The major purpose of this study was to develop functional apparels for lactating mothers. In order to achieve this, ten specific purposes were stated to guide the study; eight research questions were posed while seven null hypotheses were formulated. The study adopted Research and Development (R and D) design and was carried out in Taraba State, Nigeria. The population for this study was 1475 respondents comprising of 1239 lactating mothers between the ages of 18-34, 162 Nurses, 34 Home Economics Extension Workers and 40 Registered Fashion Designers. Multi-stage and disproportionate stratified random sampling techniques were used to select 288 subjects for the study. Instruments for data collection in the study were Interview Schedule for Nurses on Need Assessment (ISNNA), Functional Apparel Needs Assessment Questionnaire for Lactating Mothers (FANAQLM), Interview Schedule for Home Economics Extension Workers and Fashion Designers on Need Assessment (ISHEFDNA), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for Lactating Mothers on Need Assessment (FGDLMNA) and Questionnaire for Evaluation of Functional Lactating Apparels by Judges and user models (QEFAJUM). The instruments were subjected to face validation by five experts, two experts
from the Department of Home Economics and Hospitality Management Education; one from Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Science Education; all of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. One from College of Agriculture, Jalingo, and one from Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi. In order to determine the reliability of the research instruments, the questionnaire (FANAQLM and QEFAJUM) were trial tested by administering thirty copies of the questionnaire to 30 respondents from Plateau State. The FANAQLM yielded reliability index of 0.85, 0.78, 0.93, 0.81, 0.66 and 0.86 for clusters A, B, C, D, E and F respectively and an overall reliability index of 0.91 was determined for the instrument and QEFAJUM yielded a reliability index of 0.94. This was done using Cronbach alpha reliability method. Based on the geographical spread of the population across the State, four research assistants from the Home Economic Section of College of Agriculture Jalingo who know the terrain of the study area were instructed on how data should be collected for the study while the researcher coordinated the activities of the four research assistants and collated the retrieved questionnaire after the period of administration for data analysis. All the instruments administered to the respondents were returned which represent 100% return rate. Mean and standard deviation were used for answering the research questions while ANOVA was used to test hypotheses 1-6 and t-test statistics was used in testing hypothesis 7, all at 0.05 level of probability. The findings of the study showed that lactating mothers engaged in 15 various operations/activities involved in lactation, there are 12 functional apparels’ needs for lactating mothers, there are 19 design criteria to be adopted to produce functional apparels to accommodate the needs/activities performed by lactating mothers, there are nine functional and five aesthetic design features preferred by the lactating mothers, there are four functional openings with fastening needs for easy and discreet lactation. Based on the findings of the study, seven functional apparels were developed and coded for easy identification. Therefore, the researcher recommends that clothing manufacturers, designers, and entrepreneurial should recognize functional apparel needs for lactating mothers during their process of construction. They should also consider fashion, aesthetic, fit, fabric and design in conjunction with functionality of the lactating apparels. They should provide diverse sizes assortment for the lactating mothers.

References

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