

ARTICLE

# Business Clothing For Females: Suitability For Effective Workplace Job Performance in Nigeria

Azonuche Juliana Ego

Department of Vocational Education, (Home Economics Unit), Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

---

ARTICLE INFO

*Article history*

Received: 14 October 2023

Accepted: 13 December 2023

Published: 20 December 2023

---

*Keywords:*

Business Clothing

Females

Suitability

Workplace

Job Performance

---

ABSTRACT

The study investigated business clothing for females that are suitable for effective workplace job performance in Nigeria. It identified fabric characteristics of females' business clothing already used; fabric characteristics needed and design style preference suitable for females' business clothing for workplace job performance. The study was guided by four research questions and two hypotheses. Population was 4,806 female civil servants in Delta state, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was utilized to select 136 females. Structured questionnaire was employed to collect data and descriptive statistics and t-test were used for data analysis. Finding showed that cotton, nylon, lacra fabrics, light and medium fabric weight, blue, black, gray, colors, cool texture, rough, smooth surface plain, stripe and flowered design among others were fabric characteristics of business clothing are being used in workplace. But prefer and need cotton, nylon, lacra, light weight, black, blue, gray, brown colours, cool, plain, surface fabrics. Net, organza, heavy weight, white, yellow, toweling fabrics were not preferred. Findings further showed that straight gown, waist flared and gathered gowns, skirt, blouse and suit/jacket, straight, shirt, long sleeves, garment with or without collar, below knee length, peter and convertible collars, among others were highly preferred design styles of clothes. In conclusion, office workers determine what they wear to perform workplace daily jobs promotes self-confidence, comfort, professional worth and productivity. It was recommended that female employees should not downplay appropriate work attires for comfort and organizational productivity to satisfy fashion trends.

## 1. Introduction

Clothing is seen to put the body at the center of attraction and meet functionality purposes for the wearer. Since clothes are the fundamental part of cultural and social identity they are worn daily for different occasions and values in life. It has an unspoken language that communicates information about wearers' personality and preferences. Clothing can also affect others perception

and action towards you. Naturally, every woman wants to look good, polished and refined; whether at home or at workplace. Nowadays more women work outside the home; a greater percentage of women are in employment and contribute to the welfare of their households or in business of relatives (Osia, 2005;<sup>[20]</sup> Azonuche, 2021;<sup>[3]</sup> International Labor Organization (ILO), 2023).<sup>[11]</sup> These women need the right clothing to carry out their duties. As they get busy at workplace, wearing appropriate business

---

*\*Corresponding Author:*

Azonuche Juliana Ego, Department of Vocational Education, (Home Economics Unit), Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria;  
Email: [azonuchejulianaego@gmail.com](mailto:azonuchejulianaego@gmail.com)

clothing gives comfort, confidence, and greater quality work output.

Business clothing is a product that requires a style that performs a particular function, not only for the user, but also for the beholder in the white collar job or workplace (Azonuche 2017;<sup>[2]</sup> Rollings, 2020).<sup>[21]</sup> It is clothing worn by worker in office and professional setting that depicts personality within workplace (Indeed, 2023a).<sup>[9]</sup> Rollings (2020)<sup>[21]</sup> further noted that office dynamics are better when people are happy, which leads to higher workplace collaboration, and increased completed work. This type of clothing are often different based on the form of work being done in the office or prescribed uniform for organization, it can be formal, professional, or casual attire.

Business formal clothing is the attire that utilizes the use of traditional dark suit set attire, requires distinguished suits and dresses. Masterclass (2021)<sup>[16]</sup> pointed that business professional constitute the most conservative office dress code, in that, this traditional attire is the everyday office wear in industries like finance, banking, government and law. Indication of such attire includes pant suit and button-down shirt (often with a tie) or knee-length pencil skirt and blazer with perfect fit (Masterclass, 2021).<sup>[16]</sup> Business casual are usually most commonly used women business attire among workers in companies, classroom, ministries/parastatals with office setting and utilize different color of accessories and dress style in their clothing. The main aim is to ensure a business-like appearance without sacrificing individuality and comfort (Stitch Fix, 2021).<sup>[23]</sup> Uniformity is often used by most organizations to achieve their aims and at the same time explore their organizational dress code in life. But whatever it may be people or organization need to create work environment where workers can show up their whole selves (Miles, 2022).<sup>[17]</sup> Wearing appropriate dress to workplace empowers the employees, boost morale expression and flow of job ideas.

The appropriateness of work clothing is a concept that plays a major part in the determination of its success as a visual label (Rollings, 2020).<sup>[21]</sup> Most often women face dilemma in the choice of what to wear to workplace. Work clothing should provide for professional image, make employee feel comfortable in use and be presentable especially when having to deal with the public. Professional career women seek for traditional, tailored and fitted wears that make them unique and stand out while not sacrificing fashion trends in clothing (Indeed, 2023a).<sup>[9]</sup> Office dress code shows the formality level of the clothes that can be worn to the office for work efficiency and effectiveness in performance.

There is an increase in the number of females in workforce across the regions of the world and especially in Nigeria's civil service of today (Urhibo, 2021).<sup>[26]</sup> Most of whom are professionals in their field of work such as teachers, directors, permanent secretaries, lawyers, among others and non-professional areas as clerical and messengers. They can be single or married and occupy senior or junior cadre position in the workplace. Though, the civil service does not have dress code, these employees in the workplace need formal clothes that convey image of authority, safe work performance and impression management of the wearer (Azonuche & Anyakoha, 2018).<sup>[4]</sup> Clothes contribute to comfort in workplace based on the quality, properties/characteristics of the fabrics.

It is extremely difficult to predict the material properties of fabric, because most textile fabrics are made from series of fibers spun into yarn. The structure, properties of fiber or yarn, their different weaves/knit patterns as well as fabric finishes have effect on the overall fabric characteristics and performance. When choosing fabric for clothes it is important to consider the strain and stresses need to be subjected to in job performance in the workplace. Such clothing should be comfortable to enable mobility, safety and productivity allowing users to carry out work/ tasks without any restriction impediment (Braganca et al, 2015).<sup>[5]</sup> Business clothing should be light in weight, breathable to allow the heat of the body to escape, antimicrobial and durable fabric, color, surface texture and style design.

Clothing design starts with right body measurements for size of an individual which the garment is intended to fit (Aldrich, 2006).<sup>[1]</sup> The characteristics of the body shape are paramount for the clothing fit. Individuals vary physically in posture and silhouette which determine the design for the clothing that can facilitate users' activities and needs. Designing clothes deals with the translation of users' needs and preferences in visual representation of the design. The shape and length of clothes, length and type of sleeve, garment, and design ease as well as other design features can enhance aesthetics in clothes. Braganca et al (2016)<sup>[6]</sup> noted that smaller or tight clothes are capable of restricting mobility, posture, and circulation of blood in the user's body. Designer should assess different available designs and how they impact human activities for safe work performance.

This study was informed by the researcher's observation on menace of some female workers' dress to workplace; they wear fashionable outfit without considering the type of job, work environment, comfort, safety, protection in clothing style type and design. Since civil servants do

not really have dress code that cocktail type and mode of dressing, most female workers wear whatever they like as work clothes. In a bid to trend in fashion they compromise work environment, fit, posture, mobility, and comfort in business clothing, this impacts safety, level, quality and quantity of work done. The economy has also crippled good work environments, some lack adequate working facilities, furnished offices, light, fans, chairs, air conditioners, among others which make the workplace not conducive for adequate job activities. Inappropriate clothing without comfort, too tight or loose is impendence to the wearer's safety while at work. Most female workers do not consider type of fabric design and job to be done in selection and wearing practices of varieties of fashion clothing to the office. Some of these preferred clothing fabric type and bogus designs do not allow dissipation of heat, ease of movement, body flexion and posture causing uncomfortable, unsafe, and inefficient work output.

Previous studies examined factors for work wear design, garment for specific functions, activities, environment, increased agility, and ergonomics based on human body and clothing construction system (Braganca, et al, 2016,<sup>[6]</sup> Chen & Hu, 2016;<sup>[7]</sup> Lindqvist & Thornquist, 2014).<sup>[15]</sup> Other studies include how to dress at work, factors for work wear design and its impact on workers comfort, consequences of employees daily clothing choices in aesthetics, comfort and uniqueness that have implication for employees' state self-esteem and subsequent tasks and related behaviors (Nayak et al, 2015;<sup>[18]</sup> Braganca, 2015;<sup>[5]</sup> Kim et al, 2022).<sup>[14]</sup> Though several studies have been done on work wears; however, fabric type and design in relation to female workers clothing and task have not been examined in work wear selection among employees. Therefore, the need to examine business clothing for females: suitability for workplace job performance.

Specific purpose of this study:

1. Identified the fabric characteristics of females' business clothing currently used for job performance in the work place;
2. Determined the fabric characteristics needed in females' business clothing for work place job performance;
3. Ascertained design and style preferences suitable for females' business clothing for workplace job performance.

## Research Questions

1. What is the fabric characteristics of females' business clothing currently used for job performance in the workplace?
2. What is the fabric characteristics needed in females' business clothing for workplace job performance?

3. What are the design and style preferences suitable for females' business clothing for workplace job performance?

## Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of fabric characteristics needed in females' business clothing for workplace job performance of senior and junior staff.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of design style preferences in business clothing suitable for workplace job performance between single and married females.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Delta states, Nigeria. The research design utilized for the study was expo facto design with the use of focus group discussion and descriptive survey research method.

The population made up of all the female civil servants in all the ministries/ parastatals, Directorates and Agencies in the states with a total of 4,806 females.

Sample size of 136 female civil servants selected from the ministries, directorates, and agencies through the civil service commission. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed to meet needs and fair representation of females in the workplace. Simple random sampling technique was first utilized to select one ministry, directorate, and agency: Ministry of education (post primary and higher education), Local government commission, and Pension bureau. Secondly, purposive sampling technique was applied to select female staff in these positions; Directors-6, Secretaries-30, Teachers/Lecturers-45, Clerical officers-30, Messengers-25 who are involved in daily tasks performance in the work place.

Instrument for data collection was Focus Group Discussion, the purpose of the discussions was to get information from the female workers on types of fabrics worn in the workplace, challenges encountered in the use of fabrics, fabric characteristics suitable and style preferred in work wear and business clothing. A questionnaire was developed from the responses and suggestions from the focus group discussion, reviewed literature, and purposes of the study. Business clothing for females suitable for workplace questionnaire (BCFSWPQ) was in two parts and used to get needed information from the subjects. Part 1 contained the demographic information of the female workers. Part 2 contained three sub-sections: Section A had 40 items on fabric characteristics (type, weight, texture, surface and surface design) of business clothing already being used in the work place; Section B

had 40 items on fabric characteristics of business clothing needed for work place with four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA)=4, Agree (A)=3, Disagree (D)=2 and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1; Section C had 35 items on design and style preferences suitable for females' business clothing for work place (silhouette, sleeve type, shape and length, collar type) with four point rating scale of Highly Preferred (HP)=4, Moderately Preferred (MP)=3, Lowly Preferred (LP)=2 and Not Preferred (NP)=1. The questionnaire was subjected to face validity by three experts in clothing, textiles measurement, and evaluation lecturers from University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to assess the relevance, clarity and appropriateness of the instrument for data collection based on the purpose of study. A final copy of the instrument was made based on the corrections and suggestions.

To determine the reliability of the instrument 20 civil servants who were not included in the study participated in a test-retest to assess the internal consistency of the instrument. Cronbach alpha coefficient indices of 0.81, 0.76 and 0.80 were obtained for fabric characteristics of business clothing used in workplace, fabric characteristics of clothing needed, and design and style preference respectively.

One hundred thirty-six (136) copies of questionnaire were given to the selected subjects in their offices on scheduled visits with the help of three research assistants. The questionnaire were completed and retrieved at the same time.

To analyze the data collected, mean and standard deviation statistics were used to test the research questions using a cut-off mean of 2.50 -4.00 as strongly agreed/highly preferred, 1.00-2.49 as strongly disagreed/not preferred. Finally the hypotheses were analyzed using t-test at a 0.05 level of significance.

### 3. Results

**Research question 1:** What is the fabric characteristics of females' business clothing already used for job performance in the workplace?

**Research question 2:** What is the fabric characteristics needed in females' business clothing for workplace job performance?

Table 1 showed the mean rating and standard deviation of responses on fabric characteristics of females' business clothing used in workplace with all items as strongly agreed. The mean range for type of fabric was between 3.05-3.75, weight of fabric 2.58-3.53, color of fabric 2.52-3.01, texture of fabric 2.58- 3.01, surface of fabric, 2.51-

3.10, surface design of fabric 2.50- 3.93. Indication is that the fabric characteristics of females' business clothing used in workplace include; fabric type are cotton, linen, polyester, nylon, lacra among others, weight of fabrics are light and medium weight, color of fabrics include; blue, black green, gray and brown. While texture of fabrics are cool, soft, coarse and medium; fabric surface are rough, raised, smooth, embossed among others and surface design include; fabric designs are plain, paid, flowered, toweling, stripped among others. Standard deviation ranged between 0.62-1.20 which shows closeness in responses on fabric characteristics of business clothing used in the workplace.

Table 1 also shows the responses of mean rating and standard of fabric characteristics of females' business clothing needed for job performance in the work place had 25 items with strongly agreed. Type of fabric had mean ranged between 2.51- 3.93 which means that cotton, linen, silk, polyester, nylon among others are types of fabrics are needed for business clothing, but strongly disagreed in three items with mean ranged between 1.09-2.01, which show that wool, net, and organza fabrics were not needed. Weight of fabrics had mean 2.56 and 3.23 as strongly agreed for light and medium weight fabrics as needed while heavy weight was mean 1.99 as disagreed meaning that heavy weight fabric was not needed. Color of fabrics for 7 items had mean ranged between 2.50-3.41 as strongly agreed that means blue, black, brown among others were needed, but strongly disagreed on 3 items. Texture of fabrics mean ranged between 3.10-3.24 as strongly agreed and strongly disagreed in 1 item with mean 1.91. Surface of fabrics mean from 2.90-3.70 as strongly agreed that means smooth and embroidered surface were needed while mean ranged from 1.00-2.10 as strongly disagreed in 4 items meaning rough, raised, embossed, and knitted were not needed. Surface design of fabric mean range from 3.68-4.00 as strongly agreed in 4 items which shows that plain, plaid, flowered, and stripe fabrics were needed while 3 items were with mean from 1.08-2.26 as strongly disagreed that toweling, flannel and appliqué were not needed. Therefore, this implies that cotton linen, lacra, light and medium weight, blue, black, brown, green, soft, cool, smooth surface, plain, plaid, flowered and stripe are fabric characteristics needed and suitable for females' business clothing and not net, organza, heavy weight, white, yellow, coarse, rough, raised, toweling among others.

**Research question 3:** What are the design / style preferences suitable for females' business clothing for workplace job performance?

**Table 1:** Mean rating of responses on fabric characteristics of females’ business clothing used and needed for workplace job performance.

S/N	Fabric characteristics of clothing		Used			Needed		
	Types of fabrics	Mean	SD	Rem	Mean	SD	Rem	
1.	Cotton	3.75	0.88	SA	3.93	0.80	SA	
2.	Linen	3.70	0.71	SA	3.84	0.78	SA	
3.	Wool	2.51	0.78	SA	2.01	0.72	SA	
4.	Silk	3.05	0.90	SA	2.64	0.86	SA	
5.	Polyester	3.60	1.02	SA	2.72	1.16	SA	
6.	Nylon	3.60	0.68	SA	2.80	0.76	SA	
7.	Lacra	3.80	1.00	SA	2.65	0.63	SA	
8.	Suede	3.64	0.84	SA	2.65	0.80	SA	
9.	Chiffon	3.72	0.80	SA	3.51	0.79	SA	
10.	Net	2.54	0.76	SA	1.09	0.82	SA	
11.	Organza	2.50	0.87	SA	2.00	0.79	SA	
<b>Weight of fabric</b>								
12.	Heavy weight	2.90	0.80	SA	1.99	0.89	SA	
13.	Light weight	2.58	0.78	SA	2.56	0.87	SA	
14.	Medium weight	3.53	0.86	SA	3.23	0.76	SA	
<b>Color of fabric</b>								
15.	White	2.84	0.84	SA	1.54	0.70	SA	
16.	Blue	2.53	1.20	SA	2.52	0.84	SA	
17.	Black	2.80	0.78	SA	3.41	0.91	SA	
18.	Yellow	2.50	0.87	SA	2.12	1.02	SD	
19.	Pink	2.60	0.86	SA	2.50	0.68	SA	
20.	Green	2.52	0.90	SA	2.53	0.85	SA	
21.	Red	2.61	0.64	SA	2.58	0.60	SA	
22.	Cream	2.52	0.69	SA	2.53	0.93	SA	
23.	Gray	3.01	0.76	SA	3.00	0.84	SA	
24.	Brown	2.82	0.74	SA	2.84	0.74	SA	
<b>Texture of fabric</b>								
25.	Cool	3.01	0.82	SA	3.24	0.86	SA	
26.	Soft	3.00	0.76	SA	3.10	0.88	SA	
27.	Coarse	2.80	0.68	SA	1.91	0.80	SD	
<b>Surface of fabric</b>								
28.	Rough surface	2.52	0.84	SA	1.00	0.68	SD	
29.	Smooth surface	3.10	1.00	SA	3.20	0.82	SA	
30.	Raised surface	2.51	0.62	SA	2.00	0.68	SD	
31.	Embossed surface	2.54	0.78	SA	2.10	0.82	SD	
32.	Embroidered	2.58	0.84	SA	2.00	0.78	SD	
33.	Knitted	2.51	0.68	SA	1.02	0.80	SD	
<b>Surface design of fabric</b>								
34.	Plain	3.91	0.89	SA	4.00	0.87	SA	
35.	Plaid	2.84	0.78	SA	3.90	0.76	SA	
36.	Flowered	3.93	0.87	SA	3.68	0.64	SA	
37.	Toweling	2.50	0.76	SA	1.08	0.84	SD	
38.	Flannel	2.50	0.76	SA	1.68	0.80	SD	
39.	Stripped	3.73	0.86	SA	3.78	0.68	SA	
40.	Appliqué	2.58	0.84	SA	2.26	0.76	SD	

Key: SA= Strongly agreed, SD= Strongly disagreed, Rem= Remark



**Table 2:** Mean rating and standard deviation of responses on design style preferences suitable females' business clothing for workplace.

S/n	Design preferences	Mean	SD	Remark
<b>Silhouette of clothing</b>				
1.	Straight gown	3.81	0.70	HP
2.	Skirt and blouse	2.62	0.82	HP
3.	Gown with flared at waist	3.80	0.80	HP
4.	Gown with pleats at waist	3.00	0.64	HP
5.	Gown with pleats at hip	2.50	0.78	HP
6.	Gown with gathers at waist	2.73	0.68	HP
7.	Skirt suit/jacket	3.10	0.80	HP
<b>Sleeve shape</b>				
8.	Straight sleeve	3.90	0.74	HP
9.	Tight fitting sleeve	3.63	0.88	HP
10.	Kimono sleeve	3.68	0.87	HP
11.	Raglan sleeve	2.00	0.69	HP
<b>Sleeve type</b>				
12.	Shirt sleeve	3.67	0.76	HP
13.	Puff sleeve	3.00	0.87	HP
14.	Kimono sleeve	2.86	0.81	HP
15.	Bishop	2.30	0.61	HP
16.	Leg 'O mutton sleeve	2.00	0.68	NP
17.	Bell sleeve	2.40	0.79	NP
18.	Cap sleeve	3.20	0.80	HP
19.	Sleeveless	2.00	0.64	NP
<b>Sleeve length</b>				
20.	Above elbow length	3.42	0.70	HP
21.	Elbow length	3.67	0.68	HP
22.	Three quarter length	3.80	0.71	HP
23.	Long sleeve	2.60	0.72	HP
<b>Collar</b>				
24.	Garment with collar	3.61	0.82	HP
25.	Garment without collar	3.81	0.74	HP
<b>Collar type</b>				
26.	Shirt collar	3.75	0.68	HP
27.	Peter pan collar	3.00	0.78	HP
28.	Polo collar	1.40	0.80	NP
29.	Stand collar	1.32	0.79	NP
30.	Convertible collar	3.32	0.80	HP
31.	Shawl collar	1.80	0.64	NP
<b>Length of garment</b>				
32.	Above knee length	1.60	0.86	NP
33.	Knee length	2.76	0.80	HP
34.	Below knee length	3.79	0.74	HP
35.	Ankle length	1.00	0.72	NP

Key: SD= Standard deviation, HP= Highly preferred, NP= Not preferred

Result in table 2 showed the mean and standard deviation of responses on design and style preferences suitable for females' business clothing. The silhouette was highly preferred in all items with mean range from 2.50-3.81 meaning that straight gown, skirt and blouse, gowns with pleats, flare and gathers at the waist among others were highly preferred suitable styles. Sleeve shape had mean in 4 items range from 2.68-3.90 as highly preferred and 2.00 in 1 item. This showed that straight, tight fitting, and kimono sleeves were highly preferred while raglan sleeve was not preferred. Sleeve type mean in 4 items mean range from 2.86-3.69 as highly preferred while other 4 items 2.00-2.30 not preferred. Indication is that shirt, puff kimono, and cap sleeve types were highly preferred while bishop, leg O'mutton, bell, and sleeveless were not preferred. Sleeve length all items mean range from 2.60-3.67 were highly preferred, which implies that elbow, three quarter, and long sleeve length were preferred. Collar had mean of 3.61-3.81 showing high preference for garments with collar and without collar. Collar type in 3 items mean range from 3.00-3.75 were highly preferred while 3 items with mean range from 1.32-2.00 were not preferred, showing preference for shirt, peter-pan, and convertible collars and not polo, stand and shawl collars. Preferred garment length mean were 2.76 and 3.79 for knee and below knee length. Therefore, it shows that straight gown, gowns with pleats, flare and gathers at the waist, skirt suit and jacket, straight, tight fitting, shirt and puff sleeves; three quarter and long sleeve length; garments with collar and without collar; knee and below knee length garments, were preferred females' business clothing for workplace.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of fabric characteristics needed in females' business clothing for workplace job performance senior and junior staff.

Result in table 3 show there is no significant difference in the mean responses of seniors and junior staff in 4 items. The probability value ranged from 0.200-0.882 greater than 0.05 level of significance ( $P > 0.05$ ). As a result, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was upheld. Indication is that the senior and junior staff did not differ significantly in their responses on fabric characteristics needed in business clothing for workplace job performance.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of design style preferences in business clothing suitable for workplace job performance between single and married females.

Result in table 4 show there is no significant difference in the mean responses of single and married workers

**Table 3:** t-test analysis of responses of senior and junior staff on fabric characteristics in business clothing

Design style	Senior x1	n=135 SD	Junior x2	n=125 SD	t-value	Sig	Dec
1. Types of fabrics	3.86	0.92	3.54	0.82	-0.284	0.840	NS
2. Weight of fabrics	3.64	0.70	3.40	0.80	0.154	0.882	NS
3. Color of fabrics	3.59	0.86	3.67	0.74	-1.010	0.311	NS
4. Texture of fabrics	3.68	0.94	3.72	0.66	0.689	0.490	NS
5. Surface of fabrics	3.54	0.76	3.69	0.74	1.026	0.200	NS
6. Surface design of fabrics	3.78	0.70	3.60	0.81	0.680	0.392	NS

Key: X1=mean for senior staff, x2=mean for junior staff, df=degree of freedom (258), t-value=calculated value of t-test using SPSS, SD=standard deviation, n1= number of single female workers, n2= number of married female workers, Sig=level of significance 0.05, NS=not significant.

**Table 4:** t-test analysis of responses of single and married females on design style preferences in business clothing

Design style	Single x1	n=150 SD	Married x2	n=110 SD	t-value	Sig	Dec
Silhouette of clothing	3.76	0.72	3.72	0.74	1.036	0.301	NS
Sleeve shape	3.82	0.84	3.76	0.86	-0.284	0.777	NS
Sleeve type	3.72	0.74	3.71	0.81	0.689	0.492	NS
Sleeve length	3.67	0.97	3.69	0.80	-1.011	0.313	NS
Collar	3.57	0.90	3.63	0.82	0.154	0.880	NS
Collar type	3.62	0.86	3.64	0.86	-1.110	0.812	NS
Length of garment	3.48	0.76	3.46	0.72	0.140	0.426	NS

Key: X1=mean for single females, x2=mean for married females, df=degree of freedom (258), t-value=calculated value of t-test using SPSS, SD=standard deviation, n1= number of single female workers, n2= number of married female workers, Sig=level of significance 0.05, NS=not significant.

in 5 items. Probability value ranged from 0.301- 0.880 greater than 0.05 level of significance ( $P>0.05$ ), the null hypothesis of no significance was not rejected. Indication is that the single and married females did not significantly differ in their responses on design/style preferences suitable for workplace clothing.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

Finding showed that the fabric characteristics of business used in workplace include; cotton, linen, polyester, nylon, and lacra fabric types among others light and medium fabric weight, blue, black, gray, brown colors, cool and soft texture, rough, raised, smooth surface as well as plain, plaid, stripe and flowered design among others. This is in consonance with Sonye and Nzurumike (2022)<sup>[22]</sup> who found that cotton, linen, bright colors, plain, flowered, soft, smooth, light and medium weight fabric types were preference in garment making. It is of note that properties of cotton and linen fabrics include moisture absorbency, cool to the body in wear, and allow the heat of the body to escape. This, therefore, enhances comfort at workplace, promote efficiency and job

productivity. Natural fibers and fabrics absorb perspiration and are cooler than synthetic fibres/fabrics to the body in wear (Tania, 2017).<sup>[25]</sup> Color, attractiveness and texture are crucial elements to women clothing selection, choices and wear. Color, weight and texture of fabrics used for clothes are not surprising as women are known to always want to look good, beautiful and aesthetically pleasing not only at occasions but also at workplaces.

Finding further showed female workers' preferences and needs for most fabrics characteristics as garments in workplace such as cotton, linen, nylon, lacra, polyester, light and medium weight, blue, gray, black, brown colors, cool, smooth, plain, plaid, flowered surface fabrics among others. While net, organza, coarse and heavy weight, white, yellow, toweling, knitted fabrics among others were not in preference. Nylon, polyester, and lacra fabrics are currently trendy fashion and often most workers do not want to compromise fashion to work job performance. In agreement with this finding, Surbhi (2018)<sup>[24]</sup> stressed the need for aesthetic and expressive attributes in clothing for good appearance and acceptance. These project image, authority and professionalism as well as

efficiency for job productivity at workplace. Some of the fabric characteristics not preferred were net, heavy weight, and coarse fabrics that do not absorb moisture and do not allow heat from the body to escape, hence, not comfortable to the wearer and which may impede efficient work performance and job output. Heavy weight and thick fabrics used for wears discomfort the wearer due to poor removal and dissipation of heat (Nwaba et al, 2022).<sup>[19]</sup> Office wears require cool warm colors and not too sharp colors. Though red color clothes are considered being more confident, because of color preference such garment might depicts different interpretation or meaning for the user (Elliot & Mairer, 2014;<sup>[8]</sup> Kim et al, 2022).<sup>[14]</sup> Office clothing with innovative fashion details often times convey weaker professional image than classic fashion details. The responses of senior and junior staff did not differ significantly on fabric characteristics needed in business clothing. It is important to note that properties of fabrics to large extent determine its performance in use. Fabrics that provide balance in heat and moisture between the wearer and environment for comfort relates to the wearers' psychological, physical, and social comfort needs and values (Kaunde, 2014).<sup>[13]</sup> As workers comfort, values, clothing functionality and environment are important to organizational success than rank or position; therefore, work wears should meet protection/safety, expressive and aesthetic needs of the wearers in use for job efficiency at the workplace.

Finding shows that straight gown, waist flared, pleated, and gathered gowns, skirt. Blouse and suit/jacket, straight tight fitting, shirt, puff, cap, long sleeves, garment with or without collar, below knee length, peter-pad, and convertible collars among others were highly preferred design style of female business clothes for workplace. Suitable work clothing modifies female workers' appearance, express their individual values and worth. A classic styled skirt or pants suit or tailored outfit with jacket free of images and graphics were forms of career clothing for females that show workers professional image (Braganca, 2016).<sup>[6]</sup> Professional women prefer well-tailored fitted office clothing that are trendy in fashion; add aesthetic value to the general outlook of the garment, make the worker presentable, improve confidence and productivity (Indeed, 2023b).<sup>[10]</sup> The single and married workers did not significantly differ in their in their design styles preferred for business clothing in workplace. It would have been expected that the single female workers may differently style design from the married women. This lay credence to the fact that the practicality of the garment is foremost though aesthetic not compromised as admiration, impression, wearers' taste as well as social

status of identification and expression are greatest needs in most clothing choice and use (Jill, 2016;<sup>[12]</sup> Wang et al 2021;<sup>[27]</sup> Williams, 2022).<sup>[28]</sup> These preferred design styles allow for appropriate movement, postures of sitting, standing, twisting and bending to carryout work place activities, boost job performance and outcomes. Furthermore, create psychologically safe workforce with deep sense of belonging to work for effective and smooth governance at any level.

## 5. Conclusion

It is the duty of employees to decide and choose what to wear daily except the ones on uniform, to ensure confidence, self-worth and professional image. Business clothing to a great extent has implication for safety, comfort, productive job performance and behavior in the work environment. Consequent upon this, finding showed female workers need appropriate work clothing with suitable fabric such as cotton, linen, light weight, smooth, cool, warm colors among others. There had preferences for straight, flared and pleated gowns, skirt and suit/jacket, blouse, skirt shirt, puff, three quarter sleeves, garment with or without collar among others design styles. The senior did not differ significantly from the junior staff on fabric characteristics needed and the single did not differ from the married females in their preferences clothing design styles suitable in business clothing for workplace.

## Recommendations

These recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Female employees should not compromise job productivity to satisfy aesthetics and fashion in work clothes, this has far reaching implication for organizational performance, comfort and safety.
2. Employers should provide workplace clothing guide for employees to enhance decency, modesty, and job efficiency.

## References

- [1] Aldrich, W. (2006) *Metric pattern cutting for men's wear: including unisex clothes and computer aided design* (4<sup>th</sup> ed). USA: Blackwell.
- [2] Azonuche, J.E.(2017). *Development of Functional Clothing for Caregivers in Day Care centres in Delta State, Nigeria*. Ph.D Thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
- [3] Azonuche, J. E (2021). *Influence of family background on the academic performance of married*



- female students in clothing and textiles in Nigerian Universities. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*. 11 (4), 118-124. <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2021-0082>.
- [4] Azonuche, J. E & Anyakoha, E. U. (2018). Construction criteria for functional apparel for caregivers in Day care centres in Delta State. *Journal of Home Economics Research (JHER)*, 25 (1), 1-12.
- [5] Braganca.S., Fontes, L., Arezes, P., Edalman, E. R., & Carvalho, M. (2015). The impact of work clothing design on workers' comfort. *Procedia Manufacturing*, 3(1), 5889-5896. doi:10.1016/j.promfg.2015.07.898.
- [6] Braganca.S., Carvalho, M., Arezes, P. M., & Ashdown, S.P. (2016). Identification of preponderant factors for work-wear design. Conference Paper. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304822823>.
- [7] Chen, Q., & HU, X. (2016). The Research of Clothing Space Design. *International Conference on Humanities and Social Science (HSS)*, Atlantis Press. <https://www.atlantis.press.com/article/25849149.pdf>.
- [8] Elliot, A. J. & Maier, M. A. (2014). Colour Psychology: Effect of perceiving colour on psychological functioning in humans. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65: 95-120.
- [9] Indeed.(2023a, June 20). Guide to business attire (With Examples) <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/starting-new-job/guide-to-business-attire>.
- [10] Indeed. (2023b, June 20). The Importance of Dressing Professionally at work. C:\User\USER\Desktop\Documents for publication\The Importance of Dressing Professionally at work\_Indeed.com.mhtml. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/starting-new-job/guide-to-business-attire>.
- [11] International Labour Organization (2023). Employment-related gender gaps greater than previously thought, ILO report finds. Geneva ILO News Report.
- [12] Jill, C.F. (2016, June 8). How clothing choice affects and reflect self image. <https://www.huffingtonpost.com>.
- [13] Kaunde, K.R (2014). Psycho-social and economic factors influencing the choice of clothing by professional women: A case of Machakos town in Kenya. A published Thesis for Masters of Science in Fashion design and Marketing, School of Applied Human Science, Kenyatta University.
- [14] Kim, J.K., Holtz, B.C., & Vogel, R.M.(2022). Wearing your worth at work: The consequences of Employees Daily Clothing Choices. *Academy of Management Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2021.1358>.
- [15] Lindavist, R., & Thornquist, C. (2014). Construction Technology for Ergonomic Clothing: A new Approximation of the body and system for garment construction. Ambience paper final, Conference paper, 7-9 September 2014.
- [16] MasterClass. (2021). How to Dress for work: 4 Types of office Dress code – 2023. <http://s.www.masterclass.com/article/how-to-dress-for-work>.
- [17] Miles, M. (2022). The Unspoken language of Business Casual clothing. C:\User\USER\Desktop\Document for publication\ The Unspoken language of Business Casual clothing. Mhtml.
- [18] Nayak, R., Wang, L., Padhye, R.(2015). How to Dress at work. Doi.10.1007/978-3-319-11526-9\_17.
- [19] Nwaba, N. I, Mavern, K., & Hosea, C. L. (2022). Exploring Clothing and Textiles Education for selecting clothing for the Retired with Special Needs. *Nigeria Journal of Home Economics (Nig-JHEC) HEPAN*, 10(6), 200-206.
- [20] Osia, J.E.D. (2005), "Impact of Working outside the Home on Female (Women) Martial Role Performance in the Family. *Journal of Home Economics Research (JHER)* Vol. 6(2), Pp. 106-112.
- [21] Rollings, M. (2020). Does what we wear to work affect our productivity? Hive. <https://hive.com>blog>office-dress-productivity>.
- [22] Sonye, C.U., & Nzurumike, N. (2022). Design criteria for production of Infant clothing articles using fabric waste by clothing Entrepreneur in Rivers. *Nigeria Journal of Home Economics (Nig-JHEC) HEPAN*, 10(6), 207-213.
- [23] Stitch Fix. (2021). Types of Business Attire for Women: Decoding the Office Dress code. <https://www.stitchfix.com/women/blog/fashion-tip/types-of-business-attire-women>.
- [24] Surbhi, S. (2018). Business opportunities in textile industry. Business. Excom<https://www.wbusinesssex.com>.
- [25] Tania, A. R. (2017). Functional fashion design: transforming process to improve outcomes. *Fashion-scope: Art and Design*, 15, 8-12.
- [26] Urhibo, B.O.(2021) Women, Bureaucracy and Development in Nigeria: A Conceptual perspective. *Journal of Public Administration, Finance and Law*. (22) 93-103. <https://doi.org/10.47743/jopaf1-2021-22-07>.
- [27] Wang, X., Wang, X., Lei, J., & Chao, M.C.H. (2021). The clothes that make you eat healthy: The impact of clothes style on food choice. *Journal of Business Research*, 132: 787-799.
- [28] Williams, S. (2022, August 13). What is Fashion? Eight different kinds of fashion wear. <https://.sew-guide.com>fashion>.