

EXISTING CLOTHING PRACTICES OF EXPECTANT MOTHERS: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Clothing can improve appearance, conceal physical defects and gives aesthetic pleasure to the wearer. The pregnant woman needs clothes that are comfortable, undemanding and easily maintainable as possible. The present research was undertaken to understand the existing clothing practices of expectant mothers, problems faced with their regular clothes and their choice for general attributes of clothing during pregnancy.

KEYWORDS: Expectant Mother, Preferences, Pregnancy, General Attributes

As the nearest 'environment', clothing affects a person's psychological, physiological and social comfort. Clothing can improve appearance, conceal physical defects and give aesthetic pleasure to the wearer. Some of the important considerations which should be taken are type of role an individual has to play, age of person and season of the year etc.. Every change in life situation, i.e.; birth, entering school and college, marriage and motherhood requires special changes in wardrobe. Hence, clothes worn by an expectant mother should be according to his or her body needs.

The needs of pregnant women for clothing are quite different from usual normal women. In case of pregnancy from the fourth month especially when increasing size of abdomen becomes noticeable, the mother begins to feel the need of special clothes. The middle part of the body needs to be treated differently so that the dress is more comfortable and has a room for such physical changes. Nevertheless, comfort is an important factor in determining the designs of clothing for an expectant mother (Tate & Glission, 1961).

METHODOLOGY

The present research work was undertaken to assess the existing clothing practices and clothing problems faced by the expectant mothers with their regular dresses. The methodology adopted to carry out the present study was descriptive research design with suitable survey method. The demographic information, existing clothing practices, clothing problems and preferences for general attributes of clothing were elicited in survey.

Selection of the Locale and Hospitals and Localities

Kanpur city in Uttar Pradesh state was selected purposively. Three hospitals viz; Madhuraj Nursing

Home, Regency Pvt. Ltd. and Kanpur Medical Center were selected purposively because of availability of middle and higher-income group respondents.

Selection of the Tool and Respondents

Principal tool used to collect information was an interview- schedule. One fifty expectant mothers were randomly selected ,personally contacted and were requested to provide their independent opinion about existing clothing practices, problems faced with their regular clothes and preferences for general attributes of apparels.

Analysis of Data

The collected data were coded, tabulated and analysed by the application of suitable statistical tool and technique to draw the meaningful inferences. Simple percentages were calculated to assess the personal profile of expectant. Weighted mean scores, mean scores and ranks were calculated to assess the of expectant mother's, for their existing clothing practices, problems faced with regular clothes and preference regarding general attributes of garments.

Spearman's rank correlations were computed to find out the differences in the choice preferences of expectant mothers and Clothing and Textiles experts regarding casual wears and formal wears.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Expectant Mothers

Information pertinent to background characteristics of expectant mothers was gathered through personally administered interview-cum-observation schedule.

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Table 1: Distribution of expectant mothers according to their personal profile N = 150

S. No.	Personal Profile		Frequency (f)		Percentage	
1.	Age					
i	Below 20 years		-		-	
ii	20 - 25 years		7		4.7	
iii	25 - 30 years		41		27.3	
iv	30 - 35 years		88		58.7	
v	35 - 40 years		14		9.3	
vi	40 - 45 years		-		-	
vii	45 years and above		-		-	
3.	Occupation					
i	House wife		32		21.3	
ii	Service		75		50.0	
iii	Business		-		-	
iv	Professionals		43		28.7	
4.	Stage of Pregnancy					
i	Below 5 months	2 nd trimester	6	39	4.0	26.0
ii	Between 5-6 months		33		22.0	
iii	Between 6-7 months	3 rd trimester	27	111	18.0	74.0
iv	Between 7-8 months		44		29.3	
v	Above 8 months		40		26.7	

Age of the Expectant Mothers

Data related to age of expectant mothers were scrutinized to find out their distribution in various age groups (Table 1). Highest per cent (58.7 per cent) of expectant mothers belonged to the age group of 30 to 35 years while 27.3 per cent expectant mothers were of 25 to 30 years and 9.3 per cent were between 35 to 40 years. Only 4.7 per cent belonged to the age group of 20 to 25 years.

Highest percentage of expectant mothers belonged to the age group of 30 to 35 years might be attributed to the fact that women literacy rate and number of working women are continuously increasing. More women choosing to delay child birth until their careers have been established as stated by Belleau *et al.* (1989).

Occupation of the Expectant Mothers

Perusal of the Table 1 reveals that 50.0 per cent of the total expectant mothers were engaged in service while 28.7 per cent were professionals such as doctors, boutique owners, freelance designers, architects etc. and remaining 21.3 per cent were homemakers.

The work participation rate for women has increased significantly. In 1981, work participation rate for women was only 19.67 per cent which increased up to 22.73 per cent in 1991 and 26.68 per cent in 2001 (Women Employment, 2011).

Pregnancy Stage of Expectant Mothers

Table 1 portrays that maximum expectant mothers, (74.0 per cent) had entered in their third trimester of pregnancy whereas only 26.0 per cent were in the 2nd trimester. Out of 74.0 per cent expectant mothers, 29.3 per cent had pregnancy of 7 to 8 months, 26.7 per cent were having more than 8 months pregnancy and remaining 18.0 per cent were 6 to 7 months pregnant. Among 26.0 per cent expectant mothers, 22.0 per cent were 5 to 6 months pregnant and only 4.0 per cent had the pregnancy below 5 months.

Existing Clothing Practices and Problems Faced by Expectant Mothers

Data presented in table 2 revealed the preferences of expectant mothers about existing clothing practices regarding types of clothing for formal and casual wear, factors considered for selection of clothing, acquisition of garments, problems faced by expectant mothers with their existing clothing, types of alterations done in their existing clothing to satisfy the needs and preference for addition of new clothes in their wardrobe to fulfil the requirement.

Dresses Preferred for Casual Wear

Mean scores of preferences of expectant mothers for casual wears (Table 2) depicts that kameez-salwar was the first choice (rank 1st, m.s.=2.4) while maxie/ gown,

kameez-patiala, and night suit were placed at 2nd, 3rd and 4th ranks respectively whereas saree-blouse, kameez with churidar and skirt-top were least preferred dresses with ranks 5th, 6th and 7th respectively.

Expectant mothers viewed that saree is difficult to manage especially during pregnancy while kameez salwar was the most preferred dress because of its adaptability in all kinds of physical movements, comfortability and aesthetic appeal.

The dresses worn as a casual wear were also ranked by the panel of 30 experts from Clothing and Textile field. They judged these dresses for various attributes viz.; comfort, ease of wearing and dress up time, and appearance and modesty. They ranked these dresses on self administered five point rating scale. The results registered in Table 2 shows that experts ranked kameez-salwar and kameez- patiala at 1st and 2nd places

while maxie/gown and night suit were ranked as 3rd and 4th respectively. Kameez-churidar and skirt-top both were scored 5th rank whereas saree blouse was at 6th place.

Similar results were observed in the study conducted by Sandhu (1991) on 'designing of suits for expectant mothers according to their preferences'. She found that maximum respondents preferred kameez-salwar for special occasion whereas 55 per cent of respondents preferred it for daily wear.

Among all ladies dresses, kameez salwar is now emerging as leading attire. It has become one of the most popular dress among ladies both young and middle aged. Today kameez salwar attained the status of national garment and is gradually replacing the saree as a daily wear and has become biggest single retail garment in ladies readymade garment section (Agarwal, 2008).

Table 2: Distribution of expectant mothers on the basis of dresses preferred for casual wear N = 150

S. No.	Types of Dress	Mean Scores	Ranks By Respondents	Mean Scores	Ranks By Experts
1.	Kameez-salwar	2.4	I	4.5	I
2.	Kameez-churidar	1.2	VI	2.8	V
3.	Kameez-patiala	1.6	III	4.4	II
4.	Saree-blouse	1.4	V	1.9	VI
5.	Maxie /Gown	2.2	II	4.3	III
6.	Night suit	1.5	IV	3.7	IV
7.	Skirt-top	1.1	VII	2.8	V

Dresses Preferred for Formal Wear

Perusal of mean scores and ranks presented in Table-3 reveals that kameez salwar was the most preferred dress (m.s. = 2.7, rank 1st) by expectant mothers as a formal wear also. Kameez-patiala and kameez-churidar were at the 2nd place (m.s. = 2.0) and 3rd place (m.s. =1.6) respectively while saree-blouse was least preferred (m.s. =1.5) dress. Expectant mothers were asked about the reasons for their less preference to saree blouse. They said that saree is uncomfortable and difficult to manage. They also sometimes felt awkward in saree due to exposure of abdomen (Table 3).

Formal wear was also adjudged by the same panel of experts against different attributes viz.; appearance and modesty, comfort and, ease of wearing and dress up time. Experts ranking was found to be similar as given by the expectant mothers (Table 3).

Kameez salwar is the most popular traditional attire worn by the women in India. There are many reasons to wear kameez salwar such as it is modest, elegant, graceful, and the bottom line makes it comfortable. Kameez salwar gives decent yet stylish look to a teenager as well as to women (Agarwal, 2008).

Preference of expectant mother was compared with the ranks given by experts to the casual and formal dresses on the basis of various attributes.

Expectant mother's preference for casual and formal wear was in consistent with experts opinion for casual and formal wears as evidenced through computed value of rank-correlation ($r = 0.857$ and $r = 1$ respectively)

Table 3: Distribution of expectant mothers on the basis of dresses preferred for formal wear N=150

S.No.	Types of Dress	Mean Scores	Ranks by respondents	Mean Scores	Ranks by experts
1.	Kameez-salwar	2.7	I	4.6	I
2.	Kameez-churidar	1.6	III	3.2	III
3.	Kameez-patiala	2.0	II	4.4	II
4.	Saree-blouse	1.5	IV	2.0	IV

Factors Considered for Clothing Selection

Expectant mother's preference regarding clothing selection factors (Table 4) reveals that comfort was ranked 1st (m.s.=4.8), serviceability ranked 2nd (m.s.=3.9), price ranked 3rd (m.s.=2.3) and fashion was given rank 4th (m.s.=2.0) for the selection of their casual wear. However, least consideration was given to the status (rank 5th, m.s.=1.8).

The expectant mothers given rank 1st to comfort (m.s.=4.5) and serviceability was ranked 2nd (m.s.=3.5) for their formal wear too, whereas status and fashion

scored 3rd and 4th ranks respectively. On the contrary to casual wear, price was the least considered factor for the selection of formal wear (Table 4).

Similar results were observed by Chan (2000) in which he identified that comfort, softness, absorbency, function, style, quality and price were the most important considerations of pregnant women while purchasing maternity clothing. Yu and Wong (2001) also reported that comfort, support, ease of movement and aesthetics mostly affected the instant preference of a maternity supported garment.

Table 4: Distribution of expectant mothers on the basis of their preferences for clothing selection factors N = 150

S. No.	Factors Considered for Clothing Selection	Casual Wear					Mean Scores	Ranks	Formal Wear					Mean Scores	Ranks
		1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4	5		
		f	f	f	f	f			f	f	f	f	f		
1.	Comfort	132	14	1	1	2	4.8	I	111	13	20	4	2	4.5	I
2.	Serviceability	14	117	11	8	0	3.9	II	11	89	15	32	3	3.5	II
3.	According to status	1	2	37	37	73	1.8	V	16	32	27	45	30	2.7	III
4.	Price	1	14	60	31	44	2.3	III	1	2	15	40	92	1.5	V
5.	According to fashion	1	2	25	93	29	2.0	IV	19	26	27	24	54	2.5	IV

Acquisition of Garments

It can be envisaged from data in Figure 1 that the majority of expectant mothers (63.3 per cent) frequently

liked tailor made garments whereas 20.0 per cent and 16.7 per cent frequently opted boutique made and ready made garments, respectively.

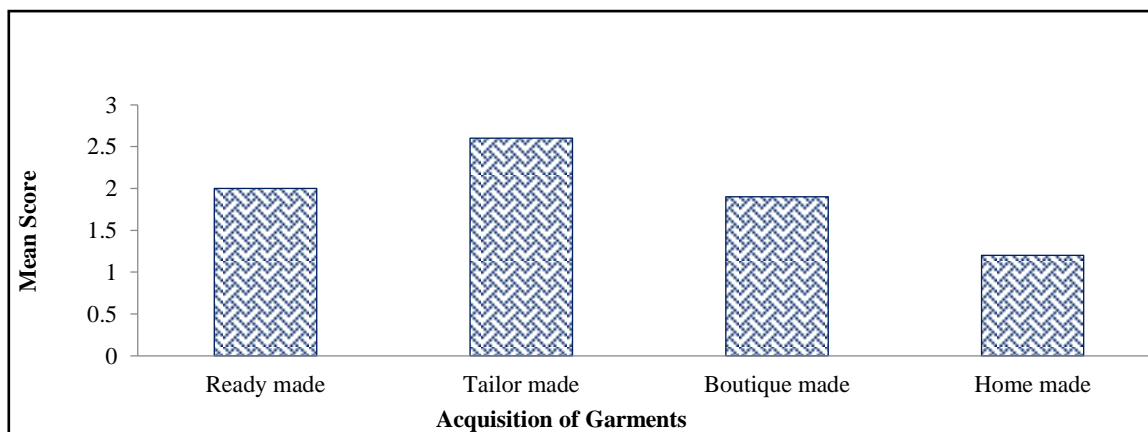


Figure 1: Distribution of expectant mothers according to their preference for acquisition of garments

Problems Faced by Expectant Mothers with their Existing Clothing

Data in Figure 2 reflect that the overall appearance of dresses was not good and scored highest mean score of 4.9 and 2nd highest mean score of 4.8 was given to the fitting problems followed by the uncomfotability and problem in donning and doffing of dresses with mean scores of 4.7 and 4.6 respectively.

In the 2nd trimester expectant mothers start to feel the need of special clothes as in their existing clothes,

they feel uncomfortable and unattractive. Even the mothers do not feel smart. The way the mother feel about her is very important, it affects her psychologically. Khatri (2010) also reported that expectant mothers did not feel comfortable in the 1st trimester’s clothing when they wear the same during 2nd and 3rd trimester because physical changes becomes more prominent during 2nd last and 3rd trimester. All the clothing of 1st trimester become tight and they had compromised by wearing oversized and loose fitted garments.

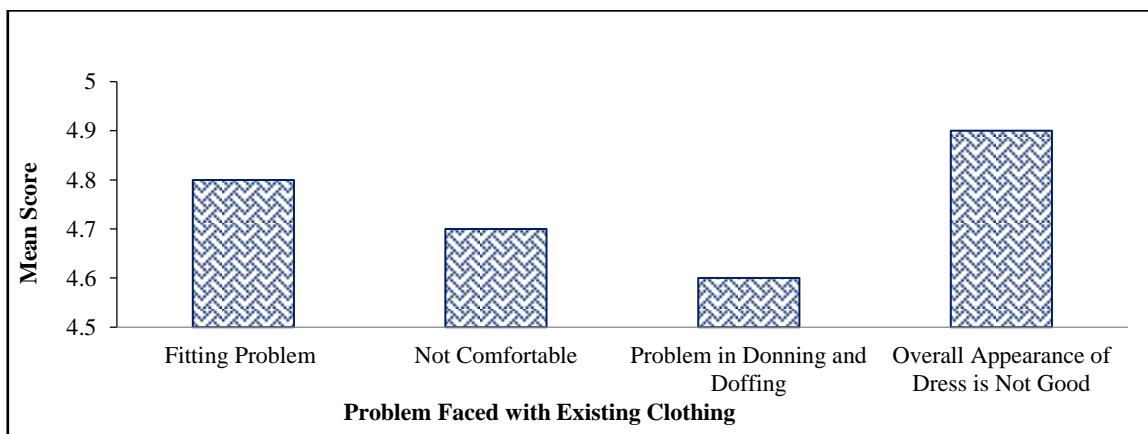


Figure 2: Distribution of expectant mothers on the basis of problems faced with their existing clothing

Alterations Made in Existing Clothing

Majority of expectant mothers, 85.4 per cent made alterations in their existing dresses to fit their changing body shape. In contrast, 14.6 per cent expectant mothers did not alter their clothing as they used to get new clothing (Figure 3). Expectant mothers usually

preferred to open seam allowances in their existing dresses to accommodate their changing body shape.

Srivastava (1983) conducted a study on clothing practices of pregnant women and said that in order to cater the requirements of changed physical characteristics some or other alterations were made by almost all women during pregnancy.

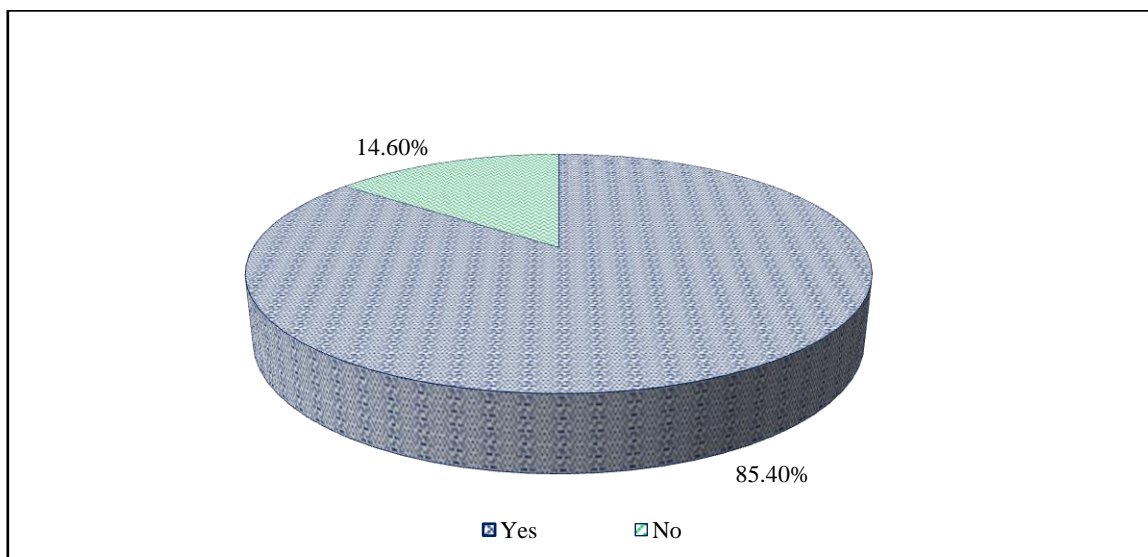


Figure 3: Distribution of expectant mothers on the basis of alterations made in their existing clothing

Apparels Added in the Wardrobe during Pregnancy

It can be envisaged from data in Table 5 that 49.3 per cent expectant mothers added new kameez salwar for their casual wear and 43.3 per cent added maxie/gown during pregnancy. Only 6.0 per cent expectant mothers added skirt-top and very meager percentage (1.3 per cent) added T shirt and trousers in their wardrobe.

For formal wear maximum expectant mothers ie; 90.0 per cent added kameez salwar whereas 2.7 per cent

and 3.3 per cent mothers added T shirt - trouser and skirt - top respectively (Table 5).

In support of above findings it was stated by Khatri (2010) that when the respondents (involved in trading of ready made maternity wear) were asked about their opinion regarding type of maternity clothes that are more in demand it was reported by them that 70 per cent expectant mothers had demanded kameez salwar also besides maternity gowns.

Table 5: Distribution of expectant mothers who add extra apparels in their wardrobe during pregnancy for casual and formal wear N = 150

S.No.	Apparel Added	Casual wear		Formal wear	
		f	%	f	%
1.	Kameez -Salwar	74	49.3	135	90.0
2.	Nightie / Gown	65	43.3	-	-
3.	Saree-Blouse	-	-	3	2.0
4.	T shirt -trouser	2	1.3	4	2.7
5.	Skirt - top	9	6	5	3.3
6.	Any other (Jeans T-shirt)	-	-	3	2.0

Preference for Features to be Added in Maternity Apparels

Maximum expectant mothers ie; 49.3 per cent chosen all features viz; good fit and comfortability, easy care, fullness features and fashionability except adjustability, for incorporation in their maternity apparels. On the other hand 36.7 per cent expectant mothers want to have all features including adjustability in their maternity apparels (Figure 4).

Expectant mothers, who opted adjustability along with all features in their maternity apparel, viewed that this feature increases the serviceable life of the

garment which in turn makes the apparel more economic. On the contrary expectant mothers, who did not prefer adjustable maternity apparel, justified that this feature results in bulkiness which ultimately make the garment uncomfortable.

Maternity clothes are specially designed according to the comfort level of pregnant woman which they need during pregnancy. Comfort must be supplemented with the good look. Good looking dresses are very important to boost up confidence of pregnant woman as they will look beautiful in specially designed clothes (Maternity Clothes, 2009).

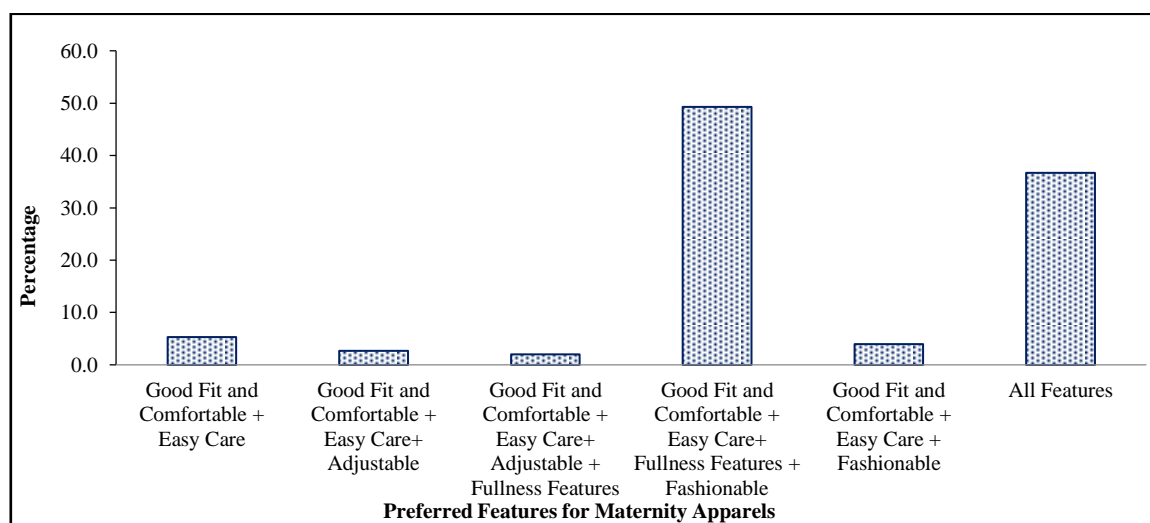


Figure 4: Distribution of expectant mothers on the basis of preferred features for maternity apparels

CONCLUSION

Salwar kameez was preferred by majority of expectant mothers as their first choice for both casual and formal wears. They prefer comfort as their top priority in the dress during pregnancy. Would be mothers also want to follow fashion trend. Therefore, specially designed kameez salwar having all required functional features would be a great option. Maternity outfits should be comfortable, easy care, having fullness features and fashionable too.

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