



Relationship among Attire, Self-Confidence, Social Connectedness and Life Satisfaction among Female University Students

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Abstract

The present study examined the impact of attire on self-confidence, social connectedness, and life satisfaction among female university students. Clothing serves not only as a means of covering the body but also as an important expression of personal identity, social status, and self-perception (Adam & Galinsky, 2012; Damhorst, 1990; Kaiser, 1997). Grounded in the theory of enclothed cognition, the study explored whether satisfaction with one's attire contributes to enhanced psychological well-being and interpersonal functioning. A quantitative correlational research design was employed. The sample comprised female university students aged 18 to 25 years who were selected through convenience and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using standardized instruments measuring satisfaction with attire, self-confidence, social connectedness, and life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985; Lee & Robbins, 1995). Statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), including descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple regression analyses. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between satisfaction with attire and self-confidence, social connectedness, and life satisfaction. Furthermore, attire satisfaction emerged as a significant predictor of all three psychological outcomes. Participants who reported greater satisfaction with their clothing also demonstrated higher levels of self-confidence, stronger social connectedness, and greater overall life satisfaction. These findings support the theory of enclothed cognition and are consistent with previous research suggesting that clothing and appearance influence self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and psychological well-being. The study concludes that attire plays a meaningful role in promoting psychological well-being and facilitating positive social functioning among female university students. Future research should investigate additional psychological, cultural, and contextual factors that may further explain the relationship between attire and well-being across diverse populations.

Keywords: attire, self-confidence, social connectedness, life satisfaction, female university students, enclothed cognition

Introduction

Attire refers to the term of clothing, it plays a very important role in young university going students i.e self-confidence, social attraction, and connectedness and satisfaction with the life. Clothing Plays a critical role in non-verbal communication and a tool for the self-expression and somehow identity formation, it influences how the young students perceive others.(Adam & Galinsky, 2012; Howlett et al., 2015; Siero, 2015; Thomas-Rounds, 2023; Yeboah, 2020. The

external influence can change an individual's choices, most of the time pushing them towards the trends that may not match with their true selves. Ultimately, the balance between personal expression and societal pressure plays a crucial role in how the individuals navigate their wardrobe decisions. (Kaiser, 2018; Crane, 2012; Davis, 1992). The interplay between the clothing and self-image shows the importance of mindful fashion choices. By selecting the outfits that match with the personal values and comfort, individual can foster a more positive self-image and deduct anxiety related to their appearance. Attire can also reflect an individual's cultural background, traditions, and values. The type of clothing people wear often symbolizes their identity and belonging to particular community or region. (Kaiser, 2012). Clothing affects how the others perceive us in society. It can create first impressions, communicate social status, and then even influence the opportunities in the professional or social settings. (Johnson, Schofield, & Yurchisin, 2002). Attire also plays a role in expressing gender identity and challenging stereotypes. Modern fashion increasingly blurs the traditional boundaries, promoting inclusivity and freedom of expression. (Entwistle, 2015). Trusting your own abilities, ideas, and skills, as well as motivating others to do the same things, are key components of self-confidence. This quality is critical for researchers to succeed in their work, as it fosters persistence, motivation, and interesting problem-solving (Bandura, 1997; Judge & Bono, 2001; Stankov et al., 2012). Defining and defending your ideas publicly, most of the time under intense scrutiny, is a common requirement for researchers. It takes the confidence to present your study convincingly and defend it in order to win over donors and the professional community. The basis of self-confidence consists of two very important elements. One of them is self-efficacy; your confidence rises as you become proficient and achieve significant goals. Self-efficacy is the conviction that learning and perseverance result in achievement, enabling people to overcome challenges and preserve resilience (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2002; Zimmerman, 2000). Self-confidence is a fundamental psychological construct that reflects an individual's perception of their own worth, abilities, and competence. It plays a crucial role in shaping human behavior, motivation, and decision-making abilities (Rosenberg, 1965). According to Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, individuals who possess high self-confidence tend to believe they can effectively perform tasks and achieve desired outcomes, even in the face of obstacles. Such individuals are more persistent, self-motivated, and resilient, leading to greater performance and psychological well-being. Social attractiveness is a component of erotic capital that reflects that how appealing some individual appears in the social situations. This attractiveness increases their ability to form friendships, attract romantic partners, and gain social influence or the power (Hakim, 2010; Anderson et al., 2010; Fink & Neave, 2005). Several elements influence the social attractiveness. Proximity is significant because it elevates familiarity and the possibility of attraction around (Festinger, Schachter, and Back, 1950). Similarity also promotes attraction, as people are drawn to others who have similar attitudes, backgrounds, and ideals (Byrne, 1971). Reciprocity promotes mutual liking of people prefer those who like them, and balanced relationships are more stable (Aronson & Linder, 1965). The mere exposure effect shows that repeated contact with someone might develop affection and attraction (Zajonc, 1968). Finally, social benefits such as kindness, support, and pleasant emotional experiences increase our attraction to others who make us feel valued (Clore and Byrne, 1974). Human relationships are influenced by a variety of forms of attraction. According to McCroskey and McCain (1974), social attraction is the desire to spend time and enjoy someone's company, frequently because of their personality or interpersonal warmth. Being attracted to someone else's physical attributes is called as physical attraction (Langlois et al., 2000). According to Horan and Afifi (2014), task attraction happens when a person is drawn to someone based on their expertise, talents, or capacity to successfully contribute to common objectives. The Reasons Behind Our Clothing selections . A strategic psychological buffer is the fashion. Many people view clothing as a means of protection, not only from the weather but also from criticism and self-doubt. It enables people to decide how much of their actual selves they can disclose to the

other people. Putting together an ensemble that feels "put together" can be a grounding practice for those who are depressed or anxious, giving them a sense of stability and control. In this way, the psychology of clothes transcends identity performance and becomes a tool for mood regulation and daily behavior guidance (Amekplenu, 2024).

Literature Review

Beyond its utilitarian use, clothing is becoming more widely acknowledged as a significant psychological and social phenomena. According to researchers, clothing is a means of self-expression that people use to convey facets of their identities, personalities, and social connections (Entwistle, 2015). People's perceptions of themselves and how others view them are frequently influenced by the connotations associated with clothing. The notion of enlothed cognition is one of the most important theories describing the psychological consequences of clothes. Adam and Galinsky (2012) assert that the symbolic meaning of clothes can affect behavioral outcomes and cognitive process. Self-confidence is defined as positive beliefs about one's abilities, competence, and self-worth. Previous studies have reported that satisfaction with personal appearance is associated with greater confidence and positive self-evaluation (Rosenberg, 1965). Clothing that reflects an individual's preferences and identity may contribute to feelings of competence and self-assurance. However, self-confidence is influenced by a number of factors, including personality traits, social support, academic achievement, and life experiences. According to Lee and Robbins (1995), social connection is the feeling of emotional intimacy and belonging that people have in their relationships with other people. By conveying social ideals, cultural identity, and group membership, clothing can have an impact on social interaction. However, experts contend that social connectivity is more strongly determined by meaningful interactions, emotional support, and successful communication than by beauty alone. According to Diener et al. (1985), life satisfaction is a measure of an individual's overall assessment of life quality and is the cognitive component of subjective well-being. Positive self-perceptions and emotional adjustment are associated with better levels of life satisfaction. Because clothing enables people to express themselves and feel at ease in social settings, appearance-related satisfaction may have a positive impact on wellbeing. Positive views of one's appearance have been linked to increased psychological well-being and life satisfaction, according to studies (Diener et al., 1985). Even while earlier studies have found connections between different psychological outcomes and clothes, the results are still inconsistent across people and cultural contexts. Additionally, only a little amount of study has concurrently looked at Pakistani female university students' dress, self-confidence, social connectivity, and life happiness. Therefore, more research is required to comprehend how clothing affects young women's psychological health in this cultural setting.

Conceptual Framework

The study examines the effect of dresses on social connectedness, self confidence, and life satisfaction of female university students. The independent variable of clothing and fashion choices included style and modesty, cultural fit and physical comfort. Clothing is an important form of self expression and social communication, and may affect how individuals perceive themselves and how others perceive them (Kwon, 1994; Kaiser, 1997). Women who are satisfied and with their clothes are more likely to have healthy psychological and social outcomes. The framework suggests that attire influences life satisfaction directly and indirectly through self confidence and social connectedness as mediating variables. Self confidences includes self esteem, appearance valuation and personal identity expression. Previous research shows that attire can have positive impact on people's confidence and self perceptions through the concept of enlothed cognition, whereby the symbolic meaning of clothing affects psychological processes and behavior (Adam & Galinsky , 2012). Individuals who are highly comfortable and satisfied with their appearance, report higher levels of confidence and self worth (Peluchette & Karl, 2007). Social connectedness, a measure of the extent of the

belonging and quality of social relationships (Lee & Robbins, 1995), mediates the link between clothing and life satisfaction. The dependent variable, life satisfaction, is defined as a person's global evaluation of her quality of life (Diener et al., 1985). The framework suggests that increased self-confidence and better social connectedness are beneficial to the life satisfaction of female university students. Attire can also contribute to life satisfaction by enhancing comfort and subjective wellbeing (Adam & Galinsky, 2012). Furthermore, sociocultural norms and socioeconomic status could act as moderators in these relationships, as cultural expectations and access to clothing resources which influence the effects of attire on psychological and social wellbeing and outcomes (Kaiser, 1997; Adler et al., 1994).

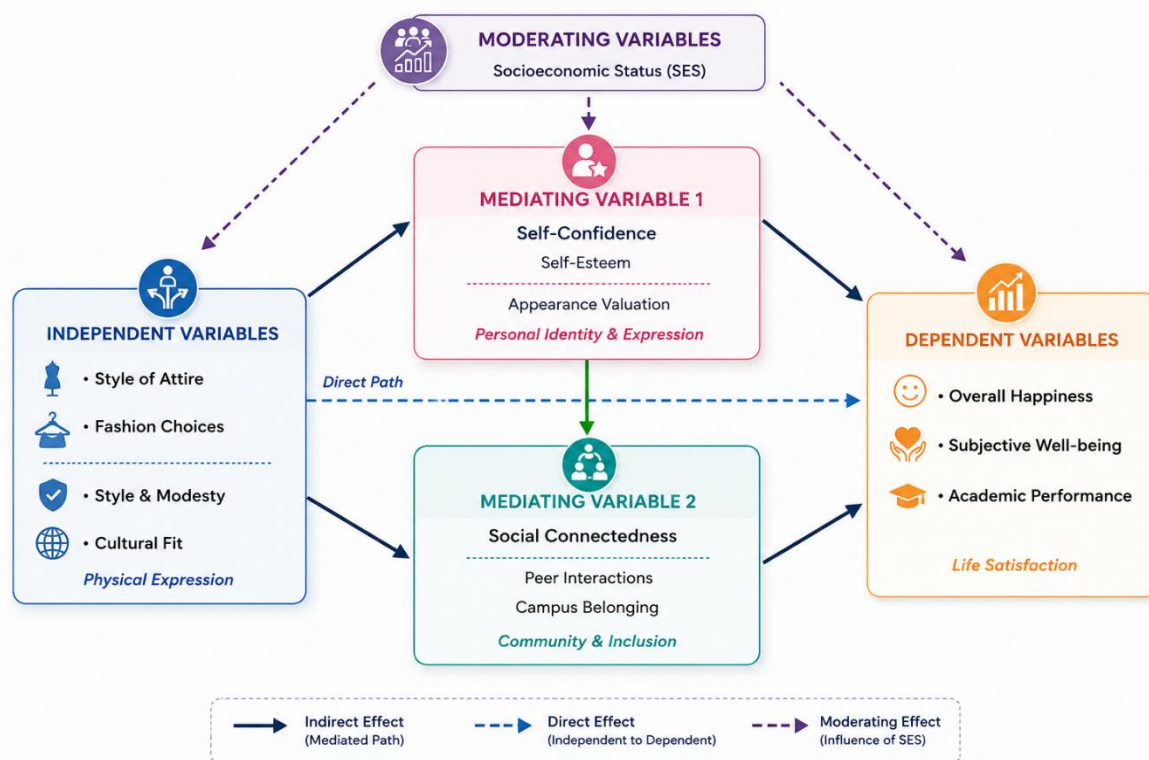


Figure 1.1 conceptual framework, Impact of attire on self confidence, social interaction and life satisfaction among student wellbeing.

Methodology

Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the impact of attire on self-confidence, social connectedness, and life satisfaction among female university students. A quantitative approach was selected to facilitate the collection of numerical data and the objective examination of relationships among the study variables. The cross-sectional design involved collecting data from participants at a single point in time, making it a practical and efficient method for investigating psychological constructs and their interrelationships. The study was grounded in the positivist research paradigm, which assumes that psychological phenomena can be measured objectively using standardized instruments and that relationships among variables can be empirically tested through statistical analyses. Data were collected using a structured survey comprising four validated psychometric scales. The obtained data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple regression analyses

were performed to examine the associations among attire, self-confidence, social connectedness, and life satisfaction.

Participants

The participants were 200 female university students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs of universities of Sialkot. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 25 years, an age range that encompasses the period of emerging adulthood when issues related to self image, identity formation, social relationships, and life satisfaction are especially salient. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling. The purposive sampling method was used to select only female university students who meet the inclusion criteria, while convenience sampling used to the accessibility and availability of participants who are willing to participate in the study.

Instruments

Data were collected using four standardized self-report questionnaires that have demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity across diverse populations. The instruments included the Clothing Preference Scale (CPS) to assess participants' clothing preferences, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) to measure self-esteem, the Social Connectedness Scale (SCS; Lee & Robbins, 1995) to evaluate perceived social connectedness, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) to assess overall life satisfaction. These well-established psychometric instruments have been extensively used in psychological research and possess strong evidence of reliability and construct validity.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Department of Psychology, Government College Women University Sialkot. Permission was also secured from the relevant university authorities to approach potential participants. Data collection was conducted over a period of approximately eight weeks. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and written informed consent was obtained before their participation. They were assured that participation was voluntary, responses would remain anonymous and confidential, and they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The questionnaires were administered in classroom settings using standardized self-report measures. Participants completed the survey in approximately 15–20 minutes. Upon completion, the questionnaires were checked for completeness, coded, and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To make sure parametric tests were appropriate, data were checked for accuracy, missing values, and normality assumptions before primary analysis. To summarize the features of the sample and research variables, descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions were calculated. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was used to look at the connections between clothing preference, self-esteem, social connectedness, and life satisfaction. According to Field (2018), this test is suitable for determining the direction and strength of linear relationships between continuous variables. Additionally, the predictive effect of clothing preference in explaining variance in self-esteem, social connection, and life happiness was investigated using multiple regression analysis. Every statistical test had a significance threshold of $p < .05$.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to examine the distribution, central tendency, and variability of all study variables.

Table 1.1 Descriptives of study variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
CPS	200	27.00	97.00	57.41	14.76
RSESTOTAL	200	22.00	41.00	33.19	4.56
SCSTOTAL	200	10.00	37.00	20.96	6.38
SWLTOTAL	200	5.00	25.00	16.77	4.20

Table 1.1 elaborates the descriptive characteristics of study variables based on a sample of 200 female university students. The results indicate that the Clothing Preference Scale (CPS) scores ranged from 27 to 97, with a mean of 57.41 (SD = 14.76), suggesting a moderate level of satisfaction with attire and clothing preferences among the participants. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) yielded scores ranging from 22 to 41, with a mean of 33.19 (SD = 4.56), indicating that participants generally reported moderate to high levels of self-esteem. For the Social Connectedness Scale (SCS), scores ranged from 10 to 37, with a mean of 20.96 (SD = 6.38), reflecting a moderate level of perceived social connectedness among the respondents. Similarly, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) scores ranged from 5 to 25, with a mean of 16.77 (SD = 4.20), suggesting that participants experienced a moderate level of overall life satisfaction. Overall, the descriptive statistics demonstrate adequate variability across all study variables, indicating that the data were suitable for subsequent inferential analyses, including correlation and regression, to examine the relationships among attire, self-esteem, social connectedness, and life satisfaction.

Table 1.2 Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Matrix for the Study Variables (N = 200)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Clothing Preference Scale (CPS)	—	.136	-.017	.171*
2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)		—	.275**	.137
3. Social Connectedness Scale (SCS)			—	-.055
4. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)				—

Note. $p < .05^*$, $p < .01$.

Table 1.2 presents the Pearson product moment correlation coefficients among clothing preference, self-esteem, social connectedness, and life satisfaction. The results indicated that clothing preference was significantly and positively correlated with life satisfaction ($r = .171$, $p < .05$), suggesting that female university students who reported greater satisfaction with their attire also tended to report higher levels of life satisfaction. However, clothing preference was not significantly associated with self-esteem ($r = .136$, $p > .05$) or social connectedness ($r = -.017$, $p > .05$). Furthermore, self-esteem demonstrated a significant positive correlation with social connectedness ($r = .275$, $p < .01$), indicating that students with higher self-esteem were more likely to experience stronger feelings of social connectedness. The correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction was positive but did not reach statistical significance ($r = .137$, $p > .05$). Likewise, social connectedness was not significantly associated with life satisfaction ($r = -.055$, $p > .05$). Overall, the findings suggest that clothing preference is positively related

to life satisfaction, whereas self-esteem is positively associated with social connectedness. No significant relationships were observed between the remaining variables.

Table 2.1 Multiple Regression Analysis of Attire Self-Esteem, Social Connectedness, and Life Satisfaction (N = 200)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p	95% CI
Constant	36.86	8.37	—	4.40	< .001***	[20.35, 53.37]
Self-Esteem (RSES)	0.41	0.24	.128	1.74	< .001***	[−0.06, 0.88]
Social Connectedness (SCS)	−0.10	0.17	−.044	−0.60	< .001***	[−0.43, 0.23]
Life Satisfaction (SWLS)	0.53	0.25	.151	2.14	< .001***	[0.04, 1.02]

Note. $p < .05^*$, $p < .01$, $p < .001$. **Model Summary:** $R = .210$, $R^2 = .044$, Adjusted $R^2 = .029$, $SEE = 14.55$, $F(3, 196) = 3.01$, $p = .031$.

Table 2.1 presents a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether self-esteem, social connectedness, and life satisfaction significantly predicted clothing preference among female university students. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 196) = 3.01$, $p = .031$, indicating that the three predictors collectively explained a significant proportion of the variance in clothing preference. However, the model accounted for only 4.4% of the variance ($R^2 = .044$; Adjusted $R^2 = .029$), suggesting a small effect size. Among the predictor variables, life satisfaction emerged as the only significant positive predictor of clothing preference ($B = 0.53$, $\beta = .151$, $t = 2.14$, $p = .034$). This finding indicates that higher levels of life satisfaction were associated with greater clothing preference among female university students. In contrast, self-esteem was not a statistically significant predictor ($B = 0.41$, $\beta = .128$, $p = .084$), although it demonstrated a positive relationship with clothing preference. Similarly, social connectedness did not significantly predict clothing preference ($B = -0.10$, $\beta = -.044$, $p = .551$). Overall, the findings suggest that life satisfaction is a modest but significant predictor of clothing preference, whereas self-esteem and social connectedness do not independently contribute to the prediction of clothing preference in the present sample.

Discussion

The present study investigated the relationship between clothing preference, self-esteem, social connectedness, and life satisfaction among female university students. The findings revealed that clothing preference was significantly and positively associated with life satisfaction, whereas its relationships with self-esteem and social connectedness were not statistically significant. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis demonstrated that life satisfaction was the only significant predictor of clothing preference, although the overall model explained a relatively small proportion of the variance. The significant positive association between clothing preference and life satisfaction suggests that students who were more satisfied with their lives also reported greater satisfaction with their attire. This finding is consistent with the theory of enclothed cognition proposed by Adam and Galinsky (2012), which emphasizes that clothing influences not only outward appearance but also psychological experiences and emotional well-being. Individuals experiencing higher levels of life satisfaction may exhibit more positive attitudes toward their clothing, reflecting greater self-acceptance and emotional adjustment. Similarly, Diener et al. (1985) suggested that individuals with greater subjective well-being tend to evaluate various aspects of their lives more positively, including personal appearance and self-presentation. These findings support previous research indicating that clothing serves as a medium of self-expression and contributes to positive psychological functioning (Kaiser, 1997). Contrary to expectations, clothing preference was not significantly related to self-esteem. Although a positive relationship was observed, it did not reach statistical significance. This finding suggests that self-esteem is a multidimensional construct influenced by numerous personal and environmental factors, including personality characteristics, family

support, academic achievement, social acceptance, and previous life experiences, rather than clothing alone. Rosenberg (1965) proposed that self-esteem develops through accumulated social experiences and self-evaluations, making it relatively stable and less susceptible to temporary influences such as clothing preference. Therefore, while clothing may contribute to positive self-presentation, it may not independently enhance overall self-esteem among female university students. Similarly, the absence of a significant relationship between clothing preference and social connectedness indicates that interpersonal relationships are likely to be determined by broader social and psychological processes rather than appearance alone. According to Lee and Robbins (1995), social connectedness reflects feelings of belongingness, emotional closeness, and interpersonal acceptance, which primarily develop through meaningful social interactions rather than external appearance. Although clothing may facilitate first impressions and social communication, it appears insufficient to influence long-term perceptions of connectedness among university students. The regression analysis further demonstrated that life satisfaction significantly predicted clothing preference, whereas self-esteem and social connectedness did not contribute significantly to the prediction model. Although the regression model explained only 4.4% of the variance in clothing preference, the findings suggest that overall psychological well-being has a modest yet meaningful influence on individuals' attitudes toward clothing. These results imply that clothing preference may reflect broader emotional functioning rather than serving as an independent determinant of psychological health. Consequently, interventions aimed at improving students' overall well-being may also contribute to more positive perceptions of personal appearance and self-expression. Overall, the findings highlight that clothing preference is more closely associated with positive emotional functioning than with self-esteem or social connectedness. The study contributes to the growing literature on clothing psychology by demonstrating that attire represents not only a physical necessity but also an important psychological resource associated with subjective well-being among female university students.

Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between clothing preference, self-esteem, social connectedness, and life satisfaction among female university students. The findings revealed that clothing preference was significantly and positively associated with life satisfaction, whereas no significant relationships were observed with self-esteem or social connectedness. Moreover, life satisfaction emerged as the only significant predictor of clothing preference. These findings suggest that clothing functions primarily as a form of self-expression linked to individuals' psychological well-being rather than as a direct determinant of self-esteem or interpersonal connectedness. Overall, the study supports the perspective that positive emotional well-being is associated with more favorable attitudes toward personal appearance and attire.

Study Implications

Practical Implications

The findings of the present study have important implications for psychologists, counselors, educators, and university administrators. Since life satisfaction was positively associated with clothing preference, interventions designed to improve students' psychological well-being may also promote healthier self-expression and positive self-presentation. University counseling centers should encourage programs that enhance emotional well-being, resilience, and self-acceptance. Educational institutions can also create supportive environments that respect students' individuality and encourage positive body image and confidence without emphasizing appearance-based judgments.

Theoretical Implications

The present study contributes to the literature on clothing psychology by extending the theory of enclothed cognition (Adam & Galinsky, 2012). The findings indicate that clothing preference is more strongly associated with subjective well-being than with self-esteem or

social connectedness. This supports the view that clothing serves as a psychological symbol of personal identity and emotional functioning rather than solely influencing interpersonal relationships. The study also provides empirical evidence from Pakistani female university students, thereby expanding the cross-cultural understanding of clothing-related psychological processes.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, which limits the ability to draw causal inferences among the study variables. Second, participants were selected through convenience and purposive sampling from a single university, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other educational institutions and cultural contexts. Third, all data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by social desirability and response biases. Finally, the regression model explained only a small proportion of the variance in clothing preference, suggesting that additional psychological, social, and cultural factors not examined in the present study may contribute to individuals' clothing preferences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and limitations of the present study, several recommendations are proposed for future research. Future studies should include both male and female participants to examine potential gender differences in the relationship between clothing preference and psychological well-being. Researchers are also encouraged to recruit larger and more diverse samples from multiple universities and different cultural settings to improve the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal and experimental research designs should be employed to establish causal relationships between clothing preference and psychological outcomes. In addition, future studies should investigate other relevant psychological variables, including body image, self-concept, personality traits, self-compassion, emotional intelligence, and social comparison, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of clothing-related behavior. Finally, cultural values, religious beliefs, family influences, media exposure, and socioeconomic status should be examined as potential contextual factors influencing clothing preferences and psychological well-being.

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