dresses sewn on standard measurements based on average body measurements for their sizes do not normally fit them. Their dresses require making necessary alterations to take care of the deviations due to figure flaws.

ii.   Women with figure flaws need specially adjusted dresses that can fit their figures and provide them comfort when won. Such dresses can be provided when the maker utilizes drafted patterns such as the ones developed in this study.

iii.   Women of the same size may have different figure flaws depending on the variety of their stereotype and the type of figure that have been developed whether tall and slim, short and plump,, 'top heavy and bottom heavy', or with flat chest, large hips, long neck, large bust and plump upper arm.

iv.   Balance and proportion are essential consideration in designing and constructing garments for women with figure problems. To successfully disguise figure faults, preference should be given to sheer and bulky fabrics that seem to enlarge the size of the wearers.

v.   The clothing fit of dresses sewn for women with figure problems depends mainly on the accuracy of the measurements used for drafting the basic block for the dresses.

Recommendations

Based on the findings for this study, the following recommendations were made:

1.   The block patterns developed for the target groups should be duplicated and made available to Clothing and Textiles lecturers and students in tertiary institutions for pattern development and further manipulation into wider variety of styles.

2.   The developed block patterns should be adopted for teaching pattern alteration to students of Clothing and Textiles.

3.   Data obtained from the study particularly on body measurements should be made available to students of Clothing and Textiles for use in pattern drafting and pattern alteration.

4.   The block patterns developed are recommended for professional tailors and fashion designers particularly those involved in making garments, uniforms for public use such as the Police, the Army, The Federal Road Safety Corps, immigration and customs, nurses and ward maids and even school uniforms.

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