

Differences in Perception of Clothing Style Among Indian and Foreign Students

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Abstract: Clothing style and its perception is a significant behavior among the individuals in any society. So the study focused mainly on the college students from India and foreign (Nigerian). It examined differences in perception of clothing styles among Indian and foreign (Nigerian) students. Gender as a demographic variable was also included in the study. Male and female college students of Indian and foreign (Nigerian) students (N= 100), of age range 18-25 years from Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab were taken for cultural differences in their perception towards clothing style. The study focused on cultural differences in perception towards clothing style of Indian and foreign (Nigerian) students including differences in the same cultural domain when it comes to gender using ATCBS-mc i.e. Attitude towards clothing Behavior Scale which is a five-point scale. Findings revealed no significant difference between Indian and foreign students whereas comparison on the basis of gender provided significant difference between males and females. Further examining differences in terms of gender were found significant only in Indian culture.

Index Terms: Clothing Behavior, Perception and Culture

I. INTRODUCTION

Science states that the clothes we wear influence our behavior, attitudes, personality, mood, confidence, and the way of manner in we interact with others, which is known as Enclothed Cognition (Adam & Galinsky, 2012)[1]. Enclothed Cognition, narrated the effect that our clothes seem to have different psychological processes like emotions, self evaluations, attitudes, and interpersonal interactions. We even judge people whom we have just met by their clothes and the occasion. It would seem that we also judge ourselves and our roles based on what we are wearing at a particular time; because of the way they make us feel. This means that the experience of wearing something subtly affects our attitudes and our choice of behavior (Adam & Galinsky, 2012)[1]. The study by Rodriguez, Hutson, & Hutson, (2015)[2] in Social Psychological and Personality Science asked subjects to change into formal or casual clothing before cognitive tests. Wearing formal business attire increased abstract thinking an important aspect of creativity and long-term strategizing. The experiments suggest the effect is related to feelings of power.

Revised Manuscript Received on December 22, 20

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Clothing mediates the interaction between body and social world; serving as a means to how it is presented, experienced and attributed meaning; and, this information goes way beyond the wearer and the intended image to the way clothes communicate meaning. The possibilities of clothes being interpreted as symbolic of sexuality have not been probed in detail. A research intended to investigate clothing as a determinant of women's sexuality. 95 women in their 20s-60s took part in the in-depth interviews in which majority of women reported their concern regarding what sexual messages are perceived from their clothes and evaluated other women's clothes on the aspects of morality, authenticity and suitability.

A study conducted by Montemurro & Gillen (2013)[3] indicated women's body being socially monitored and the suppression of sexual subjectivity on the basis of stigmatization of women's sexualized clothing as differences in self and others clothing judgment was observed on the basis of target's age, parental and marital status and for some judgment was based upon social class and generation. Roberts, Owen and Havlicek (2010)[4] found that another important element in clothing choices is the perception and interpretation of different colors in terms of gender and culture. For example, white color worn by a lady from an Indian culture has different meaning and belief attached to it as compared to a lady from western culture.

Robert et al. (2010)[4] conducted a study in which participants were told to rate the attractiveness of people photographed in different colored clothes. Results revealed that color of clothing influenced the ratings of men for both females' and males' attractiveness and how women rate men's attractiveness but surprisingly women's ratings were not influenced by the clothing color. Another study has been conducted by Kim and Lennon (2010)[5], using both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the bodily perceptions along with their impact on clothing choices with the objective to ascertain women's perception towards their body and socio-cultural factors related to this concept and to analyze their clothing preferences. The majority of women accepted that their clothing behavior was influenced by others' reactions; therefore women's perception and preference for clothing is associated with their feelings about their bodies and the manner others' react to them in their cultural context. Both clothing and bodily perception have common consequences about how one looks and how they feel about themselves. Individuals use clothes in making their bodies social and acquire an identity as our bodily image which depicts our mental image processing i.e. both perceptual and affective elements of our body.

A research investigated by Long, Mueller, Wyers, Khong, & Jones (1996)[6] examined the impact of clothing and gender on the helping behavior and the underlying feelings and perceptions which influenced their decision to help were also probed. Analysis showed women being helped more than men but no difference was observed in help received by well-dressed and sloppily dressed confederates and the helping was based upon the perception of confederates being needier; additionally, subjects reported considerable discomfort from the helping request compared to those who did help.

The study conducted by Kwon (1994)[8] investigated gender differences of perceived impact of clothing in enhancing ten occupational attributes such as responsibility, reliability, efficiency, knowledge and competence etc mediated by a) Mode of clothing (properly dressed & improperly dressed b) Participants' self-perception of their attributes c) Participants clothing preferences. Findings obtained for males (132) and females (190) supported the notion of clothing as a means of enhancement in the perception of occupational attributes. Inconsistent with the males' belief females were not convinced that attributes can be improved by any modification in clothing and this belief was not dependent on their perception of occupational attributes or clothing preferences.

Several theories have emerged trying to describe how we think and process information. One such theory which has managed to draw significant attention is "Thought Process Theory" comprising of four stages. (a)Description b) Sorting (c) Inferring, and (d) Judging, which can be used in integrating a lot about what we study and what we know about clothing, as clothing is such a source of information which we encounter daily and we use this information in various ways; and this act of recording and implementing clothing information is called 'clothing awareness'. This has been termed as "visual analysis of dress" emphasizing the visual and aesthetic aspects of perception and what our mind does with these dimensions is the concern of clothing awareness (Long, Mueller, Wyers, Khong, & Jones 1996)). It was observed that the choice of clothing was affected by the way individuals feel about themselves and the clothing one chooses to wear affected one's feeling towards the 'self'.

Further Gibbins and Gwynn (1975)[8] stated that clothing is generally used to define one's social-self; various researches have studied the relationships between variables of clothing and public self-consciousness. As Solomon & Schopler (1982)[9] verified the presence of correlation between public self-conscious and clothing preference which was observed higher in males as compared to females.

II. METHOD

A. Participants

100 undergraduate students were selected through convenient sampling from Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, India. All the subjects ranged between the 18-25 years on the following basis:
50 Nigerian = 25 Males & 25 Females
50 Indian = 25 Males & 25 Females

B. Instruments

Keeping in view, our variable of study to be measured, the aim of study and the nature of the sample selected, Attitude toward Clothing Behavior Scale (ATCBS-mc) by Mogra & Chauhan (2010)[10] was used, which is a five-point scale ranging from extremely agree to

Table 1 : Demographic details of the sample (N=100)

Nationality	Gender	Age Group	Total
Indian	25 Male	18-21 yrs	50
	25 Female		
Nigerian	25 Male	18-21 yrs	50
	25 Female		

extremely disagree. The scale is helpful in screening individual's attitude towards clothing.

C. Procedure

The research started by selecting a convenient sample of university students. After taking their consent scales were presented to them i.e. Attitude toward Clothing Behavior Scale. Instructions were given to subjects before filling the questionnaires and their queries were answered before responding. The scales were filled by participants within a time period of 25-30 minutes. After scoring, data was computed through the Independent sample t-test, Central tendency measures mean, median, Cross tables frequency and percentage.

III. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE

- A. Independent sample t-test
- B. Mean, Standard Deviation

IV. RESULTS

The research focused to understand the behavior dynamics of Indian and foreign youths with different background with regards to their clothing style behavior and perception. Table 1 presents the demographic details of the sample (N=100). The sample is assessed on the basis of cultural background i.e. Indian & Nigerian along with gender consideration. The sample is collected from participants ranging between 18-21 years of age.

The present sample involves data collected from Indian and Nigerian participants from both the gender; to further assess the role of culture in determination of perception or attitude towards clothing style the sample collection was restricted to Nigerians (both males and females) belonging to Muslim community whereas in case of Indian (both males and females) sample the data was collected from those belonging to Hinduism. This systematic break-up of sample facilitated the assessment of Attitudes towards clothing behavior in terms of culture as well as gender.

Table 2 shows the mean differences in attitude towards clothing behavior between Indian and Nigerian students along with gender comparison within each cultural group. The mean value of Indian males 106.12 and Indian

females 124.16 and their comparison shows statistically significant difference (t value = -2.560, p>0.05). On comparing Nigerian students, the mean value for Nigerian males is 106.12 and Nigerian Females is 118.20 and their comparison shows no significant difference (t value = -1.976, p<0.05)

Table 2 : Attitude towards Clothing Behavior among Indians and Nigerians in relation to Gender

Variables	Country	Mean	t-value	p-value
Attitude Towards Clothing	Indian Males	106.12	-2.560	0.014*
	Indian Females	124.16		
	Nigerian Males	106.12	-1.976	
	Nigerian Females	118.20		

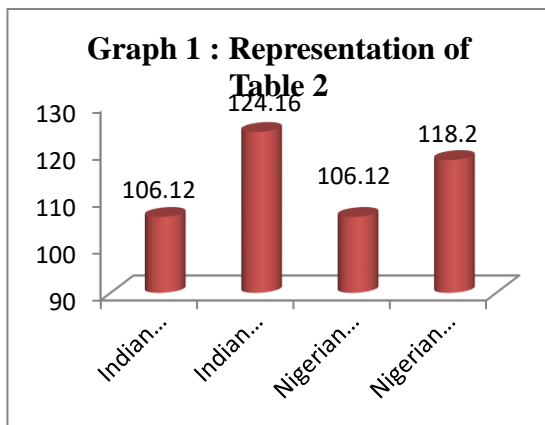
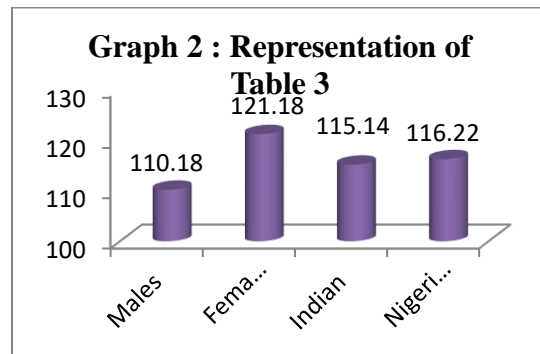


Table 3 Shows mean differences on attitude towards clothing behavior of males and females; and between Indian and Nigerian students as well as on overall gender basis; the findings reveal mean values for males and females to be 110.18 and 121.18 respectively which present statistically significant difference between males and females in general (t value = -2.608, p<0.011). On comparing Nigerian and Indian students regardless of their gender the mean value for Indians is 115.14 whereas the mean value for Nigerians is 116.22 which is not statistically significant (t value = -0.248, p = 0.805)

Table 3: Differences on Attitude towards Clothing Behavior among Males and Females and among Indian and Nigerian Subjects

Variables	Country	Mean	t-value	p-value
Attitude Towards Clothing	Males	110.18	-2.608	0.011*
	Females	121.18		
	Indian	115.14	-0.248	
	Nigerian	116.22		



V. DISCUSSION

The study tried examining the cultural differences in perception of clothing style among Indian and Foreign (Nigerian) students. Analysis of the data collected revealed some variations but those variations in perceptions of Indian and Nigerian students were not significant, which supports that there are no significant cultural differences in perception of clothing style among Indian and Foreign (Nigerian) students. This may be because of the fact that the data collected covered age group of 18-22 yrs only that too within the LPU's campus; moreover the usual clothing worn by the college going students of this age group is almost similar which can be the possible reason for our results.

Our findings are supported by those of Kim and Lennon (2010) which revealed that majority of women accepted that their clothing behavior was influenced by others' reactions; therefore women's perception and preference for clothing is associated with their feelings about their bodies and the manner others' react to them in their cultural context; meanings whether intended or unconscious from other's clothing & appearance; this evaluation process happens both ways i.e. how you are forming impression of other person along with what impression is being formed about you by that person and our assumption of how we're being perceived will determine how we'll behave in return. Kim and Lennon (2010) carried out the content analysis of response provided by 39 women in open-ended interviews regarding.

- A. Impression formed by them on the basis their appearance
- B. Their belief that others too are using appearance and clothing while forming impressions about them.

Most of the participants were convinced that decoding of general appearance and clothing cues were accurate from both sides which were limited to personality traits, information about behaviors, biological factors and social roles, whereas

some participants acknowledged that accuracy of perception is situation bound and depends upon particular appearance and clothing cues. (Johnson, Schofield & Yurchisin, 2002)[10], which rejects our second.

Thereafter we focused our analysis on Indian culture only and tried examining the male and female groups in terms of clothing style perception which revealed

significant difference in perception towards clothing style between these two with women scoring higher than men; which indicates women's perception being more sensitive for their own clothing style as well as of others as it has been empirically verified that majority of women accepted their clothing behavior and perception being influenced by others within their cultural context which rejects our third hypothesis that Indian male and female groups are not significantly different for their perceptions of clothing styles.

Next the present study assessed the Nigerian culture to examine the male and female groups in terms of clothing style perception which revealed no significant difference among the two; however the mean scores of females were higher than the males and these similar correlation was observed in Indian culture as well which further supports our earlier findings which all reveal women being more inclined in terms of their attitude and perception towards clothing style; however if we could have taken a larger sample to assess the degree of variation within the Nigerian culture we could have attained some conclusive evidences to support our observations however the results obtained support our fourth and final hypothesis that Foreign (Nigerian) male and female groups in terms of clothing style perception are not significantly different.

VI. CONCLUSION

The current study describes the differences in perception of clothing style among Indian and foreign students. There is no significant cultural difference in perception of clothing style among Indian and Foreign (Nigerian) students. Indian male and female groups are not significantly different for their perceptions of clothing styles, similar for Foreign (Nigerian) male and female groups in terms of clothing style perceptions are not significantly different. Overall findings reveal that mean scores of female participants were higher than those of males and this similar correlation was observed within culture as well which conclusively indicates women being more inclined towards clothing cues in terms of their attitude and perception. This difference in terms of can be due to the interplay of biological factors as well as the culturally ascribed roles of males and females which needs to be further explored to get a better idea of the interplay of these factors.

VII. FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

This is a well-known fact that research is a continuous process. Our research resolves some current queries but raises many other future queries. More useful research may be taken up to unveil the nature and extent of clothing as a non-verbal source of communication as it has been empirically proved that clothing do have meaning but the inter-relatedness between clothing, its identity and meaning is highly complex. This study can be extended at higher levels to cover the larger population on the topic.

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