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## **Home Economics Students' Perception of the Relevance of Consumer Education to Clothing Choice in Nigeria** (Pp. 227-233)

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this research work was to appraise Home Economics students' perception of the Relevance of Consumer Education to Clothing Choice. To carry out this work three research questions were raised. All 78 300 and 400 levels Home Economics students enrolled in Delta State University in the 2008 academic session made up the population of the study. The study adopted an ex-post facto descriptive research design. A structured Questionnaire was used to elicit response from the respondents. The data collected were analysed using simple frequency counts and percentages. Findings revealed that students' rating of their knowledge of Consumer Education was 100%. However, it was revealed that sex and class level influenced students perception of the relevance of Consumer Education to the clothing Choice. Based on the findings some recommendations were made.*

### **Introduction**

Students' have found many ways of expressing their opinion and views on the Relevance of Consumer Education to Clothing Choice. Students' perception on any issue is very important as Murray (1984) explains that students are the major "Consumers of any educational process. Explaining further, he states that their opinion must be sought if we want to get first hand

information on any teaching process. This assertion is further reiterated by Arubayi (1986) that “the opinion of those who eat the dinner should be considered if we want to know how it tastes” In furtherance to this statement, the writer has decided to use Home Economics students’ perception to appraise the relevance of consumer Education to Clothing Choice.

Consumer Education as defined by Anyakoha and Eluwa (1999), Oladokun (2007) is a process of helping individuals become informed. For the individuals to become more informed he needs to acquire knowledge, skills, abilities and attitude to enable them know their rights and responsibilities as a consumer. A consumer is a person who buys and uses goods and services to satisfy personal household needs. The act of consuming involves the ability to choose, buy and use products and services in a rational, intelligent and efficient way. Ukpore. (1996) defined a competent Consumer as an individual who is aware of his values and capable of establishing priorities by taking rational decisions in the market place. Globally, consumers are faced with the problems of making choices as to what good and services to buy and use as it relates to Clothing. As a result of technological advancement and industrialization, the Clothing needs of individuals and family members are on the increase. Therefore the consumer is faced with the problem of what choice to buy, where to buy and how to buy. Daily the market places are flooded with new and varied products. There is high competition for consumers to exercise their decision making power to select different brands of ready to wear garments, or wide varieties of fabrics to choose from and the choice of tailor to make garment to achieve a harmonious and satisfying wardrobe.

Clothing is an important aspect of human life which is a basic necessity for physical survival. Arubayi (2002) opined that Clothing along with shelter have been recognized as some of the primary needs of mankind. She explained that there is no aspect of human activity in which our values and life styles are reflected more vividly than they are in the choice of Clothes we wear. Clothes are an outward expression of how people feel about themselves and the world around them, although individuals differ in their choice of Clothing. To provide information to enable the consumer make sound judgement as to what quality of clothes to select from, Consumer Education is very relevant. Anyakoha and Eluwa (1999) listed the following as the importance of Consumer Education:-

- To enable the consumer know their rights

- To enable the consumer discern or assess Consumer information
- To enable the consumer obtain the best value for his money
- To enable the consumer eliminate waste in consumption
- To safeguard consumers from dangerous and inferior goods and services

Looking at the list enumerated by Anyakoha and Eluwa (1999), it is important to be exposed to Consumer Education. The disturbing issue is how knowledgeable is the consumer and how relevant is Consumer Education to the Clothing Choice of students? This leads to the problem of the study.

### **Problem of Study**

The problem of this study is, how do the students perceive their knowledge of Consumer Education and the relevance of Consumer Education to the Clothing Choice of individuals. Clothing is a very vital human need, how can the knowledge of Consumer Education help the individuals take decisions as regards the different brands of Clothing items available in the market places? Is a knowledge of Consumer Education relevant in making intelligent clothing choice? To provide solution to the problem, this research work raised three research questions to give direction to the study.

### **Research Questions**

1. How knowledgeable are the students about Consumer Education?
2. Does the class level of students influence their perception of the Relevance of Consumer Education to their Clothing Choice?
3. Does the sex of students influence students' perception of the Relevance of Consumer Education to their Clothing Choice?

### **Methods and Materials**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research method, which is ex-post Facto in nature. The target population of the study was made up of all 300 and 400 levels Home Economics students in Delta State University in the 2008 academic session. A total of 78 Home Economics students made up the target population. The instrument used for the collection of the data was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was made up of two parts. The first part sought for demographic information on the academic levels and sex of students. The second part solicited for responses based on the research questions. The instrument had a reasonable face and content validity and was found to be reliable. A reliability co-efficient of 0.78 was established using

the Pearson product moment correlation statistics. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the students and collected the completed questionnaires personally. The data collected were analysed using simple frequency counts and percentages.

The results arising from the analysis of data have been presented in tables 1, 2 and 3.

Reported in Table 1, is the finding on Students Knowledge of Consumer Education. 100% of the students' population said they had knowledge of Consumer Education.

Reported in Table 2, is the response on how class level influences their perception of the relevance of Consumer Education to Clothing. 40% of the students are in 300 level while 60% of the students are in 400 level. 24 (77.4%) of the 300 level students responded positively while 7 (22.6%) responded negatively to the relevance of Consumer Education to Clothing. 42 (89.4%) of the students at the 400 level responded positively while 5 (10.6%) of the respondents were negative in their responses.

Presented in Table 3, is the response of the respondents on how the sex of the students influenced their perception of the relevance of Consumer Education to Clothing. 7 (9%) of the respondents were males while 71(91%) of the respondents were females. 65 (91.5%) of the female students said their sex influenced their perception of the relevance of Consumer Education to their choice of Clothing while 6 (8.5%) responded negatively, that their sex had no influence on the relevance of Consumer Education to their Clothing choice.

### **Discussion of Results**

Findings from this research work have revealed that all 78 students who made up the population of the study agreed that they were knowledgeable about Consumer Education. This finding came as no surprise as Consumer Education is a course taught in the University to students from 300 levels to 400 levels. Findings on the relevance of Consumer Education to Clothing choice showed that students at 400 level perceived the relevance of Consumer Education higher than the students from 300 level. This came as no surprise as the finding supports a similar finding by Arubayi (1997) that the higher the class level, the better the students tend to rate the kind of learning they are getting. Some researchers like Centra (1973) Aleamoni

(1978) Arubayi (1985) have argued that students in higher levels of degree programme are in better position to appraise the course relevance than their counterparts at a lower level of the academic ladder. The notable conclusion here is that as students progressed in the University they tend to appreciate what they are being taught better because they are exposed to more knowledge which helps them to make better judgement.

The study also revealed that sex is a determinant as to students perception of the relevance of Consumer Education to Clothing choice. Looking at the data presented in table 3, the percentage of males to females is incomparable. An earlier finding by Arubayi (2004), and (2006) respectively revealed that there are more females enrolled in Home Economics programmes than males. The plausible explanation for this is probably because the curricula being offered are in the areas of Food and Nutrition, Clothing and Textiles and Home Management which are domains ascribed to woman, however the focus in this paper is the area of Clothing.

### **Conclusion**

Arising from the findings of this research work, one may conclude that Home Economics students are knowledgeable about Consumer Education. Another conclusion is that the higher the level of students in higher institution the better their perception of what they are getting in terms of knowledge and exposure, thus they are able to make better judgement on the quality of teaching they are exposed to. Another notable conclusion in this research study is that the sex of students influenced greatly their perception of the relevance of Consumer Education to Clothing Choice. There were more females in the degree programme, obviously, their perception will be higher as females are more conscious of what they wear and more apt to look well groomed.

### **Recommendations**

Following the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- That the gender inequality between males and females in Home Economics should be bridged by encouraging more male enrolment through the use of motivational strategies to woo males into Home Economics programmes.

- Consumer Education is very relevant as it exposes students to knowledge needed to increase their purchasing power to avoid wasteful spending.
- That Consumer Education should be emphasized in all aspects of Home Economics to help students build confidence in the ability to select, choose and buy products from the varied brands of clothing items in the market.

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Table 1: Students Knowledge of Consumer Education

Students	Yes	No	%
No			
78	78	-	100

Table 2: Class level of Students and its Influence on their Perception of the Relevance of Consumer Education to Clothing

Level	No. of Students	%	Yes	%	No	%
300	31	40	24	77.4	7	22.6
400	47	60	.42	89.4	5	10.6

Table 3: Sex of Students and its Influence on their Perception of the Relevance of Consumer Education to Clothing

Sex	No. of Students	%	Yes	%	No	%
Male	7	9	4	57	03	43
Females	71	91	65	91.5	06	8.5
	78					