

Identification of the Factors Responsible for the Usage of Clothes

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Abstract

Clothing is a complex but fascinating part of an individual's life. People wear clothes for different reasons, and many theories have attempted to explain the motivation for human beings to cover and decorate all or parts of their bodies. The basic reasons behind this motivation appear to be the physical, traditional and the psychological needs of all mankind. In order to determine the impact of physical and psychological needs upon the wearing of clothes, a study was undertaken in the University of Agriculture Faisalabad through a questionnaire and 102 B.Sc. (Home Economics) students acted as the respondents. The conclusions show that a majority of adolescent girls consider wearing clothes necessary for the purpose of protection and covering various parts of body.

Key words: Identification, Factors responsible, Usage of clothes

Introduction

All people have basic human needs for their survival and the fulfillment thereof provides them satisfaction and enjoyment. Clothing helps to meet most of these needs because it is perhaps as ancient as the history of human evolution. Pre-historic cave paintings have preserved the images of clothing and adornment of early man. One of the oldest depictions is in the caverns in the French Pyrenees known as "Trois Freres" depicting a man wearing animal skin and the head piece. Hawkes and Woolley (1963) comment that these ancient caves and gravesite findings support the theory that clothing was a concern of early man. Of course, we cannot completely understand the significance of the dress relics, but the evidences seem to suggest the idea that the clothing of early man was used for rituals, ornamentation and protection.

Michael and Batterberry (1977) pose the questions why do people wear, what they wear? Why indeed, have human beings chosen to transform themselves in such astonishing ways? For the sake of the flesh or the spirit? For themselves or the eyes of the beholder? What has driven them? Lust? Ambition? Fear? Piety? Shame?

There is and can be no single adequate response, it might be helpful to pause briefly and ponder the most plausible reasons for adorning the naked person, whether with a scrape of loin cloth and a daub of clay or a blaze of tiara and twenty-foot train. To our minds clothes have traditionally served four basic functions, which are to protect the body, to exalt the ego, to arouse emotions among others and to communicate by means of symbols.

According to Kaiser, (1985) three commonly noted purposes for dressing the body are modesty, adornment, and protection/utility. It becomes evident, as we examine these purposes in the light of everyday situations and available research evidence, that no single purpose can adequately explain individual's clothing behavior. The social processes involved in modesty, adornment and protection/utility may be interrelated. Therefore, it is probable that more than one motive for dressing in certain way will be displayed through clothing symbols. Therefore, a multidimensional approach to dress-related motives probably best explain individual's clothing behavior. With the progress of symbolic-interactionist perspective and social-perception approach among people and communities, we find a change in basic motivation for clothing. Evans (1973) listed the following motivations for dress.

Comfort and protection from the elements of heat, sun, and other cosmic elements, providing the modesty prescribed by a society, ritual and ceremony, decoration and embellishment, conspicuous consumption to display wealth and status, identification and recognition, satisfaction of the urge to create, self-expression, attraction of the opposite sex, competition with one's own sex, social protest, fun and recreation, satisfying a desire for change, bringing one's body into closer alignment with an idealized image of a particular culture, and displaying technological changes.

The present study is an effort to understand the different motives behind clothing.

Materials and Methods

The survey aimed at the determination of reasons for clothing of adolescent girls in our particular society, whether the girls of this age group consider protection and modesty more important than fashion or ornamentation. The study was undertaken in the University of Agriculture Faisalabad. All the 102 students of B.Sc. Home Economics during the

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session 2000-2002 were taken as respondents for the research. The data were collected with the help of a questionnaire and then analyzed to draw conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 depicts that an overwhelming majority of 82% respondents considered the main aim of wearing clothes to cover and protect the bodies, followed by 57% respondents who wanted to enhance their personalities with clothes or use them for ornamentation. However the minority of 3% respondents used to wear clothes for projecting their family status.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents on the basis of reasons for wearing clothes.

Category	No.	%
To cover and protect body	84	82%
To satisfy the desire to conform	06	6%
To enhance personality	58	57%
To show family status	03	3%
To provide comfort to body	40	39%
To satisfy artistic impulse	27	26%
To express ideas and believes	16	16%

Table 2 shows that 80% of the respondents gave high importance to modesty, whereas 17% of the respondents designed their clothes for both modesty and fashion. The remaining 5% of adolescent girls were totally fashion conscious.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents according to their inclination towards modesty and fashion while designing a dress.

Category	N0.	%
Modesty	80	78%
Modesty along with fashion	17	17%
Fashion	5	5%
Total	102	100%

Table 3 indicates that 41% of the respondents often designed or made a new dress to follow religious value, whereas 27% of them were occasionally inspired by this trend while designing a costume. However 31% of respondents paid little attention to this aspect.

TABLE 3: Distribution of the respondents regarding clothing on the basis of religious values.

Category	No.	%
Often	42	41%
Occasionally	28	27%
Never	32	31%
Total	102	100%

Conclusions

By reviewing the literature, discussion and results we have come to know that adolescent girls of our particular society have understandable reasons for wearing clothes. Fulfillment of two basic needs, physical need of protection and psychological need of modesty brought about by cultural conditioning, were considered to be more important by young girls. With increased fashion awareness through media, education and globalization, girls are becoming more fashion conscious and so we can see a change in the basic reasons of wearing clothes.

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