**Styling the self: clothing practices, personality traits and body image among women**

**Abstract**

This research explored the relationships between clothing practices, personality traits and body image among women. Previous research indicates that women tend to use clothes to present or disguise their bodies and clothing practices can be predicted by body image. Research on body image dimension address also personality traits.

The presented research utilizes the big five personality traits model (NEO-FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1992) and body image measure (MBSRQ, Cash, 1994) to explore clothing styles and practices among Israeli women (N= 727, Mean age = 39.18). The results support that lower body image relates to casual, minimalist style of dress; while urban style of dress reflects healthier body image, higher levels of extroversion and openness to experience.

This study indicates that openness to experience may foster body positive clothing practices, oriented to self-expression and individuality rather than camouflage. In this sense, clothes can assist women overcome objectification and cultural body ideal pressures, and promote self-validation and mastery.

**Key words: Clothing practices, clothing styles, personality traits, body image**

1. **Introduction**

Psychological research on clothing usually focuses on the social and cultural perceptions of people's clothing choices. Most of this research is conducted in work places and reflects how people perceive and judge professionality and reliability of others by their clothes (e.g. Rehman, Mietrt, Cope & Kilpatrick, 2005; Howlett et al., 2015). In this context, the effect of clothes on the wearer is addressed by the relationship between formal or informal style of dress to workers' self perception at work (Paluchette, Karl & Rust, 2006).

There is hardly any research attention to the idiosyncratic meanings of clothes and the emotional functions of daily choices of clothing. Past writers and theorists have proposed that clothing is the external manifestation of the self (Cooley, 1092; Flugel, 1930; James, 2007; Sontag & Schlater, 1982). Expressions such as "the second skin" and "the visible self" suggest both the physical contiguity of clothing to the body and the psychological proximity of clothing to self.

The psychological closeness of clothing to self was defined and constructed by Sontag & Lee (2004) as the extent to which clothing is (1) perceived as one with the self or as a component of the self, (2) recognized as an aspect of appearance by which the self is established and validated, (3) recognized as a significant symbol of one’s identity, mood, or attitude, (4) perceived as an expression of self-regard or self-worth, (5) recognized as an element of an affective response to self-evaluation, or (6) related to body cathexis.

This concept highlights an unanswered question, why do people in same social cultural environments choose certain clothing styles and not others. Kwon's (1991) research suggests that clothing choices of individuals can be a reflection of how they feel about themselves and not only how they want others to feel about them. It has been documented that individuals reinforce their mood and express their feelings through their clothing (Kallstrom, 2009). One's mood can be altered because the clothes selected may be perceived as fashionable, enhance individuality, provide physical comfort or enhance confidence (Kang, Johnson & Kim, 2013).

The psychological effect of clothes on wearers was demonstrated by Adam & Galinsky's (2012) research, that found that identifying a white lab coat as a doctor's coat increased sustained attention. Adam & Galinsky coined the term "enclothed cognition" – framework that is different from embodied cognition because the link between physical experience and its symbolic meaning is indirect, as it is the item of clothing that carries the symbolic meaning.

Psychological research on dress and clothing practices is concerned almost exclusively with women. One rationale for this is evidence that men are less interested in clothing and fashion than women. Millennials are likely to enjoy shopping but still women are more involved with fashion compared to men (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). However, men have come under increasing pressure to conform to the cultural ideal of a lean, well-toned, muscular build, and men also manage their appearance and body image through clothes (Frith & Gleeson, 2004).

The unique relationship of western women to clothes develops on the background of their socialization into roles that are overly preoccupied with appearance and how others see them. Clothes are one factor that contributes to the degree to which women are objectified and evaluated (Objectification theory, Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009). Women use clothes to present or disguise their bodies. Kwon & Parham (1994) found that women selected clothes more for camouflage and less for individuality when feeling “fat” than when feeling more slender. Tiggerman & Lacey (2009) found that clothes were chosen primarily for the positive functions of assurance, fashion and comfort by a sample of female shoppers.

Nevertheless, increasing BMI (body mass index) and body dissatisfaction were related to the use of clothing for camouflage. Tiggerman & Andrew's (2012) findings also show there are interrelationships between women's attitudes towards clothing and their attitude towards their bodies.

Body image is a multidimensional construct that includes perceptual, attitudinal, and behavioral components, and dressing bodies is an intentional behavior. In other words, how individuals feel about and perceive their bodies affect how they manage their appearance with clothing (Rudd & Lennon, 2000; Rudd & Lennon, 2001). Hence, clothing practices can be predicted by body image (Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009).

Research on body image dimension address also personality traits. Neuroticism was found to correlate to higher body surveillance, lower appearance control beliefs (Tylka, 2004), and higher body shame (Miner-Rubino, Twenge, & Fredrickson, 2002). Extraversion was associated with a higher appreciation of one's own body and lower body dissatisfaction (Swami et al., 2012). Concerning agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness, Swami et al. (2012) reported that body appreciation has been positively correlated to agreeableness and conscientiousness. Miner-Rubino et al. (2002) also found that body shame was

negatively related to agreeableness. All the studies mentioned were carried out exclusively using a female population.

Since body image is corelated with personality traits and individual clothing functions (e.g. Tiggerman & Lacey, 2009), it is interesting to investigate the relationship between clothing functions and personality traits. It also corresponds with the view of clothing as a reflection or expression of one's identity or personality (Sontag & Lee, 2004).

This research aims to further understand the relationship between clothing practices (i.e styles of dress and clothing functions), personality traits and body image among women. It also expands the view of types of clothing from the commonly used formal and informal categories, to different styles of clothing. The main research hypothesis is that clothing practices are related to personality traits and predicted by body image.

1. **Method**

**2.1 Sample and procedure**

Seven hundred and twenty-seven women, from different areas in Israel, took part in this research. The participants ages ranged from 19 to 74 (M = 39.18, SD = 10.34). Most of the sample were married women (N= 229, 64.70%), mothers (N = 468, 67.34%) with academic degrees (N= 551, 80.20%). Most of the sample consider themselves as secular (N= 650, 93.66%) and perceive their financial status as good (N = 449, 64.60%).

The BMI of the sample ranged from 16.33 to 46.06, with a mean BMI of 24.74 (SD= 4.49). The participants' heights ranged from 140 to 187 cm (M= 164.74, SD = 6.22). The participants weights ranged from 32 to 130 kg (M= 67.10, SD= 12.62).

The sample was recruited online through Facebook and a daily morning TV show in which the author invited them to participate in the research. The participation was voluntary. All participants filled the research questionnaires online through the Qualtrics website. The data was analyzed through SPSS 19.0 software.

**2.2 Instruments**

*2.2.1 Function of clothing measure*

Function of clothing was assessed using items developed by Kwon and Parham (1994). This scale measures the use of clothing for its comfort, camouflage, assurance, fashion and individuality functions. It includes 20 items assessed on a 1 (not at all agree) to 5 (very much agree) Likert scale. The scale was used also by Kang, Johnson & Kim (2013). The scale was translated to Hebrew through translation/ back translation by the author and an English native speaker. In addition to this measure, the participants were asked to define their clothing style by choosing one option that can best describe their clothes: (1) casual style (jeans, pants, t-shirts or cotton shirts, minimalist styling), (2) romantic style (skirts, dresses, soft fabrics, floral patterns, bohemian style, clothing that is stereotypically perceived as "feminine"), (3) dramatic style (unusual and unique outfits, bright colors and color combinations, may be tight or revealing sometimes), (4) classic style (formal clothing, conventional and representative outfits), (5) urban or eclectic style (different combinations of all styles, mix and match, playful style of dress with combinations of low and high priced clothing, frequent use of accessories).

* + 1. *Body image measure*

The Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ) is a well-validated self-report inventory for the assessment of body image (Cash, 1994), which measures overall body image and satisfaction with body shape. It is a 34-item measure that consists of 5 dimensions: Appearance Evaluation, Appearance Orientation, Overweight Preoccupation, Self-Classified Weight, and the Body Areas Satisfaction Scale (BASS). This research did not include the BASS subscale. Each item is scored from 1=very dissatisfied to 5=very satisfied. The questionnaire is characterized by reliability of α= 0.789. The Hebrew version was found reliable with Cronbach's *alpha* of .86. (Shaiovitz, 2014).

* + 1. *Personality traits measure*

The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1992; hebrew version by Etzion & Laski, 1998) consists of 60 items for the assessment of several Big Five personality traits: neuroticism (e.g., item “I often feel inferior to others”), extraversion (e.g., item “I like to have a lot of people around me”), agreeableness (e.g., item “I try to be courteous to everyone I meet”), openness to experience (e.g., item “I have a lot of intellectual curiosity”), and conscientiousness (e.g., item “I keep my belongings clean and neat”). Each personality trait of the scale is evaluated using 12 items. The response format used a 4-point Likert scale, ranged from 0 (completely disagree) to 4 (completely agree). Prior research has supported good cross-cultural validity of this measure in Israel (Etzion & Laski, 1998).

* + 1. *Socio- demographic and additional variables*

The participants were asked for their Age, height and weight, country of birth, marital status, religious affiliation, educational level, health and financial stats and occupation

*2.3 Analyses*

The relationship between clothing styles, clothing functions, and body image was analyzed using Pearson's correlation. A series of one way ANOVA analyses were conducted to explore the relationships of clothing style preference groups (casual, romantic, dramatic, classic and urban) to the big five personality traits, body image dimensions and clothing functions. Finally, logistic regressions were preformed to explore the dominant styles of dress (casual and urban), in order to identify the variables that were associated with each of these styles.

**Results**

*3.1. The big five personality traits, functions of clothing and clothing style*

The pattern of correlations among the big five personality traits and clothing functions is given in Table 1. As can be seen, extroversion is positively correlated with using clothes for assurance (r = .30 , p<.001), fashion (r = .19, p<.001) and individuality (r = .14, p <.001), and negatively corelated with using clothes for camouflage (r = -.19, p<.001). Neuroticism is positively correlated with camouflage (r= .16, p<.001), and negatively corelated with assurance (r =-.01, p<.05). Openness to experience is positively corelated with assurance (r = .31, p<.001) and individuality (r = .31, p< .001) and negatively correlated with camouflage (r = -.24, p<.001).

Consciousness is negatively corelated with camouflage (r= -.24, p< .001), and positively corelated with assurance (r = .17, p< .001)), Fashion (r= .09, p< .01) and individuality (r= .15, p< .001). Agreeableness is positively corelated with comfort (r= .16, p< .0001) and assurance (r= .15, p< .001), and negatively corelated with camouflage (-.16, p< .001) and fashion (-.09, p< .05).

**Table 1. Pearson's correlations among the big five personality traits and clothing functions**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Comfort** | **Camouflage** | **Assurance** | **Fashion** | **Individuality** |
| **Extraversion** | -.01 | -.19\*\*\* | .30\*\*\* | .13\*\*\* | .14\*\*\* |
| **Neuroticism**  | -.03 | .16\*\*\* | -.01\* | -.00 | -.06 |
| **Agreeableness**  | .16\*\*\* | -.16\*\*\* | .15\*\*\* | -.09\* | -.05 |
| **Consciousness**  | -.03 | -.24\*\*\* | .17\*\*\* | .09\*\* | 0.15\*\*\* |
| **Openness**  | .01\* | -.24\*\*\* | .31\*\*\* | 0.07 | 0.31\*\*\* |

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p< .001*.

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the big five personality traits on clothing style preferences. As seen in Table 2, there was a significant effect of extroversion (F (4, 624)= 5.76, p = .0001), consciousness (F (1,624)= 6.80, p = .0001) and openness to experience (F (1,624)= 7.38, p = .0001) on clothing styles.

Post hoc analyses using the Scheffe post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score of extroversion was significantly lower in the casual style condition (M = 3.45, SD = .74) than in the urban style condition (M = 3.8, SD = .63).

Average score of consciousness was significantly higher in the classic style condition (M = 4.04, SD = .53) than in the dramatic style (M = 3.6, SD = .74) and the casual style (M = 3.83, SD = .56).

Average score of openness to experience was significantly higher in the urban style condition (M= 3.9, SD= .54) than in the casual style condition (M= 3.62, SD = .59) and the classic style condition (M= 3.64, SD = .50).

**Table 2. One way Anova for testing the big five personality traits and clothing styles**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| F (4, 624) | Classic | Urban | Dramatic | Romantic | Casual | Measure |
|  | m (sd) | m (sd) | m (sd) | m (sd) | m (sd) |  |
| 5.76\*\*\* | 3.54 (.67) | 3.8 (.64) | 3.31 (.89) | 3.5 (.75) | 3.45 (.74) | **Extraversion** |
| 6.80\*\*\* | 4.04 (.53) | 3.9 (.54) | 3.6 (.71) | 3.8 (.64) | 3.83 (.56) | **Consciousness**  |
| 4.86 | 3.88 (.53) | 3.47 (.75) | 3.92 (.58) | 3.92 (.49) | 3.9 (.49) | **Agreeableness** |
| 1.98 | 2.85 (.76) | 2.69 (.75) | 3.05 (.71) | 2.79 (.81) | 2.85 (.79) | **Neuroticism** |
| 7.38\*\*\* | 3.64 (.50) | 3.9 (.54) | 3.57 (.75) | 3.78 (.62) | 3.62 (.59) | **Openness**  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | \*\*\**p< .001*. |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*3.1. Body image, functions of clothing and clothing style*

The pattern of correlations among body image dimensions and clothing functions is given in Table 3. As can be seen, appearance evaluation correlates negatively with using clothes for camouflage (r = -.58, p< .001), and positively with other clothing functions: assurance (r = .34 , p< .001), fashion (r = 0.276, p< .001) and individuality (r = .30, p< .001). Appearance orientation is positively correlated with assurance (r = .43, p< .001), fashion (r = .40, p< .001) and individuality (r =.37, p< .001). weight preoccupation is positively correlated with camouflage (r= .30, p< .001) and fashion (r= .14, p< .001) and negatively corelated with comfort (r = .10, p< .01). Weight classification is positively correlated with comfort (r= .08, p< .05) and camouflage (r = .45, p< .001), and negatively correlated with assurance (r = -.09, p< .05), fashion (r = -.10, p< .05) and individuality (r = -.19 , p< .001).

**Table 3. Pearson's correlations among body image dimensions and clothing functions**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Comfort** | **Camouflage** | **Assurance** | **fashion** | **Individuality** |
| **Appearance evaluation** | .01 | -0.58\*\*\* | .34\*\*\* | 0.276\*\*\* | .30\*\*\* |
| **Appearance orientation**  | -.15\*\*\* | -.14\*\* | .43\*\*\* | 0.494\*\*\* | .37\*\*\* |
| **Overweight preoccupation**  | -.10\*\* | 0.30\*\*\* | -.07 | 0.112\*\* | .01 |
| **Weight classification** | .08\* | 0.45\*\*\* | -.09\* | -0.132\*\* | -.19\*\*\* |

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p< .001*.

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of body image dimensions on clothing style preferences. As seen in Table 4, there was a significant effect of appearance orientation (F (4, 635)= 8.24, p = .0001), and appearance evaluation (F (1,635)= 13.35, p = .0001) on clothing styles.

Post hoc analyses using the Scheffe post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score of appearance evaluation was significantly lower in the casual style condition (M = 3.2, SD = .78) than in the urban style condition (M = 3.63, SD = .72).

Average score of appearance orientation was significantly higher in the urban style condition (M = 3.71, SD = .50) than in the dramatic style (M = 3.25, SD = .71) and the casual style (M = 3.37, SD = .56).

**Table 4. One way Anova for testing body image dimensions and clothing styles**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| f (4, 635) | Classic | Urban | Dramatic | Romantic | Casual | Measure |
|  | m (sd) | m (sd) | m (sd) | m (sd) | m (sd) |  |
| 8.24\*\*\* | 3.45 (.71) | 3.63 (.72) | 3.43 (.70)  | 3.52 (.75)  | 3.2 (.78)  | Appearance evaluation |
| 13.36\*\*\* | 3.68 (.58) | 3.71 (.50) | 3.25 (.72) | 3.61 (.56)  | 3.37 (.56)  | Appearance orientation  |
| 1.13 | 2.9 (.64) | 2.89 (.63) | 3.0 (.70) | 2.9 (.69) | 2.81 (.74) | Weight preoccupation  |
| 2.19 | 3.42 (.68) | 3.25 (.57) | 3.4 (.63) | 3.33 (.66) | 3.4 (.68) | Weight classification |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | \*\*\*p< .001 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

To further understand the relationship between clothing style preferences and body image, one more ANOVA was performed. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of clothing functions on clothing style preference. As seen in Table 5, there was a significant effect of comfort (F (4, 662) = 12.8, p = .000), camouflage (F (4, 662) = 8.1, p = .000), assurance (F (4, 662) = 13.04, P = .000), fashion (F (4, 662)= 39.0, p = .000) and individuality (F (4, 662)= 44.67), P = .000) on clothing styles.

Post hoc analyses using the Scheffe post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score of all clothing functions was significantly different in the casual style condition than in other clothing styles conditions. Most relevant in the context of body image, the average score of camouflage was significantly higher in the casual style (M = 3.32, SD = .71) than in the urban style condition (M= 2.89, SD = .71 ). The average score of assurance was significantly lower in the casual style condition (M= 3.36 , SD= .63) than in the urban style condition style condition (M= 3.77 , SD= .65). All the results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. One way Anova for testing clothing functions and clothing styles**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| f (4, 662) | Classic | Urban | Dramatic | Romantic | Casual | Measure |
|  | m (sd) | m (sd) | m (sd) | m (sd) | m (sd) |  |
| 12.8\*\*\* | 3.97 (.75) | 3.86 (.75) | 3.57 (1.03) | 4.02 (.72) | 4.27 (.63) | Comfort |
| 8.10\*\*\* | 3.13 (.80) | 2.89 (.71) | 3.17 (.93) | 3.03 (.77) | 3.32 (.71) | camouflage  |
| 13.04\*\*\* | 3.56 (.62) | 3.77 (.65) | 3.20 (.79) | 3.63 (.60) | 3.36 (.63) | assurance  |
| 39.0\*\*\* | 3.18 (.81) | 3.43 (.77) | 3.41 (.65) | 3.2 (.84) | 2.5 (.78) | Fashion |
| 44.67\*\*\* | 3.09 (.77) | 3.65 (.68) | 3.44 (.89) | 3.24 (.75) | 2.65 (.76) | individuality |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | \*\*\*p< .001 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Finally, separate logistic regressions were used for predicting casual style and urban style, in order to identify the variables that were associated with each of these styles. The variables that showed a significant association to casual style by univariate logistic were lower levels of appearance evaluation (beta = -.50, p = .000), lower levels of appearance orientation (beta = -.55, p= .001) and higher levels of comfort seeking (beta = .72, p = .001). Thus, women with lower appearance evaluation (OR= .61; IC95%: .47-.79), lower appearance orientation (OR=.48; IC95%: .42-.80), who seek comfort by clothes (OR=2.06; IC95%: 1.52-2.78), are more likely to exhibit casual style of dress.

Urban style of dress was indicated by higher levels of appearance evaluation (beta = .37, p = .006) and appearance orientation (beta = .62, p= .000) and higher levels of openness to experience (beta= 65, p= .000). Thus, women who are more open to experience (OR=1.92; IC95%: 1.35-2.73), with higher levels of appearance evaluation (OR= 1.45; IC95%: 1.11-1.90) and appearance orientation (OR=1.87; IC95%: 1.34-2.61) were more likely to exhibit urban style than others.

1. **Discussion**

This study explored the relationships between clothing practices to personality traits and body image among women. Overall, the results supported that clothing practices are related to personality traits and predicted by body image.

Using the Big five personality traits model, this research found that consciousness was related with classic style of dress, defined as formal, conventional and representative clothing. The big five model describes consciousness people as organized, reliable, punctual and neat (Costa & McCrae, 1992), and formal clothing was found to effect self perception of neatness, cultivation and restraint (Hanover & Kuhenen, 2002).

This research also found consciousness to negatively corelate with camouflage, and positively corelate with assurance, fashion and individuality. These findings correspond with previous findings that people who wear formal clothes perceive themselves as most competent, trustworthy and authoritative (Peluchette & Karl, 2007).

Extroversion was related to urban style of dress, defined as an eclectic and playful style, composed of creative combinations of clothes. Extroversion was also correlated with individuality, fashion, and assurance. These findings correspond with the big five model perception of extraverts as sociable, person-oriented, active, optimistic and fun loving (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Moreover, extroverts were found to prefer exciting fashion brands, perceived as active, adventurous and cool (Mulyanegara, Tsarenko & Anderson, 2007), findings that resonate with the definition of urban style.

This research showed a negative correlation between extroversion and camouflage, a function that distinguished the casual style. Casual style was defined as a minimalist style, featured by jeans and t-shirts. The results characterized it with high levels of camouflage, low levels of extroversion and low openness to experience, indicating that women who identified with this style were most introverted and conventional thinking among the research population.

Openness to experience was the highest among women who identified with the urban style. The big five model describes openness to experience as curiousness, broad interests, creativity and untraditionallity (Costa & McCrae, 1992). These results indicate that women who identified with urban style were more open minded and creative than those in casual style. Moreover, body image played an important role in the distinction between the urban and the casual style.

The final logistic regressions reinforced this distinction; Women with lower appearance evaluation and lower appearance orientation, were more likely to adapt a casual style and those with higher levels were more likely to adapt an urban style.

Women who identified with the urban style, a creative and expressive style of dress, were more likely to feel confident with their bodies. This also refers to their high extroversion, since extroversion has been related with a higher appreciation of one's own body (Swami et al., 2012).

However, women who identified with the casual style were distinguished by higher levels of camouflage and lower assurance. This corresponds with Trautmann, Lokken & Lokken's (2007) findings, that women who were more dissatisfied with their bodies, were more likely to camouflage their bodies with dark colored and baggy tops and avoid revealing, brightly colored, or tightly fitting clothing.

This research reinforces previous findings on the relationship between body image and clothing practices. Appearance evaluation was negatively correlated with camouflage, and positively corelated with assurance, fashion and individuality. Namely, the better women feel about their bodies, the higher is their ability to use clothes for self expression and enjoyment. Same regarding that appearance orientation was positively correlated with assurance, fashion and individuality. These findings correspond with Tiggerman & Andrew's (2012) findings, that show interrelationships between women's attitudes towards clothing and their attitude towards their bodies.

The results showed that weight preoccupation correlated with camouflage, and weight classification correlates with camouflage and comfort, and negatively with assurance, fashion and individuality. This is in line with Kwon & Parham's (1994) findings, that women select clothes more for camouflage and less for individuality when feeling “fat".

Since there were no BMI differences among the different groups, the urban style seems to foster body positive clothing practices, and openness to experience may play an important role.

Openness to experience is associated with non-conformity (Feist & Brady, 2004), suggesting that these women can enjoy and play with their clothes despite western society's pressure to conform a strict beauty standard and conceal possible 'imperfections'.

Openness to experience is also related to psychological flexibility, including body image flexibility. A flexible body image decreases body dissatisfaction and increases flexible responding to body-related thoughts and feelings (Sandoz et al., 2013).

This flexibility may effect women's tendency to choose concealing clothes when they see themselves as 'fat' (Trautmann, Lokken & Lokken, 2007). It is likely to consider that women who identified with urban style are more flexible with their body image as well as their clothing practices.

The urban style group may be what Cash (2008) defines as 'the flexible groomer'; characterized by a playful and enjoyable use of clothing styles, fabrics, colors, cosmetics, hairstyles, jewelry and fragrances. The flexible groomer uses grooming for mastery and pleasure, and not a rigid effort to maintain positive appearance.

The presented study highlights the relationship between clothing practices and body image among women. It indicates that personality traits, especially consciousness, extroversion and openness to experience, play a role in clothing choices, suggesting it to be a kind of manifestation of the self (e.g. Sontag & Lee, 2004).

This study indicates that openness to experience may foster body positive clothing practices, oriented to self expression and individuality rather than camouflage. In this sense clothes can assist women overcome objectification and cultural body ideal pressures (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), by dressing for their own validation and pleasure. This can be used in clinical practice, by encouraging women to experience and play with their clothes in order to flex their body image and rigid perception of clothing practices.

There are several limitations that must be noted when interpreting the results of this study. First, the definition of clothing styles was designed for this research and subjects were asked to identify only one style of dress that is most relevant for them. Second, subjects were mainly secular and only women. Further research is needed to understand the impact of religiousness on body image and clothing practices. Further research is needed to address men and other populations.

The ever-increasing cultural pressure to attain the ideal body highlights the importance of understanding the role of clothing practices in fostering positive body image. Moreover, the relationship between clothing practices and personality traits sheds light on the psychology of dress, a neglected field of research.

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