

Clothing Deprivation and Clothing Decision Factors in Korean College Women⁺

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Abstract

This study explored the perceptions of Korean college women concerning their clothing deprivation and clothing decision factors. A convenience sample was used consisting of 101 female college students aged from 18 to 36 years, with a mean age of 20.78 (SD = 4.24). Descriptive statistics were used to develop a profile of the participants. To test the research objectives, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), using Wilk's lambda criterion was conducted for the study. The results indicated that a college woman's year significantly influences her perceived clothing deprivation, at $p = 0.003$ (Wilk's lambda). There was a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.24$, $p = 0.02$) between college year and perceived clothing deprivation for special occasion clothes. The two clothing decision factors *clothes that fit me well* and *clothes that look best on me* were found to be the top two factors determining clothing decisions for the study participants.

Key Words : clothing deprivation, college women, clothing decision factors

I. Introduction

Clothing deprivation refers to an individual's discontent with their dress in relation to their physical and psychological comfort.¹⁾ An inability to dress the part can produce emotional and psychological stress in adolescents.²⁾ Clothing is often referred to as a person's "second skin," an extension of their bodily self.

Most Korean school-age students wear uniforms until they graduate from high school, after which they must learn not only what clothing to buy but also how to select appropriate clothing for different occasions. Adequate clothes are a source of happiness and self-confidence, enhancing the development of a well-balanced personality.³⁾ Therefore, it is important to choose or wear the "right," or "satisfying" clothes for daily life. In early work by

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Francis (1992)⁴⁾, clothing deprivation was measured as "best dressed" or "not dressed right." A person's evaluation of his or her clothing can affect his or her global self-esteem or confidence in his or her abilities, qualities, personal features, or performance.⁵⁾

Clothing research has generally focused on the links between clothing evaluation, the decision process, cross-national comparisons, and cultural influences, thus helping to establish the significance of appearance and clothing as the most proximate material environment for the individual.⁵⁾⁶⁾⁷⁾ Because of the wide variety of consumer behavior, marketers generally focus on specific target markets. College women who are in their early to late 20s are often seen as leading the fashion trend as opinion leaders, so apparel marketers are particularly interested in this market segment due to both their own buying power and their influence on the clothing purchases of other women in their age group.

So far, research has typically focused on three aspects of clothing studies related to age group: (a) self esteem, gender differences, and body image; (b) clothing behavior, clothing purchasing /buying behavior, clothing shopping behavior, and clothing brand loyalty; and (c) cross-national studies as they relate to life style comparisons and body image and clothing selection behavior. However, few have explored the characteristics that college women say that they want in the clothing they buy and wear and their perceived clothing deprivation for three situations, namely clothes for school, clothes for outings with friends, and clothes for special occasions.

Research has examined college women's clothing evaluative criteria, but there has been little work on college women's perceptions of clothing deprivation in terms of their clothes for

school, clothes to wear with friends, and special occasion clothes and clothing decision factors.⁸⁾ Understanding how college women view their clothing deprivation and what clothing decision factors influence this perception is important for companies developing new products and new markets aimed at college women. This study therefore focused on how satisfied or dissatisfied college women were with the clothes they chose to wear for three occasions how their college year, ranging from freshman to senior, influenced their feelings of clothing deprivation and what clothing factors influenced their decisions when choosing what clothes to wear. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore Korean college women's perceptions of clothing deprivation and the factors affecting their clothing decision.

The objectives of the study were to reveal:

1. How do Korean college women rank the decision factors governing what they choose to wear?
2. What are Korean college women's perceived feelings of clothing deprivation?
3. What is the relationship between college year and perceived clothing deprivation?

II. Review of the Literature

The review of the literature provided in the paper focuses on three subjects, all of which touch on issues surrounding clothing behaviors. These are clothing deprivation, clothing decision factors, and Korean college women's clothing behavior

1. Clothing Deprivation

Many studies have found that clothing deprivation/satisfaction has a significant effect

on adolescents' self-esteem and social participation behaviors. A number of studies of clothing deprivation or clothing satisfaction have focused on socioeconomic status, and clothing deprivation has been reported to be related to a low self-image and poor social adjustment and peer acceptance⁹⁾¹⁰⁾¹¹⁾¹²⁾.

Stone (1962)¹³⁾ found that appearance as one way in which meaning is established in social transactions, by communicating the self to others through nonverbal symbols such as clothing, grooming, and gestures. According to Kwon (1994)¹⁴⁾, college students perceived themselves as more competent in work, more sociable, and more positive when feeling good about their clothing as compared with feeling bad about it.

Sontag and Lee (2004)⁵⁾ defined three dimensions of clothing with self. One of these dimensions is that clothing affects a person's evaluation of self-worth, self-regard, or self-respect, generally expressed in terms of cognitive evaluation or affective evaluation. Specifically, clothing can positively or negatively affect a person's sense of personal and interpersonal competence including personal efficacy, mastery of the environment, usefulness, social adequacy, and desirability. Through a person's appearance in or use of clothing, the person engages in cognitive or affective evaluation of self, implicitly or explicitly, in comparison with a personal or social standard.

2. Clothing Decision Factors

To date, researchers examined clothing criteria such as price, style or design, suitability or appropriateness for a specific situation, fiber content, cut or fit, how pleasing it is to others, coordination with other clothing, comfort, color or pattern, quality, size/fit, brand name, and

country of origin. In a study of cross national comparisons, Lee and Burns (1993)¹⁵⁾ found differences in the importance placed on clothing evaluative criteria between Korean and U.S. female undergraduate students. Their study found that college students from the U.S. indicated that criteria associated with fashion and attractiveness were more important than they were for female college students in Korea.

Kim and Rhee (1994)¹⁶⁾ studied to identify shopper types by clothing shopping orientations and to compare consumer characteristics such as store evaluative criteria, perceived risks in clothing purchase, and demographic characteristics among different shopper types. The participants were economy-conscious consumers who spent time shopping to find special sales and cheap products, and often tended to negotiate prices with a salesclerk. A study of consumer's perception of clothing price by Jin (1998)¹⁷⁾ used 264 college students living in Seoul, Korea. The finding of the study supported Lichtenstein, Bloch, and Black (1993)'s¹⁸⁾ suggestion. The suggestion is that consumers' perception of clothing price is not uni-dimensional, but has six dimensions: sale proneness, price mavenism, value consciousness, price quality schema and prestige sensitivity.

A cross-national comparison of Taiwanese and U.S. consumers by Hsu and Burns (2002)¹⁹⁾ measured the importance of 12 clothing evaluative criteria, namely fabric, comfort, size/fit, quality, location of manufacturer, color, how pleasing it was to others, brand name, appropriateness for campus wear, price, style, and coordination with other clothing. They reported that the size/fit criterion was the most important criterion for both Taiwanese and U.S. female college students.

Lee, Ulrich and Connell (2006)²⁰⁾ studied the factors governing the decision on what to wear for girls and the perceptions of mothers as to their daughters' behaviors. An interesting finding of the study was that the adolescent girls' responses indicated that two decision factors, namely *clothes that fit well* and *clothes that are comfortable*, were the most important clothing decision factors affecting what they chose to wear.

3. Korean College Women's Clothing Behavior

According to Park et al., (2004)²¹⁾ Korean students wear looser styles and more fitted upper styles than Japanese students. Another finding of their study was that overweight Korean students tended to avoid wearing fitted and revealing body styles, instead pursuing more loose and covered body styles.

A study of apparel shopping satisfaction among Korean college students by Chang, Burns, and Francis (2004)⁷⁾ revealed that the physical environment of shopping sites and hedonic shopping value were both very important for their study participants because of the general shortage of leisure locations, leisure time, and discretionary leisure funds of Korean college students for apparel shopping. Korean people engage in shopping as a leisure activity with non-functional motives, and entertainment-oriented shopping venues have become very popular in Korea ("An entertaining shopping place", 2002).²²⁾

Park, Kim, and Lim (2005)²³⁾ used 9 clothing behavior factors in their study, namely interest, fashion, status symbol, individuality, psychological dependence, comfort, aesthetic sense, economical efficiency, and social approval, examining them in terms of personal and social orientation. One of their findings was

that Korean college women are more influenced by interest, fashion, status symbol, and aesthetic sense.

A study by Kang, Koh, and Park (1988)²⁴⁾ looked at sex differences on clothing behavior, finding that Korean females scored significantly higher on interest in fashion, modesty, and clothing importance than males. As a result, fashion interest was related positively to clothing importance and negatively to modesty in clothing.

III. Methods

1. Sample

A convenience sample was used for this study and consisted of 101 female college students. A total of 101 questionnaires were distributed to the participants. To minimize missing data, the questionnaires were carefully explained to the participants in terms of the terminology and scales, and participants were urged to make sure to respond to all the questions. There were no missing data for the data collection and 100% of the questionnaires were used for the data analysis.

Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 36 years, with a mean age of 20.78 (SD = 4.24). All the participants were undergraduate students, with 22.8% being in their first year of college, 10.9% sophomores, 36.6% juniors and 28.7% seniors. Forty nine percent of the participants' monthly clothing expenses were in the range from ₩100,000 to ₩300,000. The questionnaires were originally developed in English and then translated into Korean. The questionnaires were completed in university classrooms. Data were collected in October 2006.

2. Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 12.0 for windows was used for the data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to develop a profile of the participants. To test the research objectives, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) using Wilk's lambda criterion and Pearson's correlation coefficient was conducted for the study. The independent variable was the college year, namely freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. The dependent variables consisted of the clothing deprivation scales.

3. Measures

The participants responded to the set of clothing decision factors defined by May (1982)⁸⁾: Clothes (a) that look best on me, (b) like those that my friends will be wearing, (c) that are comfortable, (d) that are my favorite color, (e) that are the newest fashion, and (f) with a popular brand name. Since fit was the most important purchase factor for May's study participants, "clothes that fit me well" was also included. Using a 5-point scale, participants reported how often they thought about each factor when choosing what to wear.

The clothing deprivation scale was designed to describe how often participants felt that they did not have or could not get clothes that they would to choose to wear for three situations, namely clothes for school, clothes for friends, and dress-up clothes. "Clothes for friends" refers to the clothes worn while doing things or hanging out with their friends, such as going to the movies etc. "Dress-up clothes" refers to the clothes worn at school parties or for going to a special occasion such as a wedding. Using a 5-point scale from *never* to *always*, participants

reported how often they felt that they did not have or could not get clothes that they would to choose to wear for these three types of occasions.

IV. Results and Discussion

A total of 101 questionnaires were used for the data analysis. There were no missing data for the data collection.

1. How do Korean college women rank the decision factors governing what they choose to wear?

To analyze this research question, descriptive statistics were used to determine how the college women who participated in this study ranked clothing decision factors for what to wear. The seven clothing decisions factors analyzed were clothes that look best on me, clothes like those that my friends will be wearing, clothes that are comfortable, clothes that are my favorite color, clothes that are the newest fashion, clothes with a popular brand name, and clothes that fit me well. Each clothing decision factor was scored from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

As shown in Table 1, the two clothing decision factors: clothes that fit me well (mean: 4.28) and clothes that look best on me (mean: 4.11) were chose as the top two factors in the clothing decision factors followed by favorite color (mean: 3.85), comfortable (mean: 3.58), newest fashion (mean: 3.27), brand name (mean: 3.22), and friends will be wearing (mean: 2.30). The factor friends will be wearing was the least important factor of those listed.

<Table 1> Clothing Decision Factors

Wearing Decision Factors	Means (N = 101)	Standard Deviation
Best looking	4.11	0.691
Friends will be wearing	2.30	0.922
Comfortable	3.58	0.803
Favorite color	3.85	0.865
Newest fashion	3.27	0.926
Brand name	3.22	0.912
Fit	4.28	0.618

<Table 2> Perceived Clothing Deprivation

Clothing Deprivation	Means (N = 101)	Standard Deviation
Clothe for school	2.37	1.074
Clothes for doing things with friends	2.78	1.180
Dress-up clothes (Special Occasions)	3.46	1.136

2. What are Korean college women's perceived feelings of clothing deprivation?

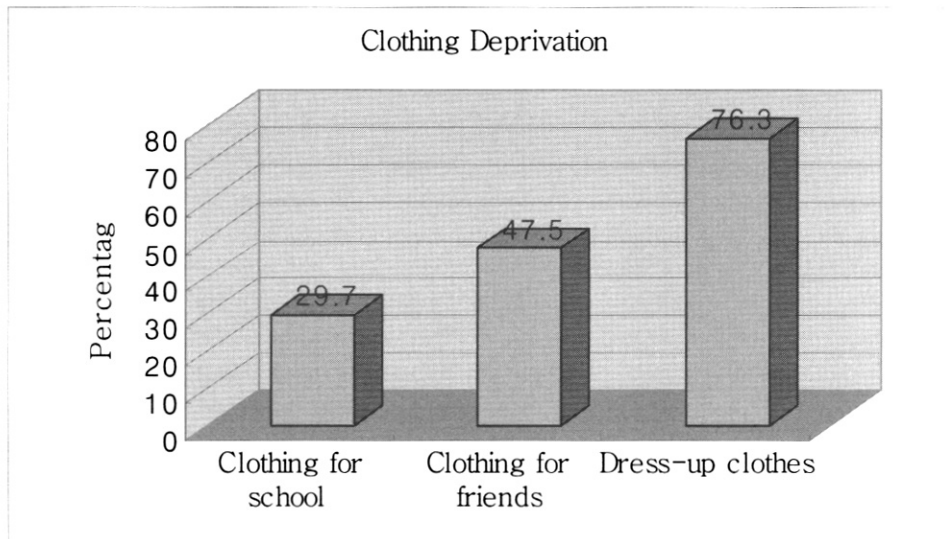
To analyze this research question, descriptive statistics were used for the study to examine how often the college women felt that they did not have or could not get clothes that they would choose to wear for three types of occasions, namely school, doing things with friends, and special occasions. Each clothing deprivation scores was scored from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

As shown in Table 2, the mean value of the perceived clothing deprivation for clothes for school was 2.37, the mean for clothes for doing things with friends was 2.78, and the mean for dress-up clothes was 3.46. The perceived clothing deprivation mean for dress-up clothes was noticeably higher than for the other two types of occasions. Figure 1 shows the results of the college women' responses to deprivation questions for all three types of occasions.

Approximately 76% of the sample indicated that they could not get or did not have suitable clothes for school parties or for going to an occasion like a wedding. Dress-up clothes scored more than twice as much as clothing for school in terms of perceived clothing deprivation in college women. Forty-seven percent did not feel they had clothes they would choose to wear for clothes worn while doing things or hanging out with their friends, while 29.7% felt they did not have clothes that they would choose to wear for school.

3. What is the relationship between college year and perceived clothing deprivation?

To analyze this research question, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and Pearson's correlation coefficient were conducted. The independent variable here was the college year, namely freshman, sophomore, junior, or



<Figure 1> Korean College Women's Perceived Clothing Deprivation

<Table 3> Perceived Clothing Deprivation Related to College Year

College year	Clothes for school Mean/Std. Deviation	Clothes for friends Mean/Std. Deviation	Dress-up clothes Mean/Std. Deviation
Freshman (N=23)	2.57 / 1.237	3.09 / 1.083	3.09 / 1.125
Sophomore (N=11)	1.91 / 0.831	1.82 / 0.982	3.09 / 0.944
Junior (N=37)	2.22 / 1.004	3.05 / 1.201	3.78 / 1.084
Senior (N=29)	2.59 / 1.086	2.62 / 1.083	3.55 / 1.121
Total (N=101)	2.37 / 1.074	2.78 / 1.180	3.46 / 1.136

senior, while the dependent variables were the clothing deprivation scales. Results from a MANOVA indicated that a college women's year significantly influences their perceived clothing deprivation, at $p = 0.003$ (Wilk's lambda).

As shown in Table 3, the mean of the perceived clothing deprivation score for clothes for school in freshmen was 2.57, while for sophomores it was 1.91, juniors 2.22, and seniors 2.59. The mean of the perceived clothing deprivation score for clothes for doing things

with friends in freshmen was 3.09, for sophomores it was 1.82, juniors 3.05, and seniors 2.62. The mean of the perceived clothing deprivation score for *dress-up clothes* for clothing deprivation in both freshmen and sophomores was 3.09, with juniors 3.78, and seniors 3.55.

As shown in Table 4, there was a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.239$, $p = 0.016$) between college year and perceived clothing deprivation for dress-up clothes. A positive correlation

<Table 4> Pearson Correlation Between College Year and Perceived Clothing Deprivation

Dress-up Clothes	Perceived Clothing Deprivation
College year	0.239
Sig.	0.016*

Note. * $p = 0.05$

indicates that as one variable increases, the other variable also increases. Therefore, as the participants progressed through college their perceived clothing deprivation for dress-up clothes also increased.

V. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore Korean college women's perceived clothing deprivation, which describes how often they feel that they don't have or can't get clothes that they would choose to wear for three types of occasions, namely clothes for school, clothes for friends, and dress-up clothes, and their clothing decision factors.

The first objective of the present study was to reveal Korean college women's rankings of their clothing decision factors for what they choose to wear. Results indicated that the two clothing decision factors: *clothes that fit me well* (mean: 4.28) and *clothes that look best on me* (mean: 4.11) were chosen as the top two clothing decision factors for the college women. In contrast, according to Lee, Ulrich and Connell (2006)²⁰⁾, adolescent girls indicated that *clothes that fit me well* and *clothes that are comfortable* were the top two clothing decision factors. Consequently, *clothes that look best on me* may begin to be an important factor once they enter college. Hsu and Burns (2002)¹⁹⁾ found that the size/fit criterion was the most important for both

Taiwanese and U.S. female college students. According to Smathers and Horridge (1978-79)²⁵⁾, well-fitted clothing is vital to an individual's psychological and social well-being. The ultimate appearance and fit of clothes should, therefore, not only be comfortable (i.e. functional) and pleasing to the senses for example accentuating a slender waist. It also has to meet with her socio-psychological needs.²⁶⁾ The present study supported the importance of fit as a clothing decision factor for Korean college women. The emergence of these two factors as being important to the college women suggests the need for further study of what having clothes that fit well and clothes that look good on them means to college women.

The second objective of the study was to investigate Korean college women's perceived feelings of clothing deprivation. Based upon their mean scores, the study participants felt the lack of suitably dressy clothes (mean: 3.46) for school parties or for going to an occasion like a wedding more severely than for either of the other two occasions, namely clothes for school (mean: 2.37) and clothes for doing things with friends (mean: 2.78). These results indicate that Korean college women are less satisfied with their choices for dress-up clothes compared to their clothes for school and for doing things with friends.

The third objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between college year

and perceived clothing deprivation. The study participants who were juniors and seniors in college felt themselves to be significantly clothing deprived for dress-up clothes. It means that these college women do not have or cannot get clothes that they would choose to wear for special occasions.

Francis (1992)⁴⁾ found that clothing deprivation has a significant effect on social participation and social competence. Therefore, marketers who aim at developing dressy clothes for this age group should thus consider their clothing deprivation for that area.

The major limitation of this study was that students from only one university participated. Consequently, the results suggest that further study using a larger participant pool from a more diverse group of universities and including more diverse ethnic groups. In addition, it is also recommended that future studies examine how female college students in different countries differ in terms of their perceived clothing deprivation and clothing decision factors.

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