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### Primary school uniforms for girls: To study the preferences and to develop suitable uniforms

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#### Abstract

Clothing is the most intimate environment as it can be carried everywhere with an individual, creating its own room within a room and its own climate within the larger climate of our surroundings. Children need clothing which is capable of providing comfort within a garment, protection from associated risks in outdoor activities and functionality to do activities faster besides being attractive in all fashion terms. From the present study, it was found that there was a definite need for specialized uniforms in order to meet the basic functions and comfort of children. The stitched uniforms were assessed against various attributes and from the study it was found that children preferred cotton fabric with shades of blue and white for their school uniforms because of its light weight, absorbing capacity and comfort ability. Respondents preferred features like shirt collar, v-neck line, short sleeves, no yoke, set in pockets on the front right panel and pleats for skirt, flaps for belt and pockets on side seam; few of them preferred pinafore style of uniform. The results revealed that the designed school uniforms could be introduced for primary school girls as they were aesthetically appealing and to improved comfort while performing different activities in schools. This survey has revealed many facts about school uniform which were causing dissatisfaction among children.

**Keywords:** Primary school girls, Uniform preferences, Clothing components in school uniforms, Designing school uniforms.

#### Introduction

A school uniform is an outfit, a set of standardized clothes worn primarily for an educational institution. Primary school students spend half of their day, according to the education state of school, by wearing school uniforms. Therefore school uniforms should be comfortable to wear and also they should be worn fondly. Children's wear offers special opportunities for design to be creative yet functional by using colors, shapes, trimmings, prints and textures with imagination. School uniforms have been proven to be beneficial for students, parents and teachers. They reduce non-academic distractions remove clothing stress on students and parents and foster a sense of community. School uniforms should include items that are affordable, comfortable, made from easy-care and easy wear fabrics, suitable for all body shapes and should provide girls and boys with equal access to the full range of school activities. Keeping these views and preferences in mind following objectives were framed for research: to study the perception and preferences with regards to primary school uniforms for girl's, designing comfortable and aesthetically appealing primary school uniforms for girl's, assessing the performance of designed uniforms <sup>[1]</sup>.

#### Methodology

The study was conducted in different schools of Kolkata. The device for the collection of data consisted of pre tested questionnaire which was administered to one hundred parents of primary school girls. Questionnaire was developed to illicit information from parents of primary school girls regarding features in school uniforms. It consisted of general information of the child, details about the level of satisfaction, features and problems associated of the existing uniform, preferences of the style and features to be incorporated in the uniforms. Their perception with regard to existing uniform colour, texture, and comfort of wear, pattern or design, style, silhouette, print, embellishments were collected and evaluated. Apart from this the opinion on an ideal school uniform and their preferences such as its length, design,

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sleeves, collar styles, colour preferences and most suitable fabric according to the parents, teachers and children was collected. Frequency, percentages, overall mean, weighted scores was used to find out the clothing preferences for school uniforms by primary school girls.

Further, designing comfortable and aesthetically appealing primary school girl's uniforms was done. Selection of most suitable five designs and ten fabrics for construction was done by taking opinion of ten experts (two textile experts, two uniform shopkeepers, two uniform manufacturers, two kids wear manufacturers and two primary school teachers). The designs were scored as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 corresponding to average, fair, good, very good and excellent respectively. The attributes on which the evaluation of designs was done were appropriateness for product, clothing components present and overall aesthetic appeal. The attributes on which the evaluation of fabrics was done were appropriateness for product, fabric colour, fabric texture and overall aesthetic appeal. Construction of School Uniforms and assessment of Constructed School Uniforms was done thereafter. Feedback of wearing trial of uniforms was collected from parents of thirty children; acceptance of the uniforms in terms of fabric, clothing components, overall aesthetic appeal and cost of the garment was seen. Statistical analysis of data using Two-way ANOVA technique was done.

**Results and Discussion**

Perception with regard to existing school uniform was studied under following categories:

**Features Present in the Existing School Uniform**

Respondents were satisfied with the fabric design and durability of the uniforms. Texture of fabric, garment design and cost effectiveness was moderately liked by the respondents. Respondents felt that there could be variation in colours in the school uniforms of primary school girls.

**Table 1:** Features Present in the Existing School Uniform

Features	WS	X	Rank
Colour	333	3.33	VI
Texture	353	3.53	IV
Comfort	330	3.30	VII
Durability	365	3.65	II
Fabric design	414	4.14	I
Garment design	311	3.11	V
Cost effective	330	3.30	III

**Satisfaction with the Existing Uniform**

The above table clearly showed that majority of respondents was not happy with the present school uniform. Fifty three percent of respondent were not satisfied with the present type of uniform. However, fifteen to twenty percent of the respondents fairly felt satisfactory. Since a number of respondents were not satisfied with the uniforms, the study was conducted where comfortable uniforms were developed using suitable fabrics.

**Table 2:** Satisfaction with the Existing Uniform

Level of Satisfaction	(f)	%
Highly Satisfied	15	15
Satisfied	12	12
Fairly Satisfied	20	20
Not Satisfied	53	53

**Parts of Existing Uniform causing Discomfort to Children**

As per the information collected, most of the children were

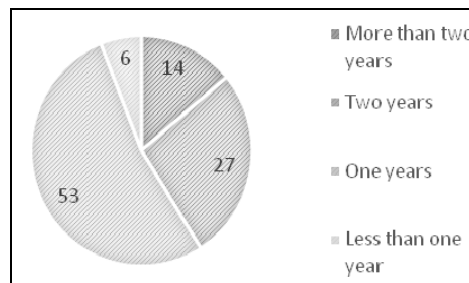
feeling uncomfortable with the misfit of the uniforms at sleeve parts and waist line. They were finding major problem in fitting at these two parts as they did not allow free movement.

**Table 3:** Parts of the Existing Uniform causing Discomfort to Children

Features	WS	X	Rank
Upper Garment			
Necklines	351	3.51	V
Collar	381	3.81	IV
Armhole	390	3.90	III
Sleeve	412	4.12	I
Fabric	403	4.03	II
Lower Garment			
Crotch	333	3.33	III
Waist Line	371	3.71	I
Fabric	365	3.65	II

**Durability of Existing School Uniform**

As per the data obtained, fifty three percent of respondents said that they had to buy uniforms almost every year as school uniforms were durable from one year to two years. Because of the low quality fabric and stitching not up to the mark, quite less durability was noticed. Most of the mothers expressed that the uniforms faded out easily and luster of the fabric was lost in less than a year. Therefore, at least two to three sets of uniforms were taken at one time for them to last for one to one and half academic session.



**Fig 1:** Durability of Existing School Uniform

**Durability of Various Components of the Existing School Uniform**

When the respondents were asked about the parts of the uniform that wears out easily, most of respondents felt that the uniform on the whole wore out easily. This could be because of low quality of fabric being used to make the uniforms more cost-effective. Though respondents were not dissatisfied with the type of fasteners being used, but their major complaint was that the fasteners were not attached properly and came out readily. However, collars and sleeves also wore out sometimes. Though pockets had good durability, but a number of respondents felt that the number of pockets were not adequate as per the need of small children.

**Table 4:** Durability of Various Components of the Existing School Uniform

Part of Garment	Weighted Score	X	Rank
Collars	327	3.27	IV
Pockets	313	3.13	V
Sleeves	362	3.62	III
Fasteners	403	4.03	I
Whole Garment	384	3.84	II

Preferences of respondents with regards to expected school uniforms were studied as follows:

**Type of Uniform Preferred**

According to the data collected, shirt and skirt was the most preferred uniform for primary school girls. This could be because it is the most conventional uniform style. Pinafore dress and A-line dress were also preferred, probably because of ease of wearing and handling by young children. Respondents preferred divided skirt from safety and comfort point of view. Some of them suggested that they could prefer divided skirt for sporting activities. T-shirt with pants or shorts was not preferred. This could be because pants were not considered suitable for hot and humid weather of Kolkata.

**Table 5:** Preference for Type of School Uniform

Type of Garment	WS	X	Rank
Salwar Kameez	160	1.60	VIII
Divided Skirt	343	3.43	V
T-Shirt & Shorts	292	2.92	VII
Wrap Skirt & Shirt	344	3.44	IV
A-Line Dress	358	3.58	III
Shirt & Skirt	398	3.98	I
Pinnafore & Shirt	373	3.73	II
T-shirt & Pant	304	3.04	VI

**b. Fabrics Preferred in Uniforms**

As per the data collected from the respondents, maximum number of parents preferred cotton because of its comfort properties followed by polyester/cotton blends, probably for its easy care properties.

With regard to the fabric pattern preference most of the respondents preferred to have plain fabric for school uniform followed by stripes and checks. Floral prints and dots were not preferred probably because they convey a sense of casual and informal clothing in school.

Colours such as beige, brown, grey, blue were preferred over red, yellow and pink. Respondents preferred neutral colours probably because they did not show much dirt and looked neater, whereas some respondents even rated for white colour as they felt that although it required special care but it reflected a greater discipline in the school environment and they wanted to make their children learn how to stay neat and tidy.

**Table 6:** Fabrics Preferred in the School Uniform

Fabric Features	Weighted Score	X	Rank
Materials used			
Cotton	417	4.17	I
Polyester	261	2.61	IV
Cotton/polyester blend	357	3.57	II
Polyester/viscose blend	234	2.34	V
Wool/polyester	227	2.27	VI
Acrylic /Cotton	293	2.93	III
Fabric Design			
Checks	352	3.52	III
Stripes	394	3.94	II
Plaids	335	3.35	IV
Floral Prints	227	2.27	V
Dots	220	2.20	VI
Plain	397	3.97	I

**c. Clothing Components Preferred in Uniforms**

Most preferred clothing components were short sleeves, full roll and Peter Pan collar, round neckline, welt pockets or set-in pockets. Yokes were not preferred and most preferred silhouette was A-line. With regard to the fasteners, most of the school uniforms possessed press buttons. Hooks were used for skirt and pinafore. The shirts of both girls had small button fasteners. Front placket was the most preferred placket,

probably because it allowed ease in wearing the garment by young children. Most of the respondents felt that plackets were always used to allow clothing to be put on or removed easily by the child, but sometimes it could be used purely as a design element. Majority of the respondents preferred gathers and pleats for fullness in shirts and skirts. Skirts typically have pleats to provide freedom of movement. Majority of the respondents preferred gathers and pleats for fullness in shirts and skirts. Gathers were preferred over pleats probably because they allowed ease in ironing the garment.

**Table 7:** Preference for Clothing Components in the School Uniform

Clothing Component	Weighted Score	X	Rank
Sleeve Length			
Full Sleeve	302	3.02	II
3/4 <sup>TH</sup> Sleeve	220	2.20	III
Short Sleeve	434	4.34	I
Type of Sleeve			
Sleeveless	221	2.21	VI
Puff Sleeve	347	3.47	II
Plain Sleeve	389	3.89	I
Flared Sleeve	239	2.39	V
Sleeve Cuff	300	3.00	IV
Cap Sleeve	342	3.42	III
Yokes			
Round	331	3.31	II
Straight	302	3.02	IV
V-Shape	329	3.29	III
Without Yoke	363	3.63	I
Type of pocket			
Flap Pocket	276	2.76	V
Set-In Pocket	355	3.55	II
Bound Pocket	313	3.13	III
Hip Pocket	310	3.10	IV
Welt Pocket	377	3.77	I
Pocket Placement on upper garment			
Right Panel	356	3.56	I
Left Panel	346	3.46	II
Both The Sides	278	2.78	IV
None	295	2.95	III
Pocket Placement on lower garment			
Side	316	3.16	I
Front	259	2.59	III
Back	306	3.06	II
Type of Collar			
Mandarin Collar	329	3.29	VII
Shawl Collar	342	3.42	VI
Full Roll Collar	387	3.87	I
Convertible Collar	345	3.45	V
Shirt Collar	357	3.57	III
Peterpan Collar	370	3.70	II
Sailor Collar	346	3.46	IV
Neckline			
Square	340	3.40	II
Round	400	4.00	I
V-Neck	284	2.84	III
Garment Silhouette			
A-Line	380	3.80	I
Straight	303	3.03	II
Flared	302	3.02	III
Fastneres in shirt/top			
Small Buttons With Button Holes	320	3.20	IV
Press Buttons	340	3.40	I
Hooks	323	3.23	III
Zipper	279	2.79	V
Large Buttons with button holes	326	3.26	II
Fasteners in skirt/pinafore/dress			
Hook & Eye	362	3.62	II

Press Buttons	319	3.19	IV
Elastic	404	4.04	I
Zipper	329	3.29	III
Buttons With Button Holes	289	2.89	VI
Type of Placket			
Concealed Placket	412	4.12	II
French Placket	283	2.83	IV
Front Placket	578	5.78	I
Shoulder Placket	299	2.99	III
Fullness in shirts			
Tucks	312	3.12	III
Gathers	377	3.77	I
Pleats	354	3.54	II
None	260	2.60	IV
Fullness in skirts/dresses			
Tucks	309	3.09	III
Gathers	370	3.70	II
Pleats	380	3.80	I
None	287	2.87	IV

### Assessment of the Constructed Uniforms



- **T-shirt:**
  - Round neck
  - Short sleeve
  - Knitted sinker fabric
- **Gathered skirt with straps:**
  - Gathers
  - Side seam pocket
  - 100% Cotton denim fabric

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**G2**

- **A-line Pleated dress**
  - Short Sleeve
  - Patch Pocket
  - Sailor Collar
  - Centre back opening
  - Inverted box pleat
  - Fabric- poplin (100% cotton )
  - Fabric for design- 65-35% cotton polyester



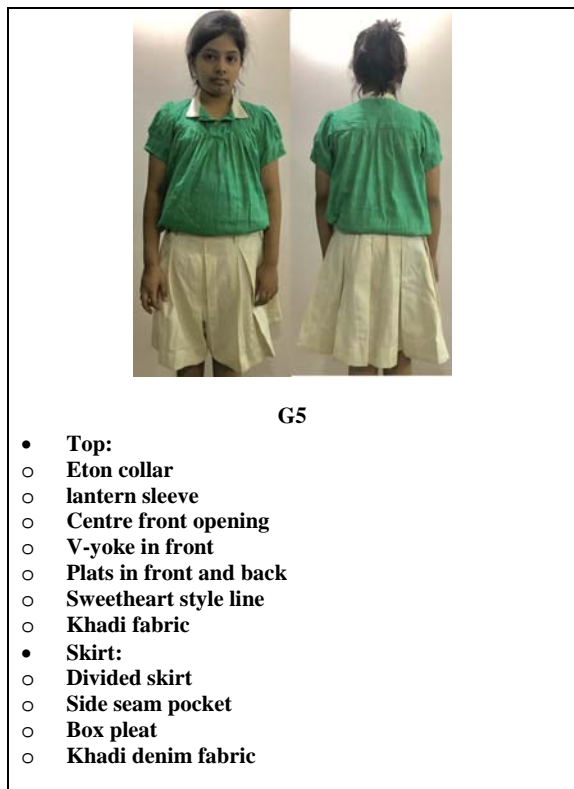
**G3**

- **Shirt:**
  - Shirt Collar
  - Centre front opening
  - Short sleeve
  - 70-30% cotton polyester fabric
- **Pinafore Dress:**
  - Box and knife pleat
  - Sleeveless
  - V neckline
  - Side seam pocket
  - 70-30% cotton polyester fabric



**G4**

- **Shirt:**
  - Shirt collar
  - Centre front opening
  - Tulip sleeve
  - Blind tucks
  - 100% cotton fabric
- **Skirt:**
  - Box pleat skirt
  - Side seam pocket
  - 70-30% cotton/polyester fabric



**Fig 2:** Uniforms Constructed

Constructed uniforms were shown to thirty respondents and they were asked to wear these garments for half a day. Views of the respondents about uniforms were taken regarding acceptance of these in terms of suitability, fabric, design and appearance.

Shirt and skirt in beige and brown (G4) had the highest ranking in terms of fabric attributes. This could probably be because of hundred percent cotton fabric used for shirt which provided excellent absorbency, breathability and softness properties. The colour combination could also be an important factor determining the preference.

From the aspect of design, appearance and clothing components, the uniform constructed from Khadi fabric was preferred the most (G5). Probably a divided skirt had good aesthetic properties and was most suitable for young girls to carry various kinds of physical activities in school. Also the colour combination was rated high by the most of the respondents.

As per the overall ranking of the uniform, pinafore dress with shirt in blue colour (G3) has obtained the highest rank. When the fit and comfort of garment, overall design and cost of garment was considered together, blue coloured pinafore dress with pleat, centre front opening with a shirt in white and blue pin stripes showed highest preference. The garment had high aesthetic appeal and was moderately priced.

From the two way ANOVA test, it was seen that in terms of overall suitability of the garment there was equal acceptance amongst all the attributes at 5 percent level of significance.

### Conclusion

Majority of respondents were satisfied with the constructed uniforms and were keen on recommendation of such uniforms in schools because probably they felt that the constructed uniforms had a good combination of comfort and aesthetic properties and yet they had moderate maintenance properties and were cost effective as-well.

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