

Fitting Problems in Ready-to-Wear Garments among Petite Female Students: Case Study of Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos State

Abiamuwe, N. O^{1.}, Seriki, M. J. S^{1.}, Ajuluchi, C. E.² & Adeniji, O. O^{3.}

1. Department of Vocational Education, School of Technical Education, Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos State.
2. Department of Home Economics, Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State.
3. Community Vocational Center, Festac Town, Lagos State.

Abstract

The study investigated fitting problems in ready-to-wear garments among petite female students in Yaba College of Education, Yaba, Lagos State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. Three research questions guided the study. Population was 1,872 female students. Sample size was 308. Questionnaire and Focus group discussion guide were used for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviations. Findings revealed seven fitting problems of petite students. Findings also showed that misleading size tags, figure types, few shops having limited number of petites' ready-to- wear garments were among the factors that contribute to garment fit problems. Findings also revealed that ways in which fitting problems can be managed by petite students included having ones measurement at hand while shopping, having knowledge of the right garments to wear, making custom made garments among more. Conclusions were made. Among recommendations proffered was that garments producers should use standardized sizes in production of ready to wear garments and petite figures should try different garments before buying.

Keywords: Fit, Garment, Size, Ready-to-Wear, Petite, Students

Introduction

Fit is one of the most important criteria for consumers in their garment buying decision. A garment may be well constructed and have all the excellent functional and aesthetic features which may attract the attention of the consumer, but if it does not fit well, the consumer may

not like it. Fit is defined as the way a garment conforms to the body or the relationship between the garment and the body, and is commonly seen as one of the most important indications of the quality of garments (Brown and Rice, 2010). Garment fit refers to the relationship between the size and contours of the garment to that of the

body (Shan, Haung and Qiam, 2013). Laitala, Klepp and Hauge (2011) described clothing fit as the correspondence in outward appearance of a piece of clothing to one's body. Proper fit gives the wearer of a dress a feeling of physical comfort and self-confidence. A good fit enhances the appearance of the wearer by making the body look well proportioned, smart and more flattering (Rasband and Liechty, 2006). Ashdown, Loker, Adelson, Carnite, Lyman-Clark and Petrova (2007) pointed out that female consumer mainly judge garment fit based on visual and tactile information they are able to obtain from the garment. Visual judgment is based on the appearance of the garment on the body. A well-fitting garment, therefore, depends on more than the relationship between the garment dimensions to the body dimension. Ashdown, et. al. (2007) mentioned that a garment with good fit during wear should hang smoothly and evenly on the body, with no wrinkles, pulls or distortion, the fabric should have straight seams, pleasing proportions, and adequate ease for movement with the hems parallel to the floor. A well-fitting garment should have all the elements of good fit such as garment grain, ease, line and balance to enable a garment to look presentable and attractive (Stamper, Sharp and Donnell, 2010). These elements determine the way the body fits into the garments. Knowledge of these elements of garment fit will enhance consumers' selection of ready-to-wear garments.

Ready-to-wear garments are mass produced clothes in factories. Throughout most of human existence, apparel was custom made from measurements taken from intended wearer and fit to the individual's size and shape (Brown and Rice, 2010). With the advent of industrial revolution, the form of ready-to-wear garments became a new way to acquire one's apparel. Ready-to-wear garment is designed to provide consumers with pre-assembled apparel, in a range of standard sizes, designed to fit the average consumer (Weidner, 2010). They are produced in standardized sizes, stocked in retail stores, and intended to be worn by the purchaser (Shan, Huang and Qian, 2013). Unlike custom apparel which had been produced for a specific customer, ready-to-wear garments are made to fit a target customer whose precise body size and measurements are not known to the manufacturer (Park, Nam, Choi, Lee and Lee, 2009). They are made using standardized sizes. By this definition, people whose measurements are not within the average size will experience difficulty with fit, either in part or in totality, when wearing standard size clothing (Anikweze, 2013).

Meeting the needs of every person in terms of fit preference is difficult for apparel companies because ready-to-wear garments are made for consumers with normatively proportioned bodies. One of the most difficult challenges facing the apparel industry today is the ability to provide well-fitting garments to a broadly defined target market (Ashdown,

Loker, and Adelson, 2007). One of the contributing factors in garment fitting problems is the individual body shapes. According to Weidner (2010), common fitting problems in garments occur within the specialty sizes which are petites, misses and plus-size. Special clothing has been designed for people whose figures vary from the norm. For the petite, there is often a problem in obtaining appropriate ready-to-wear clothing that fits well because of their figure.

Petite is a term used in fashion to describe females that measure five feet (5ft) in height or below (Kinley, 2010). Petite refers to stature not weight. Petite clothing is designed to fit women shorter than 164cm to cater for narrower shoulders and shorter vertical proportions (Ashdown, et. al. 2007). Being petite depends on the length of limbs, the width of shoulders, the size of bust and waist. Petite women come in different shapes, sizes and also encounter different fit problems due to their body type. Kinley (2010) reported that petite women are not completely satisfied with the ready-to-wear garment found in stores and most of the fit problems encountered were associated with the length. Park, et. al (2009) asserted that garment sizing is a contributing factor to garment fit problems. Most clothing manufacturers in developing countries including Africa do not follow a standardized sizing system when producing garments. This leads to varying sizes among the manufacturers or within the same manufacturer, leaving consumers

frustrated and confused (Alexander, Connell and Presley, 2005). Size label communication is also considered a factor contributing to garment fit problems. Wrong and unrealistic information communicated on the size label can lead to consumers choosing an improper fitting garment (Brown and Rice, 2010). Petite consumers should bear in mind the right ideas on the garments to purchase such as garments that will camouflage their figure and give them the illusion of height. Garments such as V-neck tops, elongate their necks which makes them look taller. Monochrome outfits (clothes of the same colour), well fitted garments outline their well-trimmed shape and garments with vertical stripes elongate their figure which makes them look taller. Based on this backdrop, this study determined the fitting problems in ready-to-wear garments among petite students in Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State.

Purpose of the study

The major purpose of this study was to determine fitting problems in ready-to-wear garments among female petite students in Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos State. Specifically, the study determined the:

1. fitting problems of the petite students,
2. factors contributing to garment fit problems among petite students
3. ways of solving fitting problems by petite students

Research Questions: The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the fitting problems of petite students?
2. What are the factors contributing to garment fit problems among petite students?
3. In what ways can fit problems be solved by petite students?

Methodology

Design of the Study: The study adopted a descriptive survey design.

Area of the Study: The area of the study was the four female hostels (Akata, New Hall, Bakassi and PGD Hall) in Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos State. The female hostels were considered appropriate as area of the study since it has a large population of female students residing in the hostel.

Population of the Study: The population for this study was one thousand, eight hundred and seventy-two (1,872). This consisted of the entire female students residing in the four female hostels (Source: Students Affairs Record as at May, 2017).

Sample and Sampling Techniques: The sample size for this study was 308. This was achieved using "Taro Yamen" statistical method of determining sample size. Convenience sampling was used to select seventy-seven (77) students from each of the four female hostels.

Instrument for Data Collection: Questionnaire and focus group discussion guide were used for data collection. The questionnaire was titled "Fitting Problems in Ready-to-

Wear Garments among Female Petite Students" (FPRGAFPS). It was divided into two sections. Section A sought for demographic information while section B was based on the research questions. Section B was drawn on a four point scale rating: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). Focus group discussion guide was also used for data collection from the respondents and their responses were recorded. Three Home Economics experts validated the instrument. Test retest method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument and it yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.85.

Method of Data Collection: Three hundred and eight (308) copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the female petite students by the researchers. Seventy-seven copies of the questionnaires were conveniently distributed to the female petite students in each of the four female hostels. Efforts were made to ensure that the items were filled correctly without omitting any of the needed information. Two hundred and ninety-five (295) copies of the distributed questionnaires were returned showing 96% return rate. For the focus group discussion, the female students were grouped into twelve for each batch. Each of the four female hostels had three batches for the group discussions. The discussions were guided with the purposes of the study. "Common room" in each of the hostels was utilized for the focus group discussion after seeking permission

from the hostel supervisor. Three research assistants helped the researchers in taking notes, comments, recording and videoing while the researchers moderated the discussions.

Method of Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using mean and standard

deviations. Mean ratings from 2.5 and above were considered as agreed upon while mean ratings of 2.49 and below were considered as disagreed upon. The responses of the participants were recorded, summarized and used to corroborate the findings of the study.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on Fitting Problems of Petite Students

S/N	Fitting Problems of Petite Students	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
	Fitting problems among petite students include problems in fit at:			
1.	length of ready-to-wear garment are usually too long	3.02	1.07	Agreed
2.	waistline of ready-to wear garments are too large	3.31	0.58	Agreed
3.	armholes of ready-to-wear garments are usually too large	2.85	0.94	Agreed
4.	sleeves of ready-to-wear garments are too loose for petite	2.69	1.15	Agreed
5.	ease of hip line are too loose for a petite figure	2.65	1.10	Agreed
6.	bust line of ready-to-wear garments are too large	3.04	0.86	Agreed
7.	width of shoulder of ready-to-wear garments are too long	2.77	1.14	Agreed

Table 1 contains the mean and standard deviation of fitting problems of petite students in ready to wear garments. From the analysis, the mean responses ranged from 2.65 to 3.31 which is above the cutoff point of 2.50. Hence, all the items were agreed upon as fitting problems in ready to wear garments. Standard deviation ranged from 0.58 to 1.15. This implied that their mean responses were not far from each other.

Findings from focus group discussion revealed that the fitting

problems in ready to wear garments include:

1. Ready-to-wear trousers' length are usually longer for the petite figure
2. Bust line of ready-to-wear garments are usually loose for petite figure
3. Armholes of ready-to wear garments are often too large for the petite figure
4. Hielines of ready-to-wear garments are usually too loose for petite students
5. Sleeves of ready-to-wear garments are too long for the petite students

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation on Factors Contributing to Garment Fit Problems among Petite Students

S/N	Factors Contributing to Garment Fit Problems among Petite Students	$\bar{X}$	SD	Rmk
1.	Variations in figure type of petite students such as petite with large bust, flat chest, large hip and broad shoulder causes fit problems	3.52	0.69	Agreed
2.	Information on garment size label used as a guide can be trusted	2.00	1.02	Disagreed
3.	Garment size label are often misleading	2.76	1.00	greed
4.	The labels found on garments are not understandable	2.66	1.02	Agreed
5.	Well fitting petite's ready-to-wear garments are usually scarce	2.86	1.06	Agreed
6.	Non availability of specialty clothes for petite	2.57	0.99	Agreed
7.	Standard sizes for garments do not suit petite figures	2.88	1.08	Agreed

From the analysis in Table 2, all but one of the listed items were agreed upon as factors that contribute to garment fit problems. Item 2 with a mean of 2.00 was rejected. Hence, information on garment size label used as a guide cannot be trusted. However, standard deviation ranged from 0.69 to 1.08 indicating that the mean responses of the respondents were not far from each other.

Findings from focus group discussion revealed that the factors that contribute to garment fit problems include:

1. Misleading size tags are often placed on ready-to-wear garments
2. Few shops have special clothing for petite figures
3. Ready-to-wear garments in the petite sections are limited
4. Difficulty in getting fashionable styles for the petite figure

4. Table 3: Mean and Standard deviation on Ways of solving fitting problems by Petite Students

S/N	Ways of Solving Fitting Problems by Petite Students	$\bar{X}$	SD	Rmk
1.	Paying attention to size tags on garments when shopping	3.20	0.67	Agreed
2.	Having ones measurement at hand helps when shopping	3.25	0.77	Agreed
3.	Trying different clothes enables one to buy the right fit	3.40	0.69	Agreed
4.	Having knowledge of the right garments to wear	3.53	0.92	Agreed
5.	Making custom made garments would guarantee garment fit	2.95	1.08	Agreed
6.	Amending ready-to-wear garments would ensure garment fit	2.86	0.99	Agreed

Table 3 revealed that all the listed items had mean values above 2.50. The items had mean values ranging from 2.86 to 3.53 implying that all the items were all accepted as ways in which fit problems can be managed by petite students. Standard deviation ranged from 0.67 to 1.08 indicating that the

mean responses were not far from each other.

Findings from focus group discussion revealed that the ways in which fit problems can be managed by petite students include:

- ❖ Not paying attention to size tags but trying out the garment to determine fit
- ❖ Knowing ones measurement and ability to choose appropriate garment that would fit
- ❖ Amending ready-to-wear garments to suit ones size.
- ❖ Sewing ones clothes instead of buying ready-to-wear garments ensures adequate fit among petite students.

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that the fitting problems of petite students in ready to wear garments included problems in: length of ready-to-wear garments, waistline, armholes and sleeves being too loose, problem with ease of hip line, bust line and width of shoulder. This showed that the petite students have fitting problems in ready-to-wear garments. The problems can be attributed to their figure type. In line with the findings, Alexander, et al. (2005) reported that most fitting problems encountered by petite figures in ready-to wear garments were in various parts of their body such as waist, hip, armholes and bust. Kinley (2010) submitted that petite women were not completely satisfied with the ready-to-wear garments found in stores and most of the fit problems encountered were associated with the length. To further support the finding, Tootal Sewing Products (1984) in Anikweze (2013) stated that the most common fitting problems that exist among different figure types are large bust, small bust, low bust, flat chest, narrow chest, round shoulders,

broad shoulders, narrow shoulders, square shoulders, thick waist, hollow back (for skirts), large stomach and plump upper arm. Findings from focus group discussion revealed that the fitting problems in ready to wear garments include length of ready-to-wear trousers are usually longer for the petite figure, bust of ready-to-wear garments are often loose, armholes of ready-to wear garments are usually too large for the petite figure, hiplines of ready-to-wear garments are usually loose and sleeves of ready-to-wear garments are loose. These findings agreed with the opinion of Ashdown, et. al. (2009) that petite consumers are least satisfied with the length, bust and hips of ready-to-wear garments. Robertson (2008) supported these findings by stating that every girl's body has its own unique shape, and this probably accounts for a myriad of styles, lengths and shapes of dresses available in the market.

Findings indicated that the factors that contribute to garment fit problems include figure type affects the choice of garments purchased, garment size label provides valuable information, labels found on garments are understandable, garment size labeling, non availability of specialty clothes for petite and standard sizes of garments that do not suit petite figures. This showed that there are a number of factors responsible for garment fit problems. In line with these findings, Park, et. al (2009) asserted that garment sizing is a contributing factor to garment fit problems. Most clothing manufacturers in developing countries

including Africa do not follow a standardized sizing system when producing garments. This leads to varying sizes among the manufacturers or within the same manufacturer, leaving consumers frustrated and confused (Alexander, et. al., 2005). Size label communication is also considered a factor contributing to garment fit problems. Weidner (2010) reported that apparel manufacturers are not using a standard system to size ready to wear clothing. Findings also showed that the information on garment size label used as a guide cannot be trusted. In support of these findings, Faust and Carrier (2010) reported that numerical size codes on tags of ready-to-wear garments are unrelated to specific individual body measurements. Findings from focus group discussion revealed that the factors that contribute to garment fit problems include misleading size tags, few shops having special clothing for petite figures, ready-to-wear garments in the petite sections being limited and petite figures having difficulty in getting fashionable styles. Wrong and unrealistic information communicated on the size label can lead to consumers choosing an improper fitting garment (Brown and Rice 2010). To further buttress the finding, Fung Global Retails and Technology (FGRT) (2017) stated that ready-to-wear apparel manufacturers decide the fit and sizing of their garments based on limited information. Apparel manufacturers generally decide on sizing by using fit models in one or two standard sizes and then scale

prototypes proportionally up and down to all sizes based on the one or two originals. Benrubes, Estel and Jordan (2015) stated that creating clothing that fits well is particularly challenging in the petite and plus-size categories, where specific parts of garments need to accommodate different body shapes instead of following a proportional scale from standard sizes. For example, a garment in a petite size might have a larger-than-proportional waist or a longer torso than mathematically scaled measurements would call for.

Result of findings also revealed that the ways in which fit problems can be managed by petite students include paying attention to size tags on garments when shopping, having ones measurement at hand helps when shopping, trying different clothes before buying, having knowledge of the right garments to wear, making custom made garments and amending ready-to-wear garments bought. In agreement with these findings, Park, et. al. (2009) stated that to help petite consumers with the right choices of ready-to-wear garments, they are advised to know their body measurements and have it at hand while purchasing garments. Petite consumers should bear in mind the right ideas on the garments to purchase i.e garments that will camouflage their figure and give them the illusion of height. In line with the findings, (FGRT) (2017) reported that the appropriate way to solve apparel fitting problems is through computer aided technology known as 3D body-scanning technology that help apparel

companies create garments with a more accurate fit by providing true measurements of customers of different shapes and sizes. Body-scanning tools can also benefit consumers, by enabling them to virtually try on clothing in order to find the best fit. Findings from focus group discussion revealed that the ways in which fit problems can be managed by petite students include not paying attention to size tags but trying out the garment to determine fit, knowing ones measurement and ability to choose appropriate garment that would fit. In support of these findings, Benrubes, Estel and Jordan, (2015) asserted that petite figures should stop focusing on garment tags when shopping because a lot of ready-to-wear garments are not developed with standardized sizes.

Conclusion

The study determined fitting problems in ready-to-wear garment among petite students. Findings indicated that the fitting problems encountered by petite figures include problems in length of ready-to-wear garments, waistline, armholes and sleeves being too loose, problem with ease of hip line, bust line and width of shoulder. Results also showed that the factors contributing to garment fit problems include figure type, garment size label, non availability of specialty clothes for petite and standard sizes for garments that do not suit petite figures. Results indicated that the ways of helping petite figures to manage fitting problems include paying attention to size tags on garments when shopping,

having ones measurement at hand helps when shopping, trying different clothes before buying, having knowledge of the right garments to wear, making custom made garments and amending ready-to-wear garments bought.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- ❖ Producers of garments should use standardized sizes in production of ready-to-wear garments.
- ❖ Producers of ready-to-wear garments should endeavor to include correct size tags on fabrics.
- ❖ Petite students with extreme figure types such as large bust, large hips, tiny waist and long torso should go for custom made garments that will enhance their figure faults.

References

- Alexander, M., Connell, M. J & Presley, A.B. (2005). Clothing Fit Preferences of Young Female Adult Consumers. *International Journal of Clothing Science and Technology*, 17, (1) 52-64.
- Anikweze, G. U. (2013). Figure Types and Challenges of Making Garments in Nigeria. *Production Agriculture and Technology, Nasarawa state University Journal*. 9 (1) 135-146. Retrieved on 21st July, 2017 from: www.patnsukjournal.net/currentissues
- Ashdown, S.P., Loker, S. & Adelson, C. (2007). Using 3D Scans for Fit Analysis. *Journal of Textile and Apparel, Technology and Management*, 4, (1) 1-12.
- Ashdown, S. P., Loker, S., Adelson, C., Carnrite, E., Lyman-Clark, L & Petrova, A. (2007). Improve apparel sizing: Fit

- and Anthropometric 3D Scan Data. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 24, (2) 137-146.
- Benrubes, A. C., Estel, C. & Jordan, A. (2015) Dress well when you are Petite. Retrieved on 4th June, 2017 from http://:dress_well_when_you_are_petite.edu
- Brown, P. & Rice, P. (2010). Ready-to-Wear Apparel Analysis. 2nd Edition. New Jersey: Merrill-Prentice Hall.
- Calasibetta, N. J. & Tortora, D. K. (2003). Adolescents' Clothing Motives and Store Selection Criteria: A Comparison between South Korea and the United States, *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 29, (2)1-11
- Faust, M.E. & Carrier, S. T. (2010). Women's Wear Sizing: a New Labeling System. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 14,(1) 88-126.
- Fung Global Retails and Technology (FGRT) (2017). 3D Body-Scanning Technology: Creating the Perfect Fit. Retrieved on 27th July, 2017 from: www.fungglobalretails&tech.deboralweiswig.com
- Kinley, T. R. (2010). Fit and Shopping Preferences by Clothing Benefits Sought. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 14, (3) 397-411
- Laitala, K., Klepp, I. G. & Hauge, B. (2011). Materialized Ideas: Sizes and Beauty. *Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 3:19-41.
- McRobbarts, B. L. (2005). Petite Women: Fit and Body Shape Analysis. Unpublished MSc Thesis from the School of Human Ecology, Louisiana State University
- Park, J., Nam, Y., Choi, K., Lee, Y. & Lee, K. H. (2009). Apparel consumers' type and their shopping characteristics. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 13, (3) 372-393
- Rasband, J. A. & Liechty, E. L. G. (2006). Fabulous Fit. 2nd Ed. New York: Fairchild Publications.
- Ransband, J. A. (2010). High Technology in the Apparel Industry. *Human Ecology*, 11-16.
- Robertson, C. (2008). *How to match Prom Dresses to Figure Types*. Majon International. Retrieved on 5th May 2017 from http://www.majon.com/articles/Clothing_for_Women/prom_dresses_657.htm;
- Shan, Y., Haung, G. & Qian, X. (2013). Research Overview of Apparel Fit. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 161: 39-44. Retrieved on 6th August, 2017 from <http://link.springer.com>chapter>
- Stamper, A.A., Sharp, S. H. & Donnell, L. B. (2005). Evaluating Apparel Quality. 2nd ed. New York: Fairchild Fashion Group.
- Weidner, N. L. (2010). Vanity Sizing, Body Image, and Purchase Behaviour: A Closer Look at the Effects of Inaccurate Garment Labelling. Unpublished MSc. Thesis from Eastern Michigan University.