Clothing Needs for Physically Challenged Individuals in Asaba, Delta State

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ABSTRACT
The study was designed to examine clothing needs for physically challenged individuals. One research question and one hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study was thirty-five (35) respondents which comprised of disabled persons. No sampling method was employed due to the size of the population. Data was collected from respondents using structured questionnaire and the hypothesis were tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results of the analysis revealed that clothing needs of disabled persons were clothes that can hide their disability, reduce dependency on their caretaker, requires less time to wear, serviceable and durable, not expensive, maintainable, fitness, safety and attractive. Taking consideration of these needs will give them sense of belonging. The study also found out that the disabled ones uniformly have same needs for clothing. The stated hypothesis was rejected. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that fashion designers should consider the needs of the disabled before making clothes for them; the identified needs should be incorporated into the curriculum of fashion designers; caretakers should always have these needs in mind when dressing the disabled.

Keywords: Clothing, Needs, Physically Challenged

INTRODUCTION
Numbers of government and non-government organizations are working for rehabilitation of the disabled. Removal of feeling of inadequacy and inferiority, restoration of confidence and a spirit of independence are the most important aims of rehabilitation. Clothing is also one of the rehabilitating tools for the handicapped as it facilitates and encourages independent dressing and undressing and boost up their self-esteem which also need special attention. The clothing related problems of the disabled are highly individualized because these depend on the type of disability. It is a matter of frustration for the caretakers to find clothes that meet the requirements of their physically disabled wards in an era geared to mass production and standardization. The clothing related problems are left to parents, which are not easy to be solved because of the reason that disabled need clothing that fit their body which is not of standard size or shape. Few of them need garments with plackets which can be reached easily with manipuable fasteners that can be operated with limited arm movements while others need reinforcement at specific areas (Friend, Zaccaginne and Suffivan, 2003).

To cater to needs of the handicapped with different type of disabilities a study was conducted to design functional garments for them. The problems of the selected respondents were critically analyzed and suitable garments were designed in accordance to their requirements. On the basis of suitability assessment (functional features were recommended for the garments of calipers and crutches users (Pruthi, Seetharaman, Chanchal 2001, 2004), upper and lower limb amputees (Pruthi et al., 2001, 2002, 2004), hemiplegics (Pruthi et al., 2003) and paraplegics (Pruthi et al., 2005, 2006).

Individuals with disabilities must live with the challenges of their disability and a lack of available clothing to accommodate their needs. During a time when conforming to peers is important to establishing identity (Damhorst, Miller-Spillman and Michelman, 2005). Individuals with disabilities may have a difficult time with self esteem and feeling like they fit in with their classmates. While specially designed clothing may have some benefits for individuals with disabilities, they may also promote self stigmatization (Wingate, Kaiser and Freeman, 2005). Measuring the clothing needs and the importance of these clothing needs provides information that can be used to improve clothing design for individuals with disabilities. Using the steps of a design process may lead to the
development of improved clothing satisfaction among individuals with disabilities. Designers, product developers and manufacturers may be able to improve clothing needs of people with disabilities. It is against this background the researcher seeks to identify clothing needs for physically challenged individuals.

**Purpose of the study**
The purpose of this study is to
1. identify clothing needs for physically challenged individuals

**Research Questions**
The study was guided by the following research questions:
1. What are the clothing needs of individuals with disabilities?

**Hypothesis**
Ho: There is no significant difference between and within respondents responses on clothing needs for physically challenged individuals

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**
The research work adopted survey research design. The population of the study was thirty-five (35) respondents who are patients in Federal Medical Centre, Asaba. The respondents comprise of disabled persons using caliper and crutches, upper limb amputees, lower limb amputees, hemiplegics (total or partial paralysis from disease) and paraplegics (inability to move lower half of the body especially legs) were selected. No sampling method was employed due to the size of the population.

The instrument had a face and content validity and reliability coefficient of 0.94 using the test-retest method which was high enough to support the use of the instrument in the research (Inomiesa, 1993). All the copies (100%) of the questionnaires distributed were duly completed questionnaires were returned. Items with mean value of 3.0 and above were accepted while items with less mean weight were rejected. The questionnaire was coded with nominal values designed for each response that was expected from the respondents. Interview technique was used for some of the respondents. Each of the items was scored on the basis of the following code. The items are on 5 point scale of very highly Needed (VHN); highly needed (HN); averagely needed (AN), slightly needed (SN); and not needed (NN). The data were analysed using means and standard deviation.

**RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Statement items</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Functional garments should camouflage (hide) the disability of the wearer.</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Functional garments should be formed in a way to reduce the dependency of the wearer on caretaker (donning and doffing)</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>These garment should be formed in a way that it takes less time of the wearer/ caretaker as compared to existing dresses</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Functional garment should be serviceable and durable</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The wearer should not look different from normal after wearing functional garments</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Functional garments should not be expensive</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Garments should enhance the personality of the wearer</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The wearer can attend any social gathering with functional garments</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The maintenance and care of functional garment should not be difficult as compared to ordinary dresses</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The garment should fit the wearer</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Safety of a garment of the user</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Work, 2015
The result presented in Table 1 indicated that the nine (9) statement items had a mean range of 3.01 to 3.72. The means were above the cut-off point of 3.00. This indicated that the respondents agreed that the stated items were clothing needs of individuals with disability. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.53 to 0.81. This indicated that the respondents were unanimous in their responses as they were not far from each other.

Table 2: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) for significant test between and within the mean scores of respondents with caliper and crutches, upper limb amputees, lower limb amputees, hemiplegics and paraplegics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>S.S</th>
<th>M.S</th>
<th>F-cal</th>
<th>F-table</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Group</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50.03</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Group</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>435.09</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>485.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Work, 2015
P<0.05 level of significance

The result in Table 2 showed that F-cal value (2.24) is less than the F-table value (2.50) which indicates that the null hypothesis was accepted. It implied that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the group disabled persons on clothing needs for physically challenged individuals.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
The findings in Table 1 indicated that respondent needed clothes that will hide their disability, reduce dependency on their caretaker, requires less time to wear, serviceable and durable, not expensive, maintainable, fitness, safety and attractive. Attractive clothing helped in development of higher self-concept by giving the handicapped confidence in their appearance. The findings of the present study were in conformity with the finding of Lamb and Kallal (2002) describe the aesthetic considerations as the human desire for beauty. Included in their model are art elements, design principles, and body-garment relationship. Fashionable clothing that reflects current trends is important to people with disabilities (de-lerk and Ampousah, 2002; Kidd, 2006). The majority of functional garments on the market do not meet the aesthetic needs of the target market. Most ready-to-wear fashion clothing does not accommodate people with disabilities (de Klerk and Ampousah, 2002). With regards to garment safety, Kidd (2006) opined that garment size and shape must be taken into consideration in order to insure safety. Bulky clothing can interfere with the ability to use assistive devices and cause injury if the garment gets caught while the wearer is in motion. According to Labat and DeLong (2000) the most obvious reason for dissatisfaction with fit of clothing is that it does not conform to the body. The factors that affect satisfaction with fit include social ideal and the apparel industry ideal of fitness. Wearer perception of garment fit is an important factor that every designer should keep in mind (Watkins, 2004).

Table 2 indicated that the disabled persons had no difference in clothing needs. Specially designed clothing has major benefits for individuals with disabilities; they may also promote self stigmatization (Wingate, Kaiser and Freeman, 2005).

CONCLUSION
Clothing disabled person with garments that solve their needs have a way of integrating them in social aspect of live in the society. Identifying clothing needs of individuals with disability provides information that can be used to improve clothing design for individuals with disabilities. The study found out that the clothing needs of disabled persons were clothes that can hide their disability, reduce dependency on their caretaker, requires less time to wear, serviceable and durable, not expensive, maintainable, fitness, safety and attractive. Taking consideration of these needs will give them sense of belonging. The study also found out that the disabled ones uniformly have same needs for clothing.
RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Fashion designers should consider the needs of the disabled before making clothes for them.
2. The identified needs should be incorporated into the curriculum of fashion designers.
3. Caretakers should always have these needs in mind when dressing the disabled.

REFERENCES