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Review

Clothing Young Children Without Stretching the Family's Resources

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One of the responsibilities of parenting which tends to be costly is clothing the young children. This is so because in as much as parents try to fulfill this task in our present hash economic situation, the markets are also filled with fashionable clothes which are appealing to parents. The paper therefore focused on meeting the clothing needs of young children considering their developmental stages and more importantly guiding parents to be resourceful by adopting proper management principles as they satisfy this basic need of life for quality living.

Keywords: Family, Resources, Management, Young Children, Clothing.

INTRODUCTION

Management can simply be said to be the planned use of resources in order to reach goals. Resources here mean all those assets which are available for use in reaching goals. Examples are time, energy, ability, skills, knowledge, and money, among others. According to Riker and Brisbane (1992), money, property, tools and equipment, and information are increasingly vital resources in today's world. Successful people take advantage of new sources of information made available to make goal achievement possible.

Africans in general and Ghanaians in particular, believe that childbearing provides a sense of purpose and achievement for parents, support for aged parents, continuation of the family name and traditions and builds strong family ties. Nevertheless, it is a known fact that bearing children limit parents from wide range of activities while as exerting economic pressure.

Due to these general accepted reasons, by observation; there is seemingly the possibility of some couples wishing to postpone childbearing until their income is adequate to provide the basic needs of life, some also purposefully enter marriage planning for smaller families to raise the family's standard of living. There is no doubt that childrearing is costly irrespective of one's income but if proper management principles are put in place, childbearing becomes a good source of future investment.

Importance of Clothing

One of the basic needs of life that tends to be costly to parent in childrearing is clothing. Like food and shelter, clothing is one of the basic necessities of life which is

indispensable in the lives and activities of man.

Kaiser (1985) defines clothing as body covering related to personal adornment and it encompasses all forms of body decoration or alteration. Wolfe (1998) also sees clothing as a behaviour practices by all at the different life cycles-childhood, adolescent, adulthood and the aged.

Many theories of clothing reveal that apart from clothing acting as protective covering for man, it also performs a lot of functions. It is regarded as man's second skin and therefore tells a lot about the wearer. Horn (1968) and Rouse (1989), share this view by stating that clothing as part of the body image acts as a second skin in establishing the physical boundaries of the self.

Again, Priest and Pullen (1990) believe that people everywhere put on clothes to physically protect themselves from extreme cold and injury. Ashong and Mensah (2009) support this by stating that proper dressing protects us and at the same time provides decency for purposes of hygiene. Clothing can also be used to know an individual's personality, individuality, occupation, sex, tribe, status, religious inclination, group membership and age.

Further, clothing is also used for adornment. It helps to enhance ones' natural beauty and features. It fosters self-esteem and adds to an individual's comfort (Faiola and Pullen, 1982, cited in Chukwuone, 2013).

As soon as conception takes place, nature has its own way of protecting this newly made man (the embryo). This newly made man in embryonic state is enclosed by two protective amniotic membranes. It is also surrounded by a fluid known as amniotic fluid which protects the unborn baby from physical shock and injury. This serves as man's first cloth in the womb till the time the baby is born.

Asare and Kwafoa (2009), point out that children need clothing for protection, to keep them warm and aid in the regulation of the body temperature and to enhance appearance.

In as much as parents want to fulfil this responsibility of clothing their children they are likely to be influenced by fashion of the day. Today, than ever before, ready to wear clothes for children are designed for the unique characteristics of children. Choices can be made from wide variety planned especially for children in different stages of growth from birth to school age.

Our shops or markets are flooded with fabulous designer clothes for children from which parents are to select from. It should be remembered that these designer baby clothes are much more costly. It is therefore imperative for parents to understand that before they spend lots of money on their children's clothing that; these dresses last for just a period of time as young children outgrow their clothes at immensely fast rate.

Steps Involved In Managing Resources in Meeting Clothing Needs for Young Children

Step One:

Getting to understand the physical development of babies will greatly influence the choice of clothing for children by parents and it is the first step in proper clothing management.

According to Vanderhoof, Frank and Campbell (1973), the sequence of continuous development of young children can be divided into different stages of growth. The infant, the toddler, and the pre-schooler represent sequential stages of growth in the early years of life. The changing characteristics of the young child can be followed through each stage of growth. However each child differs from the other in rate of development.

Asare and Kwafoa (2009), assert that infancy is the period in developmental stages of man starting from 0 to 2years. It is a period of very rapid physical growth and steady increase in size. New born infants cannot co-ordinate their movements and cannot focus their eyes properly. Sometime around six to eight months the baby learns to crawl. This stage lasts only a few months as the child usually attempts to walk by the time he approaches his first birthday. During the next few months he practices walking and standing.

The Toddler

Physical growth proceeds more slowly after the first year. The toddler has short legs and arms in relation to the rest of the body. His waistline is not yet a distinct characteristic. The toddler walks well by the time he is two. He can undress himself when he is about to two years. Putting on clothes is more complex and will come later. By age three, the toddler has made progress in dressing although the results from each attempts may be unpredictable, he learns by exploring his environment and by first-hand experiences with the people and things he encounters in that environment.

Pre-schooler

The pre-schooler's body proportions are more similar to the proportions he will have as an adult. His legs and arms have become longer as his skeletal framework develops. During the pre-school stage the child becomes more independent of adult supervision as he learns to do things for himself. The four year old is usually able to dress self with the exception of difficult closures or

complicated parts. He needs clothes that are designed so that he can dress himself. Group activities with other children are more important at this stage. (Vanderhoff, Frank and Campbell, 1973).

Zastrow and Ashman (2007) purport that children's play serves several purposes. It encourages children to use their muscles and develop physically. It also allows them to fantasize and think creatively. Finally play enables children to learn how to relate to peer. Play provides a format for learning how to communicate, compete and share. It functions as a major avenue for socialization.

Supporting the above point, Asare (2008) asserts that parents must see that young children are dressed appropriately for the weather. Garments should allow for freedom of movement but not be so big that they interfere with play, get caught on play equipment or cause the child to trip or fall.

Kratzer (2003) is also of the view that children's interest in clothing changes as their co-ordination and bodies develop. Indicating that as children grow and improve on their coordination appropriate clothing should be provided to enhance their physical development. Clothing items should therefore not serve as impediments but should facilitate good coordination and that coordination of children is much improved during play.

Kratzer (2003), further gave out few general guidelines on how physical development influences clothing as follows:

10 to 12months- Will extend arms and legs when being dressed.

18 month- Takes off socks, mittens unzipped, tries to put on shoes.

2years- Helps pull up or push down pants, removes.

3years- Can dress self with assistance, but has trouble distinguishing front from back and right from left.

4years- Can dress self if given help with small fasteners and ties undresses self.

5years - Can dress and undress self.

Steps Involved In Clothing Management

Step Two:

The second step in clothing the younger children without stretching the family income is to plan the purchases of children clothes. Young children tend to be the target of advertising and marketing because of the influence they have on their parents spending. Every parent wants his/her baby to be well dressed, and manufacturers have capitalised on styles that appear to the sense of parents; floral sundresses, peasant smocks, rompers in every colour, tiny sailor's colour suits. Baby's clothes are now trendier than ever and are as irresistible to parents.

Whatever the style, there is the need to plan your purchases. By so doing, parents must ask themselves what is really needed; deciding on what to buy before

going for shopping. It is important to choose clothing that will be suitable for several different activities. Parents must avoid making purchases they cannot explain (Impulse buying).

Parents must deliberately set out to compare prices and quality (comparative shopping). According to Lyles and Brinkey (1990), this type of shopping can lead to wise purchases and is a good way to get the most of your money. It is also useful if standards are set for the purchases of the clothes. Is the style classic enough to last for longer period? Is the garment suitable for the physical activities of the baby looking at the baby's level of development and coordination? Check to see if the fabric's care requirements and its construction meet your requirements and at your convenient.

For the dress to serve its intended purpose, comfort which is a value should be experienced by the wearer. Comfort describes how clothes feel when worn. The dress should be comfortable to the wearer in terms of the fabric used, the design details, easiness to allow the child freedom of movement or action. Decorative parts and notions should be flat and non-irritating.

When all these are not considered in selecting the dress, thus causing discomfort, children find it difficult to wear the dress. There is much dislikeness for the wearing of such dress. Consequently, the money, time among other resource spent in the purchasing of the dress had been of a waste. Here again, other resources should be looked for and put into purchasing of new dress for the child, hence causing a stretch of the family resources.

Another value to think of is security. Safety should be ensured as young children puts on clothes. Is the fabric fire resistant? Has it small part that curious children can easily put off and swallow? These factors when considered reduce the possibility of accidents. It should be noted that such accidents when they occur cause the family members to loose in terms of money, time, and energy and even affect the family's managerial system.

Durability is also another factor for consideration when selecting clothes for young children. It should withstand strain and most abrasion. Parents should examine the fabric and the construction details. Seams should be firmly stitched and well finished when these are in place few dresses can be purchased and worn by the child without buying more dresses which the child will outgrow in no time. Dresses last long and the resources spent on it purchase become worthwhile. It worth its cost of resources.

Clothes for young children should be selected on ground of minimum care. With this factor, parents must consider the minimum care requirement of the clothes in terms of its design, construction details, finishes and fabric. For instance the characteristics of the fabric used for the clothes should be resistant to solvents and wrinkling. It is not uncommon for young to soil their clothes because of their active nature. When there are

several children in the family, the home-maker maybe faced with the problem of finding enough time for washing, ironing, and repairs/mending among other routine maintenance practices. There is more flexibility in time management when the time required for maintenance tasks is reduced to its lowest ebb. Clothes with minimum care characteristics/features are convenience and leave more time for parent to enjoy the company of the young children in the family. It reduces stress, serves energy and money as well.

One of the factors that affect the use of resources is motivation. When young children are provided with clothes with self help features they are encouraged to dress themselves without adult assistance. So by the time he is of school age he must be independent enough to manage his clothes while he's away from home.

Asare and Quartey (2002), assert that one of the principles of resource allocation is it increases the utility of resources. They further explained that resources can be used to increase their ability. That is more effective use of resources available to people can help them achieve greater satisfaction. Human resources like knowledge, skills can be developed to increase their use to benefit the family. It therefore implies that parents must carefully select clothing of pre-schoolers with self-help and educational features as a factor. For example, the size of the fasteners and its placement will encourage the child to help himself. When these are considered then we can say that their clothing has been well managed and invariables reduced the waste.

Recommendation/Conclusion

For the family to meet the clothing needs of children without over spending, the following should be put into practice:

1. Determine the amount of money that can conveniently be spent on clothing.
2. Identify the clothing needs of the children in the family.
3. Plan expenses bearing in mind that, children grow faster.
4. Select children's clothes considering safety, durability and the need (suitability).
5. From time to time, evaluate your spending plan.

Button holes should be large enough for the button to slip in easily. Tiny buttons and odd shaped tiny buttons are difficult to hold and even more difficult to coordinate with the small area of the buttons hole.

Such large fasteners placed at the front and side of dresses that can be seen, will be well managed by the pre-schooler. Avoid clothes with lots of unnecessary fasteners.

As children learn to dress themselves, they improve upon their dressing skills and feel responsible; then the time and energy of the parents will be exchanged for other purposes in the home to enhance the quality of living. These characteristics of resources multiply the satisfaction that can be derived from effective clothing management.

To conclude, purchasing lots of clothes for young children is not the issue of good/quality life, but the ability to derive maximum satisfaction from the clothes purchased. Children grown fast and are active so their clothing should be accommodating to help them to develop in a free and safe environment. In this our harsh economic situation, the useful tool for families to use is the management process; by planning, organising, implementing and evaluating.

When these are considered then we can say that clothing of children has been well managed, invariably without stretching the family's resources.

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