



# Fashion and Psychology: A Documentary Study on the Influence of Dress on Self-Image and Self-Perception

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**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the influence of fashion and dress on individuals' self-image and self-perception through a comprehensive review of relevant literature and research from 2019-2023. This qualitative research employs a documentary research methodology, collecting data from both domestic and international academic databases totaling 45 documents. The findings reveal that dress significantly influences self-image, self-confidence, and social perception. Appropriate dressing can enhance positive self-feelings, reduce anxiety, and improve work performance. Furthermore, dress reflects identity and personality, affecting non-verbal communication and first impression formation in society. These findings can be applied in psychological counseling, fashion education and marketing, as well as personality development and corporate image enhancement.

**Keywords:** Fashion, Psychology of Dress, Self-Image, Self-Perception, Social Perception

## 1. Introduction

Dress and fashion have been integral parts of human life from ancient times to the present, serving not only to cover the body for weather protection but also as important communication media in human society. According to Davis (2021), clothing and dress function as non-verbal language that communicates identity, social status, and individual personality. In the contemporary era, the fashion industry has developed rapidly and significantly influences global society. The McKinsey Global Fashion Index (2023) reports that the fashion industry has an economic value exceeding \$2.5 trillion USD and employs over 60 million people worldwide.

In psychology, studies on the influence of clothing and dress on the human psyche have gained increasing attention, particularly in examining relationships between dress and self-perception, confidence, and social perception. Research by Adam and Galinsky (2020) introduced the concept of "Enclothed Cognition," which studies the influence of clothing on brain function and behavior, finding that wearing different clothes can significantly affect individuals' thoughts, feelings, and performance. Additionally, Goffman's Self-Presentation theory (2019) has been continuously developed to the present, emphasizing that dress is part of self-presentation in society.

In the Thai social context, studies on fashion and psychology remain limited despite dress being important to Thai culture for a long time, particularly regarding appropriate dress

for occasions and places. The National Statistical Office (2022) reports that Thais spend an average of 15,000 baht per person annually on clothing and dress, demonstrating the importance of dress in Thai lifestyle. Moreover, the growth of online social media and photo-sharing culture has increased the importance of dress and image even more.

This study is therefore significant in creating understanding about the influence of fashion and dress on the human psyche, especially regarding self-image and self-perception, which will benefit psychological counseling, clothing design, personality development, and applications in marketing and communication. The results of this study are expected to enhance academic knowledge and be applicable in developing quality of life and mental health for individuals in society.

## 2. Objective

- 2.1 To study and analyze the influence of fashion and dress on individuals' self-image
- 2.2 To examine the relationship between dress and self-perception and self-confidence
- 2.3 To synthesize approaches and recommendations for applying fashion psychology knowledge in personality development and mental health

## 3. Research Methodology

This study is qualitative research using documentary research methodology through systematic literature review to collect and analyze data from research and academic documents related to fashion, dress psychology, and influences on image and self-perception.

### 3.1 Population and Samples

The sample group for this study consists of academic documents, research works, journal articles, and research reports related to fashion and psychology during 2019-2023. Selection was conducted through purposive sampling based on established criteria including: research published in reputable and internationally recognized journals, content related to fashion psychology, dress, self-image, and self-perception, totaling 45 documents.

### 3.2 Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study include: Data Extraction Forms for collecting data from each document, Quality Assessment Tools, and Content Analysis Frameworks. Instrument quality verification was conducted by three experts in psychology and fashion to examine content validity and Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), achieving an IOC score of 0.87.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted from January to March 2025 by searching documents from renowned academic databases including PsycINFO, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, and Thailand's TCI database. Keywords used for searching included "fashion psychology," "clothing and self-image," "dress and identity," "enclothed cognition," and related Thai terms. Data reliability verification was conducted through source verification, researcher credibility assessment, and triangulation from multiple sources.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis employed Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis methods, grouping data according to main themes including: theories and concepts about fashion psychology, dress influence on self-image, relationships between fashion and self-perception, and practical

applications. The data will be synthesized and presented in analytical narrative format with summary tables and relationship models.

## 4. Result (s)

From studying 45 academic documents during 2019-2023, researchers can summarize findings according to established objectives, dividing results into the following main issues:

### 4.1 Basic Theories and Concepts about Fashion Psychology

The study found that important theories related to fashion psychology encompass various concepts. The "Enclothed Cognition" theory by Adam and Galinsky (2020) is the main concept explaining that clothes we wear can affect brain function and behavior. This theory proposes that dress is not merely body covering but a tool affecting individuals' thoughts, feelings, and actions. Additionally, Goffman's Self-Presentation theory (2019) has been continuously developed to present, emphasizing that dress is part of self-presentation in society.

### 4.2 Influence of Dress on Self-Image

Study results show that dress significantly influences individuals' self-image, which can be divided into various dimensions. In terms of self-confidence, research by Zhang et al. (2022) found that individuals who dress neatly and appropriately have 25% higher self-confidence levels compared to informal dressing. Regarding self-perception, Roberts and Martinez's study (2021) indicates that choosing different clothing colors significantly affects self-personality perception, with dark colors increasing feelings of power and credibility, while bright colors increase feelings of friendliness and accessibility.

**Table 1: Influence of Dress on Self-Image Dimensions**

| Self-Image Dimensions  | Dress Influence | Significance Level |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Self-Confidence        | Increased 25%   | p < 0.01           |
| Personality Perception | Changed 30%     | p < 0.05           |
| Self-Satisfaction      | Increased 18%   | p < 0.01           |
| Self-Acceptance        | Increased 15%   | p < 0.05           |

**Source:** Synthesized from multiple studies (Zhang et al., 2022; Roberts & Martinez, 2021)

### 4.3 Relationship between Fashion and Self-Perception

The study found strong relationships between dress and self-perception in multiple dimensions. In terms of emotions and feelings, research by Thompson and Lee (2023) shows that wearing preferred clothing can increase serotonin and dopamine levels in the brain, resulting in good feelings and happiness. Additionally, Wilson et al.'s study (2022) found that changing dress styles can effectively help reduce depression and anxiety symptoms. In terms of self-control, appropriate dress helps increase feelings of life control and enhance work performance.

### 4.4 Influence on Social Perception

Study results show that dress significantly affects social perception, particularly in creating first impressions. Brown and Davis's study (2021) found that individuals use only 3 seconds to judge others' image from dress, and this first impression affects long-term social interactions. In non-verbal communication, dress functions as media conveying information about social status, personality, and individual values.

#### 4.5 Route Network Performance Analysis

Document analysis revealed important factors affecting dress choices including: psychological factors encompassing personality, psychological needs, and past experiences; social factors including reference groups, culture, and social pressure; situational factors such as usage occasions, weather, and role responsibilities; and personal factors like age, gender, income, and physical appearance. Understanding these factors helps create deeper understanding of human dressing behavior.

**Figure 1:** Relationship Model between Fashion and Psychology



**Source:** Developed by researchers based on literature synthesis

### 5. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate significant influence of fashion and dress on the human psyche, particularly regarding self-image and self-perception, which aligns with Adam and Galinsky's (2020) Enclothed Cognition theory proposing that clothes we wear affect brain function and behavior. These findings also support Pine's (2019) concept that dress is a highly effective form of non-verbal communication.

The finding that dress increases self-confidence by 25% aligns with research by Johnson and Williams (2021) studying working-age groups, finding that systematic dressing positively affects work performance and job satisfaction. However, these results differ from Martinez's (2020) research finding only 15% dress effect on self-confidence. This difference may result from various factors such as different sample groups, measurement methods used, and cultural contexts.

Study results regarding social perception demonstrate the importance of dress in creating first impressions, aligning with Anderson and Taylor's (2022) Social Perception theory emphasizing the role of external symbols in social communication. The fact that individuals use only 3 seconds to judge from dress highlights the importance of preparation and choosing appropriate clothing, especially in important situations such as job interviews, work presentations, or social meetings.

Regarding factors affecting dress choices, study results show the complexity of decision-making processes, which don't depend on any single factor but result from combinations of multiple factors. Understanding these factors is important for developing marketing strategies, counseling, and designing fashion products that respond to consumers' psychological needs.

However, this study has limitations to consider, including being primarily documentary study which may not fully reflect Thai social cultural contexts. Additionally, most documents come from Western society studies which may have cultural differences from Asian and Thai societies. Future studies should therefore emphasize field research in Thai social contexts to obtain data reflecting reality more accurately.

## 6. Conclusion

This documentary study on fashion and psychology clearly demonstrates that dress significantly influences individuals' self-image and self-perception. Study results found that appropriate dress can increase self-confidence, improve emotions and feelings, and positively affect social perception. Understanding the relationship between fashion and psychology will be extremely beneficial for quality of life development, psychological counseling, and applications in various fields related to communication and personality development. Additionally, these study results support the importance of providing fashion psychology knowledge to the general public to enable using dress as a tool for self-development and creating effective social relationships.

## 7. Recommendation

Based on the study results, researchers propose the following recommendations:

### Recommendations for Application

Applying fashion psychology knowledge in personality development counseling, where psychologists and counselors can use dress as one tool to help clients with self-confidence or self-image problems. Developing training programs on dress and image for individuals of various ages, especially adolescents and working adults, to help build confidence and social communication skills. Integrating fashion psychology knowledge into curricula for fashion design, marketing, and communication education to help learners understand consumer psychological dimensions more deeply.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Conducting field studies on Thai dressing behavior in various contexts to obtain data reflecting reality in Thai society. Conducting comparative studies on dress influence between different age groups and genders. Developing measurement instruments suitable for Thai social contexts for assessing dress influence on psychology. Studying impacts of digital technology and online social media on dressing behavior and self-image. Studying approaches to using fashion for therapy and mental health rehabilitation (Fashion Therapy) in groups with mental health problems.

### Policy Recommendations

Promoting research and development in fashion psychology fields in Thailand. Supporting educational institutions to open curricula or courses related to fashion psychology. Promoting cooperation between educational institutions, private sector, and government agencies in developing knowledge in this field. Establishing guidelines and standards for providing image and dress counseling services with scientific foundations.

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## Declarations:

**Conflict of interest:** The researchers declare no conflicts of interest in conducting this research.

**Ethics of Human Research (if any) :** Not applicable (due to being documentary study)

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