

## Psychosocial Factors Influencing Ghanaian Young Women Choice of Panties

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### Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to identify the psychological and social cultural factors influencing young women choice of panties in Ghana. The study purposively selected 217 final year students in the University of Cape Coast for the study. The data was collected from the respondents using a Likert scale questionnaire, and it was descriptively analysed using mean, standard deviation, and percentages. The study revealed that young women are aware of the diverse uses of panties, but quiet a number of them are also unaware, causing them to use a limited range of styles of panties. The study found that comfort is prioritized over sex appeal, with psychological factors such as interest and confidence guiding their choices. The study also revealed that young women choose panties based on the occasion. Moreover, cultural norms and fashion trends were found to play significant roles, while family and ethnic background had lesser influence on the choice of panties among young women. The study therefore recommended that manufacturers and retailers should consider diversifying their panty offerings to better accommodate the varied preferences and needs of young women. This could involve expanding options for different styles, materials, and designs that prioritize both comfort and sex appeal.

**Keywords:** Psychological factors, socio-cultural factors, panties, Ghanaian young women

### Introduction:

Panties are often overlooked in discussions of attire and fashion; however, they hold a significant place in the lives of women (Datta & Agrawal, 2018). Beyond panties' practical function as undergarments, panties serve as a means of embodying personal identity, navigating social expectations, and expressing individuality (Giongo et al., 2017). Understanding the significance of panties and the myriad factors influencing their use among young women is essential for comprehending the complexities of gendered attire and consumer behaviour. At the core of the discussion lies the fundamental

importance of panties in providing comfort and support. As an integral component of everyday attire, panties serve as the foundation upon which the rest of one's clothing rests (Datta & Agrawal, 2018). Comfortable and well-fitting underwear can enhance physical comfort throughout the day, while ill-fitting or uncomfortable panties can lead to irritation and discomfort (Loh et al., 2019). Thus, the significance of panties extends beyond mere utility to encompass bodily well-being and comfort.

Moreover, panties serve as a medium for self-expression and personal identity (Banasam, 2019).

The choice of underwear reflects individual preferences, attitudes, and values, allowing individuals to assert their identity in subtle yet significant ways (Craig & Gray, 2020). Whether opting for practical cotton briefs or lacy lingerie, the selection of panties can communicate aspects of personality, style, and mood (Giongo et al., 2017). In this sense, panties become more than just undergarments; they become a means of self-expression and empowerment for women.

However, the use of panties among young women is influenced by a myriad of factors, ranging from psychological to socio-cultural norms. Cultural expectations surrounding modesty, femininity, and sexuality shape the types of panties deemed acceptable or desirable in different contexts (Giongo et al., 2017). Additionally, socio-economic factors such as affordability and accessibility can impact the choices available to individuals (Datta & Agrawal, 2018). Personal preferences, body type, and comfort preferences also play significant roles in determining panty selection (Datta & Agrawal, 2018).

In light of these considerations, this paper seeks to explore the uses of panties among young women and assess the psychological and socio-cultural factors influencing their choice of panties. significance of panties among female adults and the various factors influencing their use.

## **Literature Review:**

### **Panties:**

Panties, also known as underwear or underpants, are essential garments worn by individuals to provide coverage and support to the lower section of the body, encompassing the pelvic region, buttocks, and groin (Burse, 2017). Serving as a foundational layer of clothing, panties are designed to offer both practical functionality and comfort (Shouli, 2007). These undergarments come in a wide array of styles, ranging from full-coverage briefs to more minimalistic options like thongs and G-strings. Each style caters to different preferences, offering varying degrees of coverage and silhouette. Briefs typically feature a higher waistline and provide ample coverage, making

them suitable for everyday wear. On the other hand, thongs and G-strings are characterized by their minimal fabric coverage, making them ideal for outfits where avoiding visible panty lines is desired.

Panties are crafted from diverse fabrics, including cotton, polyester, nylon, silk, lace, and spandex. Each material offers unique properties, such as breathability, moisture-wicking capabilities, and stretchiness, contributing to the overall comfort and functionality of the garment. Additionally, some panties may incorporate special features like seamless construction, moisture management, and antimicrobial properties, further enhancing comfort and hygiene. Beyond their practical functions, panties also play a role in personal style and self-expression. They are available in an extensive range of colours, patterns, and embellishments, allowing individuals to express their personality and preferences through their undergarments.

The selection of panties is contingent upon individual preferences and specific circumstances. Ryan (2017) emphasizes that the ideal choice depends on factors such as functionality, style, and material, with the paramount goal being to provide optimal support, fit, and comfort to the wearer. The importance of appropriate design and colour is underscored, as mismatched choices could lead to discomfort and dissatisfaction among consumers (Ryan, 2017).

Different types of panties cater to varied needs, ranging from disposable options designed for one-time use, typically during maternity or menstruation, to reusable ones intended for prolonged wear (Sujatha & Sarada, 2016). Disposable panties are lightweight and meant for single use, while reusable variants like briefs, boyshorts, thongs, and G-strings are constructed with durability and aesthetics in mind (Shycart, 2013). Reusable panties often feature decorative elements like lace and ribbons and are crafted from a variety of fibres such as cotton, polyester, wool, nylon, silk, lace, rayon, and spandex to enhance their appeal and comfort (Ghosh, Das & Bhattacharyya, 2014).

### **Uses of Panties:**

The uses of panties encompass various dimensions, including hygiene, protection, support, comfort, fashion, self-expression, and specialized needs. Panties are indispensable for maintaining hygiene and providing protection to the pelvic area, contributing significantly to a sense of well-being throughout the day (Ryan, 2017). Factors such as fit, fabric, style, and intended use influence the selection of panties, impacting overall comfort and support (Ryan, 2017). Proper fit is crucial to prevent discomfort and sagging, with fabric choice, like cotton for breathability or synthetic materials for durability, further enhancing comfort (Ghosh, Das & Bhattacharyya, 2014). Style also matters, with briefs offering full coverage and thongs providing minimal coverage, catering to different preferences (Sujatha & Sarada, 2016). Additionally, panties serve as a platform for self-expression, allowing individuals to showcase their personal style through various designs and decorative elements (Sujatha & Sarada, 2016). Specialized panties, including disposable and reusable options, address specific needs like maternity and menstrual periods, offering convenience, comfort, and sustainability (Shycart, 2013; Sujatha & Sarada, 2016). In maternity and menstrual use, disposable panties provide hygienic solutions, while reusable ones offer eco-friendly alternatives for everyday wear (Shycart, 2013).

### **Psychological factors that influence the choice of panties:**

Psychological factors play a pivotal role in shaping women's choices regarding panties, encompassing various aspects such as comfort, self-esteem, and mood. Comfort emerges as a primary consideration for women when selecting panties, as emphasized by Scott and Affuso (2023). This aspect goes beyond mere physical comfort, extending to emotional satisfaction and well-being, as highlighted by Tsarenko and Lo (2017). Women often prioritize soft fabrics, seamless designs, and breathable materials to ensure optimal comfort throughout the day. The

sensation of "feeling good" in panties is closely intertwined with comfort, with women selecting underwear that enhances their mood and confidence, as noted by Tsarenko and Lo (2017). Self-esteem and confidence also significantly influence women's underwear choices, as evidenced by research conducted by Patowary (2024). Wearing flattering or stylish panties can positively impact women's self-esteem, contributing to a sense of empowerment and self-worth. Similarly, confidence is closely linked to underwear choice, with women opting for panties that make them feel confident and attractive, as observed by Hume and Mills (2013). The perception of sexiness further underscores the importance of psychological factors in panty selection, with women choosing lingerie or provocative styles to enhance their desirability and appeal, according to Hume and Mills (2013). Women's attitudes towards specific panty styles, brands, and colours are also influenced by psychological factors. Past experiences with particular styles or brands shape women's preferences and attitudes, as highlighted by Holmlund et al. (2011). Additionally, mood-driven preferences for certain colours or designs reflect the impact of emotions on panty selection. Personal values and beliefs, such as sustainability or body positivity, further guide women's choices, aligning their underwear selections with their broader psychological outlook and principles, according to Cwynar-Horta (2016). Overall, the interplay of psychological factors in panty selection underscores the multifaceted nature of women's decision-making processes in this domain.

### **Socio-cultural factors that influence the choice of panties:**

Socio-cultural factors significantly influence the selection of panties, encompassing cost, fashion, suitability, convenience, and association. Cost plays a pivotal role, with affordability dictating purchasing decisions, as individuals opt for types, quantities, and qualities within their budget (Kumar, 2020). Moreover, cultural shifts, such as the empowerment of women in the 1980s, have

influenced undergarment purchases. Fashion trends also heavily impact choices, with consumers seeking to align with popular or accepted styles (Gavor et al., 2015). The design and appropriateness of undergarments in terms of body size and shape are crucial considerations, affecting self-esteem and confidence (Zhanga, Xua, & Songb, 2016). Wearing fashionable panties not only fulfils aesthetic desires but also serves to impress others and boost confidence (Jantzen, Østergaard, & Vieira, 2006). This is particularly evident in scenarios like romantic encounters, where individuals aim to make a fashionable impression (Riungu, 2009). Furthermore, younger demographics tend to follow fashion more closely, prioritizing trends over physiological comfort (Riungu, 2009). Thus, socio-cultural factors intricately shape the choices individuals make when selecting panties, reflecting broader societal norms and individual preferences.

**Methodology:**








The study area was University of Cape Coast level 400 regular students on the main campus in Cape Coast. A total of 217 respondents were conveniently sampled for the study. A

questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. The data were then entered and processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (v.25) software and the results attained were displayed in tables. Also, the processed data were analysed using descriptive statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools consisted of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations.

**Results and Findings:**

Table 1 shows the perceived usefulness and functions of pantie styles. As shown in table 3, functions based on literature were used for rating the seven different panty styles. Looking at the functions individually, the comfort style of panties had the highest ranking for almost all the functions except for sexy where the highest was taken by the string style and avoiding exposure of private part which was taken by boy shorts. For the lowest rankings, thong style had the least for all the functions except for modesty where it shared the lowest ranking with tanga, keeping the private parts dry where tanga had lowest and sexy where the lowest ranking went to boyshorts and high waist styles.

**Table 1: Uses and functions of panties.**

	Prevent soiling %	Keeps private dry %	Comfort %	Avoid exposing private part %	Protection %	Hygiene %	Modesty %	Sexy %	Keep menstrual cups %
COMFORT 	41.9	38.5	48.7	26.5	32.7	45.9	31.0	22.3	34.2
BOYSHORT 	11.1	15.4	14.5	29.9	23.9	16.2	14.2	3.6	6.3
H. High waist (Waist) 	24.8	7.7	11.1	17.9	12.4	11.6	8.8	3.6	25.2
BIKINI 	12.0	12.8	8.5	12.8	16.8	14.4	16.8	14.3	12.6
STRING 	4.3	12.8	8.5	7.7	4.4	8.1	15.0	25.0	7.2
TANGA 	5.1	3.6	6.8	3.4	8.0	3.4	7.1	11.6	10.8
THONG 	0.9	9.4	1.7	1.7	1.8	0.0	7.1	19.6	3.6

When one looks at the individual garment styles and the various panty styles worn, it is noted that with stretchy garments the panty style used most is bikini, whereas comfort style was the least used. Comfort panty style is mostly worn under jeans trousers and less with highwaist. Boyshort is noted to be worn more under gathered and flared dresses (full garment) and tanga the least. Thong is frequently used under pencil or fitted dress and less with comfort. Again, comfort panty style appears to be worn more under smocks and less with bikinis. Slit and kaba are used with bikinis regularly and rarely with thongs. In regards to the

use of sport wears, highwaist was the most used, while the least used was tanga and thong.

**Psychological factors that influence GYW choice of panties**

Table 2 displays the psychological factors that influenced GYW choice of panties. All the psychological factors were relevant to GYW choice of panties, however, the most dominant factors included feeling good (1.79), safety/protection (1.82) and confidence (1.94), as well as the least concerned factors, included attitude towards the brand (2.54), values (2.38) and moods (2.37).

**Table 2: The psychological factors that influence GYW choice of panties**

Psychological factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
Comfort	1.70	0.939
Feels good	1.79	1.010
Safety/Protection	1.82	1.052
Confidence	1.94	1.022
Interest	1.95	1.053
Experience with a particular style	2.11	1.144
Self Esteem	2.17	1.126
Sexy	2.25	1.125
Attitude towards the style	2.33	1.149
Experience with a particular brand	2.35	1.144
Moods	2.37	1.087
Values	2.38	1.139
Attitude towards the brand	2.44	1.167

Source: Field survey (2020) (Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Undecided=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree = 5).

**The socio-cultural factors that influence the GYW choice of panties**

Table 3 presented the socio-cultural factors that influenced GYW choice of panties. The most significant factors included occasion (1.96), activities (2.05), figure type (2.21), cost of pantie

(2.25), impression creation (2.67), latest fashion (2.71), moral values (2.76), peer influence (2.81) and societal perception (2.94) and the least significant factors were ethnic background (3.31), celebrities influence (3.21) and family influence (3.18). Respondents were indecisive about their religious background (3.00).

**Table 3: The socio-cultural factors that influence the GYW choice of panties**

Socio-cultural factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
Occasion	1.96	1.072
Activities	2.05	1.020
Figure type	2.21	1.208
Cost of panties	2.25	1.146
Impression creation	2.67	1.321
Latest fashion	2.71	1.384
Moral values	2.76	1.303
Peer influence	2.81	1.339
Societal perception	2.94	1.289
Religious background	3.00	1.432
Family influence	3.18	1.388
Celebrities influence	3.21	1.433
Ethnic background	3.31	1.305

Source: Fieldwork, 2020 (Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Undecided=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree = 5).

## Discussion:

### Use and functions of panties:

The results showed that comfort pantie is highly effective for serving almost all the functions as revealed in table 1. The comfort style of the pantie was ranked first in preventing soiling, keeping private parts dry, providing comfort, giving protection, hygienic and modest. Comfort pantie rests at the hip level, but the side section is broader or wider (Giongo et al., 2017). It also has linings or a base at the crotch which provides the extra feature for absorbing fluid, stains and soiling (Ryan, 2017). Comfort pantie was preferred because its style performed the basic functions of panties. According to Datta and Agrawal (2018), one of the foundations of panties is the aspect of keeping the outer garments clean by absorbing sweat and oils from the skin.

Boyshort style of pantie was also preferred second to comfort when it comes to keeping the private part dry, comfortability, avoiding exposing

private, protection and hygiene. Boyshort style of panties was adapted from men's boxer briefs and have short legs extending below the crotch (Giongo et al., 2017). It also covers fully the private part and does provide enough space. Similarly, highwaist which has a comparable structure to boyshorts pantie was also ranked high in preventing soiling and avoiding exposure of private part. According to Giongo et al., (2017), these styles of pantie, such as comfort, boyshorts and highwaist do not expose the private part and allow free air circulation. This could be the reason for its functions and uses as indicated by the respondents.

Further to the uses and functions of panties, the bikini style of pantie was also discreetly preferred by respondents especially concerning preventing soiling, keeping private dry, protecting and modesty. The bikini rests at the hip level and looks narrower at the side sections (Giongo et al., 2017). The bikini was preferred to string, tanga

and thong in all the functions except the aspect of feeling sexy.

Lastly, table 1 revealed that string, tanga and thong were least preferred considering preventing soiling, keeping the private part dry, comfortability, avoid exposure of private part, protection, hygiene, modesty and keeping menstrual. It is noted that these least preferred panty styles cannot perform the functions for which they are least preferred due to their very designs. By design, they have very little coverage for the vagina area and they ride into the anal area. Narins (2015) noted that such a style of pantie speeds up the spread of pubic infections since it is not able to cover the vagina entirely. These styles leave most private part open while some goes deep into the private part, making it uncomfortable, unable to keep fluid and hygiene (Banasam, 2019). Although these panties not considered as comfortable, the string, tanga and thong were seen by respondents to be sexy. According to Banasam (2019) panties that leave some parts of the private nuddy are meant to look erotic and sensual and as such these panties were highly indicated by respondents for such purpose.

#### **The psychological factors that influence GYW choice of panties:**

It was revealed in table 2 that all the psychological factors influenced the respondent's choice of panties. However, in terms of ranking, comfortability, feeling good, safety and protection were considered the top priority. On the contrary, attitudes towards brands, values and moods were not so much concerned by the respondents. This could also be seen in table 4 where the branding was not of interest to the respondent. Again, in table 2, respondents were indifferent to brands. Mair (2019) conducted a study on the psychology of underwear. It was revealed that people perceive underwear as more appealing when it makes them feel good about themselves and comfortable when worn.

#### **The socio-cultural factors that influence the GYW choice of panties:**

Table 3 shows the socio-cultural factors that influenced the respondent's choice of panties. It

was revealed that the occasion, activities, figure type and cost of panties were considered before their selection. Studies show that people considered the occasion to which they must attend before selecting their outerwear but this study confirms that not only outerwear but panties are considered too. The average mean of activities and occasion symbolises that there is a relationship between them. Mostly the occasion determines the activities to be done.

Also, respondents indicated that to feel good in what they wear, they need to choose what will fit their figure type or form. Figure type was next to occasion and activities. How the person is made up of and what will fit exactly the way they are as important. Also, respondents considered the cost of panties. People are sensitive about price and as such the respondent considered the cost after identifying the occasion, activities, and the figure type. Arguably, it was attested that the cost of the product (prices) influences consumers choices as demonstrated in the studies of (Dickson 2001; Shaw & Tomolillo, 2004).

Again, from the study, respondents were undecided considering ethnic background and celebrities influences, family influence, religious background, peer influence which are all external forces when it comes to the selection of the choice of pantie. According to Saeed (2015); Farah and El-Samad (2014) religion have a remarkable influence on consumers behaviour and choices in apparel. However, the study did not show any sign of respondents being influenced by such factors. This difference in panties as a garment could be because they are undergarments and are not seen by observers therefore does not seem to have any religious connotations nor restrictions for the respondents. Unlike garments where some style is peculiar to some tribes. Smocks and fugu are noted to be used by the northerners while slit and Kaba is associated with *Fantes*. Panties are general and no style is associated with ethnicity. Celebrities are used in advertisements to help attract more consumers (Das, Dash & Padhy, 2012). Studies have shown a high rate of celebrity endorsement to influence consumers (Hameed,

Qayyum & Awan, 2018). GYW not considering celebrities influence is reasoned to the fact that panties are intimate apparel and therefore need to be personalised to define them.

Throughout the study, respondents were so much concerned about their comfort, how they will feel when they wear the panties rather than any external pressure or benefits.

### Conclusion:

In conclusion, the study's findings underscore the multifaceted nature of young women's panty selection, revealing both awareness and ignorance regarding the various uses and functions of different styles. While comfort emerges as a dominant consideration, particularly in terms of functionality, it is noted that no single model adequately fulfils all needs, with comfort often overshadowing considerations of sex appeal. The adoption of thongs, strings, and tangas for enhancing attractiveness or expressing sexual pleasure underscores the interplay of psychological factors such as interest, confidence, and feeling good in shaping underwear choices. Additionally, socio-economic factors, including the occasion, exert significant influence, prompting young women to adapt their panty styles accordingly. Cultural norms, moral values, societal perceptions, and fashion trends further contribute to decision-making, while influences such as family, religious background, and peer pressure are comparatively limited. Notably, ethnic background and celebrity influence were found to have negligible impact on purchasing decisions. Overall, the study illuminates the intricate interplay of personal, social, and cultural factors in shaping young women's panty selection processes.

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