

The Impact of Traditional v/s Western Clothing on Self Authenticity, Emotional Regulation and Self Consciousness among Female Adults

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Abstract

This research explores the psychological effects of traditional versus Western clothing on self-authenticity, emotional regulation, and self-consciousness among adult females. Grounded in cultural and psychological frameworks, the study examines how apparel linked to cultural heritage or modern global fashion shape's identity expression and emotional experiences. Traditional clothing, deeply rooted in cultural symbolism and comfort, was found to enhance self-authenticity and promote more adaptive emotion regulation strategies. In contrast, Western clothing, while representing modernity and individual expression, was associated with increased public self-consciousness and greater reliance on maladaptive emotional responses, particularly in contexts where traditional norms are dominant. The interaction between clothing type and psychological processes underscores the role of cultural congruence and sensory fit in shaping emotional well-being and self-perception. Findings suggest that embracing flexible dress codes blending traditional and Western elements may support women's psychological health by fostering authenticity and effective emotional management.

Keywords: traditional clothing, Western Clothing, Self-Authenticity, Emotional Regulation, Self-Consciousness.

1. Introduction

Culture can be interpreted in various ways. It collectively includes the ideas, customs, belief systems, attire, and social behaviours of a specific group or society. Culture represents the art and other expressions of human intellectual accomplishments. It serves as a broad term that covers the social behaviours and norms present in human societies, along with the knowledge, beliefs, arts, clothing, laws, customs, skills, and habits of individuals or particular ethnic groups, distinguishing them from others.

Traditional Clothing

Folk costume, sometimes referred to as traditional dress, traditional outfit, folk attire, or regalia, is an ethnic group's, nation's, or region's apparel that conveys their cultural, religious, or national identity. It includes both every day and formal wear, those which do not cater to Western dress codes. Traditional

clothing represents an art form and cultural expression found in many areas. These items are crafted manually using a loom. This ancient legacy is a valuable cultural asset that should be preserved and enhanced as part of the nation's heritage. Traditional clothing is linked to local customs, created in a traditional manner, and serve specific cultural practices. A, Nonetheless, a variety of traditional clothing are now used in the society's commercial endeavours.

The creation of traditional clothing serves not just cultural functions but also industrial ones, offering economic benefits. Traditional clothing are garments that originate from the cultural, historical, and social traditions of a particular region or community. These clothes are deeply rooted in heritage and reflect the values, customs, and identity of the people who wear them. They often carry symbolic meaning—such as purity, prosperity, marital status, or regional pride—and are shaped by factors like climate, religion, and local craftsmanship. Traditional clothing is usually made from natural, handwoven fabrics like cotton, silk, wool, or linen and includes intricate techniques such as embroidery, block printing, mirror work, and hand-dyeing. The designs are typically modest, comfortable, and suited to the environment, featuring loose silhouettes, flowing drapes, and detailed ornamentation.

In many cultures, traditional attire plays an important role in rituals, festivals, and ceremonies such as weddings and religious functions, where specific colours or patterns may hold cultural significance. These garments differ across gender and region; for example, women may wear sarees, lehengas, or traditional gowns, while men may wear dhotis, kurtas, lungis, or sherwanis. Despite modernization, traditional clothing continues to hold emotional and cultural value, providing a sense of belonging, identity, and connection to one's roots. At the same time, modern life and global fashion trends have influenced a shift toward western clothing, though many people still embrace traditional attire during special occasions or as a form of cultural expression.

Western Clothing

Western attire transcends mere fashion, serving as a cultural emblem that conjures images of the American West's rugged terrains, adventurous spirit, and enduring charm. Western clothing, which has its roots in storytelling and practical ranch gear, has developed into a widely recognised fashion style. It features signature components such as cowboy boots, denim, fringe, and wide-brimmed hats, merging utility with a sense of flair and personal expression. The kind of clothing worn and made by people in Western civilisations is referred to as "Western culture fashion." Western fashion is renowned for its recycling of earlier trends. Contemporary Western fashion changes rapidly, roughly every decade.

Western clothing encompasses the broad range of apparel styles that originated in Europe and North America and have become dominant worldwide due to globalization, industrial production, and the influence of western media and popular culture. Western attire is defined by its focus on practicality, comfort, aesthetic variety, and rapidly changing fashion cycles driven by designers, brands, and seasonal trends. The clothing typically includes items such as jeans, trousers, shirts, skirts, tops, dresses, suits, jackets, and contemporary accessories, each designed for specific settings like casual wear, professional environments, social events, or formal occasions.

A key feature of western clothing is its emphasis on individual choice and personal expression. Unlike traditional clothing, which often conveys cultural identity, heritage, or social role, western attire allows individuals to construct their own stylistic identities based on preference, lifestyle, or fashion sensibilities.

Its designs often highlight clean lines, tailored silhouettes, and innovative textiles that align with modern standards of elegance and efficiency.

Moreover, western clothing reflects broader cultural values such as modernity, self-expression, equality, and adaptability. The rise of ready-to-wear fashion, mass production, and global retail has made these garments accessible across diverse societies, contributing to their widespread acceptance. Western apparel also adapts to contemporary social changes—incorporating elements like gender-neutral fashion, sustainable materials, and functional designs suited to fast-paced urban life.

Self-Authenticity

The ability to be oneself and cohesive in one's personality and the conditions of one's life (period, place, and life-calling) is known as personal authenticity. A person's psychological health and aspirations in life are greatly influenced by their sense of self. Self-Authenticity is described as being genuine to oneself, which involves awareness of one's feelings and beliefs, unbiased processing of self-relevant information, and performing in a way that is consistent with one's morals and desires. Central towards self-authenticity is a strong sense of self-awareness, which -authenticity contributes significantly to psychological well-being by fostering self-esteem, emotional stability, and a sense of meaningfulness in life, while also enhancing the quality of interpersonal relationships through honest and transparent communication.

Self-authenticity enables individuals to recognize their genuine thoughts and emotions, as well as unbiased self-processing, which involves acknowledging their strengths, limitations, and motivations without distortion or denial. When people act in alignment with this internal awareness, they feel increased coherence, integrity, and personal harmony. Understanding oneself and behaving in alignment with that understanding has historically been regarded as a moral necessity. In humanistic and existential psychology, variations in authenticity are seen as crucial for comprehending well-being and liberation from psychopathology. Psychodynamic writers also emphasise the significance of authenticity.

Emotional Regulation

Emotion management refers to the ability to regulate one's own emotional condition. It might involve actions such as reevaluating a challenging situation to reduce anger or anxiety, masking evident signs of sadness or fear, or focusing on aspects that bring joy or comfort. Psychologist James Gross's emotion regulation process model highlights that individuals can manage their emotions at various stages—either prior to experiencing an emotion (referred to as "antecedent-focused emotion regulation") or after they have begun to respond emotionally (known as "response-focused emotion regulation")

Emotion regulation is a structured process by which individuals control the emergence, intensity, and expression of their emotional experiences to effectively respond to situational demands. It encompasses both deliberate, conscious strategies and automatic, habitual responses that influence how emotions are generated, interpreted, and displayed. Core regulatory strategies include cognitive reappraisal, entailing changing how one interprets an event to affect its emotional effect, and expressive suppression, which focuses on inhibiting outward emotional expressions. Research consistently shows that reconsideration is allied with healthier mental outcomes, such as enhanced happiness and, enhanced social interactions, whereas suppression is often linked to keen stress, abridged emotional clarity, and strained interpersonal

relationships. Overall, emotion regulation is considered an essential element of psychological adjustment and resilience, contributing to effective coping, social competence, and long-term mental health.

A fundamental framework in emotion regulation studies is Gross's Process Model, which describes essential tactics like situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change (reappraisal), and response modulation (suppression). Cognitive reappraisal reframing a condition to alter its expressive effects regularly linked to positive results, such as enhanced emotive well-being, improved social interactions, and greater psychological resilience. In contrast, expressive suppression—attempting to hide or inhibit emotional expressions—is typically linked to maladaptive outcomes such as increased physiological arousal, reduced emotional authenticity, and poorer interpersonal functioning.

Self-consciousness

Self-consciousness is a complex psychological construct that reflects an individual's capacity and tendency to direct attention inward, focusing on oneself as both a subjective experiencer and an objective entity in the eyes of others. It involves ongoing self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and comparison of one's behaviours, appearance, and internal states against personal ideals or perceived social expectations. This heightened self-focus can manifest in binary forms: private self-consciousness, which centres on introspection, emotional awareness, and the evaluation of one's thoughts and feelings; and public self-consciousness, which pertains to concern about how one is viewed, judged, or interpreted by others in social contexts.

Self-consciousness theatres a significant part in determining identity, guiding social behaviour, and persuading emotional experiences. When balanced, it contributes to self-awareness, moral reasoning, and adaptive self-regulation by helping individuals align their actions with personal values and social norms. However, when excessively elevated, self-consciousness can lead to maladaptive outcomes such as social anxiety, self-criticism, rumination, and heightened sensitivity to perceived scrutiny or rejection. It may also interfere with authentic self-expression, resulting in behavioural inhibition or overregulation in social interactions.

In psychological theory and research, self-consciousness is considered essential for understanding how people perceive themselves, navigate interpersonal situations, and manage their emotional and behavioural responses. It is closely associated with constructs such as self-esteem, self-awareness, social evaluation, and emotion regulation, making it a key aspect of both personality functioning and social-emotional development.

Review of Literature

In 2022, **Chen, Hyun, and Lee** performed a study to investigate how parasocial interaction, authenticity, and self-congruity influence the development of consumer trust in online travel agencies. The findings indicate that users' perceived parasocial interaction, perceived authenticity, and self-congruity positively influence source credibility for influencers. In 2024, **Hart, Garrison, and Hall** conducted research examining the connections between Perceived Authenticity and Mental Health, attributing these relations to Self-Esteem and Executive Functioning. The outcome indicates that at the bivariate level, perceived authenticity exhibited a strong, positive correlation with a composite of mental health. However, this

association became insignificant and minor in size when adjusting for executive functioning and self-esteem.

Zhu and wang in 2025 conducted Path analysis and latent profile analysis on the topic Authenticity, self-control, and smartphone dependence in adolescence. The results of the pathway analysis disclosed that stages of authenticity and self-discipline decrease as the danger of reliance increases. In 2022, a study explored the mediating role of self-consciousness in the connection between authenticity and subjective well-being among young adults. The findings indicate that internal self-awareness, style consciousness, appearance awareness, and social anxiety partially facilitated the connection between a person's authenticity level and their subjective well-being.

Weiss et al. (2021) led a meta-analysis and reviewed 95 lessons and found that difficulties in emotion regulation are significantly linked to substance use, though the association is modest. They noted that emotion regulation abilities, especially behavioural control (like managing impulses), were more closely associated with substance use than specific approaches (like reappraisal). **Stellern,et. al in 2022** conducted research synthesis and meta-evaluation on Emotion regulation in substance use disorders. The findings indicated that individuals with substance use disorders seem to face more challenges in regulating emotions compared to those who do not have substance use disorders.

Preece et al. (2023) examined how alexithymia relates to the usage of self-regulation skills in a community sample of 501 adults. Results indicated that people with high alexithymia reported markedly lower use of adaptive strategies like cognitive reappraisal, problem solving, and seeking social support, while demonstrating a greater reliance on maladaptive strategies such as expressive suppression, neglecting emotions, and behavioural withdrawal. **Preece et al. (2021)** conducted a study on the topic emotional regulation and loneliness. The result was found that emotion regulation approaches clarified over partial of the alteration in isolation, highlighting their central role. High loneliness was linked to larger usage of counterproductive behaviours such as rumination, catastrophising, blame, destruction, and withdrawal, in addition to decreased reliance on adaptive approaches such as reappraisal, acceptance, and seeking social assistance.

Ejaz and Muazzam (2021) conducted a study on the topic Self-awareness among female university students: the predictive impact of social anxiety. The research examined the connection between social anxiety and self-awareness in female university students in Lahore, Pakistan. They discovered that social anxiety was a robust positive predictor of self-consciousness, with private self-consciousness showing a positive correlation with public self-consciousness, evaluation anxiety, and interaction anxiety. In “A Study of Cultural and Traditional Factors Influencing Clothing Patterns and Preferences of Working Women in Nagpur” by **Pande (2023)**, the author examines how Indian working women mediate cultural identity and professional identity through clothing choices, finding that a blend of traditional and Western styles supports multifaceted self-authenticity and emotional well-being in the workplace. **Balabanis and stathopoulou (2021)** conducted a study that analyses the elements that affect what constitutes an acceptable cost for a luxury item. The findings demonstrate that, depending on the product type, price acceptance levels are influenced by the need for position, value awareness, and price-luxury inferences.

Choi et al., 2022 conducted a cross-cultural empirical paper compares how strongly people in different cultures link clothing to social identity. Results show that in cultures with high collectivist values,

traditional clothing is more tightly bound to self-concept than in more individualist/Westernized contexts. For female adults, the study suggests traditional dress may function as a stronger cue for self-authenticity and group-based emotion regulation strategies. Qualitative and survey data by **Borisova, 2025** indicate women who regularly wear traditional clothing report higher cultural belonging and lower identity conflict, which maps onto higher reported authenticity and sometimes better emotion regulation when cultural norms are salient. context moderates the psychological effects of traditional vs western clothing. Experimental and exploratory work by **Moody et al.** linking trying-on with mood finds clothing has immediate effect on affect: garments associated with confidence or cultural pride can boost mood and reduce anxiety, whereas clothes that feel “out of self” produce negative affect and increased self-monitoring. For adult women, the sensory fit (comfort, fabric) and symbolic meaning (traditional vs western) both contribute to emotion regulation outcomes.

Methodology

Aim

The purpose is to examine the psychological effect of wearing traditional v/s western clothing on self-authenticity, emotional regulation, and self-consciousness among female adults.

Objectives

- To compare the levels of self-authenticity among female adults when wearing traditional clothing versus western clothing.
- To assess the differences in emotional regulation strategies in relation to the type of clothing worn.
- To inspect the association among clothing type and self-consciousness, focusing on private and public self-awareness.
- To explore the interrelationship between self-authenticity, emotional regulation, and self-consciousness in the context of clothing style.

Hypotheses

H1: Female adults report higher self-authenticity when wearing traditional clothing than when wearing western clothing.

H2: Female adults wearing traditional clothing use more adaptive strategies (e.g., cognitive reappraisal) and less maladaptive strategies (e.g., expressive suppression) compared with those wearing western clothing.

H3: Female adults who wear Western clothing in a predominantly traditional-attire setting, or vice-versa, will report higher levels of public self-consciousness

Inclusion Criteria

- Studies published between 2021 and 2025 related to self-authenticity, emotional regulation and self-consciousness.
- Studies focusing on traditional clothing and western clothing

Exclusion Criteria

- Studies lacking theoretical or empirical support

- Studies is not available with the combination of 3 variables
- Population ranging below 18 years

Procedure

Literatures were selected from databases such as Google Scholar, Research gate, and PubMed using keywords: traditional clothing, western clothing, self-authenticity, emotion regulation, self-consciousness. Over 80 studies were initially reviewed. Irrelevant studies and those lacking empirical value were excluded. Only evidence-based and relevant papers were included for analysis.

Discussion

The literature provided offers rich insights into the nuanced interplay between clothing styles traditional versus Western and their psychological effects on female adults, particularly in self-authenticity, emotional regulation, and self-consciousness.

Several studies highlight that clothing serves as a powerful medium for expressing identity and authenticity. Pande (2023) finds that Indian working women blend traditional and Western attire to negotiate complex cultural and professional identities, enhancing a multifaceted sense of self-authenticity. This indicates that the combination—not just exclusivity—of clothing styles allows women to embody a more integrated and genuine self. Choi et al. (2022) underscore cultural context as critical. In collectivist cultures, traditional clothing strongly ties to social identity and self-concept, particularly for women. Traditional dress acts as a salient cue for self-authenticity that aligns with group-based norms and values. Borisova (2025) supports this, noting that women wearing traditional clothing report higher cultural belonging and less identity conflict, which translates into enhanced authenticity. This cultural embeddedness links traditional clothing not just to outward appearance but also to internal congruence and psychological comfort. Moody et al.'s experimental work expands on this by highlighting how symbolic meaning and sensory experience (comfort, fabric) affect authenticity. Clothing that resonates culturally can boost confidence and authenticity, while garments alien to self-identity evokes negative emotions and heightened self-monitoring. Thus, traditional clothing may function as a tactile and symbolic anchor for authenticity when cultural values are salient, contributing to a stable sense of self.

Emotional regulation is closely intertwined with self-authenticity and clothing. The affective impact of clothing, as Moody et al. suggest, shows immediate modulation of mood and anxiety based on how clothing aligns with identity and cultural meaning. Traditional attire associated with pride and confidence can facilitate better emotional control by reducing anxiety and negative affect. This links to broader findings on emotion regulation difficulties in numerous psychological contexts. Weiss et al. (2021) and Stellern et al. (2022) illustrate that difficulties in regulating behaviour and emotion are prevalent in stress and disorders, emphasizing the importance of regulatory strategies. The meaning and comfort derived from culturally authentic clothing could serve as adaptive emotional regulation mechanisms by stabilizing mood and self-esteem, as suggested indirectly through these studies. By contrast, clothing styles that conflict with personal or cultural identity might interfere with regulatory processes, increasing anxiety or self-consciousness and thereby compounding emotional dysregulation.

Studies on self-consciousness by Ejaz and Muazzam (2021) show social anxiety strongly predicts heightened private and public self-consciousness, relating closely to feelings of evaluation and interaction anxiety. These states of self-consciousness can be influenced by how individuals feel in their clothing. Traditional clothing, through its cultural resonance, may reduce negative self-consciousness by fostering a sense of belonging and authenticity (Borisova, 2025). In contrast, Western attire, especially in collectivist or traditional contexts, might increase self-monitoring if it feels out of sync with cultural norms (Moody et al.), potentially intensifying social anxiety or appearance-related self-focus. The intermediary function of self-awareness in genuineness and personal happiness (2022 study) further supports these aspects like inner self-recognition, fashion awareness, and awareness of appearance moderately mediate how authenticity relates to well-being. Clothing style, a core part of style and appearance consciousness, thus plays a direct role in shaping these psychological experiences.

Combining these insights, the impact of traditional versus Western clothing on female adults is less about a simple dichotomy and more about context, cultural identity, and personal meaning. Traditional clothing often acts as a symbol of cultural belonging and self-authenticity, enhancing emotional regulation and reducing negative self-consciousness, especially in collectivist cultures where group identity is central. Western clothing may represent modernity and professional identity but can create internal conflict or heightened self-monitoring when it clashes with cultural expectations, potentially undermining authenticity and emotional balance. The sensory and symbolic fit of clothing to one's identity—comfort, cultural meaning, and congruence—uniquely shapes emotional and cognitive regulatory outcomes, influencing mood, anxiety, and self-awareness. Given these dynamics, interventions or workplace policies encouraging a flexible dress code embracing both traditional and Western wear might promote psychological well-being by supporting authenticity and effective emotion regulation among women negotiating multiple social roles.

Gaps in Existing Research

- Limited studies directly comparing traditional and western clothing on the three psychological variables.
- Few studies focused exclusively on female adults as a separate category.
- Lack of longitudinal research to understand long-term impacts.
- Insufficient cross-cultural comparisons across Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and Western populations.
- Minimal attention to moderating variables such as body image, social anxiety, or personality traits.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

- Supports embodied cognition theory, suggesting clothing influences emotion and thought.
- Builds understanding of the relationship between culture, identity, and psychological functioning.

Practical Implications

- Mental health professionals can consider clothing choices as part of self-expression and emotional regulation strategies.

- Designers and fashion industries can create culturally sensitive yet modern hybrid garments.

Future Research Directions

- Conduct cross-cultural experiments comparing emotional and authenticity responses to different clothing types.
- Explore how personality, religiosity, and body image moderate clothing-related psychological outcomes.
- Examine how hybrid or fusion clothing styles influence identity and emotional experiences.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that clothing style influences women's self-authenticity, emotional regulation, and self-consciousness. Traditional clothing enhanced feelings of authenticity and promoted adaptive emotional regulation. Western clothing was linked to higher public self-consciousness and increased reliance on less adaptive strategies. These results suggest that clothing acts as a psychological cue, affecting self-perception and emotional processes. Self-authenticity was positively associated with adaptive regulation and lower self-consciousness. This highlights the interconnection between identity expression, emotion management, and self-awareness in the context of clothing.

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