



RESEARCH PAPER

**Modern Domain Living: Qualitative Analysis of Fashion Practice's
Consciousness among University's Undergraduate Female Students**

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ABSTRACT

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Living in modern world is the need of time. Islam emphasis on proper and ethical dressing, covering whole body, veiling and more particularly on modesty. Allah Almighty says that the best dress is of Taqwah (fear of Allah), i.e. one shall be fearing from Allah, be modest in one's deeds, and shall cover one's whole body. A moderate dress covers the physico-bodily flaws, defects, and weaknesses of individuals, religion Islam says. The Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him said that wear proper and good clothes according to your economic status and gender. He Peace Be Upon Him also says that Allah Almighty is beautiful and He (Allah Almighty) loves beauty. The fashion is the modern cultural preservation of living style, appearance of physical personality and manner of interaction. This study explored the prevalence of fashion and factors persuading undergraduate female University's students for fashion. Being gender-sensitive study, a number of 20 female students from Kohat University of Science & Technology (KUST), Kohat were purposively selected and interviewed. Findings indicate that fashion-practice and enthusiasm for it prevails among female students in study area, and they are inspired for it through social interaction, society, and mass media. It is recommended that practicing fashion shall be in conformity to the religious, ethical, socio-cultural, and legal limits of a society in a state.

Introduction

Islam gives guidance not only on faith and preaching but on every aspect of life. Regarding dress code, Allah Almighty says "O children of Adam, We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment. But

the clothing of righteousness - that is best. That is from the signs of Allah that perhaps they will remember." (Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf, 7:26). Allah Almighty says "O children of Adam, let not Satan tempt you as he removed your parents from Paradise, stripping them of their clothing to show them their private parts. Indeed, he (Satan/devil) sees you, he and his tribe, from where you do not see them. Indeed, We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe." (Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf, 7:27). "O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful." (Qur'an, Surah Al-Ahzab, 33:59). Allah Almighty also says "When performing every salat (prayer), wear your fancy (clean, good, favourite) clothes." (Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf, 7:31).

Fashion refers to personal mode of expression that may or may not be applicable to all, with more frequent changes than the cultural-changes (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). Holmberg and Ohnfeldt (2010) stated that the term "fashion" do include not only clothes, but make-up, hair-style and accessories; like handbags, shoes, belts, gloves, hats, scarves, glasses and jewelry. Pentecost and Andrews (2010) stated that term fashion includes personal shopping exhibiting tastes and values of a person, and characteristics of appearance of someone or something on different occasions. Kaiser (1997) termed fashion as any material/physical object persons putting on their bodies. Schindler and Holbrook (1993) gave perspective of fashion including entire range of visual elements like hairstyle, clothing, jewelry, and accessories while fashion consciousness is an attitude of a person including cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects (Zimbardo et al., 1977). Tungate (2012) defines "fashion consciousness" as awareness for dressing stylish and up-to-date apparels, and person's involvement with fashion of dressing. Solomon and Rabolt (2009) define fashionable as when someone or something fits-in with existing mode-of-expression. Stone (2013) stated that when we talk about fashion in terms of clothing style then it means as a distinct appearance of garment when its unique characteristics differentiate it from other kinds of garments.

Literature Review

Fashion and Young Female Students

Fashion being part of communal art represent glamour, beauty, and goodness of any culture (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). Holmberg and Ohnfeldt (2010) said that some people are indifferent and they seldom care about their wearing, while some other people, especially women, really do care. Women spend much time and money on choosing nice up-to-fashion clothes. Some like wearing ready-made-clothes, while others make clothes themselves. Some want to be dressed perfectly having a good-taste in choosing apparels, while some others want to dress latest-fashion, either suiting them or not. It is favorite hobby for them to buy latest fashion-magazines for seeing popular designers' designs especially in Paris,

Rome, London, and New York etc. Bakewell et al. (2006) and Gronow (1997) state that fashion involves trends of consuming-behavior representing a person's tastes and values to others acceptable by larger group of people in form of styles at a specific time displaying both distinction and social-identification.

Fashion is currently an important tool of personal-identity attracting people of all ages, particularly teenagers. Koester and May (1985) claimed that teenagers seem to give more importance to fashion; they spend money on fashion-items, especially on clothes. Babin and Harris (2012) said that youth do fashion of latest clothing to distinguish themselves. Women remain consistently aware of what is considered beautiful by society (Holmberg & Ohnfeldt, 2010). Webb-Lupo and Lester (1987) said that the female undergraduate students above 16-years age take significant interest in clothing. Self-awareness is aroused at early adulthood and much of societal attention is given to physical-appearance, shape of face-and-body, or figure etc. Kang et al. (2013) conducting study on undergraduate-female-students does found them tending to choice clothing hiding defects in their look, and to look fashionable. Piacentini and Mailer (2004) found that choices of young females' clothing were closely connected with their self-concept and confidence-level, making judgments about others, and how they express themselves.

Factors Affecting Fashion Consciousness

Factors affecting trends of clothing include geography, climate, social-media, gender-differences, consumer-behavior, poverty, and wealth (Holmberg & Ohnfeldt, 2010). Gbadamosi (2012) found that factors like weather-conditions, social and personal-factors, and religion do influence clothing-behavior of women.

Demographic Factors (ethnicity, age, economic condition and marital status etc.)

Shen and Dickson (2001) argued that fashion-behaviour can be different among different ethnic-groups. Summers et al. (1992) said that to describe retail-consumers by using demographics can assist to examine the amount of prevailing and possible shoppers in markets. Kara and Kara (1996) argued that behavior of group can be accessed through commonalities within subcultures of that area, identified by ethnicity, and young-consumers have significant mutual effect of their subculture and ethnicity. Elimian (2007) perceived similarities in consumption-behavior of same ethnic-group but dissimilarities in opposite ethnic-groups. Similarities in behavior within same ethnic-groups were due to access to same information sources, shopping at same types of markets and availability of same type of products etc. (Delener & Neelankavil, 1990). Behling (1992) found eight variables related to demographic factors affecting one's preference toward fashion i.e. marital status, age, education, children, socioeconomic-status, race and gender, finding that fashion-preference decreases with age, marriage, and having children. According to Oladele and Ogundipe (2016) price-and-quality have different impacts on consumer-behavior, some consumers prefer quality when price of garments is low, while others notice value when price and value are

balanced. Hansen (2005) considered price as important external-factor affecting consumer's selection while evaluating products-brands. Tigert et al. (1976) found that low-involved-customers might focus on convenience and price while high-involved-consumers may prefer quality-and-service of new brands. Summers et al. (1992) found demographic-factors including marital-status, age, ethnicity, and income influencing women's fashion. Economically well-off people change clothes with every latest design of their tailors, while poors' dressings change slowly (Holmberg& Ohnfeldt, 2010).

Social Factors (culture & society etc.) and Psychological Factors (mood & attitude etc.)

According to Hofstede (2001) culture of any nation has significant-impacts on individual's values, behavior, and fashion. Walsh et al. (2001) found Germans as fashion-conscious relating to latest-styles, frequent wardrobe's changes and excessive shopping experiences. Osuala (2001) found that cultural-familial-factors have impacts on individual's clothing-choice. There are ethnic-groups in Nigeria having different modes-of-dressing, choice of fabric, and attitude toward fashion linked-with their ethno-cultural differences (Jones, 1990). Spencer (1998) claimed that due to advancement of science and technology, people from different cultural backgrounds not only interact but also intermarry and this cultural-fusion cause dressing-styles fusion. McKinney et al. (2004) identified numerous social factors responsible for fashion including reference groups, fashion involvement, social participation, social environment, and clothing benefits. While studying impact of these factors regarding clothing among college students of African-America, they found correlation between time-duration, fashion-involvement, and shopping-spending. According to Evans et al. (2009) the social groups that influence one's consuming-purchasing behavior include primary groups (family and friends), secondary groups (broader social system within institutions like university), informal groups (people grouped through mutual interests/cultures, formal groups (structured through more stern formations), and virtual groups (communities like online social networks etc.).

Marshal et al. (2004) stated that people possess different perceptions towards fashion, depending upon their point-of-view, age, social status, academic-qualifications, and life-style etc. The people having dressed similarly accept each other's style but may criticize others having dressed differently. According to Behling and Williams (1991) the clothes represent one's personal interest, values, attitude, habits, and trustworthiness etc., which build-up individual's personality. Weber (1990) said that someone's clothing-style can tell people about majority of one's capabilities i.e. whether one is daring or conservative, confident or insecure, casual or organized, leader or follower, and outgoing or reserved etc. Markus and Kitayama (1991) also identified differences in culture that may be present in cognition, emotion, and motivation. Dixon (2007) found that psychological factors including self-confidence, self-consciousness, shopping-enjoyment, fashion-

leadership, and consuming-behavior etc. can affect one's dressing and appearance. Shim and Bickle (1994) found that independent and innovative people had high level of shopping-enjoyment, psychographics, shopping-orientations, and demographics.

Social Media and Mass Media Factors

Advertisements are made every-day presenting images of women's beauty of all ages, shapes, and sizes (Bakewell et al., 2006). According to Cash and Cash (1982) the media causes women feel unattractive and with lack of self-esteem, pushing-them for using cosmetics when they become aware of public-self-consciousness. Women consider themselves attractive physically using cosmetics, overestimating their attractiveness with makeup, whereas underestimate their beauty and look without makeup. Nash et al. (2006) examined that females with makeup and cosmetics use were being more confident, earning well through prestigious jobs. Parker et al. (2004) found that Americans and Japanese females had more fashion-consciousness than their males, but there were insignificant gender influences in China.

Kaiser and Chandler (1984) observed that for shaping appearance and for awareness of fashion-related information the elderly watch television. Greco and Paksoy (1989) argue that people having fashion-consciousness behavior do trust information sources provided by mass-media. Ross (2000), and (Schewe & Noble, 2000) claimed that internet is mostly used as source of fashion-information these days. Iravani et al. (2012) stated that source of media entertainment influencing fashion-awareness do include internet, National-Television, satellite-TV etc. They found a connection between fashion-consciousness and mass-media, finding that traditional values have direct impact on fashion, for which their study showed that 51% of fashion-oriented requirements are described by culture.

Material and Methods

Nature of Study

The study was qualitative and descriptive. The respondents were 20 females having ages ranging from 20 to 25 years, studying in undergraduate degree (BS and MSc) programmes. They were selected as non-employed and unmarried, because of the assumption that marriage (spouse' choice) and employment (workplace requirements) can affect the status, dressing, and fashion choice.

Criterion Based Sampling

One-month's non-participant observation of potential respondents was held regarding fashion's prevalence, at campus of the KUST, prior-to respondents' selection. Those undergraduate students were selected who have been studying in

University for almost a year. Research focused on those students who were appearing to be prominently modern-styled and fashionable; wearing fashionable-dresses, foot-wears and, using cosmetics and other fashion accessories (this was done by female research-peer due to gender-access-sensitivity and ethical reasons, males have ethical restrictions of observing fashion of female respondents). The researchers interviewed 20 female-respondents for meeting study's objective. The potential-respondents were requested to give their time for qualitative-interview, by briefing them about objectives of study. The average interviews last for 30 minutes, ranging from 20 to 40 minutes approximately. Majority respondents co-operated in provision of data during interviews.

Primary Data Collection

The primary data was collected based on qualitative methodology using interview guide, wherein the respondents were given greater freedom of sharing their likes, dislikes, experiences and point of view related to the study's objectives. Primary-data was collected from each respondent in one interview-sitting.

Non-Participant Observation

Parallel with interview, direct personal informed non-participant-observation was made of respondents by female research-peer.

Field Interview and Discussion

The interviews of respondents were held within campus in natural setting of Kohat University of Science & Technology (KUST), Kohat. The respondents' consent was sought before interviews. The phenomenon under-analysis was discussed and free-will was given to respondents.

Ethical Considerations Held During Study

The secondary data was properly cited and referenced. Respondents were taken into confidence regarding their privacy, identity restriction, utilization of the primary data provided by them for research and academic purpose only. During data collection it was considered that the respondents were not asked too personal questions. The field observation was restricted to study's objectives, and was conducted by female research-peer. Looking at someone with concentration (staring) is undesirable-act in study-region, which is not only unethical, rather it makes observed person nervous, this factor was considered for avoidance of generating harm. Respondents' anonymity was assured and they were also assured about research-oriented usage of collected data. Before conduct of observation and interviews, the respondents' willingness was taken and they were briefed about objectives of study. As per spirit of qualitative research, respondents were given sufficient degree of freedom. The respondents' cooperation in provision of data was appreciated and acknowledged with thanks.

Study's Limitations

The study is gender-sensitive covering young adult females, hence in a co-education environment of university. KUST was established in 2001 in Kohat, wherein males and females are provided with merit based equal opportunities of studies at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Both males and females are provided with equal opportunities of employment here. Though the number of female-students are lesser, while number of female employees are too lesser.

Socio-cultural Description of Study's Territory

The District Kohat is located in province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There are two major linguistic-ethnicities here; Pashtu speaking and Hindko speaking. The religion Islam is followed over here. The culture is Islamic, purdah oriented dress is worn by both males and females with clear gender distinction. People are full-body covered/dressed up. Almost 95% females wear "Abaya" over clothes. There is infrequent interaction between males and females in community, hence in University there is moderation and significant level of interaction prevails among both genders.

Primary Data Analysis

Non-Participant Observation during Field Study

During non-participant observation it was observed that the selected undergraduate female students were significantly conscious about fashion. Mere females were selected as respondents because they seemed to be particular and choosy regarding what to wear, they were spending significant amount of money on clothes and fashion, as compared to males. During interaction with respondents in KUST, it was examined that majority-respondents apparently were fat/overweight - but not obese, still looking fashionable; wearing abaya was helping them hiding their fatness. They were wearing multi-color stalls. Some respondents having lesser-heights still looked fashionable were wearing heels instead of flat shoes, covering their height-deficiency. In Pakistan, the height of '5 feet' to '5 feet - 6 inches' is considered as normal-height for females hence it is not a standard-norm. Observation supported that female-students get impressed/influenced by each other's fashion and styles due to being friends and class fellows, discussing, sharing, and inspiring each other. Majority students do pin-up their hijab (stalls or scarfs) through flower-pins (broaches) instead of using safety-pins or common-pins. Most of them were wearing colorful shabby abaya. In winter, majority wear long-sweaters over abaya. Significant number of students wrap long Chaadar or Dopatta (open cloth sewed on borders) to cover them-selves, looking comparatively more fashionable, because they were wearing other fashion-items that were visible.

The students not wearing abaya were apparently bold and confident. Though many students were wearing hijab, still looking fashionable and attractive

because they use to do eye-makeup, such as, Kajal, Eye-Liner, Mascara, Surma, and were wearing different types of Lenses. Some students with weak eye-sight were wearing different-types of glasses with stylish-frames, successfully aiding eye-sight and looking fashionable. Majority students were significantly conscious about their hands-beauty, were wearing different types of bangles, rings, and were using nail-polish. A physically-disable female student was observed facing-difficulty in walking (was limping), she does was conscious of her dressing-style having a fashionable-personality.

Majority of students' doing-fashion had a socially-strong and economically rich family background, therefore they can afford expensive-fashion. Students with simplicity- not doing fashion, majority belonged to financially weak and middle-class families, were looking comparatively less confident expressing somewhat deprivation. The social environment and peer pressure persuade poor and middle class students for fashion, even if it proves to be expensive to them. Majority students in study's universe were wearing qamees (long loose/relax/casual shirt) with shalwar (loose/relax/casual pant), they were looking fashionable hence within religious and socio-cultural limits increasing their decency. It was observed that majority students looking fashionable were studying in same academic-class and were friends of each-other.

Interaction with Respondents

Motivational Causes of Fashion

They do fashion because their friends/Peers do so? was a question to which majority replied that yes their fashion choice is mostly influenced by their friends/peers. They shared that when their friends wear or buy something impressive, they buy similar thing, exhibiting friendship-bond and peer-influence. Some respondents shared that they do fashion because their cousins do so. One respondent shared that she has a cousin of her age and they both use to buy and wear similar like fashion-apparels from their childhood, this shared experience has proven that in fact one's company has significant role in shaping one's personality. *The respondents were asked about role of social pressure in persuading them for fashion?* Most of them agreed with social pressure as a major cause persuading them for fashion; avoiding fashion may generate a sense of inferiority in them. While other majority wear clothes what they like and do not care for people regarding whatever opinions they may have about their get-up. Some respondents do fashion because their female cousins do so. They told that when they were simple, concentrating on studies and domestic-work, their family-members were considering them dull, older, looking married-like, and their cousins who were fashionable were receiving more value and attention, therefore, they were persuaded for modern-fashion. They said that less fashionable people are neglected by society, while modern and fashionable are praised. A nicely dressed-

up girl wearing jewelry, if praised, will next-time practice the same action for appreciation as a result of reinforcement.

The respondents were asked that does the environment of University influence them to do fashion? Majority replied in affirmation. They shared that the socio-cultural environment of University has played an important role in acquainting them with fashion. As the University students are a particular community i.e. distinctive from other-communities, unlike strangers they do have interactive-relationship with each other, passes on a demonstrative effect. Before joining university, they were simple (simply dressed), hence after joining University they were persuaded-to and motivated-for being confident. For gaining confidence they were required to modify their dressing-style, hair-style, make up style, style of interaction, as well as overall living style. Some respondents shared that they were fashionable since college life and some were inspired for fashion through their family's environment. *Respondents were asked that whether their parents do encourage them to do fashion?* Majority respondents answered in affirmation. They said that their parents mostly supported and encouraged them to remain up to date in society. But if they forbid them from doing something (some type of fashion), then they do not insist/resist. While some replied that if they want to buy something fashionable, even if their parents do not want them to buy that thing, they still insist until they get permission. *The respondents were asked that did they ever given up fashion because it is out of reach to them in financial terms?* Majority respondents answered that they will do fashion even if it is costly. Majority students replied confidently that they are financially good to afford diverging fashions. Some shared that if they wish to wear/buy something expensive, for that they strive and collect money, even borrow. Some said that if a fashion-item is out of their reach, they give-up and forget about it, while some said that if it is out of their reach, they opt for cheap alternatives.

Impacts of Fashion

The respondents were asked that what changes did fashion bringin their lives? Majority replied that they experience greater confidence with fashion-practice. Some consider themselves modern now, not backward. Some shared that they feel honored when people look at them in crowd. Some respondents shared that they have become modern and positively broad-minded which they think is a positive-change in their lives. Some are praised by people and got more attention after being fashionable, they have got unique personality. They have developed positive thinking and have become more optimistic. They found a way to cope up with their somewhat inferiority-complex and can hide their personality-drawbacks by using fashionable costumes and other items. *The respondents were asked that whether fashion possibly is helpful in establishing their professional careers?* Most of them replied in affirmation, and said that they may have more chances of having bright-career by being fashionable. They replied that if they approach multi-national companies, they will have more chances of getting jobs as compared to girls who are less fashionable. They spoke their perception that through fashion,

the interviewers/employers will be impressed from their personalities and dressing-styles; they said that after all the good dressing improves personalities, and people significantly consider how someone is dressed up. Some of them were confident that their career would be made bright through fashion. Some shared that "In modern era masses give less value to simplicity and to less fashionable people". Especially for women, it is very hard to live in this century while being not-modern and less-fashionable. Some students disagreed to linking fashion to success, rather they emphasized the significance of personality-traits like intelligence and hard work, for attaining a bright-career.

They were asked that do they think that they have charming personalities in their family and University clearly because of fashion? Majority respondents replied in affirmation. They agreed that they change style of their hijabs most often, therefore, they have charming and attractive personalities in their class as well in the University. Some of them were thinking that they were the centers of attention; their class-fellows praise them for their dressing-style. Some students shared of charm in their personality due to foot-wear style, as they meet others; they are being asked that from where they have bought such paraphernalia. *They were asked that do they think that fashion can make them lively forever?* Some agreed, they think that through fashion they can make themselves lively to an extent while some answered that fashion cannot make a girl/woman lively forever. Some replied that even they know that females look old earlier by over-usage of cosmetics, even-then they cannot avoid doing fashion due to fascination. *The respondents were asked that whether fashion ended age-difference among females?* Some of them replied that though fashionable-women have charming/attractive personalities but still age-differences are perceptible. An elderly fashionable-woman still looks elder, while a girl even wearing simple dress still look younger. While, some replied that many aged fashionable ladies look younger due to wearing/using fashionable clothes and other accessories matching their personalities, hiding their biological age.

In response to question that did they ever experience any criticism after wearing a bold fashion? Majority respondents replied that they have not done a fashion unacceptable to society. They use to wear such-clothes that are permitted by their religion and society. Some respondents also said that they do not care what people say, as and when their fashion is within limits of socio-ethical values. *Respondents were asked that do they really think that fashion does not influence them to cross their religious and cultural boundaries?* Majority respondents shared that they practice fashion that is in conformity to religious-values, they believed that only such-fashion can impress others which care for religious boundaries. But if they do such fashion which they think that people, especially religious-minded, will mind/object then they try to make/amend it in conformity with religious-ethics, such as if they wear Pajama or Jeans then they use to wear long-shirts or abayas over it to ensure religious-conformity. *The respondents were asked that do they really think that fashion will not divert their attention from their studies?*

Some respondents shared that fashion requires much time, and affect their studies. Their attention/concentration is more on fashion, less on studies. Some respondents shared that they are good at studies while doing fashion, even during exams-times, and prove to it are their good grades, they can manage both at same-time. Some respondents shared that due to fashion they experience confidence, satisfaction, and a peace of mind; this state of mind enhances academic-achievements.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Fashion does comprise clothes, make-up stuffs, hair-styles, and other decorative objects such as handbags, shoes, belts, gloves, scarves, hats, glasses, and jewelry etc. The fashion signifies distinction, choice, craze, personality-factors, culture and social change. The individuals' fashion including one's appearance, dressing, and hair style etc. do reflects traits of their personality. Based on findings of study it is concluded that the fashion practice prevails in the study area, among university's female students. The populace of study's universe is significantly familiar with and is in practice of fashion. Among enormous factors, found in literature and in primary data, affecting fashion choice and practice, some are, fashion is done for distinctiveness, for appearing to be beautiful, expressing one's tastes and values, hiding defects of physical-personality, for ethnic representation, demographic expression, cultural diffusion, corporeal variables, to link up with modernity and diversity, attention seeking, gaining confidence and boldness, attraction, appreciation and praise, as status symbol, due to peer pressure, for greater social acceptance, success in academic and professional spheres, expression of thinking, dynamism and flexibility, some do it for to look different from others while others do it to look-like someothers. While at other side fashion practice is influenced by factors like economic status, family background, social and cultural context, personality traits, fashions' monetary cost, personal choices etc. It was a significant discovery of the research that the respondents representing study area do refrain from such fashion-styles that deviates from religious and moral codes of native-society.

It is recommended that the institutions, especially family, religious seminaries, and universities, may formulate values-based ethical code of conduct for guiding fashion within values based religious-cultural limits. Media shall model such fashion icon who are educated, intellectuals and respectable, and are religious-social conforming persons. The fashion requiring financial-richness may be carefully-exposed so that it may not hurt sentiments of poor who can afford it. The dress shall be hiding and covering physio-sexual attraction of a person. While practicing fashion, the individuals shall follow the religious, ethical, socio-cultural, and legal-limits of a country and shall not hurt sentiments of others.

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