

Rural Mothers' Preferences for Pre-adolescent Children's Garments

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ABSTRACT Preadolescence is a period when puberty growth spurts begin and conformity to peer group standards is very important to the child. The present study was conducted in Hisar city of Haryana state and its surrounding villages to find out the preferences of rural mothers while selecting garments for the pre-adolescent boys and girls. Market survey was done to enlist the available garments for this age group. For that purpose, eight retail stores offering kids wear were visited. It was found that fifteen types of dresses were available for both the sexes. The preferences for garments were taken from 100 rural women. *Salwar-suit* and *pyjama-suit* were found to be the most preferred dresses for girls by rural mothers while for boys' *pant-shirt* and *kurta-pyjama* were most preferred.

INTRODUCTION

Preadolescence is the period of human development just preceding adolescence, specifically the period between the approximate ages of 9 and 12 (www.merriamwebster.com). According to DeBord (2008), there are several physical, mental and social changes in this age. Growth in weight and height continues at a steady rate. Some children experience a growth spurt and enter early adolescence. Children begin to experience body changes that indicate approaching puberty. This age group has the need to feel independent. They want to be free to express themselves. Importance of the peer group increases. Conforming to peer standards in every aspect of behaviour becomes critical. This is also true for the type of dresses they wear. Therefore, selection of garments for this age is a challenging task.

Careful selection of clothes for a child can satisfy some of his important needs, help get more attention from peer group and identification of sex. Clothing for a child may become a major problem for the family because it is expensive and at the same time used only for short period of time. It should be selected to help better child development, self reliance, practice, increased social skills and interaction with peers (Gautam 2005).

India's rural market has just started to be seen as a viable option and companies who understand what the rural consumer wants will grow to incredible heights. The bulk of India's population still live in rural areas and to be able to cater specifically to them will mean generating

tremendous amounts of business. Retail business must focus on the most important factor in the Indian mind-set, that is, value for money. Indian consumers are ready to pay almost any amount of money for a product or service as long as they feel they are getting good value for money. This is often misconstrued as being tight fisted or interested in lower priced and/or lower quality products (Bahadur 2011).

There has also been widespread media interest in children and fashion, notably with the rise of the so-called 'tweenager', in the context of a growing market in children's clothing and accessories now estimated to be worth well over £5 billion in the UK alone (Mintel 2001). However, the study of clothing preferences for rural children is one area that is yet to be explored. Although rural population provides a huge number of consumers in every sector including readymade garments, rural children's pattern of clothing has been overlooked by academic studies as well as the industry. In this paper, an attempt has been made to understand socio-ecological contexts of rural children's use of clothing, through rural mothers' preferences for garments of their pre-adolescent boys and girls.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in Hisar city of Haryana state and its surrounding villages due to ease in accessibility. The study was conducted in the year 2009. The market survey was conducted in Hisar city. Eight retail stores offering kids wear were visited. An exhaustive list of garments available in market for this age

group was prepared including casual wear, nightwear and occasional wear. Woolen articles were not included in the study. The preferences for garments were taken from the rural women of three villages which were, Satrod, Kaimary and Gangwa. The preferences were taken from 100 rural women using simple proforma. The women who were mothers of pre-teen boys or girls were selected purposively. They were asked to name the dresses they liked their son or daughter to wear, casually as well as occasionally. The respondents were free to give more than one preference, that is, they marked all the dresses they would like their pre adolescent wards to wear.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The personal profile of the respondents, that is, rural mothers has been given in Table 1. Most of the mothers were in the age group of 18-30 years. The majority was educated only up to or below matriculation. They came from medium sized farming families that were either nuclear or joint. Brock et al. (2010) included mothers in their study 'Exploring the Apparel Needs and Preferences of Tween Girls and Their Mothers' in order to understand how mothers affect the tweens' apparel.

Table 1: Personal profile of respondents (N=100)

S. No.	Aspects	Categories	Number of respondents
1	Age	18-30	60
		31-45	34
		46-60	06
2	Education	Illiterate	22
		Primary	13
		Middle	24
		Matriculation	23
		Above matriculation	18
3	Family Type	Nuclear	41
		Joint	59
4	Family Size	Small	32
		Medium	50
		Large	18
5	Family Occupation	Farming	67
		Business	11
		Service	23

Table 2 gives the list of dresses available in the market for preadolescent girls and boys. There were fifteen types of dresses to be chosen from according to one's liking. The girls' wear included *anarkali* suit, capri suit, divider-top,

dungaree, frock, jeans-top, *lancha*, *lehanga choli*, night suit, parallel suit, *pyjama* suit, *salwar* suit, skirt-top, slacks suit and trouser suit. The boys' wear included bermuda- t-shirt, capri suit, cargo suit, coat-pant, gallace suit, jacket-suit, jeans-t-shirt, knicker-shirt, *kurta-pyjama*, night suit, pant shirt, *pathani* suit, *sherwani*, sweat shirt-pant and track suit. It is clear that market offers a number of outfits in this age group and the variety is at par for both the sexes.

Table 2: List of dresses for elementary school children prepared on the basis of market survey

S. No.	Dresses for girls	Dresses for boys
1.	<i>Anarkali</i> suit	Bermuda T-shirt
2.	Capri suit	Capri suit
3.	Divider-top	Cargo suit
4.	Dungaree	Coat-Pant
5.	Frock	Gallace suit
6.	Jeans-top	Jacket-suit
7.	<i>Lancha</i>	Jeans-T shirt
8.	<i>Lehanga choli</i>	Knicker shirt
9.	Night suit	<i>Kurta pyjama</i>
10.	Parallel suit	Night suit
11.	<i>Pyjama</i> suit	Pant shirt
12.	<i>Salwar</i> suit	<i>Pathani</i> suit
13.	Skirt-top	<i>Sherwani</i>
14.	Slacks suit	Sweat shirt-pant
15.	Trouser suit	Track suit

Table 3 contains number of preferences each dress got from the mothers. As expected, *salwar*-suit was preferred by all the rural mothers, first because this is classic attire of females in Haryana and second because all the rural tailors as well as the mothers, who know stitching, can stitch these two articles. As per Blake et al. (1953), mothers sew clothes at home to save money, for better fit, to use left over material and to get the exactly needed article. It was followed by *pyjama* suit that was preferred by 89 percent respondents because *pyjama* being tight is considered less comfortable than a roomy *salwar*. Parallel suit, jeans top, frock and skirt-top were preferred by only 10-20 percent respondents. Frock and skirt-top were less preferred because legs are not covered in these dresses. Noreen (2011) informs the tourists visiting India that attire is an important way of showing social stature and status in India. The overall dress code is more conservative. Short, revealing clothes for women should be avoided especially if they don't want to get stared at. Rural parts of India call for loose cool clothing that covers up as much as possible. In the bigger

cities, jeans and western wear is perfectly acceptable and is widely worn by Indian's themselves. It is advised to stick to the more conservative length of dresses and skirts (knee length or longer preferably) and avoid plunging necklines and strappy tops.

Table 3: Preferences of rural mothers for preadolescent girls' dresses

S. No.	Name of dress	No. of respondents (N=100)
1.	Salwar suit	100
2.	Pyjama suit	89
3.	Parallel suit	19
4.	Jeans-top	18
5.	Frock	17
6.	Skirt-top	10
7.	Lancha	08
8.	Anarkali suit	07
9.	Lehanga choli	05
10.	Slacks suit	03
11.	Divider-top	03
12.	Capri suit	02
13.	Trouser suit	01
14.	Night suit	-
15.	Dungaree	-

Anonymous (2011) wrote that dress is still largely associated with "morals" and women continue to be judged based on questionable notions of propriety. Most parts of India are more conservative than Europe but there is a huge decline in sarees being worn and these have been taken over by *salwar kameez* in all most parts on India. The story in India is also different for married and unmarried women - so it is very complex world out there. In most parts of India, western wear for women is becoming more acceptable - though it would still be clothes that cover more and reveal less. In the villages and rural areas dressing is a different thing altogether, and is a reflection of the place, culture, religion, etc.

Readymade *lancha*, *anarkali* suit and *lehnga choli* were preferred only as party wears. Dhillon (1973) had also reported that majority of the home-makers preferred readymade garments for occasional wear. Night Suit and dungarees were thoroughly rejected while slacks suit, divider top, capri suit and trouser suit received only a few favourable responses.

Table 4 shows number of preferences each boys' dress got from the mothers. As expected, pant- shirt and *kurta-pyjama* were preferred by all the rural mothers, former as casual wear and

the latter as formal wear. Pant- shirt is got stitched from a tailor or is purchased from market. *Kurta-pyjama* is sewn by the mother or by a tailor. Bevely et al. (1965) had also observed that mothers sewed more for their daughters than for their sons. It was followed by jeans- T-shirt that was preferred by 83 percent respondents. Knicker- shirt got moderate liking response because it left the legs exposed. Jacket suit and track suit were preferred more for winter season. Coat suit and *sherwani* were preferred only as party wears. *Pathani* suit and gallace suit were rejected by all while night suit, bermuda-top, capri suit and cargo suit were preferred by only a few respondents. According to Noreen (2011), the usual attire of men in urban India is very similar to that in the west. Pant, shirts, jeans, t-shirts are worn mostly. Many men in rural parts of India opt for traditional Indian wear like *dhotis* as they are more suitable to India's hot climate. However, men don't have much to worry about when it comes to dressing etiquette in India

Table 4: Preferences of rural mothers for the dresses of elementary school boys

S. No.	Name of dress	No. of respondents (N=100)
1.	Pant shirt	100
2.	Kurta pyjama	100
3.	Jeans-T shirt	83
4.	Knicker shirt	49
5.	Coat Pant	13
6.	Track suit	13
7.	Jacket suit	09
8.	Cargo suit	08
9.	Sherwani	05
10.	Capri suit	02
11.	Sweat shirt-pant	02
12.	Night suit	01
13.	Bermuda T-shirt	01
14.	Pathani suit	-
15.	Gallace suit	-

Multiple responses possible

CONCLUSION

It may be concluded that rural mothers prefer dresses that fully cover the body of their pre-adolescent daughters as well sons. Their tendency is to go for traditional and classic garments. Availability of variety of garments in the city markets has certainly influenced the clothing patterns but it does not mean that all of them have been equally adopted by rural masses.

Clothing preferences in rural areas are different from those in urban areas. Market is not catering to the demands of rural consumers. Cheaper price range may be available but not the kind of product they expect. As population is more in rural areas, potential customers for garments are more in rural areas. This potential market may be tapped by providing durable articles with simple designs at reasonable prices.

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APPENDIX

Meaning of Hindi terms

1. *Salwar*- The *salwar* can be described as huge baggy trousers, usually with a drawstring waist, a low crotch and heavily stitched, stiff cuffs.
2. *Kameez* (similar to the French word Chemise, French for shirt)- This is the dress and can either be loose and flowing or more fitted at the waist with an a-line skirt. It more often than not has slits up the sides which can range from knee length to up to the thigh.
3. *Pyjama*- are bottoms that are very tight fitting on the leg and incredibly long so that they bunch up around the ankles. These gathers at the ankles look like bangles (*Churis*) and hence known as *churidar*.
4. *Lancha*- Ladies' *kameez* worn with *lehanga* like full skirt.
5. *Anarkali suit*- A frock type shirt having many vertical panels below bust and is worn with *churidar*.
6. *Lehanga* - A *lehenga* is a full skirt worn with a *choli*.
7. *Choli*- A *choli* is a blouse worn with *Lehenga*.
8. *Kurta* - The *kurta* is the top in the form of loose shirt falling either just above or somewhere below the knees of the wearer. It's a pull over type shirt with a few buttons. It has side slits or seems for easy movement.
9. *Pyjama*- drawstring pants
10. *Sherwani*- is a coat-like garment buttoned in the front, which reaches down to the knees, or lower. It's a formal version of a *kurta* and worn by boys and men at formal functions and occasions. A *Sherwani* is worn with *chudidar* bottoms or a *dhoti* style bottom.
11. *Pathani suit*- Men's *kurta* teamed with heavy *salwar*.