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Original Article

Smart Wardrobe and Clothing Management in Home Science: A Practical Model for Cost, Care and Sustainability

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Abstract

Clothing management can be studied in Home Science as a household resource system involving planning, selection, use, maintenance, repair, reuse and expenditure control. This conceptual paper introduces the SMART wardrobe model: Select appropriately, Maintain scientifically, Adapt through repair, Reuse creatively and Track household resources. The model shifts attention from purchase price alone to total use value, including frequency of use, care requirements and service life. The paper presents teaching activities, a clothing-management cycle and assessment indicators for developing practical textile literacy. It can support Home Science classroom work, extension education and future empirical research.

Keywords: *clothing management, Home Science, wardrobe planning, textile literacy, cost-per-use, repair, reuse, sustainability*

Introduction

A wardrobe is a collection of household resources that requires planning, maintenance and periodic evaluation. Clothing choices influence family expenditure, comfort, hygiene, appearance and time spent on care. Home Science can help learners approach clothing as a management problem in which needs and resources are considered together.

Concept of Clothing Management

Clothing management includes planning, selection, acquisition, use, maintenance, storage and disposal. The management perspective adds practical decision-making to knowledge of textile materials.

Need for a New Approach

Garments are often judged mainly by style and initial price. Yet garments with similar prices may differ in durability, care burden, versatility and frequency of use. Home Science education can teach learners to assess total use value.

Objectives

The study aims to conceptualize clothing as a household resource system; develop the SMART wardrobe model; identify practical textile and garment-care competencies; connect clothing decisions with budgeting and sustainability; and suggest assessment methods.

Research Questions

What elements should effective clothing management contain? How can wardrobe planning improve household decisions? How can cost-per-use support purchasing decisions? How can repair and reuse become routine practices?

Methodology

A conceptual framework-development method was used to organize Home Science clothing-management concepts into a practical model. No original respondent data are claimed.

The SMART Wardrobe Model

S—Select appropriately: consider need, function, fabric, fit and quality. M—Maintain scientifically: follow suitable care and storage. A—Adapt: repair or alter garments.

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R—Reuse: extend use or repurpose. T—Track: monitor spending, frequency of use and avoidable replacement.

SMART Model in Practice

Element	Key Question	Activity
S – Select	Do I need it and is it suitable?	Purchase comparison sheet
M – Maintain	How should it be cared for?	Care-label exercise
A – Adapt	Can it be repaired or altered?	Repair workshop
R – Reuse	Can its useful life be extended?	Reuse project
T – Track	What did it cost and how often is it used?	Wardrobe/cost log

Cost-per-Use and Budgeting

A simple educational measure is: Cost per use = purchase cost ÷ number of meaningful uses. The measure is not a complete economic or environmental assessment, but it encourages consideration of frequency and longevity rather than initial price alone.

Factors in Garment Selection

Factor	Importance
Fibre/fabric properties	Influence comfort, strength and care
Fit and construction	Influence comfort, appearance and durability
Colour/design	Influence versatility and coordination
Care requirement	Influences household time and resource use
Durability	Influences replacement frequency
Price versus expected use	Supports budgeting decisions

Scientific Clothing Care

Care education should begin with reading labels and understanding how textile properties relate to washing, drying, ironing and storage. Practical demonstrations can help learners connect correct procedures with garment longevity.

Repair and Alteration

Button replacement, seam repair, patching, hemming and simple fit adjustments are accessible Home Science skills. Learners can record the original problem, method used, time required and resulting extension of use.

Reuse and Creative Transformation

Reuse may involve repeated wearing, family transfer, donation, exchange or transformation into another useful product. Creative transformation projects combine design, measurement, construction and resource conservation.

Suggested Learning Activities

1. Maintain a one-week wardrobe-use diary.
2. Compare two fabrics for the same garment purpose.
3. Decode care symbols from garment labels.
4. Calculate cost-per-use for selected garments.
5. Repair a damaged textile item and document the process.
6. Create a useful item from an old garment.
7. Prepare a family clothing-care calendar.

Clothing Management Cycle

Phase	Question	Outcome
Planning	What is actually needed?	Need-based wardrobe
Selection	Which material and garment fit the purpose?	Suitable purchase
Use	How can it be used efficiently?	Higher utilization
Maintenance	How can quality be protected?	Extended life
Recovery	Can it be repaired or repurposed?	Reduced replacement
End-of-use	What is the responsible next step?	Reduced waste

Role of Home Science Teacher

Teachers can combine textile science with consumer education, family resource management and practical work. Case studies, wardrobe audits, repair tasks and care demonstrations can make learning more relevant than textbook description alone.

Common Barriers and Responses

Barrier	Possible Response
Impulse buying	Use a need-and-use checklist
Limited repair skills	Teach repairs progressively
Ignoring labels	Make label interpretation routine
Overemphasis on low price	Use cost-per-use and durability

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Clothing accumulation	Conduct wardrobe audits
Unclear disposal practices	Teach reuse and appropriate collection

Recommendations

1. Include clothing-management projects in Home Science practical courses.
2. Teach total use value rather than purchase price alone.
3. Make repair and alteration regular learning activities.
4. Connect textile science with budgeting and time management.
5. Use wardrobe audits for reflective consumption.
6. Develop community workshops on garment care and reuse.

Assessment Framework

Competency	Assessment Evidence
Selection literacy	Fabric/garment comparison
Care literacy	Correct care procedure
Budgeting	Realistic clothing budget
Repair	Completed basic repair
Reuse	Useful second-life application
Management	Coherent wardrobe plan

Discussion

The SMART model gives textile and clothing education a management-oriented structure. Its value lies in connecting repeated household decisions: selection affects care, care affects longevity, and longevity affects expenditure and waste. The model can also support interdisciplinary teaching through links with economics, environmental education, design and consumer studies.

Limitations and Future Research

The model is conceptual and has not been statistically validated in this paper. Future research can develop a clothing-management literacy scale, conduct intervention studies and examine changes in expenditure, repair and disposal behaviour.

Conclusion

Effective clothing management requires more than knowledge of fibres and fabrics. It requires planning, suitable selection, maintenance, repair, reuse and evaluation of clothing as a household resource. The SMART wardrobe model offers a practical structure for Home Science teaching, community extension and future research.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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