

Study of the pre-schoolers uniforms of Chandigarh schools

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■ **ABSTRACT :** School uniforms are the distinctive design clothing worn by the students of schools and are purposely designed for undifferentiated identification. The study aims to find out the suitability of the uniforms to the pre-school children and to find out the features required in the uniforms of the pre-school children. The study dealt with the uniforms of pre-school children which required meeting with teachers and mothers, and observing the uniforms of children. Therefore, survey method was used that included interview and observation. The major findings shows that regarding various features that should be there in the uniforms, the mothers preferred comfort followed by smartness and appeal of the uniform and good colour combination. Ease to care and self-help were at fourth and fifth place. A good style and its suitability of style to season were the next preferred factors. Other factors in their order of preference were durability and serviceability, economy, room for growth and colourfastness was the last rank given by the mothers of the preschooler's uniform. Mothers found that uniforms were colourfast and were economical too.

■ **KEY WORDS:** School uniforms, Suitability, Durability, Colourfastness, Pre-school children

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The pre-school children are gradually learning to dress themselves. A small child soon acquires definite likes and dislikes. For him to develop socially as well as physically his clothes must be suitable for his activities and similar to those of his playmates. He is conscious of clothing other children wear and wants to look like them. A little boy will not enjoy wearing a new jacket when his playmates are all wearing sweaters. A little girl cannot enjoy herself in pretty, dressy clothes in which she cannot run and play and not dirty, while her playmates are dressed in play clothes. A child may suffer from being overdressed, or feel inferior because he is not as well dressed as his friends (Lewis, 1960).

The pre-school age is the age to introduce them to the school and a different environment. Uniforms in schools help the children to identify with their institution. The word 'uniform' means literally having the same form.' So a school uniform means that every kid in the school wears the same clothes (though girls often have a different uniform to boys). A school uniform is an outfit-a set of standardized clothes-worn primarily for an educational institution. They are common in primary and secondary schools. School uniforms are standardized clothing for regular school attendance worn in conformity with school policy (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/school-uniform).

School uniforms address parents and students

“another tool in the war against social pressures” (Atkins and Schlosberg, 1996) and allow students to put less stress on trendy clothes and more priority on a useful education. Taking an account of clothing requirements of pre-schoolers, their school uniform should be patterned for growth; have ease and freedom yet it should not be too large; well constructed to stand hard wear and be comfortable; roomy neck opening; strong reinforcements at all points of strain such as placket-openings, pocket-corners, knees, elbows, armholes and under buttons; closely woven material which will remain fresh even after several washes; good workmanship, durable flat seams; simple, accompanied by becomingness of line and colour; fasteners sewn firmly to withstand tugging and pulling and button holes closely worked; school shoes should be comfortable with good fit and material of shoes should be durable (Gawne and Oerke, 1969).

Keeping in mind the vital role of clothing in building up the self concept and personality of an individual right from his pre-school days, the study-”uniforms for preschool children” was taken up to cover an important area of clothing in child’s life *i.e.* the uniforms which usually does not get attention much on the part of parents as well as the school authorities. The objective of the study focus on the mothers on the basis of their preference for various features in their child’s uniform and their opinions of the school authorities regarding the pre-schooler’s uniform.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

According to the list of the schools total strength of the schools in Chandigarh was seventy five. Out of these,

only thirty three schools had nursery and K.G. classes were selected. Thirty per cent of schools were then selected from each zone by the lottery method. The sample was selected using stratified proportionate purposive sampling technique. The study dealt with the uniforms of pre-school children which required meeting with teachers and mothers, and observing the uniforms of children. Therefore, survey method was used that included interview and observation. Questionnaire cum interview schedule was selected as the tool for collecting the data. The sample for the present study consisted of 200 mothers of pre-school children, hundred each of boys and girls, Let us denote, total number of mothers by $N=200$, mothers of boys $n_1=100$ and mothers of girls $n_2=100$ (each). A total of eleven schools were selected and the number of children from each school.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study of the present study are presented as follows.

The data in Table 1 depicts that the preference of mothers for various factors in the uniforms. It can be seen that comfort with a score of 1213 was the most preferred factor amongst mothers for their child’s uniform. This was followed by smartness and appeal of the uniform (875) and good colour combination (842). Ease to care with score of (841) was placed at 4th rank. Mothers preferred the uniform with self help features (5th rank with a score of 831) and good style (6th rank). Suitability of style to season, durability and serviceability and suitability of material to season were the next preferences of the mothers with 513, 468 and 462 score. Economy was at 10th rank in the mother’s order of

Table 1 : Distribution of the mothers on the basis of their preference for various features in their child’s uniform

Sr. No.	Features/Factors	Score	Rank
1.	Comfort	1213	I
2.	Economy	432	X
3.	Easy to care	841	IV
4.	Smartness and appealing	875	II
5.	Self help	831	V
6.	Good colour combination	842	III
7.	Style	652	VI
8.	Suitability of style to season	513	VII
9.	Durability and Serviceability	486	VIII
10.	Room for growth	357	XI
11.	Suitability of material to season	462	IX
12.	Colourfastness	266	XII

preference. Colourfastness was the least preferred factor with a score of 266. This is because most of the mothers felt that uniforms were colourfast and were economical too.

The respondents on the basis of whether or not there should be uniforms for pre-schoolers :

The majority (97%) of the mothers opined that there should be uniforms in school. Only few mothers (3%) however felt that there should be no uniforms in the schools (Fig. 2). A few mothers who felt that there should be no school uniforms gave the following reasons- children lose their identity when all of them wear same

clothes; dress other than uniform could help them to express themselves better. Some mothers were of the opinion that uniform should be compulsory but children should be allowed to wear dress of their own choice once a week.

The respondents on the basis or reasons for having uniforms for pre-schoolers :

It can be seen from Table 2 that discipline was the most common reason given by mothers (97%) for having uniforms in the schools followed by uniformity, equality and status symbol of belonging to the institution (87% each). Several researchers reported that cultural and

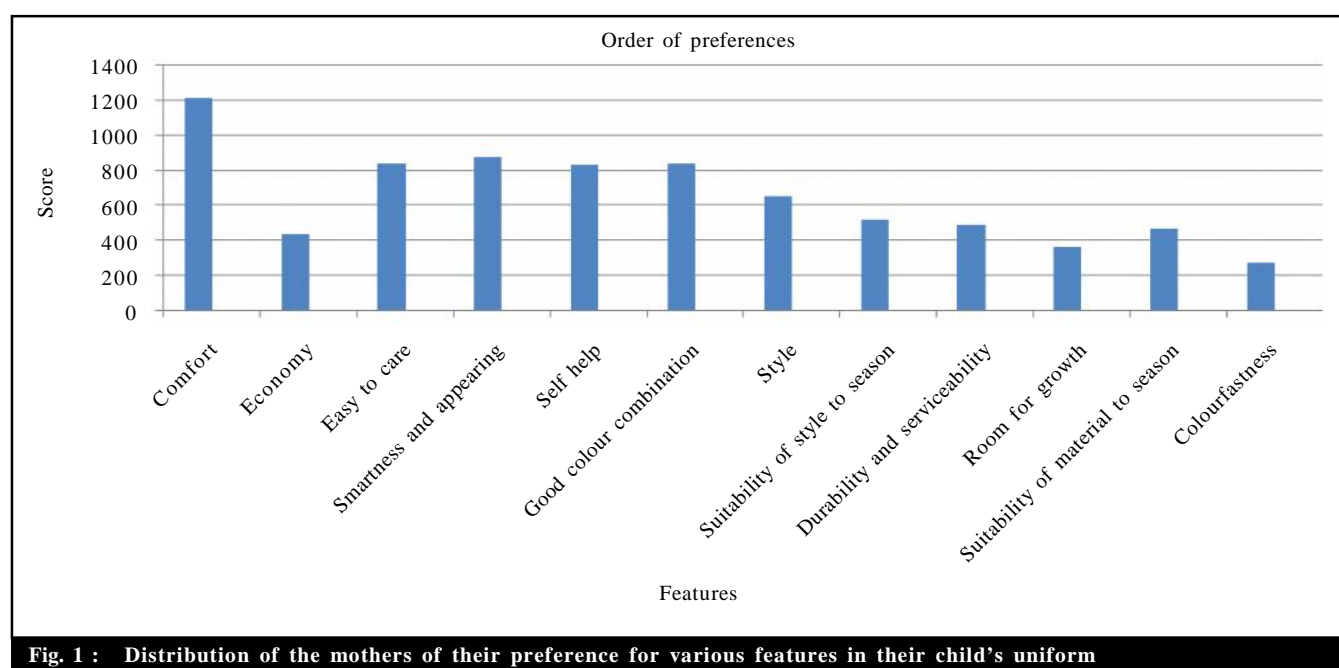


Fig. 1 : Distribution of the mothers of their preference for various features in their child's uniform

Sr. No.	Reasons	Respondents (Yes)	
		f	%
1.	Discipline	195	97
2.	Uniformity	175	87
3.	Equality	175	87
4.	Status symbol belongings to institution/organization	175	87
5.	Smart looks	160	80
6.	No display of wealth	150	75
7.	Reduces the cost	150	75
8.	Identification	135	67
9.	Fixes code of conduct	130	60
10.	No complexes	125	62

f=Frequency, %=Percentage, *=Multiple responses

economic differences are removed, and pupils develop an enhanced self-concept and good academic performance (Isaacson 1998; Chaika 1999; Eveland 1994 and Brunnsma and Rockquemore, 1994). Smart looks was the next reason given by 80% mothers followed by reduced cost and no display of wealth (75% mothers each). Some mothers however felt that uniforms helped the children to be identified (67%), fixed the code of conduct (65%) and they helped the child to be free from any complex related to clothes (62% mothers). Sommers (2001) concluded that clothes worn to school do have an impact on discipline. Students' behavior inclines toward the way they are dressed; hence, more formally dressed, the better the behavior.

The respondents on the basis of whether or not the child likes to wear uniform :

According to Fig. 2, the maximum mothers (65%) said that their child liked to wear the uniform, while 35 per cent of mothers said that their child didn't like to wear the uniform. The children liked to wear uniform because they wanted to look smart like other children but those children who didn't like to wear uniform found them uncomfortable and boring.

The data in Table 3 shows that majority (85%) of the mothers didn't feel the need of accessories like tie, belt and badges to be a part of the uniform as they felt that these were an extra mental burden for their child. Only 15 per cent mothers were said that the need of the accessories like belts and badges to be part of the uniform.

Suggestions given by the mothers for the uniform of pre-schoolers :

Regarding the material of the uniform, mothers suggested that summer uniforms should be of cotton, rubia or lizzy-bizzy in a combination of plain or checks, stripes or plaids.

Mothers complained about the quality of material used for uniforms.

- There was pilling in the material of shirts/T-shirts and the mothers suggested that better quality material should be used for shirts.
- Stretchable material of Tracksuits became very loose after a few washes and hence should be of better quality.
- Seams of neckties were neither firm nor finished and hence opened up very fast giving an untidy look to the tie, it should be of good quality.
- Quality of socks needed to be better as the elastic used in them was not of good quality and it lost its elasticity after a few washes.

Mothers suggested that good colour combinations should be used for children's uniform. The colours should be bright and pleasant and uniform should not be in single colour.

Designing of the uniforms should incorporate the self help features and margins for the child's growth.

Views of school authorities regarding pre-schoolers' uniform :

All the school authorities were of the opinion that

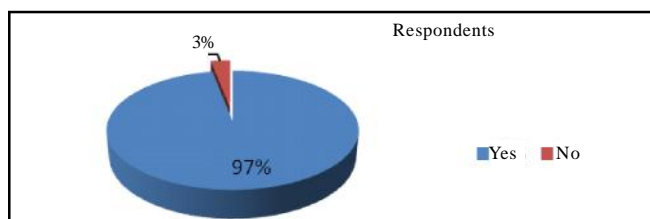


Fig. 2 : Distribution of the respondents on the basis of whether or not there should be uniform for pre schoolers

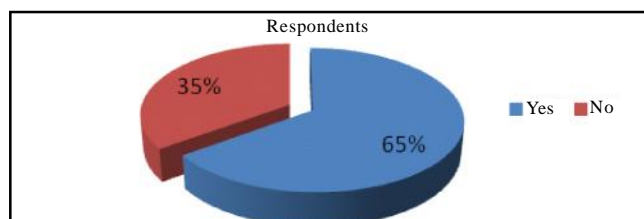


Fig. 3 : Distribution of the respondents on the basis of whether or not the child likes to wear uniform

Table 3 : Distribution of the respondents on the basis of whether or not accessories are required in the uniform		(n=200)	
Sr. No.	Accessories are required in the uniform	Respondents	
		f	%
1.	Yes	30	15
2.	No	170	85

f=Frequency, %=Percentage

there should be uniforms in schools for pre-schoolers. They pointed out that even three year-olds are fashion conscious and try to judge one another's dress and uniforms help in eliminating these distractions.

They suggested that uniforms for preschoolers should be mandatory in all schools.

All respondents felt that uniform was important for the schools because-

- It helped to maintain the discipline, uniformity, identification and equality among the children in the schools.
- Diminished economic and social barriers between students.
- Increased a sense of belongingness to school.
- Schools were ready to incorporate the changes in uniform suggested by the parents of pre-schoolers.

Conclusion :

Pre-school age is an important period of an individual's life as it is the beginning of a child's exposure to a new environment in the form of school. Uniforms play an important part in the life of pre-schoolers by helping the children in identifying themselves with the peer group as well as the school and hence give them a feeling of security and self-confidence. The uniforms for preschoolers need to be more comfortable in terms of style, material and their suitability to season. They can be made more interesting by using combination of checks and plains, pockets and suitable collars. Accessories like ties, badges can be done away with. A comfortable and appealing uniform designed to suit the requirements of preschoolers can make them independent and confident, thereby contributing towards

a positive attitude, better self concept and better adjustment to new environment.

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