



Challenges Faced by Mothers in the Maintenance of Primary School Children's Clothing in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria

¹*Ojike-Chijioke Etuosiso P., ²Ojike Perpetua Chidera and ¹Chukwuemeka Elizabeth N.

¹*Department of Home Economics, Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, Enugu State

²Department of Home Economics, Federal College of Education Technical, Isu, Ebonyi State

*Correspondence: Email: ojikeetuosisochukwu120@gmail.com; Phone: 07030183112

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the specific challenges encountered by mothers in the proper maintenance of primary school children's clothing within Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area (LGA) of Enugu State, Nigeria. Proper clothing maintenance is essential for extending garment lifespan, ensuring hygiene, and promoting children's neatness and self-esteem in school. However, cultural, socio-economic, and environmental factors often create barriers. A descriptive survey design was employed. The population comprised all mothers with primary school children in the LGA. A sample of 200 mothers was drawn using a multi-stage sampling technique. A structured questionnaire titled "Mothers' Clothing Maintenance Challenge Questionnaire (MCMCQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.85 using Cronbach's alpha. Data collected were analysed using mean scores $\{\bar{X}\}$ and Standard Deviation (SD) to answer the research questions, and the t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the primary challenges faced by mothers include economic constraints (high cost of quality detergents and replacement of worn-out clothes), time and energy challenges (juggling maintenance with other responsibilities), and environmental issues (limited access to a reliable water supply). Based on these findings, it was concluded that the mothers in Igbo-Etiti LGA face multiple, interconnected challenges in clothing maintenance. The study recommended that the government and non-governmental organisations provide micro-credit schemes for mothers and organise workshops on cost-effective clothing maintenance techniques.

Keywords: Mothers, Primary School, Clothing Maintenance, Challenges, Enugu State, Childcare.

INTRODUCTION

Clothing is one of the basic human needs, serving protective, psychological, and social functions. For primary school children (typically aged 6-12), clothing, particularly the school uniform, is crucial for establishing identity, discipline, and a sense of belonging within the school system. The cleanliness and good condition of a child's clothing directly reflect on the family's welfare and the child's readiness to learn.

Clothing maintenance refers to the systematic process of keeping clothes in good repair and condition, which includes laundering, drying, ironing, mending, and proper storage (Anyakoha, 2015). Effective maintenance prolongs the useful life of garments, reduces the frequency of replacement, and ensures the clothing remains hygienic and aesthetically pleasing. In the context of primary school children, whose activities often subject clothes to rapid wear, tear, and stains, the

task of maintenance falls predominantly on the mother in the typical Nigerian family structure.

Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area (LGA) is located in Enugu State, Nigeria. Like many semi-urban and rural areas in the South-East, the LGA is characterised by a population largely engaged in farming and petty trading. The socio-economic status of families in such areas often presents significant hurdles to domestic management. Challenges such as low disposable income, poor infrastructure (especially inconsistent electricity and water supply), and the mothers' dual role as homemaker and income earner create a complex environment for maintaining high standards of clothing care.

Previous studies in Enugu State have highlighted the struggles of mothers in managing children's welfare, including clothing provision and care (Nwakaego & Eze, 2017). These challenges are

often multifaceted, ranging from the high cost of quality detergents and washing agents to the sheer labour and time required for washing clothes, especially where running water or modern washing machines are unavailable. Furthermore, the selection of durable, wash-and-wear fabrics is often constrained by affordability.

This study is specifically focused on identifying and analysing these maintenance challenges within the unique context of Igbo-Etiti LGA, aiming to provide empirical data that can inform local solutions, vocational training, and supportive policies designed to ease the burden on mothers and ensure primary school children remain well-kempt for optimal educational outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to identify and analyse the challenges faced by mothers in the maintenance of primary school children's clothing in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area, Enugu State.

The specific purpose is to:

1. Identify the economic challenges faced by mothers in the maintenance of primary school children's clothing in the area.
2. Determine the time and skill-based challenges faced by mothers in maintaining primary school children's clothing.
3. Ascertain the environmental challenges related to clothing maintenance faced by mothers in the area.
4. Determine if there is a significant difference in the perception of economic challenges based on the mother's educational level.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the economic challenges faced by mothers in the maintenance of primary school children's clothing in Igbo-Etiti LGA?
2. What are the time and skill-based challenges faced by mothers in maintaining primary school children's clothing?
3. What are the environmental challenges related to clothing maintenance faced by mothers in the area?

Hypothesis:

Null hypothesis (Ho): There is no significant difference in the mean rating of economic challenges faced by mothers with tertiary education and those without tertiary education in Igbo-Etiti

L.G.A. ($P > 0.05$) Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant difference in the mean rating of economic challenges faced by mothers with tertiary education and those without tertiary education in Igbo-Etiti L.G.A. ($P < 0.05$).

METHODOLOGY

Design of the study:

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate because it aims to collect data from a sample of the population to describe the nature and characteristics of the challenges (economic, time/skill, and environmental) faced by mothers in the maintenance of primary school children's clothing as they naturally exist in Igbo-Etiti LGA.

Area of Study

The study was conducted in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area (LGA), located in Enugu State, South-East Nigeria. The LGA is bordered by Udi, Enugu East, Isi-Uzo, Nsukka, and Uzo-Uwani LGAs. It is predominantly a rural and semi-urban area, with agriculture and petty trading as the major economic activities. The choice of this area is justified by the prevalence of primary school children and the general socio-economic status, which is hypothesised to present significant challenges to domestic management.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises all mothers (or female caregivers) who have children currently enrolled in public and private primary schools in Igbo-Etiti LGA, Enugu State. Based on projected census figures and school enrollment records for the 2024/2025 academic session, the estimated population of mothers with primary school children in the area is approximately 7,500.

Instrument for Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured Questionnaire titled "Mothers' Clothing Maintenance Challenge Questionnaire (MCMCQ)."

The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A: Demographic data of the respondents (e.g., Ward, Educational Level). Section B: Items structured on a four-point Likert scale to measure the challenges, with response options:

- 4 = Strongly Agree (SA)
- 3 = Agree (A)
- 2 = Disagree (D)
- 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Section B contained 15 items, with five items addressing each of the three research questions (Economic, Time/Skill, and Environmental challenges). The decision criterion was a mean score of 2.50 and above, indicating agreement (challenge exists), while a mean score below 2.50 indicated disagreement (challenge does not exist).

Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire with the assistance of two trained research assistants. The head teachers of the selected schools were contacted, and their permission was secured. The questionnaire was administered to the selected mothers, who were guided on how to fill it out accurately. A total of 200 copies were distributed. After the event (challenge exists) or disagreement (challenge does not exist), the Standard Deviation was used to show the variability in the responses. The cut-off point for the decision was 2.50.

Findings of the study

The findings are based on the research questions. A total of 195 retrieved questionnaires were analysed.

1.1 Presentation of Demographic Data

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Ward and Educational Level (N=195)

Variable Category (Ward)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Ukehe	50	25.6
Aku	48	24.6
Ekwegbe	49	25.1
Ogbede	48	24.6
Total	195	100.0

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level

Variable Category (Educational Level)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
No Formal Education	21	10.8
Primary Education	35	17.9
Secondary Education	84	43.1
Tertiary Education	55	28.2
Total	195	100.0

Table 2 shows that the respondents were evenly distributed across the four selected wards. It also indicates that the majority of the mothers had Secondary education (43.1%), followed by Tertiary education (28.2%).

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the economic challenges faced by mothers in the maintenance of primary school children's clothing in Igbo-Etiti LGA?

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Economic Challenges Faced by Mothers

S/N	Item Statement	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	The high cost of quality detergents makes effective washing difficult.	3.51	0.65	Agreed
2	Lack of money to promptly replace worn-out uniforms is a major challenge.	3.82	0.51	Agreed
3	Inability to afford new casual clothes leads to excessive mending and patching.	3.39	0.72	Agreed
4	The cost of electricity/fuel for ironing is too high.	3.20	0.77	Agreed
5	I cannot afford time-saving devices like a washing machine.	3.11	0.81	Agreed
Cluster Mean		3.41	0.69	Agreed

Table 3 shows that all the economic challenge items had mean scores above the 2.50 cut-off point. The highest mean score (3.82) was for Item 2, indicating that the lack of money to promptly replace worn-out uniforms is the most significant economic challenge. The overall cluster mean of 3.41 confirms that mothers in Igbo-Etiti LGA face considerable economic challenges in clothing maintenance.

Research Question 2: What are the time and skill-based challenges faced by mothers in maintaining primary school children's clothing?

Table 4 shows that four out of the five items relating to time and skill-based challenges were agreed upon, with a cluster mean of 3.22. The most significant challenge in this cluster is Item 6 (3.65), indicating that juggling laundry and mending with economic activities is a major constraint. However, the

mothers generally disagreed (2.45) that they lack the skill to remove specific stains, suggesting they possess basic stain removal knowledge.

Table 4: Mean Ratings of Time and Skill-Based Challenges Faced by Mothers

S/N	Item Statement	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
6	Juggling laundry and mending with market/business activities is time-consuming.	3.65	0.61	Agreed
7	I lack the skill to effectively remove specific stains (e.g., oil, paint) from clothes.	2.45	0.88	Disagree
8	Children's failure to take care of their clothes increases my workload.	3.40	0.75	Agreed
9	I often have to postpone mending due to a lack of time.	3.05	0.80	Agreed
10	The labour involved in manually washing heavily soiled children's clothes is exhausting.	3.55	0.69	Agreed
Cluster Mean		3.22	0.75	Agreed

Research Question 3: What are the environmental challenges related to clothing maintenance faced by mothers in the area?

Table 5 reveals that all the items on environmental challenges were agreed upon by the mothers, with an overall cluster mean of 3.36. The most critical challenge identified here is Item 12 (3.85): the lack of pipe-borne water, which forces mothers to fetch or buy water for laundry.

This is closely followed by the high impact of irregular power supply on ironing (3.70).

Table 6, shows that the calculated P-value (0.0004) is less than the alpha level (0.05), therefore the Null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Alternative hypothesis (H_1): the study showed that there is a significant difference in how mothers perceive economic challenges based on their educational level. Mothers with lower educational levels perceived the high cost of quality detergent as a significantly greater burden than those with tertiary education.

Table 5: Mean Ratings of Environmental Challenges Faced by Mothers

S/N	Item Statement	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
11	Irregular power supply makes ironing difficult and costly.	3.70	0.58	Agreed
12	The lack of pipe-borne water means I have to fetch/buy water for laundry.	3.85	0.50	Agreed
13	Hard water in the community makes it difficult for soap to lather well.	3.15	0.82	Agreed
14	Insufficient outdoor drying space is a challenge during the rainy season.	2.65	0.89	Agreed
15	Dust and poor roads quickly soil freshly washed clothes.	3.42	0.70	Agreed
Cluster Mean		3.36	0.70	Agreed

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Tertiary and Non-Tertiary Educational Level

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	T-Value	P-Value
Non-tertiary education	140	3.52	0.65	193	3.58	0.004
Tertiary education	55	3.13	0.78			

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study consistently revealed that mothers in Igbo-Etiti LGA face significant

challenges across economic, time/skill, and environmental domains in maintaining their children's clothing.

Economic Challenges (RQ1): The finding that lack of money to replace worn-out uniforms is the highest-rated challenge (Mean 3.82) confirms the economic pressures facing families in the LGA. This aligns with the findings of Nwakaego and Eze (2017) and Omeje and Ugwu (2020) who both cited finance as a major impediment to clothing management in Enugu State. When replacement is difficult, mothers are forced into excessive, time-consuming mending, which often results in poor-quality garments for the children.

Time and Skill-Based Challenges (RQ2): The most critical challenge here is the conflict between domestic duties and economic activities (Mean 3.65).

This is a classical demonstration of the time-poverty faced by women who are expected to fulfil both productive (market/farm) and reproductive (domestic) roles, limiting the time available for detailed maintenance tasks. Interestingly, mothers rated their stain removal skills relatively high (Mean 2.45 - Disagreement), suggesting that the problem is not necessarily a lack of foundational skill but rather the structural constraints of time, money, and water that prevent the consistent application of these skills.

Environmental Challenges (RQ3): The highest rated challenge overall was the lack of pipe-borne water (Mean 3.85). This environmental deficit immediately increases the labour and cost of laundry, as water must be sourced, fetched, or bought, directly linking the environmental problem to the time and economic challenges.

Furthermore, the high rating of irregular power supply (Mean 3.70) validates the infrastructural deficit and its impact on a simple task like ironing, which is necessary for presentable school uniforms.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the data, it is concluded that mothers in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area face multiple, interconnected, and severe challenges in the maintenance of primary school children's clothing. The root causes of these challenges are structural, stemming from low household income, poor public infrastructure (water and electricity), and the traditional dual burden of work and home management placed upon the mother. These challenges ultimately undermine the ability of children to maintain a neat and hygienic appearance in school.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

Government Intervention in Infrastructure: The Enugu State Government and Igbo-Etiti LGA should prioritise the provision of reliable pipe-borne water and address the issue of electricity supply to communities, as this will significantly reduce the labour, time, and cost of laundry for mothers.

Economic Empowerment: Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and community development agencies should provide micro-credit facilities for mothers engaged in petty trading to boost their income, thus improving their capacity to purchase quality clothing and maintenance inputs.

Targeted Home Economics Education: Local primary schools and community centres should organise free, short-duration workshops for mothers without tertiary education on cost-effective clothing maintenance, focusing on techniques like using local materials for stain removal and advanced mending to extend the life of uniforms.

Promoting Child Responsibility: Teachers and parents should actively involve children in age-appropriate care of their clothes to reduce the mother's workload and instil early habits of personal hygiene and responsibility.

REFERENCES

- Agbo, J. E. (2018). Clothing Maintenance Practices of Secondary School Students in Nsukka Urban of Enugu State. *International Journal of Home Economics, Hotel and Tourism Management*, 5(2), 1-10.
- Anyakoha, E. U. (2015). *Home Economics for Junior Secondary Schools*. Africana First Publishers PLC.
- Nwakaego, A. U., & Eze, C. G. (2017). Management of Clothing Practices Adopted by Mothers in a Selected Rural Area of Enugu State. *Journal of Home Economics Research*, 22(1), 125-138.
- Omeje, J. C., & Ugwu, A. C. (2020). Challenges Faced by Mothers in Provision and Maintenance of School Uniforms for Children in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area, Enugu State. *African Journal of Educational Studies, Research and Excellence*, 2(1), 45-56