

A Study of Body Cathexis and Clothing Interest among Middle Age Working Women

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between body cathexis, and clothing interest among middle age working women. Subjects consisting of 200 females which include 100 college/university lecturers and 100 doctors from different hospitals in Alwar, Rajasthan. No previous research had investigated body cathexis, and clothing interests of the middle age working women. Since clothing is such an integral part of the self, it was important to examine the influences and contributions of these variables to working life and age.

The proposed research model hypothesized that these variables body cathexis and clothing interests would be correlated with each other. Results indicated that a greater percentage of working women was related to a higher average body cathexis score. Current clothing interests also seemed to be influenced by age and working status. By middle adulthood (the years from 35–64), physical development is essentially complete and a very gradual decline in functioning begins. Middle adulthood is a time of personal growth; however, it is the least researched and the least understood of the life stage. Findings from the present study provide new information about how women choose clothing based on their level of satisfaction with their bodies.

I. Introduction

Indian society has seen a proliferation of middle age working women. Women especially worked more in the 1990s than in the 1980s, and women constitute the majority of members of formal education programs in the country. George Simmel address clothing's power as both maker of socioeconomic status and a mean by which human express their collective identities. Clothing is a direct manifestation of an individual's interaction with society at large. Fashion trends originate in the upper class, diffused to the lower one via copycat consumption, followed by more trends created by the elite to distance themselves from social underlings. Clothing is a social necessity and a universal need. Yet, clothing is not about protection but rather about showing socioeconomic status.

Body cathexis

The present paper is concerned with one variety of attitudes, namely, body-cathexis. Body cathexis is meant the degree of feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the various parts or processes of the body. If the variable body-cathexis is to be deemed important for personality theory, it is necessary to demonstrate that it is related to other personality variables which are recognized as significant. body-cathexis is believed to be integrally related to the self-concept. Body cathexis is a concept that is also closely related to body image, but more specifically addresses the degree of satisfaction one has with his/her body. This construct is described as multidimensional and complex. As satisfaction with one's body can be influenced by many different factors, such as cultural ideals and gender, body cathexis can vary from body area to body area.

A positive body cathexis is associated with possessing a relatively small body frame, with the exception of the bust area. Their study also explored whether or not a shared ideal for body shape or size exists. The researchers uncovered a small variability in ideal sizes, indicating the existence of a standard ideal body frame.

Hwang (1996) defined body cathexis as a factor that aids in the formation of clothing behavior and attitude towards clothing. Many consumers perceive an innate problem with their bodies when their clothing fails to accentuate the body in the desired way. However, quite often, these consumers neglect to realize that clothing needs to be designed for the body and not vice versa. These consumers also frequently rely on outside influences when shaping their ideal bodies. Bodies of female fashion models are considered to represent the perfect figure, and women that fall short of those standards are left with negative thoughts about their own bodies.

Individuals often have a perceived divergence in their ideal physical self and the actual self (Kaiser, 1997). This divergence between the actual body shape/size and the ideal body shape/size means that the consumer has the desire to have a shape other than the one she possesses. The socially accepted standard of an

ideal body has been found to create body image disturbances and contribute to negative body cathexis among women. Actual weight, although important, may not play a major role in women's feelings about their bodies. body perception and clothing practices indicated that women's perception of their weight rather than numerical weight had a heavier bearing on their clothing practices. Their perception of personal physicality dictated whether garments were to be used as camouflaging tools or to individualize oneself.

Body Mass Index (BMI) serves as a better predictor of body attractiveness. women's desire for a smaller figure, specifically a smaller waist, and hips, increased on exposure to television images of the ideal body.

In order to determine whether clothing can make a difference in body cathexis, Markee et al. (1990) investigated the difference between the perception of the nude body and the perception of the clothed body in relation to body cathexis using a modified version of the Body Cathexis Scale. Results indicated the women were significantly more satisfied with their clothed bodies than with their nude bodies. The results also revealed that clothing was not only a body covering, but that it functioned to improve body image perception. Women used clothing to camouflage areas of the body that deviated from cultural ideals, thereby improving their body image.

Satisfaction with the fit of clothing is strongly related to an individual's body cathexis. Higher body cathexis scores have been related to greater satisfaction with the fit of clothing (Hwang, 1996; Shim et al, 1991). Individuals who were more satisfied with their bodies and had a favorable attitude toward clothing were more likely to be satisfied with ready-to-wear clothing, enjoy shopping, be confident in choosing, proper clothes for themselves, and be heavy purchasers of clothing (Shim et al., 1991). Lower body cathexis scores for weight have been related to dissatisfaction with the fit of clothing at the thighs, hips, and waist. Overweight women tend to have a lower body image and lower body cathexis scores than normal-weight women and tend to express greater dissatisfaction with the fit of clothing. Normal-weight women, when compared to overweight women and those in a weight loss group, were more satisfied with their bodies and expressed greater satisfaction with the fit of clothing.

Women who were overweight or in a weight loss group had lower degrees of body cathexis, and women in the weight loss group expressed significantly lower clothing satisfaction than the normal-weight group. overweight women were in need of clothing that would enhance their self-image because of the negative feedback they receive as a result of being overweight. Dissatisfaction with the lower body has also been related to decreased satisfaction with the fit of garments in the lower body (Labat & DeLong, 1990). when clothing does not fit, the consumer may perceive the cause as related to the body and not the clothing. Further, they believed that fit problems could result in negative feelings about the body particularly when fashion dictates a close fit in the lower body with the use of blue jeans and slim skirts. The apparel industry's sizing systems and the sized garments themselves provide symbols of expectations for women. The ideal female body type, with slimmer hips than the average woman, is reflected in sizing systems used by manufacturers. This in turn may influence the more stringent evaluation of fit at the lower body. The correlation between lower body satisfaction and lower body cathexis supports a relationship between satisfaction with fitness and feelings toward the personal body. Labat and DeLong (1990) suggest that dissatisfaction is a result of trying to fit real bodies into garments that the garment industry sized according to an ideal body shape with slim hips in proportion to upper body measurements.

Six clothing behavioral factors were extruded: style pursuit, body shaping, showing-off, comfort pursuit, creativeness, and consciousness of others factor, which covers both physical and psychological aspects of middle-aged women. The difference between the 40s and 50s was significant in depression level, however, not significant in body cathexis and clothing behavioral attributes. This finding implies that the design and coordination of garments for middle-aged women could be recommended according to the depression level to improve their quality of life.

Research Approach

A co-relational survey design that employed quantitative methodology would be used for the present study. the empirical study would be descriptive in nature, because the relationship between body cathexis (independent variable), and clothing interest (dependent variable) would be investigated.

Clothing interest is a psychological variable that influences consumer decisions, the present study fills to depicts how decision-making processes influence clothing interest. Height is also not a factor affecting clothing interest. Taller women are just as interested in clothing as petite or average-height women Even though average-height women had the highest scores on body cathexis and petite women expressed the most dissatisfaction with their bodies, there were no differences in fashion interest or clothing importance for the three groups. Just as body size or height does not affect the level of clothing interest, the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the body also does not appear to be an indicator of clothing interest. University women who were underweight or average-weight indicated higher satisfaction with their bodies than overweight women.

However, all women, regardless of weight or level of body satisfaction, exhibited clothing interest and fashion leadership qualities. who found that women were interested in clothing and fashion, regardless of body type or size.

II. Result

There is a significant positive correlation between Body cathexis and clothing interest among middle age working women lecturers and doctors.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Conduct a similar study using a different age group and compare the results of the two studies.
2. Conduct a study employing male and female subjects and compare the results by gender.
3. Conduct a similar study for middle-aged males and compare the results of the two studies.
4. Conduct a similar study in another region of India and compare the results of the two studies.
5. Conduct a similar study that examines the relationship between prior and latest clothing behavior.

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