

The Value Dimension of Dress in Shaping Personality: A Socio-Psychological Approach

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Abstract:

This study aimed to investigate the variable of dress as a socio-cultural value within the social system and its role in shaping personality as a social and value-based standard that determines the socio-psychological dimension in building identity and belonging, achieving psychological and social adjustment within the social environment, and preserving cultural continuity within the social system.

Keywords: Dress, Identity, Belonging.

Introduction:

Cultural, social, and psychological factors play a role in building and shaping personality from a social psychology perspective. This is achieved through a set of variables, including belonging and membership in a specific society, which serves as the primary system encompassing customs, traditions, and cultural heritage in general. Individuals adopt aspects of their social environment, such as their style and type of clothing, among other things. As individuals belong to groups, they are identified by their affiliation. Among these cultural and social factors is clothing, which serves as a symbol, message, and expression of belonging. It carries connotations that reflect a person's identity and affiliation. The social context dictates the nature and type of clothing an individual wears within the social system, and society assigns social and cultural value to clothing. Through clothing, behavior is judged according to value standards, determining whether it is acceptable or unacceptable, and the nature of the behavior is determined by its conformity to social norms. Given that identity and socialization influence the overall structure of personality, culture ultimately defines personality. Furthermore, judging individuals based on clothing categorizes them within the social system based on their adherence to ethnic and social continuity, which is termed traditional and conservative, or their rejection of values and departure from social norms, which is termed openness and liberalism. With modernity, the individual adopts an identity outside the scope and expectations of society. Returning to social norms, we find a strong relationship between the nature of dress, social discipline, and the preservation of values. Even within society, we find different types and styles of clothing, some influenced by gender (male and female), age (young and old), and even economic and social status. Clothing is not merely a means of covering the body, adornment,

and protection from the elements; it possesses a profound social, cultural, and psychological dimension that plays a pivotal role in shaping personality through social and cultural determinants. We find that the type of clothing influences mental health and psychological and social adjustment. Furthermore, we observe intergenerational conflicts regarding the nature of clothing, which vary from one culture to another. We also find differing, sometimes positive and sometimes negative, attitudes towards clothing, reflecting the ongoing struggle between change and preservation, as clothing represents cultural and social identity and therefore must be adhered to. In this vein, we find the study by Omar Masoudi and Abdelkrim Raqiq (2018, University of Batna 1, Algeria) on the issue of clothing in Algerian society between modernity and values. Society represents customs and traditions, while religion represents legal regulations. Generally, clothing is considered an expressive means of conveying cultural and social values. Clothing is considered a message that transcends time, a connection and a distinction between societies in terms of authenticity and social influence. The process of raising individuals to wear a certain type of clothing is a process of instilling a social value that contributes to the formation of their personality, defining their identity, belonging, aspirations, interests, level of conformity, and preservation of values within the social context to which they belong. Clothing is not merely a covering for the body, but a direct reflection of modernity and values in society. It simultaneously represents a means of expressing cultural and religious identity and a field for interacting with the currents of the modern age. The process of socialization of individuals plays a fundamental role in the formation of personality. In this regard, we find a study by Asmahan Boucheikhawi and Salaf Bouzidi, University of Oran, in 2000, on the value conflict among youth, socialization and the symbolism of clothing, fashion and traditional dress as a model, on a sample of (50) male and female students at the University of Oran. The results of the study concluded that there is a value conflict about clothing and its nature between generations, where the current generation passes judgments and descriptions on traditional clothing as being outdated and seeks liberation and keeping up with the times.

- How is personality defined through clothing as a social value? We also pose the following sub-questions:

- Does clothing, as a cultural and social value, influence a person's overall behavior?
- What are the psychological and social implications of clothing on the individual?

1- Study Hypotheses:

- The social value of clothing is ingrained and shapes the overall structure of personality.
- Clothing influences the psychological and social adjustment of individuals.
- Clothing is considered a language of communication, belonging, and identity.

2- Study Objectives:

The study aims to:

- Investigate clothing as a value that expresses belonging to the social system.
- Highlight the importance of social values as a determinant in shaping personality according to prevailing social norms within the social system.
- Examine the variable of belonging and membership within the social system through clothing as a social and moral value.
- Reveal the value conflict between generations through clothing as a predictive indicator.

3- Importance of the Study:

- Highlighting the value dimension as a formative determinant of personality.
- Guiding specialists in social psychology on the importance of clothing as an educational and ethical value that contributes to the psychological and social adjustment of individuals.
- Contributing to the cultural and social identity of individuals by reinforcing values that express belonging.
- Revealing the role of clothing as a social value that expresses social belonging.
- Identifying the nature of clothing as a means of constructing and shaping the social and cultural determinants of personality.
- Investigating social systems using the variable of cultural and social identity and the factors influencing it through the criteria adopted within the social system.

4- Study Terminology:

4-1- Clothing as a Symbol of Identity:

a- Traditional Clothing: This refers to clothing that embodies authentic social values inherited across generations, such as conservatism, belonging, and preserving the traditions and customs inherent in the social fabric, which express individual identity. Within society, we find various types of clothing that express symbols of collective identity. b- Modern Clothing: This refers to keeping pace with modern changes, following fashion trends, engaging with external influences, and being open to other societies and cultures. It involves departing from inherited values and disrespecting existing customs and traditions within the social context, and is often judged as socially and culturally incompatible.

4-2- Modernity: This is considered a type of style adopted by individuals who wear clothing that deviates from the norm within society and departs from established values. Here, we find a conflict at the level of values between conservatism, cultural continuity, and identity, and the personal freedom of individuals. This freedom manifests as the freedom to choose clothing and a means of individual expression.

5- Values Associated with Clothing:

5-1- Religious Values: There is a connection and relationship between religion and clothing, including its style. For example, Islam sets guidelines for dress according to specific details and considers it a means of protecting values and morals and preserving religious identity.

5-2- Social Values: From a social perspective, the type of clothing reflects an individual's social standing within the social system and is used to express cultural and social membership and affiliation.

5-3- Aesthetic Values: The aesthetic dimension falls within the realm of taste and fashion, and may conflict with prevailing values in society.

6- Balance between Modernity and Values:

6-1- Reconciling Authenticity and Modernity: Clothing can be a bridge between the past and the present, where modern design is integrated with traditional symbols.

6-2- Challenges: The conflict between a generation that sees modernity as personal freedom and another generation that sees it as a threat to values.

6-3- Solutions: Promoting a culture of modest, modern dress and supporting local industries that integrate authenticity with modernity.

7-Clothing:

Clothing is defined as something made from different materials such as hair, wool, or cotton, and it is formed from them into clothes that cover the body in all their different types, both internal and external, and various types of decorative accessories. (Boutaqrabt Rachid, 2007, p. 21).

7-1- Psychological and Sociological Theories for Explaining the Socialization Process of Individuals on Values:

1- Psychoanalytic Theory:

Proponents of the psychoanalytic school explained that the socialization process works to form what is called the superego, which begins to develop from childhood. The process involves imitation and emulation of parents, and the child adopts clothing of the same gender. The child is born with innate drives and seeks to satisfy these desires and drives through a developmental process influenced by surrounding and environmental conditions, represented by parents and other members of society. Here, the child begins to learn the laws of society and develop strategies for adaptation and social adjustment, working towards social acceptance and integration with other members of society. This leads to the development of the superego, which embodies values, laws, customs, and traditions. This is what is called the conscience and the inner voice of the personality, which works to subdue the demands of the psyche. This is what is called the pleasure principle, controlling instincts and primary desires according to societal standards. The standards that an individual finds to be his type and nature are determined by society, which raises the individual from the earliest stages according to what is socially prevalent.

2- Social theory: It believes that the process of socialization of individuals within the social system, and the attention to social systems that make the individual acquire the characteristic of socialization and work to interact and integrate with others, and thus it is a process of training individuals from the early stages to acquire and learn their roles in the future and to form them to be active in society by teaching them social values, customs, traditions and norms prevailing in society, and this is with the aim of reaching them to the process of achieving psychological and social compatibility in accordance with social standards, laws and values in order to achieve social gains represented in solidarity and social cohesion in society.

3-Social learning theory: The proponents of social learning theory were interested in the learning process and considered it the basic basis and foundation through which a person develops and understands his behavior and goals. It sees that a person learns, develops, and changes and needs education and training through a continuous and permanent process. Through his learning, what is called habituation to learning different behavioral patterns is produced. Learning is a social characteristic, and through the learning process, social institutions are created, and through these institutions, mechanisms for change are used, and they are based on teaching. Among these practices is the way of dressing.

4-Membership and Affiliation:

Any individual who has affiliation and membership within society. Arab societies, and the Gulf societies in particular, have witnessed a profound transformation in the structure of social relations, concepts of identity, and methods of building trust. In the past, a person was known

and valued through his lineage, his family name, and his tribal affiliation. This affiliation had a high social value that determined the individual's position in society and affected his relationships, marriage, and opportunities in life. Today, however, the standards have changed remarkably, and the definition of an individual is often done through the institution he belongs to, the job he occupies, or the company he works for. This reflects a fundamental shift from "personal affiliation" to "job affiliation."

5- Tribal affiliation as a source of identity and confidence:

In traditional societies, a person did not need a biography or a lengthy introduction; it was enough to say, "I am so-and-so from such-and-such tribe," for a complete picture of their cultural background, lifestyle, and social standing to come to mind. Tribes were known for their customs, values, lineage, and strength, and represented a mark of social status.

6- Respect and Appreciation: Clothing bestows respect and appreciation upon an individual in society. People interact with them based on their attire, discerning their social standing and granting them respect and appreciation. Individuals have a need for respect and appreciation, as outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Satisfying the need for esteem goes beyond simply feeling socially accepted; it extends to building a firm sense of self-worth and competence. Maslow sees esteem as divided into two complementary parts: self-esteem (internal) and esteem from others (external). Self-esteem encompasses feelings of power, achievement, self-reliance, and independence. External esteem, on the other hand, is represented by obtaining status, recognition, attention, and a good reputation in society. Maslow emphasizes that internal esteem is more important and sustainable; while external status can be fleeting, the internal sense of competence forms a stable foundation for psychological well-being.

7- Interaction with Others:

Individuals interact with each other in various ways, including work, studies, neighborhood, and travel. Clothing can influence how individuals interact positively with others, fostering a sense of security and acceptance within the group.

8- Social Image:

Every individual has a social image in the eyes of others. People form judgments and opinions based on their clothing, and individuals are categorized accordingly. A person's self-confidence is directly linked to a positive self-image. When a person is satisfied with their self-image, they are better equipped to face challenges and cope with stress. Self-confidence enhances personal performance and helps in making better decisions in daily life.

Self-image has a significant impact on mental health. Individuals with a negative self-image may experience problems such as anxiety and depression. Conversely, a positive self-image can contribute to feelings of happiness and life satisfaction. 13- Social acceptance: The social system includes a set of different relationships between individuals, whether within the same system or even other social and cultural systems. In order for an individual to have social acceptance, he is required to adhere to the standards set by the members of the group, including the way and type of clothing, so that he has psychological and social compatibility and as evidence of a feeling of belonging to them, because it expresses a noticeable social behavioral aspect.

-2- From a psychological perspective:

Clothing has a clear impact on mental health and personality functions in general. Through outward appearance,

1- The impact of clothing on behavior:

1-1- Self-confidence:

Clothing influences the development and enhancement of an individual's self-confidence. Families raise children to respect the type and nature of clothing from the earliest stages of upbringing. Children of both sexes, male and female, learn to wear clothing that symbolizes their gender and thus establishes their role, age group, and the social context to which they belong. Families are keen from the beginning to emphasize the importance of clothing, recognizing that instilling its value from a young age is crucial so that children acquire identity and social belonging, ensuring its continuity across generations. They also see their outward image in society as being reflected through clothing. An individual's self-confidence is higher when their clothing is respectful and expressive of their value and social standing.

2. Self-Esteem: Self-esteem is higher when an individual's clothing is respectful and expressive of belonging and social status. This is because others will judge and comment on their appearance and attire. Individuals of both genders place great importance on their outward appearance, wearing various clothes that convey acceptance and respect, thus increasing their self-esteem based on external reinforcement of their clothing.

3. Expressing Psychological State: Clothing is a message from the individual, reflecting their psychological state in terms of mood, anxiety, and psychological stability. Outward appearance is considered a diagnostic criterion for psychological and mental disorders.

Conclusion: Clothing is a mirror of society; it reflects its religious and social values while simultaneously keeping pace with the influences of global modernity. The real challenge lies in finding a balance that preserves identity and responds to the demands of the times. These garments are not merely fabrics; they embody values of modesty, belonging, beauty, and pride in identity, and at the same time, they can be integrated with elements of modernity to keep up with the times without losing their authenticity.

Recommendations and Suggestions: Among our recommendations are the following:

- The necessity of preserving inherited values through their material aspects.
- Clothing is a continuum between generations.
- Reinforcing educational and moral values in preserving cultural and social identity.

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