

## **UNDERSTANDING THE NEXUS OF LOCATION AND READY-TO-WEAR FIT PREFERENCE AMONG FEMALE TEACHERS IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between location and ready-to-wear fit preference among female teachers in Kogi State, Nigeria. A multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select 400 female teachers (200 in rural and 200 in urban) from the list of 3,986 secondary school female teachers aged 30-60 years in the study area. The primary data obtained through questionnaire administration were analysed using descriptive and Kruskal-Wallis statistics. The results show that the majority (61.2%) of the female teachers were in the age bracket of 36-45 years with a first degree as the most (94.5%) obtained educational qualification. The result further reveals most teachers in rural (56.50%) and urban (50.50%) areas prefer loose-fit fit ready-to-wear apparel. The inferential analysis shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between location and fit preference among female teachers. The study recommended that the manufacturers should offer diverse clothing options to cater to varied fit preferences, implement flexible dress codes in educational institutions, consider localized apparel design, and provide climate-appropriate attire.*

**Keywords:** Apparel, female, preference, ready-to-wear, rural, urban

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ready-to-wear apparel are clothing items that are pre-sewn according to standard specifications to fit various body types, requiring no adjustments by the consumer. Abul (2009) defines ready-to-wear garments as mass-produced textile products in the clothing industry. Unlike custom-tailored garments, ready-made garments are not individually tailored to specific measurements but are instead based on generalized sizing derived from anthropometric studies (Akinyotu and Alao, 2020). Locally made apparel is crafted from fabrics readily available in the environment and produced by individual artisans. The appeal of ready-to-wear apparel lies in its proper fit and attention to detail. The selection of garments and styles depends on the intended occasion. For instance, attire chosen for religious services may differ from that worn in an office setting (teaching setting – schools) or for social gatherings. Religious apparel prioritizes modesty and decency, while office attire is designed to meet workplace standards, encourage professionalism, and facilitate free movement.

Since ready-to-wear clothing relies on an accurate understanding of the distribution of body shapes and sizes within a specific population, it is essential for each location, and even different regions within a diverse location, to establish their sizing systems tailored to their target population (Honey & Olds, 2007). A common complaint among consumers is dissatisfaction with the fit of garments (Mastamet-Mason, 2008). This dissatisfaction has spurred the development of assistive technologies in manufacturing, processing, and retail environments, such as the utilization of body scanners. With body scan technology, body dimensions and shapes can be quickly and accurately obtained from a population and promptly translated into body form categories, size charts, and garment patterns for production (Ashdown *et al.* 2004).

Kogi State's rural and urban areas have distinct lifestyles, with rural settings typically characterized by more physical labour and outdoor activities compared to urban environments. This study is premised on the fact that, while female teachers within the same profession share common professional identities, their fit preferences may still be influenced by the unique characteristics of their rural or urban teaching environments. As a result, female workers in rural areas may prefer looser or more relaxed fit garments that allow for ease of movement and comfort during their daily tasks, whereas those in urban areas may lean towards more tailored or form-fitting attire suited for office or indoor work environments (Lee *et al.* 2012). According to Burnes and Towers (2016), community expectations, work environment, access to fashion retail, climatic conditions, and professional expectations all play a role in shaping fit preferences among female ready-to-wear apparel consumers.

This study examined the relationship between location and fit preferences among female teachers. Previous studies have identified a positive correlation between consumers' interest in clothing and their decision to make purchases (Kumar *et al.*, 2009; Vikkraman & Sumathi, 2012). Additionally, research has shown that consumers' level of price sensitivity influences their decision to purchase clothing items (Gauzente and Roy, 2012; Jayasingh and Eze, 2012). These findings suggest a potential gap in the nexus of location and fit preference. In other words, female teachers who reside in rural areas have different preferences to teachers in an urban setting. Despite the significance of this potential effect, literature examining such a relationship in Kogi State, Nigeria is scarce, to the best of the researchers' knowledge. Consequently, there is a need to address this research gap regarding the customers' location and fit preference for ready-to-wear apparel.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive survey design was adopted in this study. The population for the study comprises of 3,986 secondary school female teachers between the ages of 30-60 years living in Kogi State. Taro and Yamane's formula was used to calculate a sample size of 364 respondents. Primary data for the study was obtained from 400 female teachers (200 in rural areas and 200 in urban areas). The selection of the respondents was through a multi-stage sampling procedure. A body measurement guide as suggested by Aldrich (2000) was used to collect data on body measurement. Descriptive statistics and Kruskal-Wallis inferential statistical tools were used for data analysis and Chi-square was used for testing hypothesis at  $p < 0.05$  level of significance.

### **Hypothesis:**

Ho1 There is no relationship between socio-demographic variables and fit preference of the respondents.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Demographic data of respondents**

Descriptive statistic on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic variables of the respondents**

<b>Demographic variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age(years)</b>		
20-30	112	28
31-40	210	52.8
Above 40	78	19.5
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	281	70
Single	189	29
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	275	68.8
Muslim	125	31.0
<b>Educational qualification</b>		
First degree	378	94.5
Second degree	22	5.5
<b>Income level(monthly)</b>		
Less than 50,000	106	26.5
50,000-100,000	262	65.5
Above 100,000	32	8

The socio-demographic characteristics analysed in this study include age, marital status, religion, educational qualification and income. The distribution of respondents according to age categories shows that the majority of the respondents were in the age bracket of 31-40 years. The result on the age categories implies that the majority of the respondents were in their youthful and active age. They are therefore likely to be more aware of the dynamics of fashion and more concerned about the fit of their apparel. The majority of the respondents were married, while a few number of them were single. A large number of the respondents were Christians. Based on their educational qualification, it can be established that majority of the female teachers had first degree. This implies that the teachers have more than the national minimum educational qualification which is the Nigeria certificate in education.

### Fit preferences of the respondents

The distribution of respondents according to fit preferences is presented in Table 2. The results show variation in the fit preference of the respondents. There is a high preference for loose-fitting apparel in rural areas, this may be influenced by physically demanding activities, traditional values, and climate considerations. In contrast, urban areas demonstrated a higher preference for close-fitting apparel. This may be because of urban fashion trends, indoor job roles, and climate control.

**Table 2: Fit preferences of the respondents**

Fit preferences	Rural		Urban		Pooled	
	Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage
Loose fit	113	56.50	89	44.50	202	50.50
Close fit	87	43.50	111	55.50	198	49.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Field Survey, 2023.

These findings suggest that in rural areas, where most respondents favoured loose-fitting clothing, several factors could be contributing to this preference. Rural environments often entail a range of physically demanding activities, such as outdoor teaching or agricultural work. Loose-fitting attire can offer comfort, ease of movement, and ventilation, which are essential in such contexts. Additionally, traditional, or cultural influences might promote the adoption of loose fits, reflecting practicality and modesty. In contrast, the urban respondents' preference for close-fitting apparel aligns with the dynamics of urban living. Urban areas tend to experience faster shifts in fashion trends, and close-fitting clothing often aligns with contemporary styles. Urban teachers may have predominantly desk-bound jobs, and they may value the sleek and professional appearance that close-fitting attire can offer. Additionally, climate control in urban environments may reduce the need for loose clothing for temperature regulation.

Understanding these fit preferences is crucial for various stakeholders. For the fashion industry, it underscores the importance of offering a diverse range of clothing options to cater to the varied preferences of their clientele. Designers and manufacturers can consider creating lines of clothing that blend both loose and close fits to address this dichotomy. From an educational and policy perspective, these findings highlight the need for dress codes that accommodate these diverse preferences. Educational institutions should strike a balance between professionalism and individual comfort. Dress codes should be flexible enough to allow teachers to choose attire that aligns with their preferences while maintaining a professional appearance.

### **Test of association between location and fit preference**

This study applied Kruskal-Wallis to test locational (residential) differences among female teachers in terms of their fit preference. Table 3 shows the difference in location on fit preference of ready-to-wear apparel which indicates a calculated chi-squared value of 0.007.

Table 3: Kruska-walis test on location difference and fit preference

<b>Location</b>	<b>Obs.</b>	<b>Rank Sum</b>	<b>Chi-Squared</b>	<b>Probability</b>
Urban	200	40200.00	0.007	0.9311 <sup>NS</sup>
Rural	200	40000.000		

Field Survey, 2023.

<sup>NS</sup> = Not Significant

The Chi-square statistic measures the overall difference among the groups (Urban and Rural). A low Chi-square value suggests that there is little difference between the groups regarding their wear preferences and location. The p-value associated with the Chi-Square statistic is 0.9311, this is a measure of statistical significance with a p-value close to 1 (0.9311), (Wink, 2012). Even though there are slight differences between the rural and urban fit Preferences, statistically, that difference is not significant. The respondents appear to have similar fit preference considerations, regardless of whether they live in urban or rural areas.

### **Relationship between socio-demographic variables and fit preference of ready-to-wear apparel**

The relationship between socio-demographic variables and fit preference of ready-to-wear apparel is presented in Table 4. The findings between age and fit preference of ready-wear apparels show that there was a significant relationship between age and fit preferences of respondents. The result from the study shows that respondents between the ages of 20-30 years preferred close fit apparels, while the older respondents preferred loose fit apparels.

This may be attributed to the fact that younger people may have firmer body shapes and may want apparels that accentuate those parts of the body like the bust, waist, and hip, whereas the older respondents may be out of shape, therefore, they might prefer loose fit apparels that conceal the undesirable body features.

There was also significant association between marital status and fit preference. The result from the study showed that a large number of the respondents who were single preferred close fit apparel, while respondents who were married showed preference for loose fitting apparels. This may be attributed to the fact that the single respondents might also be the younger respondents who preferred close fit apparels. Single respondents may not have experienced loss of body shape due to pregnancy and child bearing, hence they might prefer close fit apparels that enhance their attractive body features. Jham (2018), investigated the effect of marital status on consumers' apparel fit satisfaction, and found that customer fit preference for ready-to-wear apparels differs across individual on the basis of their marital status. For example, he found that female customers who were married showed more preference for loose fit apparel than their unmarried counterparts.

Relationship between fit preference and religion show that religion was not significant related to fit preference. Christianity and Muslim religion all have individual forms of dressing that visibly identify members of the religion for maintaining the traditions, customs, and hierarchies Kersial (2003), however, in this study religion differences were not found in apparel fit preference of the respondents. The findings on the relationship between income and fit preference show that there was no association between fit preference and income of the respondents. This implies that the income level of the respondents did not influence their preference for either close fit or loose fit ready-to-wear apparels). The hypothesis which stated that socio-demographic variables will be significantly associated with fit preference of the respondents was rejected on age and marital status but not rejected regarding religion and income.

**Table 4: Relationship between sociodemographic variables and fit preference of ready-to-wear apparel**

SN	Items	Loose fit F (%)	Close fit F (%)	Chi-Square (P-value)
1	<b>Age (Years)</b>			
	20-30	66(37.7)	109(62.3)	10.25 (.006)*
	31-40	51(42.5)	69(57.5)	
	Above 40	60(57.1)	45(42.9)	
2	<b>Marital Status</b>			
	Married	121(49.4)	124(50.6)	7.30 (.026)*
	Single	56(36.4)	98(63.6)	
3	<b>Religion</b>			
	Christian	124(45.1)	151(54.9)	0.25(.615)
	Muslim	53(42.4)	72(57.6)	
4	<b>Income(Monthly)</b>			
	Less than 50000	91(42.9)	121(57.1)	0.33(.848)
	50000-100000	25(46.3)	29(53.7)	
	Above 100000	61(45.5)	73(54.5)	

\*, values are significant at  $p < 0.05$

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study reveals that rural female teachers prefer loose-fitting attire, likely due to outdoor activities and traditional values, while their urban counterparts lean towards close-fitting clothing, reflecting fashion trends and indoor job roles. However, the differences between rural and urban preferences were not significant, suggesting similar considerations regardless of location. Based on findings from the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Fashion industry stakeholders should offer a range of clothing options, blending both loose and close fits, to cater to the varied preferences of their clientele.

2. Educational institutions should implement flexible dress codes that balance professionalism with individual comfort, allowing teachers to choose attire that aligns with their preferences while maintaining a professional appearance.
3. Designers and manufacturers should consider creating apparel lines tailored to specific geographic regions, considering local preferences for fit and style.
4. Given the influence of climate on fit preferences, retailers should offer clothing suitable for different environmental conditions, ensuring comfort and functionality.
5. Continued research into fit preferences across diverse demographics and geographic regions would provide deeper insights for stakeholders, aiding in the development of more targeted and inclusive clothing options.

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