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Effect of Minimalistic Clothing Style on Self-Esteem among Young Adults

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Abstract

The impact of a person's dress habits on one's sense of self-image has long been researched. The new study's objective was to build on earlier findings while investigating the mostly unknown topic of one's daily clothing preferences and how they relate to themselves. The minimalist sartorial approach encourages the building of a minimalist closet, conscious buying, and sustainable clothing businesses. Only the clothes we love, need, and wear are included in a minimalist wardrobe. Making the best use of our essentials is key, as is avoiding hasty fashion trends. It enables us to simplify our lives while having a smaller negative impact on the environment. We have more freedom to choose what we like to wear when we choose minimalist clothing. The association between aspects of clothing proximity to self and self-esteem was also investigated in this study. A sample of 32 people, within the age group of 18-25 years of age, was studied that have adopted the minimalistic style of clothing over the last few years. The study showed a positive correlation, that is, a proportionality between the mentioned style of clothing and the individual's self-esteem levels, hence proving the fact that the type of clothing affects how an individual feels about themselves.

Keywords: Minimalistic Clothing Style, Self-esteem, Clothing

Introduction

Every shade, material, and shape have a purpose, and when used together, they conform to a particular norm. Take the little black dress, for instance. The fabric of your choosing will also evoke specific attributes, such as satin or silk that symbolize richness and opulence, just as the color is linked to elegance, sophistication, and power. A person's choice of clothing can be influenced by how they feel about themselves, and the clothes they choose to wear can also have an impact on how they feel about themselves (Muzert, 1980; Compton, 1962; Kwon, 1991). Throughout history, dress habits have evolved for three basic reasons: safety, modesty, and ornamentation. Clothing as a requirement for protection may differ among cultures, communities, and even within the same society. Rouse describes females in the 1960s who would endure snow drifts and below-freezing weather wearing just "the briefest of tiny skirts and jackets."

Every civilization and culture have its definition of modest clothes and conduct, making it difficult to draw a firm connection between modesty and the primary function of clothing. The inverse of modesty as a theory has also been developed and is universally accepted. Dress as ornamentation, to draw attention to the body. Individuals, according to this belief, have an instinctive urge to express themselves via clothes. Veblen (1953) was among the first to assert that clothes did more than just protect the body. His early fashion consumption theory concentrated on the social status of women's clothes, which represented some of society's essential values.

Clothing has been defined as the visible self (Roach & Eicher, 1972) and the second skin (Horn & Gurel, 1981). We, humans, convey a lot about ourselves via our unique style and clothing. Fashion, according to Kaiser (1990), is a symbolic creation distinct from the notion of clothes. Fashion connects us to our emotional needs and reflects our inner distinctive individuality through exterior markings and symbols, logos, and status symbols.

Compton (1962) discovered some significant connections between personality, vocational interests, and design and color preferences. He concluded that people choose fabric and color to make them resemble their ideal selves. However, Muzert (1980) held that mood and the specifics of the environment or time have an impact on colour preferences. Clothing's symbolic character might include styles, brands, retail locations, uniforms, and membership in certain subcultures. The meanings that these generate can help an individual understand who they are. Fashion influences both our self-concepts and our interior emotions (Tombs, 2010).

According to the latest fashion trends, we also value the shape of clothing. As a result, the giant knitted pullover has replaced the sweatshirt as the go-to comfort item, and maxi skirts with floral prints personify the free-spirited bohemian movement. Naturally, wearing a long, backless satin gown will make you feel like royalty. We have a long-standing mentality that dictates what constitutes a professional appearance, what it means to dress in tailored clothing, and what constitutes "unconventional" or "rebellious" behavior. The instant we put on a suit; we are physically putting ourselves into a prescribed role with a fixed set of actions. It makes sense because we are not only making a statement, but that five-inch heel also makes us look better and a pair of workout leggings makes us feel like working out.

Minimalist Clothing Style

Minimalistic fashion is all about eliminating the extraneous to make room for the things that bring you delight and real value. Having a small selection of joyful, flattering clothes in your closet is considered minimalist fashion. The present consumerist narrative is the opposite of minimalism. Adopting minimalist clothing allows us to express our styles and move toward a more sustainable lifestyle.

Making the wardrobe simpler will make it simpler for us to decide what to wear. It eliminates the extra time and effort we expend in the morning looking for the ideal attire. More room equates to fewer clothes. It is simpler to keep and maintain a minimalist wardrobe organized. Additionally, it makes room for other belongings of yours. We look our best when we are dressed in our preferred attire. Instead of stressing about fitting in, we develop self-esteem and confidence in what we wear when we stick to our aesthetic instead of following trends. Spending less money on clothing is associated with minimalism. We find it difficult to satisfy our need to purchase the newest fashions and bring something fresh to every occasion.

Whittaker (2022) suggests that there are minimalist clothing options for every age group, style, and way of life. It has numerous advantages for both the environment and us. Fast fashion aims to encourage frequent and large purchases. Trying to stay up with the newest trends can be stressful, and advertisements can be overwhelming. Minimalism as a way of life can help, we prevent that. Furthermore, the environmental implications of the fast fashion market are negative, ranging from excessive carbon emissions to severe water contamination from cheap, hazardous colors. By adopting a minimalist wardrobe, we reduce the need for quick fashion and ease the strain on the environment. We can change things if we only buy what we need when we need it and choose sustainable or used products.

Researchers Derwanz and Strebinger observed that when minimalists demonstrate the essential change on a personalized bottom-up level, such as authors of books, online instructors, or organizers of meet-ups or conventions, they can be crucial disseminators for sustainable change. According to practice theory, the ethnographic examples thoroughly explained how the three components of practices; material, competences, and meanings, and their relationships to one another alter in a minimalist way of living. A higher level of sustainability can be attained by implementing new behaviors into daily life (Derwanz & Strebinger, 2021)

Additionally, according to Derwanz and Strebinger (2021), the aim of having fewer possessions and frequently also preserving consumption time for other purposes characterize the minimalist lifestyle. The processualism of the "minimalist journey," which is characterized by accepting change and learning, is essential to the transformation that results. Three sets of practices reduction and reorganisation, lengthening the useful life of products, and conscious consumption—are used to achieve it (Derwanz & Strebinger, 2021).

Although actions like picking clothes, wearing them, caring for them, and cleaning them are routines and frequently take place subconsciously, minimalism's main point emphasizes the awareness of the material environment around people and their relationship to it. It's possible to interact with your clothes more deeply if you keep them utilitarian and keep your wardrobe simple. As a result, the visual appeal and construction of clothing provide particular challenges for minimalists. The quality affects the items' lifespan in conjunction with how well they are used and cared for by the consumer (Derwanz & Strebinger, 2021).

Self-esteem

Clothing is a basic physical need, along with shelter and food according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). The five fundamental human wants of physiological, safety, belonging or love, self-esteem, and self-actualization are the foundation of the human motivation theory. Before going on to the next motivator and ultimately achieving self-actualization, these needs build upon one another. There is proof that higher-order needs, such as affiliation and self-esteem can be satisfied by clothes," even though Maslow (1943) linked clothing with biological need (Lee, 1997). Although self-esteem can be thought of as a typical self-evaluation, it is subject to change in response to outside factors, such as other people's reactions, performance, expectations, and shifting responsibilities (Baron & Byrne, 1991).

Self-esteem has been defined as a positive or negative feeling about the overall self "constructed out of our evaluations of the things we do, of who we are, and of what we achieve in terms of our private assessments of the goodness, worthiness, and/or significance of those things." Self-esteem is frequently referred to as the feeling of overall self-worth (Hamacheck, 1987).

People are more likely to buy a product if they believe it to be coherent to their ideal self-image (ideal congruity), which satisfies their demand for self-esteem (defined as the propensity to act in a way that brings one closer to their ideal self-image). According to this model, people are likely to choose clothing items that project a favorable image of themselves while yet keeping their identity. As a result, when it comes to choosing apparel, both the actual self and the ideal self are crucial aspects (Erikson & Sirgy, 1992).

Wearing clothing is a very visible and non-verbal way to express one's inner thoughts and sentiments (Horn, 1975). Declining health and the many losses that come with ageing may contribute to negative attitudes, which may show up as a low degree of self-esteem (Youmans, 1974). These unfavorable emotions can be displayed in a person's looks and attire (Gurel, 1974).

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to determine the relationship between minimalist clothing style and self-esteem.

Hypothesis

There will be a significant correlation between the proximity to clothing self and self-esteem.

Method

Sample

A sample of 32 individuals within the age group of 18-25 years old from Delhi.

Measures

- **The Proximity of Clothing to Self-Scale**: as given by (Sontag and Schlater, 1982). A 39-item scale measures how psychologically near the clothing to self is. It is graded on a Likert scale of 1 to 6, with 1 being "Never or rarely true," and 6 being "Always or almost always true." The scale consists of six dimensions including clothing concerning (1) self as a structure (2) self as a process - communication of self to others (3) self as a process – response to judgement of others (4) self-esteem – evaluative process, dominant (5) self-esteem – affective process, dominant (6) body image and body cathexis.

- **The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale:** as given by Rosenberg (1965): Ten items make up the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which is intended to gauge a person's level of self-esteem. A four-point scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, was used to gauge participant agreement. Scores varied from 10 to 40; higher scores indicated higher levels of self-esteem.

Procedure

Participants were acknowledged for their time and cooperation after the questionnaire, and they received a debriefing and the researcher's contact information. Google Forms, a free online survey platform, was used to accomplish the distribution of the survey online.

Analysis of Data

Results

Table 1: N, Mean and SD

	N	Mean	SD
Self as a structure	32	23.9	7.03
Self as a process - communication of self to others	32	23.4	7.75
Self as a process – response to judgement of others	32	15.4	4.56
Self-esteem – evaluative process, dominant	32	32.1	9.63
Self-esteem – affective process, dominant	32	23.6	6.67
Body image and body cathexis	32	28.5	8.97
Self Esteem	32	28.4	4.47

Table 2: Correlation

		Dimension 1 PCS	Dimension 2 PCS	Dimension 3 PCS	Dimension 4 PCS	Dimension 5 PCS	Dimension 6 PCS	Self esteem
Dimension PCS	1	—						
Dimension PCS	2	0.978***	—					
Dimension PCS	3	0.910***	0.864***	—				
Dimension PCS	4	0.969***	0.946***	0.901***	—			
Dimension PCS	5	0.955***	0.952***	0.939***	0.971***	—		
Dimension PCS	6	0.974***	0.975***	0.861***	0.956***	0.946***	—	

Self esteem	0.377*	0.302	0.481**	0.331	0.378*	0.274	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
Dimension 1 PCS: self as a structure
Dimension 2 PCS: self as a process - communication of self to others
Dimension 3 PCS: self as a process – response to judgement of others
Dimension 4 PCS : self-esteem – evaluative process, dominant
Dimension 5 PCS: self-esteem – affective process, dominant
Dimension 6 PCS: body image and body cathexis.

Discussion of Results

There is a significant correlation between Self-esteem and Dimension 1 of PCS, Self as structure (r = 0.377, p = 0.017, p < .05). Also, there is a significant correlation between Self-esteem and Dimension 2 of PCS, Communication of self to others (r = 0.302, p = 0.046, p < .05). There is a significant correlation between self-esteem and Dimension 3 of PCS, Response to judgement of others (r = 0.481, p = 0.003, p < .01). There is a significant correlation between self-esteem and dimension 4 of PCS, Self-esteem, evaluative (r = 0.331, p = 0.032, p < .05). There is a significant correlation between Self-esteem and Dimension 5 of PCS, Self-esteem, effective (r = 0.378, p = 0.017, p < .05). Although there is a positive correlation between Self-esteem and Dimension 6 of PCS, Body image and body cathexis (r = 0.274, p = 0.64), however, it is not significant.

The purpose of the study was to determine a positive correlation between the Minimalistic style of clothing and a person's self-esteem. The values of the result show that there is indeed a positive correlation present between the minimalistic style of clothing adopted by a person and the level of self-esteem. Therefore, it is concluded that the variables are directly proportional to each other.

Tyrchniewicz and Gonzales (1978) discovered favorable relationships between feelings about the body and clothing characteristics such as interest, aesthetics, management, and social approbation, which supports Feather, Kaiser, and Rucker's (1988) claim that many women perceive themselves as less than attractive. Using clothing to boost social acceptance and self-esteem may be beneficial for those who are unhappy with their physical attributes or who have poor self-esteem.

Self-esteem has been linked to clothing choices themselves (Kwon, 1991; Kwon, 1994b; Henneman, 1994), but research on PCS and its effects on how emotions are perceived have had mixed results. "A person's attire frequently reflects how they are feeling both physically and mentally" (Pensiero & Adams, 1987, p. 1). Furthermore, for those who live in cultures or subcultures that place a high value on physical attractiveness, physical changes and changes in appearance pose a threat (Atchley, 1985).

Conclusion

The study shows that a person's identity and sense of belonging are both influenced by their clothing, which is an aspect of their material self. One's identity, personality, qualities, self-esteem, ideals, views, values, or emotions can be reflected or expressed through their clothing. The individual aims for uniformity in both appearance and self-image. To express messages about who they are to others or to try on different personas, a person intentionally selects or chooses their wardrobe. With help of the clothing style an individual prefers, they visualize how they appear to others. Depending on whether the judgment is real or imagined, the person may react behaviorally, cognitively, or affectively. One's perception of personal and interpersonal competency, including self-efficacy, understanding of the surroundings, usefulness, social adequacy, and desirability, can be positively or negatively influenced by their attire. Self-esteem influences how someone feels about or behaves around clothing. The attention one gives to their wardrobe is a reflection of their pride in themselves.

This research aims to study the correlation between the minimalistic style of clothing and a person's self-esteem. It was proved that there is a positive correlation between a minimalistic style of clothing and self–esteem. Everyone has experienced the pressure to look well, but they should be dressed for themselves. A person's attitude and confidence can be affected by the things they wear and the purchases they make. Clothing and fashion are frequently utilized to convey and imply social value or position. People frequently make judgments about other people's social values or rank based on what they wear. Clothing may also be used to express membership in a cultural group to both members and non-members. It is a social process that generates cultural meaning and is an essential component of our social relationships.

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