

## Self-concept of High School Girls in Relation to Their Clothing Selection Behavior

Soon-Ea Hong\* and Pil-Gyo Cho\*\*

Dept. of Home Economic Education, Kyungpook National University

### Abstract

*This study aims to figure out the levels of self-concept, to reveal the aspects of clothing selection behavior, and to clarify the relation of self-concept to clothing selection behavior in high school girls. Questionnaire was used to collect data. The subjects were made up of 298 second-grade high school girls from four parts in Taegu.*

*The findings of this study are as follows:*

1. *The level of physical self, personal self, family self, and social self of high school girls are shown as above average.*
2. *In general trend of their clothing selection behavior, the scores related to practicality, economy, exhibitionism except fashionability are shown as high.*
3. *It seems that high school girls have a tendency to firstly weigh exhibitionism, and then economy, practicality, fashionability are followed one after another.*
4. *Physical self is shown as significantly different in fashionability, exhibitionism among clothing selection behavior.*

*Key words : self-concept, clothing selection behavior, exhibitionism, economy, practicality, fashionability.*

## I. Introduction

Clothes are regarded as a means for each individual to cope with this complex society. They have a symbolic value as nonverbal language in social interaction and also play a important role in the wearer's own self-formation. In other words, clothes as a method to express compensational image are another self modified from the individual's appearance which convey his personality, role, attitudes and mood, and are an extension of physical

body or of whole personality.<sup>1)</sup>

Adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood, which means that the establishment of self-concept goes through rapid changes of physical, mental and social aspects. Self-concept, defined as perception of, belief in, and attitude toward self, dose not develop greatly until adolescence. Many scholars just like Rogers(1951) maintained that self-concept is a basic unit for personal behavior study and a useful means to predict human behavior.<sup>2)</sup>

In addition, adolescents begin to have an

\*E-mail : maria60@chollian.net

\*\*E-mail : pgjo@bh.kyungpook.ac.kr

<sup>1</sup> Myung-Mi Im, *Clothes and Personal Ornament and Wearing*(Seoul : Kyungchoon Sa, 1984), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Eon-Joo Kim & Kwang-hyun Ku, *New Educational Psychology* (Seoul : Moonum Sa, 1994), 144.

interest in their own appearance, which leads to great emphasis on the importance of clothes. They are so susceptible to external stimuli and attractions that they tend to respond to fashion sensitively. This tendency is strong in clothes rather than anywhere else, which directly lead them to spend more time choosing their clothes and enjoying shopping.<sup>3)</sup>

Ryan observed that physical self-concept of an individual is closely related to clothes and that the individual is, when his(or her) own physical self is felt to get smaller, willing to search for how to promote his(or her) self through clothes. He also stated that the changes of social self-concept (concept about self as a member of society) lead the individual to make difference in clothing selection behavior as well as in his(or her) role and behavior.<sup>4)</sup>

Hong(1982)<sup>5)</sup> studied the relation of self-concept to motivation for wearing clothes in high school girls, and found that physical self is positively correlated with exhibitionism need as compared to personal self and social self positively correlated with aesthetics. Suh (1995)<sup>6)</sup> noticed that the variables which have a great influence on clothing purchasing behavior of high school students are those of self-concept rather than of demographic features. The finding can be explained in terms of mental and physical development of high school students; that is, it is due to the desire to get recognized as a member of peer group and to the increased interest in his(or her) appearance which comes from femininity

and masculinity as second sexual characteristics.

Lee(1997)<sup>7)</sup> revealed that girls make more of fashionability and exhibitionism in choosing clothes than boys. It can be considered that girls, compared with boys, are strongly inclined to express and show off herself seeking for change and beauty through clothes, whereas boys make more of conservative clothing norms which conform to social group.

In summary, self-concept becomes an important variable that is capable of accounting for adolescents' behavior, and influences clothing attitude which is shown off through specific way of choosing and wearing clothes. Therefore, through this study I try to focus on high school girls' self-concept level, their clothing selection behavior in relation to it and their clothing culture.

The specific aims of this study are 1) to grasp self-concept levels of high school girls, 2) to make clear the aspects of their clothing selection behavior, and 3) to clarify the relation of self-concept to clothing selection behavior.

## II. Research Method

### 1. Data Collection

Self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 298 2nd grade high school girls living in Taegu, from which the data was collected and analyzed in March 1999. The economic level of their household is considered to be at middle level, and 50.7% of them are spending from 30 to less 60 thousand won every month

<sup>3</sup> A-Young Jung "The Impulse Buying of Adolescents and its Related Factors", Busan University, Unpublished Master's Thesis (1996), 15.

<sup>4</sup> In-Ja Lee, *Socio-psychology on the Basis of Garments* (Seoul : Soohak Sa, 1985), 228-234.

<sup>5</sup> Chan-Hee Hong, "The Relationship between the Self-concept and Clothing Costume Incentives of High School Girls", Ewha Women's University, Unpublished Master's Thesis (1982), 47.

<sup>6</sup> Ju-Hyung Suh, "A Study on the Relationship between Self-concept and Clothing Purchase Behavior for a Group of High School Students", Sookmyung Women's University, Unpublished Master's Thesis (1995), 49.

<sup>7</sup> Woon-Hyun Lee, "A Study on Psychological Clothing Selection Factors and Information Seeking Activities Which is followed by Clothing Involvement of The New Generation", Kyunghee University, Unpublished Master's Thesis (1997), 46.

as their monthly allowance. 70.5% of their mothers are reported as full-time housewives.

## 2. Research Instruments

A questionnaire in this study comprised three parts: self-concept questions, clothing selection behavior questions, demographic variables.

### 1) Self-concept Question

Jung Won-Sik's standardized self-concept test was used. This part consists of 60 questions measuring physical self, personal self, family self and social self.

### 2) Clothing Selection Behavior Question

This part was reorganized with reference to some previous studies. Clothing item for the study was limited to outdoor wears useful for meeting friends in downtown in the daytime. In this part were included 18 questions associated with practicality, economy, fashionability, and exhibitionism which were measured by 5-point Likert scale.

### 3) Demographic Variables

This part is composed of questions on monthly allowance, annual clothing expenditure, parents' educational level and occupation, and household's economic level.

## 3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by SPSS statistical package. Statistics are employed descriptive statistics analysis (mean, standard deviation), factor analysis, reliability analysis, and Pearson's correlation analysis.

## III. Results and Discussion

### 1. Aspects of Clothing Selection Behavior

Factor analysis was practised to classify factors related to clothing selection behavior into some interrelated types and to summarize them into a few factors. The results of factor analysis and reliability test with each factor

are as indicated in (Table 1). Cronbach's internal consistency test was used for reliability test.

Four factors were emerged from factor analysis of questions related to clothing selection behavior, which could explain 53.3% of total variance. Names and contents of each factor are shown in (Table 1).

Factor I called practicality is the inclination to think much of physical comfort and managerial easiness, which includes 7 items. Its percent in total distribution is found to be 15.7% and its reliability to be .7136.

Factor II economy is the inclination to think much of price, which includes 4 items. Its percent in total distribution is shown to be 3% and its reliability to be .6322.

Factor III named fashionability is the inclination to keep face with current fashion by wearing fashionable styles, which includes 5 items. Its percent in total distribution is known to be 14.5% and its reliability to be .7681.

In factor IV exhibitionism, 2 items are included. Its percent in total distribution is 7.8% and its reliability is .5938.

## 2. The Analysis of the Self-concept Data

### 1) General Trend of Self-concept

In general trend of self-concept, as is indicated in (Table 2), all subscales of self-concept are shown to be above average. Higher state of physical self reflects that high school girls think positively of their own physical conditions such as health, appearance, etc. And the level of family self is relatively high points in their wholesome family life and their pride in their own family. Social self, the highest of all, indicates that they maintain healthy relation with others, while personal self, relatively lower, reflects their emotional and psychological discomfort.

### 2) Correlations among Self-concept Factors

Correlations among self-concept factors in

**<Table 1>** Factor analysis in clothing selection behavior

No.	Contents	Factor loading			
		Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV
Factor I : practicality					
13	Choose clothes by comfort rather than design or color	.725	-.081	-.085	-.056
17	Choose clothes easy to care rather than style	.692	.108	.038	-.110
1	Purchase clothes whose color is less noticeable if dirtied	.598	.138	-.060	-.089
15	Purchase no clothes that give discomfort in wearing though attractive	.568	-.057	-.257	-.109
8	Purchase clothes easy to wash	.503	.377	-.109	-.099
4	Purchase clothes that can be worn by daily wear	.488	.134	-.416	.227
10	Purchase clothes that doesn't need ironing as far as possible	.435	.292	.119	.024
Factor II : economy					
12	Purchase clothes supposed to be frequently worn with pleasure though expensive,	-.036	-.770	.060	.113
18	Purchase clothes that are preferable regardless of cost (R)	.196	.767	-.240	.040
2	Purchase no clothes that are expensive though preferable	.252	.715	-.160	-.022
5	Try to purchase cheap clothes	.070	.655	-.035	.405
Factor III : fashionability					
11	Purchase clothes of fashionable style though unmatched	.055	.042	.751	-.171
3	Be informed of fashionable style before going shopping	-.066	-.092	.712	.121
9	Make efforts to buy new style more hurriedly than others	-.194	-.349	.697	-.056
7	Be sure to buy clothes with fashionable style in spite of adults' reluctance	-.240	-.057	.674	.168
14	Purchase clothes with style which are much advertised in TV, magazine, etc	-.036	-.131	.654	.274
Factor IV : exhibitionism					
6	Purchase clothes that looks gorgeous though cheap in real	.008	.241	.110	.794
16	Make use of clothes in order to look more beautiful and nice	-.181	-.366	.111	.595
Eigen value		2.828	2.752	2.604	1.413
Reliability		.7136	.6322	.7681	.5938
Percent in total distribution		15.709	15.289	14.465	7.849
Total explanation (%)		53.311			

\* (R) was reversely counted.

**<Table 2>** General trend of self-concept  
(n=298)

Variable		Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-concept	Physical self	2.9707	.2456
	Personal self	2.6748	.3592
	Family self	3.1293	.2592
	Social self	3.2833	.2511

**<Table 4>** General trend of clothing selection behavior

Variable		Mean	Standard Deviation
Clothing selection behavior	Practicality	3.1588	.6036
	Economy	3.4488	.5825
	Fashionability	2.3604	.7438
	Exhibitionism	3.8037	.7148

high school girls expressed by Pearson's correlation coefficient are shown in <Table 3>.

Positive correlations are reported in such conditions as physical self and family self, physical self and social self, personal self and social self, family self and social self.

### 3. Analysis of Clothing Selection Behavior

#### 1) General Trend of Clothing Selection Behavior

General trends of clothing selection behavior in high school girls are shown in <Table 4>. All subscale of clothing selection behavior, except fashionability, are shown to be above average. This means that, in purchasing clothes, high school girls consider a variety of choice standards. The findings that fashionability is lower than average can be

figured out from two reasons. One is that school girls are relatively deficient in the opportunity and time in which to wear fashionable clothes because they primarily wear school uniforms, and the other is that they are not much interested in fashion on account of being burdened with heavy school work.

It is shown that exhibitionism has the highest score. This suggests that high school girls have much interest in their own appearances and have a strong tendency to show off themselves by way of clothes so as to look attractive.

#### 2) Difference of Clothing Selection Behavior by Demographic Variables

Practicality shows significant differences in monthly allowance, annual clothing expenditure, and household's economic level. The less

**<Table 3>** Correlations among self-concept factors

Factor \ Factor F score	Physical self	Personal self	Family self	Social self
Physical self	1.000			
Personal self	.004 .944	1.000		
Family self	.227** .000	.072 .219	1.000	
Social self	.272** .000	.155** .008	.174** .003	1.000

\*\*p<.01

&lt;Table 5&gt; Analysis of clothing selection behavior by demographic variables (n=298)

Variable	c.s.b F score	Practicality	Economy	Fashionability	Exhibitionism
Monthly allowance		6.974**	4.977**	5.689**	2.929*
Annual clothing expenditure		13.538**	15.026**	5.765**	7.474**
Educational level (father)		.676	1.439	.686	1.784
Educational level (mother)		.238	3.102*	.486	2.257
Economic level		2.888*	5.221**	1.375	2.721*
Occupation (father)		.470	.464	1.517	.635
Occupation (mother)		1.275	1.027	.361	.234

\*p&lt;.05. \*\*p&lt;.01

monthly allowance and annual clothing expenditure is, the higher the score of practicality is.

Economy reveals significant differences in monthly allowance, annual clothing expenditure, mother's educational level and economic level. The less the monthly allowance, the higher the score of economy.

Fashionability seems to be significantly different in monthly allowance and annual clothing expenditure, and the more monthly allowance, the higher the score of fashionability.

exhibitionism makes significant difference in monthly allowance, annual clothing expenditure and economic level. The more monthly allowance and the annual clothing expenditure is, the higher the score is.

### 3) Correlations of Clothing Selection Behavior Factors

Correlations between subscale of clothing selection behavior, such as practicality, economy, fashionability, and exhibitionism are drawn in (Table 6).

&lt;Table 6&gt; Correlations between factors of clothing selection behavior

Variable	Variable F score	Practicality	Economy	Fashionability	Exhibitionism
Practicality		1.000			
Economy		.340** .000	1.000		
Fashionability		-.328** .000	-.131* .024	1.000	
Exhibitionism		-.247** .000	-.122* .036	.494** .000	1.000

\*p&lt;.05. \*\*p&lt;.01

Significantly positive correlation was observed between economy and practicality, and between exhibitionism and fashionability, which means that each variable is affected by the other. Fashionability and exhibitionism are in significantly negative correlation with practicality and economy. This indicates that whoever seeks for comfort in wearing or for easiness in management tends to weigh clothing cost before purchasing, while those who are preferable to most fashionable style or who wish to look attractive tend to purchase fashionable clothes in spite of a little discomfort and higher cost.

#### 4. Correlations of Self-concept with Clothing Selection Behavior

Correlations of self-concept, that is physical, personal, family and social self, with subscales of clothing selection behavior, that is practicality, economy, fashionability and exhibitionism, are provided in <Table 7>.

As shown in <Table 7>, positive correlation was found between physical self-concept and fashionability and exhibitionism of clothing selection behavior. It is suggested that a person who was at high-score of physical self-concept, that is, who looks on the bright side

of his(or her) own physical conditions, was inclined to run after fashion in choosing clothes and to make himself(or herself) look more attractive through clothes. This finding corresponds with that of Lee(1982)<sup>8)</sup> and Hong(1982), which have reported that the higher the level of physical self is, the higher in exhibitionism score. High school girls who high-scored at social self-concept are observed to count economy of clothes for much.

## IV. Conclusions and Implications

### 1. Summary and Conclusions

This study aims at helping understand adolescents by grasping self-concept levels of high school girls, and at making sure that social psychological function of clothes is of good importance to high school girls by looking into the correlation of self-concept to clothing selection behavior. The subjects are 298 sampled from 2nd grade high school girls living in Taegu. The findings can be summarized as follows.

- 1) In general trend of self-concept of high school girls, the scores at all subscales of self-concept is shown as above average.

<Table 7> Correlations of self-concept with clothing selection behavior

Variable F score	Practicality	Economy	Fashionability	Exhibitionism
Physical self	-.018 .761	.055 .346	.134* .020	1.216** .000
Personal self	.044 .450	.003 .957	.056 .334	-.051 .384
Family self	.024 .680	.042 .470	.031 .601	.037 .527
Social self	.080 .166	.196** .001	-.020 -.735	.020 .726

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01

<sup>8)</sup> Kyung-son Lee, "A Study on the Relationship between the Self-concept and Clothing Behavior of Adult Males" *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles* (1982), 6(1).

- 2) In general trend of their clothing selection behavior, the scores related to practicality, economy and exhibitionism except fashionability are shown as high.
- 3) It seems that high school girls have a tendency to firstly weigh exhibitionism, and then economy, practicality, fashionability are followed one after another. This reflects that high school girls have strong desire to look beautiful and refined and to show off themselves.
- 4) Clothing selection behavior of high school girls are significantly different in demographic variables, such as monthly allowance, annual clothing expenditure, mother's educational level, household's economic level.
- 5) Physical self is shown as significantly different in fashionability and exhibitionism of clothing selection behavior.

## 2. Limits and Implications

The limits and implications of this study can be described as follows.

First, the sampling is confined to high school girls living in Taegu, which may prevent the findings from being generalized nationwide.

Second, more elaborate standard measures for clothing selection behavior need to be developed, though, the measure used in this study was made from correcting and supplementing the established standard measure.

Third, in addition to individuals' psychological aspects, mass media, peer group, and school-related factors(whether general or occupational) are considered to have such an influence on clothing selection behavior of high school girls in these days that further studies will have to deal with these variables.

## References

- Park, Eun-Joo. 1991. A Study on Relationship between Clothing Purchase Situation and Clothing Evaluative Criteria. *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles* 15(2).
- Park, Eun-Joo. 1996. Effects of Situational Variable and Consumer Characteristics on Apparel Buying Behavior. *The Research Journal of the Costume Culture* 4(2).
- Kim, Mi-Young. 1989. A Study on Life Style Types and Clothing Evaluative Criteria. Unpublished Doctor's Thesis. Seoul National University.
- Kim, Mi-Young. 1992. A Study on Change of Clothing Evaluative Criteria According to Clothing Buying Process. *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles* 16 (3).
- Kim, Soon-Ku and Yoon, Hak-Ja. 1986. Self-Esteem Influence in the Clothing Behavior-Comparison of Sex in High School Students. *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles* 10(1).
- Lee, Myoung-Hee. 1994. Consumer Clothing Shopping Orientation and Purchase Criteria-with a Suit and Blouse. *Journal of Korean Home Economics Association* 33(5).
- Moschis, G. P. & Churchill Jr., G. R., 1978, "Consumer Socialization : A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis." *Journal of Marketing Research* 15.
- Hall, C. S. and Lindzey, G. 1970. *Theories of Personality*, 2d ed., New York : John Wiley & Sons.
- Hurlock, E. B., 1973. *Adolescence Development*, 4th ed., Tokyo : International Student Edition, McGraw-Hill Kogakusha, Ltd.
- Ryan, M. S., 1966. *Clothing : A study in Human Behavior*, New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- Chung, Ihn-Hee and Rhee, Eun-Young. 1996. Clothing and Self-Image. *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles* 20 (1).
- Koh, Ae-ran & Kim, Yang-jin. 1996. The Effects of Egocentrism, Self-Consciousness, Body Cathexis on Adolescence Clothing Behavior. *Journal of the Korean Society of*
- Park, Eun-Joo. 1991. A Study on Relationship between Clothing Purchase Situation and Clothing Evaluative Criteria. *Journal of*



- Clothing and Textiles* 20(4).
- Lee, Boo-hee, Koh, Ae-ran & Kim, Yang-jin. 1996. Adolescence Clothing Behavior as Related to Psychological Characteristics. *Korean Home Economics Association* 34(5).
- Sim, Hyun-sub. 1991. A Study on the Relationship between Self-Concept and Clothing Behaviors for a group of High School Grils. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Kangwon National University.
- Lee, Kyung-son. 1982. A Study on the Relationship between the Self-concept and Clothing Behavior of Adult Males. *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles* 6(1).
- Im, Myung-mi. 1984. *Clothes and Personal Ornament and Wearing*. Seoul : Kyungchoon Sa.
- Kim, Eon-joo & Ku, Kwang-hyun. 1994. *New Educational Psychology* Seoul : Moonum Sa
- Jung, A-young. 1996. The Impulse Buying of Adolescents and its Related Factors. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Busan University.
- Lee, In-ja. 1985. *Socio-psychology on the Basis of Garments*. Seoul : Soohak Sa
- Hong, Chan-hee. 1982. The Relationship between the Self-concept and Clothing Custom Incentives of High School Girls. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Ewha Women's University.
- Suh, Ju-hyung. 1995. A Study on the Relationship between Self-concept and Clothing Purchase Behavior for a Group of High School Students. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Sookmyung Women's University.
- Lee, Woon-hyun. 1997. A Study on Psychological Clothing Selection Factors and Information Seeking Activities Which is followed by Clothing Involvement of The New Generation. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Kyunghee University.