



Views of Young Expectant Women Aged 16-35 Years Regarding their Physical Body Changes during Pregnancy and their influence on Maternity Wear Selection

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Abstract

The pregnancy period in human beings is divided into three trimesters. During this period expectant women experience physical body changes that make them more sensitive about their bodies. These body changes are so dramatic to an extent of triggering negative thoughts and feelings in some women. With the wide variety of body shapes and sizes, physical changes occur differently for every pregnant woman. These variations lead to problems of comfort, fit and sizing of maternity wear especially if not well selected. Despite an increasing interest in fashion and clothing, researchers in Kenya have conducted limited study about dressing and adorning the pregnant body. This leaves pregnant women with minimal sources of reference thus relying on trial and error or copying what other pregnant women wear. This study deals with the views of young expectant women aged 16-35 years regarding their physical body changes during pregnancy and their influence on maternity wear selection. Physical body changes were measured in terms of the body silhouette, measurement, posture and weight. The body change in relation to silhouette, measurement, posture and weight of the 90 young expectant women in the first (30), second (30) and third (30) trimester was determined. The study was limited to young expectant women attending antenatal clinic at Kenyatta National Hospital, Nairobi Kenya. The views of the young expectant women regarding these physical changes and their influence on maternity wear selection was determined from the answers given by the respondents during the interview.

Keywords: Physical body changes; Pregnancy; Trimester; Maternity wear selection.

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1. Introduction

Expectant women experience an apparent alteration in their physical body appearance [8]. This was supported by [8] who stated that alterations in the women's body were as a result of dramatic physical changes. Reference [3] outlined that these changes occur differently as the pregnancy progresses through the three trimesters of pregnancy. This is as a result of disparity in the body shape and size that causes a variation in the occurrence of the body changes during pregnancy [20]. This to some extent triggers different feelings among the young expectant women.

According to [6], more physical changes are perceived in the upper part of the female body during trimester one. For example, Reference [2] explained that while breasts begin to increase, other body proportions remain almost normal during the first trimester that is from week one to twelve weeks. As a result Martell and Mitchel in [6] stated that some women become conscious of any changes in their body and may focus on themselves. On the other hand, during the second trimester the waistline gradually expands and rises and in the last trimester there is rapid abdominal enlargement until birth [5].

2. Physical Body Changes during Pregnancy

These physical changes are the most concrete changes during pregnancy, though many young women are not ready to face them [22]. Reference [17] categorized these physical changes as; changes in the body silhouette, measurement, posture and weight.

2.1 Body Silhouette Changes

The body silhouette is one of the dramatic physical changes experienced by expectant women. According [13] as the pregnancy progresses, the body silhouette presents itself differently throughout the three trimesters. In addition, due to disparity in the body shape and size, the body silhouette presents itself differently among the expectant women [20]. This leads to change in body size and shape thus changing the body silhouette of young expectant women as the pregnancy progresses [12]. According to [19] the change in body silhouette as the pregnancy progresses affects the sizing, fit and comfort of maternity wear.

A study conducted by [1] revealed that the most dramatic physical changes of expectant women's body silhouette occur during the last two trimesters of pregnancy. Reference [9] stated that this is the time when pregnant women need maternity garments to accommodate these changes.

2.2 Body Measurement Changes

Reference [16] stated that expectant women experience an increase in body measurement whereby certain body parts grow much more in proportion than others. Reference [17] explained that the prominent growth is seen on the waist, bust, hip, biceps, and thighs among others. Despite variation in anthropometric requirements of the

body as reported by [19,18] considered the body measurement changes as evident in all expectant women in the second trimester onwards. According to [8] variation in abdominal extension during pregnancy also causes disparity in body measurement changes among the expectant women. These changes in body measurement mount pressure on young expectant women as they struggle to maintain their body size [14]. Young expectant women try to create subjectivities that would make them satisfied and feel acceptable in the society [10].

2.3 Posture Changes

Reference [7] stated that expectant women experience abdominal growth that cause a transitory bend of the back. This experience increases during the last six months of pregnancy [6]. This leads to a backward bend of an expectant woman's body resulting to an increase in length of the front part of the body [15]. Change in size and posture causes the front of a dress to rise as pregnancy progresses. Reference [17] reveals that the change in the body posture affects the fit of clothing thus requires greater attention when selecting maternity wear.

2.4 Weight Changes

Reference [7] describes pregnancy as a stage where the anthropometric requirements of the human form are very different due to a substantive weight gain that is not uniformly distributed. Reference [4] explain that expectant women experience a significant variation in the weight gained in their body that result in a substantial alteration in body image. An expectant woman gains roughly 13 kilograms in weight during pregnancy [15]. Many women become self-conscious about the weight gain, resulting in low self-esteem [11]. Reference [17] states that the physical changes during pregnancy require special consideration for comfort, fit and sizing when selecting maternity wear. Reference [19] highlights the need to design, make and select maternity wear that will hide the inconsistent change in physical body thus avoiding cases of negative feelings experienced by young expectant women.

3. Materials and Methods

The target population for this study was drawn from expectant women attending ante-natal clinic at the reproductive health department, Kenyatta National Hospital. Convenience method of sampling was used to select 90 respondents (30 from each trimester) who participated in the study. The consenting process involved meeting with the nurse on duty prior to the recruitment process to explain the purpose of the study and the process of which the participants took part. It also involved asking for an affirmation from the participants on whether they wanted to take part in the study or not. For the respondents who were between 16 -18 years, the researcher sought signed consent from parents and guardians.

With prior arrangement with the nurse on duty, the researcher explained to each selected young expectant woman the purpose of the study after which an interview was conducted and questionnaires filled. This enabled the researcher to collect data from expectant women in the first trimester, then second and finally third. The nurse on duty helped in taking body weight of the respondents and made sure that the respondents were comfortable. To make the respondents more comfortable the researcher motivated them through good communication and maintained good rapport.

4. Results

4.1 Physical Body Changes Experienced in Trimester One

Trimester one is regarded by [2] as a period where there is minimal physical body changes that does not create the need for wardrobe change. A total of 30 respondents formed the basis for the determination of physical body changes experienced by the young expectant women in trimester one. The following table shows the results of the physical changes in trimesters one.

Table 1: Physical Body Changes Experienced in Trimester One

Physical Changes	Frequency			
	Change	Percentage	No Change	Percentage
Body Silhouette	19	63	11	37
Body Measurement	19	63	11	37
Body Weight	19	63	11	37

Table 1 show that 19 expectant women had undergone slightly visible changes in their body silhouette. The size, position and outline of the abdomen and bust was determined to find out whether there was any change in the general outline or shape of the body. It was revealed that the body silhouette changes occurred mostly in the waist, bust and hips among expectant women between 9-12 weeks. However 11 expectant women did not show any visible change in their body silhouette.

Table 1 also shows the results of the expectant women in trimester one that had undergone some change in their body measurement. Body measurements were obtained by use of a tape measure with measurements taken around the fullest parts of the expectant women’s bust, hips and abdomen. The measurements were then compared with the original measurements stated by the expectant women. From the Table 1, 19 expectant women showed changes in their body measurement. Measurements related to the abdomen recorded a large increase. This was significant in the expectant women between 9-12 weeks. On the other hand 11 expectant women did not show any change in their body measurement. Most of these women were between 0-4 weeks and 5-8 weeks pregnant.

On the other hand body posture was identified through observation and determining whether the young expectant women’s body bearing was upright, leaning forward or backwards. The results in Table 1 reveal that there was no visible change in the body bearing among the expectant women in trimester one. This was probably due to the minimal increase in the abdomen of the expectant women that did not cause a transitory bend of the back. As a result, the expectant women still felt comfortable in their pre-pregnancy clothing, and felt no need to select maternity wear.

Finally, the weight of the young expectant women in this trimester was taken using a weighing scale. The

weight taken from each woman in this trimester was further compared with their original weight that they stated. Table 1 above shows that 19 expectant women recorded a change in their body weight. The average weight gain among these expectant women was between 0.5 – 1.5 kilograms. However it was noticed that the weight gain was not uniform among the women.

4.2 Physical Body Changes Experienced in Trimester Two and Three

Most dramatic physical changes occur during these two trimesters as highlighted by (9). This is where all the pregnant women will require maternity wear as highlighted by [18]. This is supported by [17] who recommended that since most dramatic body changes occur in trimester two and three, these two trimesters should be considered together when studying clothing. The following table shows the results of the physical changes in these two trimesters.

Table 2: Physical Body Changes Experienced in Trimester Two and Three

Physical Changes	Frequency			
	Change	Percentage	No Change	Percentage
Body Silhouette	60	100	0	0
Body Measurement	60	100	0	0
Body Posture	48	80	12	20
Body Weight	60	100	0	0

Table 2 shows that all the 60 respondents in this trimester recorded dramatic changes in their body silhouette. The change was significant in their waist, abdomen and bust measurement as they had dramatically increased in size. It was noted that the dramatic changes occurred differently among the expectant women. For example there were women who recorded a greater change in their body silhouette than others. This is associated with age, body mass index, tightness of the muscles before pregnancy and number of children that each expectant woman had previously.

The results in Table 2 also indicate that all the 60 expectant women in this trimesters recorded dramatic changes in their body measurement. The change was significant in their waist, abdomen and bust. It was noted that the striking changes occurred differently among the expectant women. For example there were women who recorded greater change in their body measurements in inches around their waist, abdomen and bust than others. On the other hand, 48 expectant women in trimester two and three had undergone visible changes in body posture. This was as a result of pressure exerted on the back of the body due to increase in size of the abdomen during these two trimesters. However 12 expectant women did not show any visible changes in body posture.

Table 2 shows that all the 60 young expectant women in these two trimesters recorded vivid changes in their body weight. There was variation in the amount of weight gained among the expectant women. For example

there were women who recorded a large amount of weight gained in kilograms than others. This was associated with the disparity in the anthropometric characteristics of the expectant women’s body.

4.3 Views of Expectant Women Regarding the Physical Body Changes

During the study expectant women were also asked to state and explain their positive and negative views towards their physical body changes. The results were recorded in Table 3.

Table 3: Views of Expectant Women Regarding the Physical Body Changes

Physical Body Changes	Views of Expectant Women			
	Positive		Negative	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Body Silhouette	35	39	55	61
Body Measurement	35	39	55	61
Body Posture	35	39	55	61
Body Weight	35	39	55	61

According to Table 3, 35 (39%) young expectant women confirmed that they had a positive view regarding the changes in their body silhouette, body measurement, posture and weight. The young expectant women highlighted that they were contented with the changes in their physical body. They regarded the pregnancy period to be an exciting and a joyful experience and could cope with the changes so easily. The young expectant women also described their pregnancy to have been accepted by their family members and the society at large since they were married and were expected to get children. On the other hand majority 55 (61%) young expectant women stated that they had a negative view regarding the changes in their body silhouette, body measurement, posture and weight. The young expectant women confirmed that they were unhappy with the striking changes in their physical body. Most of the young expectant women described the pregnancy to be unwanted as they had not planned for it. They highlighted that they were worried about how they would have to work hard to take their body shapes, size and weight back to what they used to be. Some also stated that they didn’t want their friends to notice that they were expectant, thus the physical changes would not be something to smile about.

5. Discussion

During the interview, when respondents were asked about the physical body changes they had experienced, 19 (63%) respondents in trimester one stated to have experienced minimal changes in their body silhouette, measurement and weight (Table 1). On the other hand, 60 (100%) respondents in trimester two and three confirmed that they experienced vivid physical changes in their body silhouette, measurement and weight. (Table 2). This implied that the respondents in the first trimester did not require maternity wear as compared to those in trimester two and three who had pressure to change their wardrobe. (19) associated the wardrobe

change to change in body silhouette of the expectant women to an extent of affecting sizing and fit of their normal clothes. The finding is supported by [2] who reported that since there is minimal increase in the body during the first trimester, wardrobe change is unnecessary during this time. Similarly, References [21,1] recommended that since most physical changes occur in trimester two and three, most expectant women will require maternity wear during this time.

It was also observed that the respondents experienced both positive and negative views regarding these physical body changes (Table 3). Even though most of the respondents were married and had one child, most of them 55 (61%) had a negative view regarding the changes in their physical body. This was attributed to the dramatic physical changes and the fear that their body shape and size would be transformed thus making them look unattractive. For example, the respondents stated that the changes made their body big and shabby. The reference drawn from the finding is that young expectant women would select maternity wear that could maintain their body shape and size with an aim of looking attractive. This will to some extent compromise on the important elements of fit, comfort and sizing of maternity wear selected.

Nevertheless, 35 (39%) respondents had a positive view regarding the physical body changes since they had had an experience of the physical changes from their previous pregnancies and also perceived the changes to be short term. In addition, the respondents explained that they were happy with the pregnancy and the changes since they defined their fertility and femininity. This implied that the respondents were aware that their body size and shape would change thus selecting maternity wear that could accommodate the changes.

It was therefore evident from the findings that the positive and negative views of the respondents regarding the physical changes influenced their maternity wear selection. This indicated that the respondents selected maternity wear that could create the kind of body image they wanted. This finding concurs with [18,10] who highlighted that expectant women develop different views regarding the body changes during pregnancy which makes them to create different subjectivities that satisfies them.

6. Conclusions

From the study, it has been observed that most young expectant women experienced negative views regarding physiological changes during pregnancy. The need to maintain their original body shape and size shows that these youthful women selected maternity wear that fitted closely to their body or used their normal clothes. We could therefore conclude that young Kenyan expectant women select maternity wear without considering whether it is of the right size, fit and comfort. In addition, they don't understand how to select maternity wear that can accommodate the body changes, maintain their body shape and size and make them look young, fashionable and attractive.

7. Recommendations

Fashion design institutions and organizations should offer training to fashion designers and marketers in maternity wear on views on physiological changes and their influence on maternity wear selection among expectant women. This would aid them in giving advice to expectant women on selection of maternity wear that

is fitting, comfortable and fashionable and in relation to their physiological and psychological changes. On the other hand they will also be in a position to design and sell maternity wear that can make the young expectant women look young, fashionable and attractive. This will as a result reduce the gap in knowledge on dressing and adorning the pregnant body.

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