



Biological And Psychological Aspects of Clothing

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Abstract

Textiles always have played important roles in well-being of a human being by protecting it from different adverse environmental conditions and making him feel comfortable. Comfort characteristic is an important functionality of clothing. Clothing creates a microclimate between the skin and the environment, which supports the body's thermoregulatory system to keep its temperature within a safe range, even when the external environment temperature and humidity changes to quite an extent. But on the other hand, clothing is used in many societies for the purpose of expressing wealth, status, occupation, age, occasion, gender, etc.

Keywords: Clothing, Comfort, Environment, Status, Protection

Introduction

The dress of an individual is a kind of 'sign language' it communicates a complex set of information and is usually the basis on which immediate impressions are formed. There are different controversies about the origin of clothes as different writers sought different reasons and put forward many theories. Some accepted the Biblical explanation of modesty, others though that clothing was first worn as protection against hazards, insects and supernatural forces while others believe that it was adopted as a form of decoration.

The value of clothing in meeting certain human needs like physical protection and decoration has long been recognized. Now people are becoming more aware about its psychological need which on the other hand are also protective needs. Not only these clothes communicate a person's social status, age and occupational group but help in developing social relationships. So today the concept of clothes has widened which include sociological and psychological aspects besides biological. There are two main functions of clothing i.e., Biological and Psychological functions.

1. Biological functions of clothing:



(a) Protection against cold weather - According to the principles of heat exchange, in winter the body has a tendency to lose energy through conduction, convection, radiation and evaporation because the body temperature is more than the environmental temperature. So, to keep the body at a constant temperature, this equilibrium can be achieved by preventing heat loss from the body by use of woolen clothes as these acts as insulators. The body feels comfortable if the heat loss is prevented by clothes. Color of clothes also helps in conserving energy to some extent.

b) Protection against hot weather: In summer our body perspires very frequently to maintain the body temperature. The perspiration is absorbed by the clothes which cause cooling by evaporation. Light and cool colors make the clothes comfortable in summer as these reflect most of the heat.

c) Protection against Rain and Wind: Water-proof clothes and wind-cheaters protect us against rains and wind. During rainy season the weather is humid and the air is already saturated the body does not feel comfortable because much of sweat goes waste as it drips unevaporated from the skin surface. For comfortability clothes should be made of absorbent fabric. Thermal comfort is also influenced by the temperature of air, humidity, air movement and radiation intensity.

d) Protection against Biological Agents: Biological agents like bacteria, fungi, virus, numerous parasites and insects are capable of producing skin lesions and other harmful reactions. To protect the body from these biological agents proper clothing and footwears are necessary.

e) Health and Sanitation: The atmospheric dusts keep on setting on the body and cause various skin diseases. These are the clothes which protect the skin from dust, as dirty skin can't breathe and perspire properly and have bad effect on the health which leads to skin ailments.

2. Psychological Functions of Clothing: Clothing is a part of 'silent language' that is communicated through the use of visual but nonverbal symbols. Whenever we meet a person for the first time through his clothing, we make certain impression of his personality pertaining to his characters, position and status in life which on the other hand help in social interaction. People are interested in clothing for the following various socio-psychological reasons besides the basic need of protection.

a) **Self-Adornment:** In all cultures, clothing provides a means of adornment and decoration. Primitive man used to adorn himself with colored clay and by inserting jewelry in nose, ears and lips. This urge to decorate himself and his family led man to a search for furs and fibers all over the world.

b) **Status and Prestige:** Prestige can be obtained from various methods and clothing is one of the them which is preferred by some people. Clothing is also used as a means of showing one's academic rank or status. In modern era use of different symbols is a mark of distinction. Many



people like to use certain clothing symbols pertaining to particular social class whereas affluent people reject the same. There are times in everyone's life when one's dress may not be as important as some other aspects of life.

- c) **Role identification:** Society has certain expectations about the way people should dress for certain roles. Men are expected to dress differently from women. When the fashion same for both the sexes even then there will some indication to tell the sexes apart. In the same way grand mothers are expected to dress up differently from those of their granddaughters. Clothing is really important in helping to identify your role and fit the accepted behavior of your role.
- d) **Clothes have effect on behavior:** Clothing can tell others about your expected behavior but it can also influence you. e.g., A policeman feels braver in uniform than in his casual dress because he can be easily recognized by others. Similarly in long dress you feel feminine and in jeans you will have tomboyish behavior. If you are wearing heels you will not like to run or play even you are in the playground but on the other hands in fleets you can feel like participating in games.
- e) **Self-Expression:** Who you are and what your values are also judged by the way you select and wear clothes. If you value craftsmanship and high standards of work, you will like clothing carefully constructed with handmade or other distinctive touches. One who wants to look older or younger will select clothes for the desired age group. You like to wear pastels when you feel feminine. If you want people to think you are like a certain person, you will dress up like that person.
- f) **Creativity and Individuality:** Just as we feel that we belong to certain group and are like others still have a feeling of individuality. Clothing can accomplish this by the use of details and colors that are different and still within the accepted norms.

Many women enjoy applying their creative ability to clothing. Instead of painting or writing poetry they apply the art elements to articles of dress.

- g) **Change or Adventure:** One is always fed up with the routine of life. Clothing can help one escape from the routine of daily living and provide a relief from boredom. Almost all the persons feel the need for novelty to add interest & zeal to life and fashion can help to meet this need. Actually, fashion results from a desire for change.

The woman who remains at home for most of the time may feel the need for fancy party clothes as a change. On the other hand, a woman who has many different daily experiences or goes out daily may select simpler party clothes.



h) **A Means of achieving a sense of wellbeing:** When a person is physically well and comfortably dressed, he or she has a better chance to enjoy life because of feeling of inner security and can be friendly and outgoing. One cannot be as attractive as one wishes but by wise clothing selection one can help oneself to achieve a sense of wellbeing. Clothing reflects what one thinks of himself and what one wants to be.

i) **Appeal to the same or opposite sex:** Some people believe that clothes are selected to appeal to the opposite sex but others believe that women wear clothes to arouse envy or comment in other women. There are two theories about this view.

Modesty: Which means the parts of body which call attention of the opposite sex are covered.

Immodesty means: The parts of the body which are covered call attention of the opposite sex because a person has curiosity to see the hidden parts.

j) **Clothing and Family Values:** 'Values' means anything that is important to you. Clothing and its styles are very important in some families. Many family's values only a certain type of clothing e.g., mother must have a fur coat or the children must have best quality shoes or the son studying in college must have expensive and varied wardrobe. Each family and each individual must think about his needs and values to decide where to put the emphasis.

Conclusion

The basic needs of human are food, clothing and shelter. After fulfilling the first need of food, a person looks for the second important need, i.e., clothing. In the modern society, we expect much more from clothing than to satisfy our basic need. Depending on the environmental conditions the clothing need changes. The performance factors are the dominating parameters. One requires different clothing for different climatic conditions. Clothing awareness is affected by one's personal environment, past and present experiences.

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