

Journal of Fashion Business
Vol.25, No.6

—
ISSN 1229-3350(Print)
ISSN 2288-1867(Online)

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J. fash. bus. Vol. 25,
No. 6:1-12, December. 2021
[https://doi.org/
10.12940/jfb.2021.25.6.1](https://doi.org/10.12940/jfb.2021.25.6.1)

Case Studies of the Fashion Therapy

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Keywords

women's closet, self-esteem,
fashion therapy,
qualitative study, case study

Abstract

The purpose of this study examines the fashion-related concerns of women in their early twenties and their personal thoughts on sociocultural factors through fashion. Data were collected twenty-seven female participants in their twenties in order to examine their traumas related to fashion and how these experiences affect their attitude toward clothing and fashion. Based on this, this study sheds light on what effects traumatic experiences have had on participants self-esteem. It also provides an in-depth analysis of the problems underlying and reasons for the study participants' fashion choices, and attempts to demonstrate their self-reflection through fashion. Finding of the study was that the participants had a passive attitude toward fashion and built a wall against it. The study results suggest that the very first step to going beyond oneself and developing an active attitude is to try to be proactive and face a challenge related to fashion or clothes that one chooses oneself. Therefore, it is now time for Korean society to shape a culture that respects the unique qualities of every individual and allows free expression of diversity.

I. Introduction

Clothes are often called our second skin. They are extension of our identity. We make decisions about what to wear every day. Shopping addictions, obsessions over too baggy or tight clothes, extremely minimal fashion, and excessive body exposure are behaviors we easily consider as isolated problems of fashion. Scholars have claimed that individuals demonstrate these kinds of behaviors due to psychological trauma resulting from a variety of events or incidents (Baumgartner, 2012/2013). Clothing itself has many meaningful representations for not only covering the body but also representing different cultural symbols or political status. Fashion changes all the time and reflects the social norm and cultures (Lee, 2012).

Most women in Korea begin their professional lives in their early twenties; this is also the phase when the role of confidence and self-esteem becomes much more important. Self-esteem is an essential element in personality, developed as individuals build extended interpersonal relationships beyond family, school, and friends after completing primary and secondary education. There is a considerable body of research stating that our fundamental confidence and self-esteem are established at a much earlier age, even prior to primary education.

The early twenties is the period when young people come into contact with fashion. They finally reach this stage after the long middle and high school period that they spend in school uniform while not having many clothing options. It is also the first time in their lives that they have to make decisions about what to wear every day. According to a survey by Macromillmbrain (2014), 52 percent of Koreans responded that they care about being judged by others; this is more common among women (56.2 percent) than men (47.8 percent), and more common in young people in their teens and early twenties. Seventy-four percent of Koreans also responded that individuals often have to behave in certain ways to show others in Korean society. Culture influences the perspectives of the people comprising a society. It is built through interactions between and mutually shared

thoughts of people living in the same place at the same time. Throughout human history, beauty standards for women have continued to be discussed and to evolve throughout many different cultures. Women have been forced to conform to social stereotypes about their bodies for centuries. The media and society incessantly require women to conform to a number of sociocultural expectations. Of these, measurable body sizes such as height and weight are particularly important, although unquantifiable limitations are also imposed upon them. This culture makes women who do not meet such standards uncomfortable. The impact of the sociocultural factors imposed by society is tremendous, especially on women in their twenties who are just starting to build their interpersonal relationships.

Various existing studies have analyzed body size and body image trends among female students. However, only few of them examined women's personal thoughts in association with the keyword fashion. Psychotherapy, which is designed to treat and heal the mind, has recently incorporated various therapies such as music, art, drama, and play therapies in Korea. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide female students who are highly interested in their appearance with fashion therapy to help them enhance their sense of self-efficacy and confidence. The findings will contribute to producing positive synergy effects in other areas.

The present study examines the fashion-related concerns of women in their early twenties and their personal thoughts on sociocultural factors through fashion. Based on the approach, this study ultimately aims to increase study participants' confidence and self-esteem, and overcome the depression and anxiety cause of clothing.

II. Literature Review

2.1. Fashion Therapy

The effects of various alternative psychological therapies have recently gained a great deal of attention as a means to relieve psychological pain in patients suffering from

mental and emotional disorders and help them receive treatment with a positive mindset. A group of researchers have continued to develop new models of psychotherapy using art, physical, and cultural activities such as art, music, dance, and games. They implemented the new programs with their patients, reporting that the patients experienced a reduction of the negative emotions they suffered from due to depression and anxiety, and that the patients were able to participate in the treatment process more seriously (Yeo, 2015). Fashion therapy programs were first introduced in an American psychiatric hospital in the 1950s. A group of psychiatrists developed an eight-week program for patients in a psychiatric ward that consisted of appearance improvement, posture management, and a small fashion show. They reported that the patients' depression was reduced after the program (Roach & Eicher, 1965)

Fashion therapy is a new psychiatric treatment method based on research into the relationship between symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders and clothing and accessories, and has demonstrated excellent results in clinical treatment. This treatment approach reduces negative emotions by improving one's appearance using clothes and other additional items worn on the body. It is one of the therapies used to provide psychiatric treatment and improve social adaptation (Horn & Gurel, 1981; Kang, 1995; Shin & Lee, 2000).

Yeo (2015) applied the fashion therapy to a group of female patients in attempt to reduce their negative emotions. She investigated whether disorders such as depression and anxiety can be reduced through a fashion therapy program in both female non-cancer and cancer patients. The present study conducted a fashion therapy program and analyzed the results in relation to socio psychological factors such as appearance concern, body satisfaction, self-esteem, and self-efficacy in order to suggest the wide-ranging applicability of fashion therapy. However, Kang (2019)'s study has developed fashion therapy program for male worker to promote positive body image and self-esteem.

2.2. Shopping addicts and Psychology factors

Nineteen patients reported relief of tension with act of shopping or buying. Fourteen patients reported pleasurable feelings while buying or shopping. Thus, although the impulses to buy were associated with tension and experienced as uncomfortable, buying was associated with relief and often pleasure (McElroy, Keck, Pope, Smith, & Strakowski, 1994).

They are actually indifferent to the items they purchase, and in many cases, they rarely use the things they buy. They also show a tendency to become sensitive and feel anxious and unhappy if they cannot go shopping. It has been reported that for shopping addicts, the act of shopping is related to fear, guilt, and anxiety. They experience extreme emotional fluctuations, as they get excited while shopping but immediately feel regretful and depressed afterwards. Sometimes, they even hide the items they have bought fearing that people close to them, such as their spouse or family, will become aware of their shopping addiction (Kim, 2001).

Shopping activities for them represent opportunities to socialize and perhaps to confirm their status may well explain this difference.

This study shows that compulsive buying tendencies are related to many personal and environmental factors, the most important being the influence of peers. The results discussed in this article show that consumers higher on the generalized urge to buy are more likely to associate buying with social status and are more easily influenced by salespeople (D'Astous, 1990; Song & Rhee, 1994).

According to Scherhorn (1990), addictive buying has in fact the qualities of an addiction: that it is associated with anxiety and low self-esteem, that it is characterized by a compulsion or an urge to buy, that it is accompanied by feelings such as being happy or high during but depressed after the act of buying.

III. Research methodology

In this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted, applying systematic reflection to fashion analysis.

Through this, behaviors that have been simply related with fashion in terms of self-esteem and psychotherapy were reexamined, such as an individual's habits, shopping addiction, obsession with small sizes, extremely monotonous fashion, insufficiently-dressed fashion style, etc. The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between the basic theories of fashion therapy and self-efficacy, and to understand fashion from the perspective of fashion therapy.

In Week 15, participants wrote essays on their fashion style after studying issues such as shopping addiction, obsession with extremely small or big sizes, extremely monotonous fashion, and insufficiently dressed fashion style and gave presentations on their essays. By examining essays of approx. 60 participants, six topics commonly discussed in the essays were selected and analyzed, and the data were used for qualitative research.

3.1. Measurement Instrument and Data Analysis

Data were collected sixty Korean female college participants in their early twenties for two semesters from September 2017, and September 2018. The participants were interviewed in order to examine their traumas related to fashion and how these experiences affect their attitude toward clothing and fashion. Based on this, this study sheds light on what effects traumatic

experiences have had on participants' self-esteem. It also provides an in-depth analysis of the problems underlying and reasons for the study participants' fashion choices and attempts to demonstrate their self-reflection through fashion. Several cases from the 60 study subjects under a common theme were qualitatively analyzed, and six subjects were examined as case studies.

3.2 Case studies

Case 1. It is possible for women to weigh over 60 kg

I was always conscious about my position in interpersonal relationships. I was quite keen to study others' feelings and cared a lot about what the thought. Other people's thoughts matter to me a lot, and I am quite sensitive to current trends. When it comes to clothing, however, I do not follow what is currently in fashion. I have clear preferences and my own style.

At some point, I noticed a problem in my fashion orientation, so I analyzed why I insist on my current style. The biggest reason is the stress from my body weight. I personally call this my diet compulsion. A compulsion is a psychological disorder in which one feels anxious due to certain ideas or scenes that occur regardless of one's will, and a need to repeat a certain type of behavior to get rid of the anxiety. I grew obsessed with the visible aspect of my body weight,

Table 1. Participant's Profile

Case	Age	Job	Subject
1	21	Sophomore	<i>It is possible for women to weigh over 60 kg</i>
2	22	Junior	<i>My closet: A glance into my personal and social problems</i>
3	21	Sophomore	<i>I am not a Barbie doll</i>
4	23	Senior	<i>Dress like a woman</i>
5	22	Junior	<i>I only wore black</i>
6	22	Junior	<i>How I ended up not caring about fashion</i>

rather than my weight in terms of the percentage of body fat or muscle mass.

I am 170 cm tall and weigh 64 kg. Most men think that women rarely weigh over 60kg. My friends also know quite little about women's body weight. They just judge people based on their appearance. As women, we grow up with these perceptions. During elementary school, I never felt strange when I saw boys bullying or picking on chubby girls. Various TV programs also frequently aired scenes in which fat people were disregarded. I grew up seeing this kind of thing. I believe that this is probably why I am so conscious about what others think and suffer from my compulsive dieting.

I think I try to choose clothes that cover my flaws as much as possible because of my compulsive dieting. For example, I often choose boxy pants to cover the flaws of my leg line, and I prefer boxy T-shirts to cover the flaws in my arms and waist. I often wear this type of clothing and I do like the style, but sometimes I want to wear clothes that are more feminine and show off some parts of my body.

I think a lot about my problems. After sufficiently contemplating my relationship with my sense of fashion, I settled on the following three solutions. First, it is important to put small things into practice. Second, it is better to cook at home than eating out. Finally, the most important solution is to start a healthy diet. Extreme fasting, dieting without exercise, and diets harmful one's health are inevitably the wrong ways to eat.

I realized my problems through this interview and now I am more confident in my capacity to resolve them. I was able to have some time to learn more about myself, which helped me increase my self-esteem.

Case 2. My closet: A glance into my personal and social problems

1) Psychological causes of the greed for clothes

I thought about why I particularly crave getting new clothes among other types of possessions from a psychological perspective. I am quite short compared to my peers. This frequently led to embarrassing situations when I went out for shopping: the tops or pants I liked

were too long, the waist was too loose, or I could not buy the clothes that enchanted me because they were often too big for me. As I was continually frustrated because I could not buy clothes even when I really wanted to, whenever I found something that fit me well, I would rush to buy it without giving it much thought, as though I had just met the love of my life. Even if the item was more expensive than I had expected, I would just take it home with me, doubting when I would next be able to find another item of clothing that fit me as perfectly.

I believe that I tried to feed this greed for clothes, as episodes such as this have happened time and again ever since middle school, when I started choosing my clothes myself: it is an element of human psychology that we become more possessive even when what we want is out of our reach. The same principle explains why people are more interested in 'limited editions' or 'rare items.'

I previously believed that I was so possessive about clothes just because I liked them. However, approaching the issue from a psychological perspective, I realize that my habit is associated with my conflicting feelings about my appearance.

2) The reason for my frequent clothes shopping

An image occurred to my mind when I was thinking about the reason for my shopping habit. Most women understand what it is like to think that one has nothing to wear, even after tons of shopping. I am one of those people who buys a lot of clothes, but still stands before my wide-open closet thinking that I have nothing to wear. I am caught in a vicious circle of endless shopping.

I thoroughly analyzed the cause of this never-ending cycle, because I felt like I could identify the reason for my frequent clothes shopping. I think the biggest reason is the trends: I was always determined to dress according to the most up-to-date fashion trends, because what others think and how I look is so important to me. Because I always bought clothes to keep up with fast-paced fashion trends, I felt that I did not have anything to wear in the following seasons. Ideally, I want to buy clothes based on what I really need, and what I

can match well with the ones I have at home. However, I was getting fed up quickly because I was just buying clothes to follow the trends.

In short, I pursued satisfaction by keeping up with the styles of others or being distinguished from them through my clothes. Investigating my clothes shopping problem, I soon reached the conclusion that it might originate from Korean culture. In other words, my behavior and attitude of caring about others' judgment does not arise solely from my personal problems. I believe the reasons are also present in our society.

Case 3. I am not a Barbie doll!

The first thing I do at 8:00 in the morning is choose what to wear for the day. It is often said that clothes represent our identity, and what kind of thoughts and emotions we have. Clothing is our outer self, reflecting our consciousness, dissatisfactions, and wishes. If we feel comfortable and confident wearing certain clothes, we are able to increase our quality of life and further enhance our self-esteem.

When I thought that I did not have problems anymore, I found that my most fundamental problem was with myself. In fact, it probably took me longer to acknowledge this because it also touches upon the trauma I have experienced. As the phrase 'I am not a Barbie doll!' suggests, I tried to have a perfect body like a Barbie by choosing extremely small or tight clothes.

Clothes are often compared to packaging: They are the covering that increases our value. Others evaluate us based on the way we dress, and we perceive ourselves accordingly. For example, I am unable to make eye contact with other people when I am returning home from the library during exams because I do not have time to take care of my appearance at that time.

However I look, whatever I put on, I am myself. But why am I so obsessed with how I look? I have identified three reasons for this phenomenon. The first is my desire to have an extremely curvy body, like a perfect Barbie. The media incessantly propagate the idea that ideal women have large breasts, butts, and thighs but a slim waist. Women feel pressured to expose more of their

body, and to wear clothes that make them appear sexy. I am no exception to this. I choose clothes that fit tightly, and often use shapewear to add more padding to my body in certain places and to make my waist slimmer. I insisted on smaller-size clothes because I felt like I fit the description of the perfect woman when I dressed this way. Second, I am extremely sensitive about what others think. I was pleased by the attention and reactions of people around me when I wore tight, sexy clothes. Third, my former boyfriend, with whom I stayed together for a long time (we recently broke up), was obsessed with tight, sexy, feminine clothing. He would always say to me that I looked better wearing a skirt than pants because I have a long waist but shorter legs, and a big butt. I always wore tight knitted tops and skirts or dresses when I went out with him. He would tell me I looked pretty when I wore feminine, tight clothes rather than boxy designs. Eventually this made me think that it was normal for me to dress the way he wanted because he liked it, even though I felt uncomfortable in such clothes.

I finally concluded that it is necessary to choose clothes for myself—not for show, and not to please others. I measured my real body, not the size of my body in tight clothes. The result was shocking. I had insisted on a small size 24 for skirts and trousers, but my real size is a medium 26. When I zip up a pants, I did not feel like my clothes were too tight at the waist because I was getting old; it was just that the clothes were not the right size for me. I gave away all my pants and other tight clothes that used to suffocate me to my friends, or just threw them away with determination. I was able to recognize my inaccurate stereotypes through this therapy. There is no one type of clothing we have to wear because we are women. I am discarding the framework of femininity I have always dressed within and trying out more diverse styles.

In fact, I am really intrigued by street fashion, although I gave up the idea once before, because I felt that I was not bold enough to trying it. I have broken free from the idea that I have to wear the clothing others expect me to. I can wear what I want to wear, as much as I want

to. Finally, I decided to love my body as it is. Perhaps it is only natural to internalize the desire for a perfect body in today's society, which places so much importance on appearance. Perhaps it is not only me who thinks this way. However, it truly is a pity that women are trying so hard to fit that ideal, knowing so well that such images are all artificially processed. At times, we overestimate our flaws due to the pressure imposed upon us. I am priceless the way I am.

Case 4. Dress like a woman

I analyzed my fashion first: I always wear T-shirts, sleeveless tops, leggings, or training shorts on hot days, and hoodies, sweatshirts, windbreakers, leggings, and a long padded jacket in winter. I do not usually wear dressy shoes; instead I go out in slippers or sneakers.

'Dress like a woman,' 'why do you always wear a hoodie?,' 'why are you always in trainers?,' 'why do you not get yourself some pretty clothes?,' 'why do you not put on a skirt or dress at least once?' and 'you look like you just got out of bed': these are the comments I always hear in response to my sense of fashion. These comments eventually made me question if something was wrong with me. From the moment I was asked to choose a topic, I wondered why I do not like buy so-called women's clothing (blouses, skirts, and dresses), why I feel uncomfortable with them, and if something was wrong with me. There is nothing wrong with my sense of fashion. The usual comments that I get from people around me, such as being told to dress like a woman, to be pretty and neat, make me deny my fashion myself. Fitness wear is the type of clothes that represents me.

People often say that fitness wear is sloppy, informal, and uncomfortable. When I am in such clothes, they tell me that 'I do not know how to get dressed up,' 'I look too informal,' and 'I look sloppy.' Putting on fitness wear is not the same thing as just putting on whatever you grab without looking. I carefully choose colors and match the items that go well together. Nonetheless, I inevitably became convinced that 'my clothes are not good to look at. They are not pretty, and look sloppy. It is not

considered good enough in society' due to people's unfriendly looks at my clothes and relentless advice to dress more like a woman. In consequence, I have been stressed out and am always trying to buy clothes that I do not need and I will not even wear.

I identified three issues as the real problems with my sense of fashion, instead of my sporty look. First, I get very frustrated when I choose clothes. It takes me at least half an hour to choose clothes, because I try to wear things to please others, not the clothes that I need and feel comfortable in. Second, I rather hate clothes. Precisely speaking, I am indifferent about clothes, and I am growing uninterested in fashion. I put a lot of effort into choosing and buying clothes I do not actually want. Finally, I hate shopping. The last activity I would choose to do on earth is shopping. My choices for clothes are based on what I should wear to make others consider my style normal, and how I should dress to keep them from noticing my sense of fashion. I do not go shopping because certain clothes are attractive, or they look good on me. I had been shopping this way, and I lost all interest in shopping.

I analyzed my problems and thought about the causes. The most fundamental reason was that I had been denying my sense of fashion, and I took others' criticism seriously. I did not choose clothes based on what I felt comfortable in and I wanted. The thought that I had to meet others' standards developed into problem in my sense of fashion. As I am not very good with fashion and I know very little about it, I accepted all such comments at face value, and ended up believing everything people told me was right. Those who gave me advice probably said such things in wish that 'I would sometimes try more varied styles' or 'perhaps I look good in other clothes,' because I only ever wear sporty clothes. I changed my point of view. I put on sportswear because I am a sportswoman: I told myself that I will continue to do so, that I feel most comfortable in sporty clothes, and that they are the best, the most efficient, and most reasonable style for me. This made me feel more comfortable, and I was finally able to break free from the compulsion that used to push me to wear something

else that does not represent my personality.

I am now free from the compulsion, and can better express myself. I realized that the clothes that represent my personality are the clothes I am going to wear.

Case 5. I only wore black

A month of taking pictures showed that I always wore clothes in the same style: a short skirt with the top tucked in and a skirt, or a dress. Furthermore, most of my clothes were brown, and those that were not brown were usually other dark colors such as burgundy or black.

I have received a lot of mean comments about my appearance since I was little. I lost my self-esteem due to these endless verbal attacks. I felt as if I was not good enough and I that was falling behind everybody else because I did not know how to take care of my appearance well. I felt so inferior around stylish people, no matter who they were. I even believed that they would look down on me and talk behind my back. However, I did not wear makeup other than sunblock, and did not buy many clothes until I graduated from high school. I thought it was more important for me to enter a good university than to take care of my appearance.

My favorite color is pink. Of all its many shades, I like pale pink and indy pink most. However, I have only one item of pink clothing in my closet, a pink vest I bought earlier this year. I have only worn it twice since I bought it. The color I usually chose was white: I used to wear it so often that my friends' goal was to prevent me from buying white clothes when we went out shopping together. Now, however, I have just few clothes that are white. Although I do not wear pink too often, I think about why I do not wear pink or white any longer. I think this is because of the personal color diagnosis I got last fall.

As I mentioned previously, I tuck my tops into my skirts; I also wear long skirts and dresses. However, I hardly ever wear pants. It is not because I prefer skirts to pants, or that skirts are more comfortable than pants. I used to wear pants more than skirts during my

freshman year, and of all the varieties of pants I wore only skinny jeans. However, I started to gain weight over the course of my school years, and the shape of my legs changed. I got positive comments from people about my legs, and I was most confident with my legs. But the appearance of my legs changed. It made me stop wanting to wear skinny jeans. I believed that skinny jeans made my ugly leg shape stand out. I was very frustrated whenever I saw my legs in skinny jeans, and I was constantly trying to figure out how my legs looked different after I put on more weight. That is why I came to choose skirts. A short skirt keeps my legs equally visible, but I still reasoned that my legs would be less likely to catch people's attention than tight skinny jeans. In order to cover my legs completely, I even thought about wearing long skirts or slacks. When I tried going out in a long skirt, however, people often told me that it did not look good, and that short skirts looked better on me. I rarely wear long skirts anymore. I do not know how to coordinate my look well with slacks, which were the other alternative, and I tend to avoid them, because I think that they are made for people with a keen sense of fashion. I compulsively take care of my looks when I go out. I used to be criticized for my appearance until high school, but I started to get positive comments when I started taking care of my looks when I began university. I was happy to get such comments, but on the other hand, I grew fearful of getting criticized as I had been before. As a result, I wear makeup even when I do not have any special plans after school, during exams, or even when I go to the supermarket. I feel secure when I am wearing neat clothes and have the proper accessories on. Although I suffer from dry eye syndrome, I wear lenses at all times unless I have severe eye pain. I pay much more attention to my skin and makeup than usual when I go out with my glasses on. In fact, I want to wear my glasses, leggings, and a hoodie with no makeup on my face; I just want to stay comfortable during my exams or when I am out for a short time near home. However, this means I do not take care of my appearance. I fear that people might talk behind my back or look down on me. I cannot even try it.

I do not particularly dislike my current fashion style. However, I do find it boring to dress in the same style all the time. I want to try different looks. Bohemian dresses, cropped T-shirts, slacks, hoodies, and leggings—these are styles I would love to try out, but I have not been able to because I am afraid of others' judgment.

The best period of life for me to try out all different kinds of unique styles is now, while I am still a student. It was not easy to do so during high school, because we had to wear school uniforms. I want to work as a psychotherapist after graduation, and I will have dress formally then, such as suits rather than unique styles. Therefore, I am going to try all the new and creative styles I have been wanting to experiment with for the rest of my school life, which will soon come to an end. It is probably right to avoid really strange or incomprehensively eccentric clothes that others disapprove of; however, I will buy at least one article of clothing without being afraid of what others think. I will buy one that I really want to try on. The result of my personal color diagnosis said that pink is not the right color for me, but it is my favorite color after all, and it makes me feel happy, so I will wear pink clothes sometimes.

I used to believe that all the criticism about my appearance I got from people around me did not really matter to me. This opportunity allowed me to contemplate for the first time the reasons why I ended up with the style I maintain today. It was a rude awakening for me that all this started from the criticism I used to get a long time ago. I might as well take better care of myself. I will try to understand what I really want, and I will pursue my own style for myself, not anybody else.

Case 6. How I ended up not caring about fashion

Until my freshman year, I was completely indifferent to fashion. I found the clothing shops I popped into with my friends, who are big shoppers, the most boring places on earth, and the kind of place I wished to get out of as soon as possible. I would stay behind my friends, who were completely fascinated by the fantastic clothes, and I would keep my eyes glued to my phone screen. At that

time, I would wear only baggy T-shirts in achromatic tones. I would buy clothes twice a year at best. Through this therapy, I have analyzed why I was so indifferent about fashion, and I am dealing with the root causes of this.

1) Low self-esteem

'There are no clothes made for me.' This was the line I never failed to say whenever I was looking at cool clothes in shops. I think that this phrase best represents my low self-esteem, because it translates into 'all the clothes in this shop are made for skinny and pretty girls. I am neither skinny nor pretty, so I do not deserve them.' What does self-esteem mean then? It is 'how to evaluate one self.' Therefore, those with high self-esteem value themselves highly, and those with low self-esteem consider themselves to be of little value. I was one of those who gave myself a really poor evaluation score. I figured that my low self-esteem originated from trauma that has haunted me ever since adolescence. I used to be bullied by my peers in a subtle way when I was in sixth grade. At that time, I believed that my life centered on friendship, and I put so much effort into getting along with those bullies, despite their mean treatment of me. They would always say to me: 'you have good skin, but you are ugly, and your legs are like an elephant's.' I just accepted these unkind comments, without being critical of them. It mattered to me much more to manage to get along with the people who said these things than to get angry at them, or to think about how my self-esteem was being damaged. However, that one comment actually struck my heart. It traumatized me. It haunted me throughout middle and high school. This sickening thought ate up my confidence much too frequently. Every time I was interested in stylish clothes, I would hear such phrases repeated in my mind: 'those clothes are too fancy, colorful, and tight, they are not for you' and 'you do not deserve to wear such fancy clothes.' Whenever these thoughts crept up on me, I had to give up the clothes that fascinated me countless times, and this consumed my self-esteem. In the end, the only clothes I would wear were dark and extremely baggy

tops, pants, and other clothes. As I had a limited range of clothing, I gradually lost interest in fashion.

2) Ways to change

After I started university, I often compared myself with my friends, because I did not know how to improve my looks but I saw them dressed up in stylish clothes and working on their appearance. These comparisons always concluded with me devaluing myself, asking 'why am I like this?' I wanted to get away from my self-devaluation and decided to grow my interest in fashion. I attempted to learn to like fashion in the following ways; my personal color diagnosis and buying skirts.

When I decided to take an interest in fashion, the first thing I thought about was getting a personal color diagnosis. I thought it is important to know myself before I started purchasing and wearing different clothes. I decided that it would be very helpful to know which colors look good on me and which ones do not when I went out to purchase clothes. I had an opportunity for a personal color diagnosis, so I went to an appointment with my friends last September. I wondered which colors would suit me while I waited my turn at the clinic for personal color diagnosis. I hoped that I would get dark tones, as about 90 percent of my closet is filled dark clothes. Until then, I believed that bright colors, especially pink, were not good matches for me. I was not even able to imagine pink on myself.

The diagnosis results were completely different from my expectations. I got bright spring tones as my colors for the spring season, among various warm shades. The results indicated that my skin tone worked better with bright colors than dark tones. The counselor even put a piece of pale pink sample fabric on my shoulder, explaining that the color looked good on me. I found these results very surprising. Again, I realized that I barely knew anything about myself. I want to break away from my habit of covering myself with dark, baggy clothes. The color counseling session encouraged me to try bright, colorful clothes.

My personal color diagnosis has certainly had a great

impact on my sense of fashion. In fact, I have purchased several items of clothing that contain pale pink since the diagnosis session, and I wear them frequently. The amount of dark clothes in my closet decreased noticeably. I gained confidence that bright colors look good on me, and I do not care about how others might judge me anymore. I wear bright colors when I want to.

When I finally started feeling comfortable wearing clothes in bright tones, I chose buying skirts as the next objective. Usually, this is hardly a challenge—it is probably a piece of cake for many. However, it is an extremely difficult task for me.

I do not feel comfortable in skirts. In high school, I expected that I would get many pretty skirts and wear them every day once I started university. It was my dream to wear a shirt as a top and a skirt as a bottom. This is still my dream today. The reality, however, is very different from what I wish. On rare occasions, I did buy and wear a few long dresses. Nevertheless, I remained hesitant about buying skirts instead of other types of clothes due to my low self-esteem, which would not allow me to wear a short skirt. I have thick legs, and I was afraid that someone would laugh at me if I wore a short skirt. I thought people would talk behind my back for wearing a skirt with such ugly legs. I clearly knew that anyone is free to wear a skirt regardless of how thick their legs are, but I was harder on myself. For this reason, I did not own a proper skirt for my first three years at university. I think the fact that my clothes are limited to pants is one of the factors that prevent my interest in fashion. I therefore decided to buy a skirt at all costs before the end of the year.

IV. Conclusion

Over the course of this survey of fashion therapy with 60 females, the author found that the participants had a passive attitude toward fashion and built a wall against it. They were unwilling to try new colors, styles, or sizes of clothes. As a result, they were unable to be autonomous actors when it came to the clothes or fashion they had to make decisions about

Table 2. The Abstract of Six Case Studies

Cases	subjects	summary
Case 1	<i>It is possible for women to Weigh over 60kg</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most men think that women rarely weigh over 60 kg. - They just judge people based on their appearance. - Various TV programs also frequently aired scenes in which fat people were disregarded. - I often choose boxy pants to cover the flaws of my leg line, and I prefer boxy T-shirts to cover the flaws in my arms and waist.
Case 2	<i>My closet: A glance into my personal and social problems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most women understand what it is like to think that one has nothing to wear, even after tons of shopping. - I am one of those people who buys a lot of clothes, but still stands before my wide-open closet thinking that I have nothing to wear. - In other words, my behavior and attitude of caring about others' judgment does not arise solely from my personal problems.
Case 3	<i>I am not a Barbie doll</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I tried to have a perfect body like a Barbie by choosing extremely small or tight clothes. - The first is my desire to have an extremely curvy body, like a perfect Barbie. - My boyfriend would tell me I looked pretty when I wore feminine, tight clothes rather than boxy designs.
Case 4	<i>Dress like a woman</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Dress like a woman," "why do you always wear a hoodie?," "why are you always in trainers?," "why do you not get yourself some pretty clothes?," "why do you not put on a skirt or dress at least once?" - These comments eventually made me question if something was wrong with me.
Case 5	<i>I only wore black</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have received a lot of mean comments about my appearance since I was little. I lost my self-esteem due to these endless verbal attacks. - I felt as if I was not good enough and I that was falling behind everybody else because I did not know how to take care of my appearance well. I felt so inferior around stylish people, no matter who they were.
Case 6	<i>How I ended up not caring about fashion</i>	<p>Low self-esteem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It translates into all the clothes in this shop made for skinny and pretty girls. I am neither skinny nor pretty, so I do not deserve them. - I used to be bullied by my peers in a subtle way when I was in sixth grade - In the end, the only clothes I would wear were dark and extremely baggy tops, pants, and other clothes

wearing every day. The study results suggest that the very first step to going beyond oneself and developing an active attitude is to try to be proactive and face a challenge related to fashion or clothes that one chooses

oneself. As mentioned in the introduction, Korean society is characterized by the 'culture of *Chaemyeon*' or 'saving face', which is the ultimate cause of the reduced happiness index of Koreans. A previous study found that

individuals with a stronger desire to please others were less happy, and that those who placed more importance on others' happiness were more than twice as unhappy as those who prioritized their own felt happiness. These kinds of individuals try hard to look nice compared to the other people around them, but these efforts were not highly proportional to their satisfaction with their interpersonal relationships.

The social phenomenon of caring about others' judgment as a great influence on the fashion industry. New fashion trends can be set overnight compared to other countries, and Korean people are faithful adaptors of fast-paced trends. In this process, the gap between the Chaemyeon culture and the need to adapt to fashion trends can be a source of personal conflict and distress. Therefore, it is now time for Korean society to shape a culture that respects the unique qualities of every individual and allows free expression of diversity. In conclusion, the key to inducing change in oneself is that "one has to become an actor" of change oneself. Such changes in many as a whole will help our culture enter the phase of true maturation. Furthermore, like a music therapy and art therapy, fashion therapy is recognized as a field and it is believed to help develop various programs for the future.

This study has limitations in that it conducted research only on 60 female college students. Therefore, it is difficult to apply the results to all women in their 20s or women of all ages. It is expected, however, that further research can be conducted not only on female college students but also on middle-aged women based on the results of this study.

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Received (October 26, 2020)

Revised (November 10, 2020; December 11, 2020)

Accepted (December 28, 2020)