

## The Relationship between Body Cathexis and Clothing Satisfaction

Tae-Gue Choo

*Dept. of Clothing & Design, Sangju National University, Sangju, Korea*

**Abstract :** The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between body cathexis and clothing satisfaction. The questionnaire was administered to 458 female college students in Daegu and Sangju and the results were obtained as follows. From the questionnaire, the 14 body parts were categorized into 4 factors, these being weight/girth, lower body, face, height/length. The bust girth was not included into one of these 4 factors. Subjects were dissatisfied with all of their body parts, especially with thigh, hip girth in the lower part of the body, as well as their weight. According to the Rohrer Index distribution, 99.2% of respondents were thin or normal, but means of respondents' satisfaction scores on weight and height were very low. To measure clothing satisfaction two factors were included, these being 'satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability' and 'satisfaction with one's own clothes'. The respondents were quite neutral on their clothing selection ability and their own clothes. Two factors about clothing satisfaction were correlated negatively. All of body cathexis factors were correlated positively with 'satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability' and were correlated slightly negatively with 'satisfaction with one's own clothes'.

**Key words :** body cathexis, rohrer index, actual weight/height, satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability, satisfaction with one's own clothes

### INTRODUCTION

In modern society, physical attractiveness is emphasized through the mass media more than it was in the past and physical attractiveness is very important aspect for one's social life. Especially the emphasis on thin and tall shape as ideal body image makes most women feel obese about their body. In the survey asking Glamour magazine's readers their feelings about their bodies Wooley & Wooley (1984) reported that 75% said they felt too fat, even though, according to their self-reports of weight and height, only 25% were overweight and 30% were underweight.

Body cathexis, based almost exclusively on self-ratings of satisfaction with specific body parts and overall appearance, is defined as the "degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the various parts or processes of the body" (Secord & Jourard, 1953). Body cathexis as a concept closely related to body image (Kaiser, 1997), is viewed as part of self-concept. Ryan (1965) stated that body cathexis is the somatic self, while self as a member of a group is the social self.

Clothing is a second skin (Horn & Gurel, 1981) or extension of the bodily self (Shim, Kotsiopoulos & Knoll, 1991) that represents the nearest aspects of one's environment. Therefore Clothing can be used to compensate

for body dissatisfaction and enhance one's self-esteem (Kaiser, 1997; Sontag & Schlater, 1982).

Many studies have been conducted on the relationship between body cathexis and clothing behavior (Hwang & Na, 1999; Park, 1999, Hwang, 1998, Labat & DeLong, 1990). Park (1999) reported there was a negative relationship between body cathexis and preference of tight skirt of both Korean and American female students. Hwang (1998) reported that body cathexis alone may not explain the complicated clothing benefits sought and the importance of meeting the ideal body image is an important variable in explaining clothing benefits sought.

Body cathexis has been found to have an influence on clothing satisfaction, too. Jeon (2001) found that the satisfaction of clothing in terms of design-related aspects was influenced by body cathexis. Also the more they satisfied with their body, the more they felt comfortable for their clothing.

As stated above many studies on body cathexis concerned about just body cathexis or relationship between body cathexis and clothing behavior such as clothing preference of clothing style or clothing satisfaction with ready-to-wear. Even though fitness and appearance of clothing were the most important factor of clothing satisfaction, 'satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability' and 'satisfaction with one's own clothes' were different dimensions of clothing satisfaction. Shim, Kotsiopoulos, & Knoll (1991) found that those who were satisfied with their body and had a favorable attitude toward clothing

---

Corresponding author; Tae-Gue Choo  
Tel. +82-54-530-5311, Fax. +82-54-530-5319  
E-mail: tgchoo@sangju.ac.kr

were likely to be confident in choosing proper clothes for themselves.

This research to identify the relationship between body cathexis and clothing satisfaction, was undertaken in order to meet the following objectives:

1. determining body cathexis factors and correlations of those factors
2. determining correlations between body cathexis factors and two clothing satisfaction factors.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Body cathexis

Body cathexis, the indication of the individuals' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their different body parts (Labat & DeLong, 1990), was evaluated by the individual through interrelation with others. The desirability of certain body forms and prescriptions on how the body should be displayed are evidence of cultural influence. The way people feel about their bodies is indicative of cultural ideology, social relations, and personal activities. Many researchers have studied people's degree of satisfaction with their bodies as a whole, as well as with specific body parts. There is some evidence of "perceptual groupings" of interrelated body parts that are relevant in predicting overall body cathexis and/or feelings about the self. Clearly, body cathexis is a complex, multidimensional construct. For example, differential cultural ideals for males and females influence the degree of satisfaction one has with the body (Kaiser, 1997).

Like clothing styles, cultural ideals about the body are subject to changes in fashion. These days, a thin body is generally considered to be important to physical attractiveness and the pursuit of thinness sometimes had caused eating disorder symptoms such as anorexia. One researcher reexamined the data from many studies on evaluating body image and discovered that normal women also often overestimated their body size (Thompson, 1986). Song (2000) found that fashion models were more positive about their bodies especially concerning height than college students were.

Also fashion models were significantly different from college students in satisfaction with clothing fitness. In other words, the taller and thinner they were, the more they satisfied with clothing fitness. Jeon (2001) also reported that middle- and high-school girls were more satisfied with the upper body than the lower body and more satisfied with length measurements than girth measurements. The results of these three studies might be considered the influence of physical ideals on one's body cathexis.

Park (2000) reported that Korean women were more dissatisfied with their bodies than American women

were. A comparison of body cathexis scores between Japanese adolescents and American adolescents revealed that Japanese adolescents had less favorable views of their bodies' attractiveness and effectiveness (Kaiser, 1997). However, bases on only these two findings, it could not be concluded that body cathexis was culturally influenced. The issue of cultural influence on body cathexis merits further research attention.

### Body cathexis and clothing satisfaction

Clothing is a tangible thing but clothing satisfaction is the psychological experience. Therefore the external condition of clothing does not always indicate the internal clothing satisfaction. Clothing satisfaction as an index of whole life satisfaction can be different according to clothing features, individual interest and value.

Body cathexis has been found to have an influence on clothing satisfaction. Many studies on the relationship between body cathexis and clothing satisfaction were conducted about clothing fitness, ready-to-wear, design, textiles and other aspects of clothing (Jeon, 2001; Hwang, 2000; Hwang & Norton, 1994; Shim *et al.*, 1991).

Lee (1981) reported that body cathexis was positively related to clothing satisfaction for early middle-aged women as well as advanced middle-aged women. Jeon (2001) found that the satisfaction of clothing in terms of design related aspects was influenced by body cathexis. One who was more satisfied with one's body was more satisfied with the style of one's own clothes and thought oneself more elegant. One whose body cathexis score was high thought that one's own clothing was more suitable for oneself and occasion; and thought that one's own clothing was more harmonious with other clothes. Also the more satisfied with one's body, the more one felt comfortable with one's clothing. Therefore, body cathexis was related to satisfaction with clothing design and was thought to be related to satisfaction with wearing behavior such as clothing selection and one's own clothes, etc.

Women subjects who had higher satisfaction with their body parts had higher satisfaction with ready-to-wear clothing, had a higher degree of shopping interest, had a higher degree of store patronage, and had a higher expenditure on clothing (Hwang & Norton, 1994). Shim, *et al.*, (1991) also found that those who were satisfied with their body and had a favorable attitude toward clothing were likely to be satisfied with ready-to-wear and with product variety/store quality; to enjoy shopping; to be confident in choosing proper clothes for themselves; and to be heavy purchasers of clothing.

In most studies, the contents of clothing satisfaction were focused on fitness, appearances. However, in Kim & Kahng (1992)'s study on the effect of clothing satis-

**Table 1.** Factor analysis results of clothing satisfaction

Factors/statements	Eigen values	Factor loadings	Cum. Pct. of variables	Cronbach $\alpha$
Factor 1: satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability	4.034		36.7	.8546
I think I am capable of selecting appropriate clothes		.809		
I think I can select suitable clothes to me		.788		
I think I wear proper clothes according to time and place		.788		
I think I wear more sophisticated than others do		.781		
I am satisfied with my wearing appearance		.745		
I think I can coordinate the colors of clothes harmoniously		.581		
Factor 2 : satisfaction with one's own clothes	1.841		53.4	.6466
I am worried because I don't have suitable clothes for going out		.743		
I think that I am of seedy appearance		.742		
I am dissatisfied because of lack of expensive clothes		.721		
I am dissatisfied because of lack of the quantity of clothes		.576		
I am dissatisfied because of lack of color-matched clothes		.506		

faction, body cathexis, and school achievement related to social self-esteem, the clothing satisfaction included 3 aspects like as satisfaction with one's own clothes, clothing selection ability, and parent's clothing restriction. Kim and Kahng stated that body dissatisfaction would be relieved by the high clothing satisfaction.

On the bases of the results of Jeon (2001) and Shim, Kotsiopoulos & Knoll (1991), it was thought that satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability and satisfaction with one's own clothes might be related to body cathexis. Clothing satisfaction in this study was defined as satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability and satisfaction with one's own clothes.

## PROCEDURE

### The instrument and the variables measured

The questionnaire included questions about body-cathexis, clothing satisfaction, actual/ideal weight, and actual/ideal height.

Body cathexis was measured by the scores of subjects after rating their satisfaction with 15 body parts on the 5-point Likert scale as follows: extremely satisfied (5) to extremely dissatisfied (1). 15 body parts were weight, height, neck girth, waist girth, bust girth, hip girth, shape of legs, thigh, calves, eyes, nose, face color, facial complexion, length of legs, body shape. The measure of body cathexis was modified from the scale used by Shim, Kotsiopoulos, and Knoll (1991).

Clothing satisfaction was measured by the scale including eleven 5-point Likert type questions ranging from extremely satisfied (5) to extremely dissatisfied (1). The contents of clothing satisfaction were the degree of individual's satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability and with one's own clothes. Questions were selected from

those of Kim & Kahng (1992). To confirm validity of scale, factor analysis was conducted and as the result two factors were abstracted: 'satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability' factor that included 6 questions and 'satisfaction with one's own clothes' factor which included 5 questions. Cronbach  $\alpha$  values of each factor were .8546 and .6466, indicating high reliability in Table 1.

Before the survey was conducted, the questionnaire was pretested by the students of department of clothing and textile design. According to the results of the pretest, the questionnaire was modified.

### Sample and data collection

600 questionnaires were distributed to female college students in Daegu and Sangu and 495 were collected. 458 questionnaires were used for final analysis with exception of uncompleted questionnaires. To analyze data, factor analysis and Pearson's correlation analysis were used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Body cathexis

**Factor analysis result of body cathexis :** The 14 body parts were grouped into 4 factors in Table 2. Factor 1, including 5 body parts (waist girth, weight, hip girth, neck girth, body shape), was named weight/girth cathexis. Factor 2, composed of 3 lower body parts (shape of legs, thigh, calf), was named lower body cathexis. Factor 3, encompassing 4 body parts (eyes, facial complexion, nose, face color), was named face cathexis. Factor 4 which 2 body parts (height and length of legs) were grouped, was named height/length cathexis. Cronbach  $\alpha$  values for each factor were .8252, .8496, .6754, and .7636 relatively, indicating high reliability. The cumulative percentage of variables was 65.9%. This figure indicated that these 4

**Table 2.** Factor analysis results of body cathexis

Factors	Means	Factor loadings	Eigen values	Cum. Pct. of variables	Cronbach $\alpha$
Factor 1: Weight/girth	2.5459		4.416	34.4	.8252
Waist girth	2.50	.860			
Weight	2.33	.803			
Hip girth	2.29	.753			
Neck girth	3.08	.676			
Body shape	2.53	.625			
Factor 2: Lower body	2.4170		1.774	47.1	.8496
Shape of legs	2.53	.884			
Thigh	2.21	.856			
Calf	2.51	.738			
Factor 3: Face	3.0819		1.491	57.7	.6754
Eyes	3.17	.763			
Facial complexion	2.81	.755			
Nose	2.93	.643			
Face color	2.82	.593			
Factor 4: height/length	2.6048		1.139	65.9	.7636
Height	2.65	.889			
Length of legs	2.56	.822			
Total body cathexis	2.6798				

factors could not explain all aspects of body cathexis, however 65.9% was considerably high.

This result of factor analysis about body cathexis was different from the grouping factors used by the previous studies (Ku & Choo, 1996; Hwang, 2000). In these two previous studies, to determine body cathexis, body parts were simply grouped head/upper body, lower body, height, weight.

It was considered that respondents' satisfaction with bust girth was rated differently as compared with satisfaction with other girth items. Like as Jung and Nam (1999)'s result, the smaller other girth items were, the higher respondents' satisfaction with girth items were. However it was not desirable that bust was either too small or too big. As shown in Table 3, correlations between satisfaction score of bust girth and other body cathexis factors were also very weak. Therefore, bust girth would be considered apart from other girth items.

#### Actual/ideal weight and height and body cathexis :

As shown in Table 4, most subjects (61.4%) weighed 50 kg or more but 62% of subjects considered that the ideal weight was less than 50 kg. Means of actual and ideal

**Table 3.** Pearson correlation coefficients of body cathexis factors

	Weight /girth	Lower body	Face	Height /length	Bust
Weight/girth	1.000				
Lower body	.455***	1.000			
Face	.265***	.317***	1.000		
Height/length	.350***	.307***	.338***	1.000	
Bust	.282***	.147**	.146**	.196***	1.000
Total	.818***	.724***	.644***	.619***	.283***

\*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*P<0.001

weight were 51.9 kg and 49.2 kg, relatively. Like weight, 70% of subjects were shorter than 165 cm, however, more than 80% of subjects thought that ideal heights were 165 cm or taller in Table 5. The mean of actual height was 162.6 cm, and that of ideal height was 166.7 cm.

Subjects were dissatisfied with all of their body parts, especially with lower body such as thigh, hip girth and weight. According to Rohrer Index distribution of subjects, most subjects (99.2%) were categorized into thin (Rohrer indexes of 74.2% of subjects were less than 1.2)

**Table 4.** Actual/ideal weight distribution

	Less than 45 kg	45~50 kg	50~55 kg	55~60 kg	More than 60 kg	Total	Means (kg)
Actual weight	34( 7.4)	115(25.1)	118(25.8)	85(18.6)	45( 9.8)	397(100)	51.91
Ideal weight	46(10.0)	220(48.0)	127(27.7)	27( 5.9)	9( 2.0)	429(100)	49.24

unit: n (%)

**Table 5.** Actual/ideal height distribution

unit: n (%)

	Shorter than 160 cm	160-165 cm	165-170 cm	170-175 cm	175 cm or taller	Total	Means (cm)
Actual height	106(23.8)	204(45.8)	109(24.4)	22( 4.9)	5(1.1)	446(100)	162.55
Ideal height	2( 0.5)	76(17.4)	255(58.2)	93(21.2)	12(2.7)	438(100)	166.72

or normal (Rohrer indexes of 25.0% were 1.2 to 1.5), but means of subjects' satisfaction scores on weight (2.33) and height (2.65) were very low (Table 2). These figures indicated that most respondents were not satisfied with their weight and height.

On the bases of these results, it could be stated that respondents perceived their body not as it was. They wanted to be thinner and taller than they were.

**Clothing satisfaction**

**Clothing satisfaction :** Average clothing satisfaction scores were 3.0313 Average clothing satisfaction scores were 3.0313 (mean of 'satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability' was 3.1339 and mean of satisfaction with one's own clothes was 2.9082). These figures suggested that subjects were quite neutral on their clothing selection ability and on their own clothes.

These two factors of clothing satisfaction were correlated negatively Table 6, in other words, the more satisfied with one's ability of selecting clothes, the less satisfied with quantity/quality of one's own clothes.

**Body cathexis and clothing satisfaction :** To determine the relationship between body cathexis and clothing satisfaction, Pearson's correlation coefficients analysis was conducted Table 7. Positive correlations were found between all of the body cathexis factors and satisfaction with one's ability of selecting clothes, but all of the body cathexis factors were correlated negatively with satisfaction with one's own clothes. These results could be interpreted that the more satisfied with one's body the more satisfied with one's ability of selecting clothes. In the meanwhile, the more satisfied with one's body the less satisfied with the quantity and quality of one's own

**Table 6.** Pearson's correlation coefficients of clothing satisfaction

Clothing satisfaction	Clothing selection ability	One's own clothes
Clothing selection ability	1.000	
One's own clothes	-.307***	1.000
Total clothing satisfaction	.555***	.622***

\*\*\*P<0.001

clothes.

Shim, Kotsiopoulos & Knoll (1991) also found that those who were satisfied with their body and had a favorable attitude toward clothing were likely to be satisfied with ready-to-wear and with product variety/store quality; to be confident in choosing proper clothes for themselves.

Therefore, it would be considered that one who satisfied with one's body might be concerned more with one's own clothes and confident in choosing proper clothing than one who dissatisfied with one's body might be. Therefore the respondents who rated body cathexis scores high were satisfied more with their clothing selection ability than those who rated body cathexis scores low were. However according to Shim, Kotsiopoulos & Knoll (1991)'s result those who were satisfied with their body and had a favorable attitude toward clothing were likely to enjoy shopping and to be heavy purchasers of clothing.

Therefore they were likely to want to buy suitable clothes more and to feel insufficient about one's own clothes than those who were not satisfied with their body. However, to determine the relationships of these variables, further studies need to be conducted.

**Table 7.** Pearson's correlation coefficients between body cathexis and clothing satisfaction

Clothing satisfaction body cathexis	Clothing selection ability	Satisfaction of one's own clothes	Total clothing satisfaction
Weight/girth	.211**	-.257***	-.051
Lower body	.249***	-.182**	.046
Face	.167**	-.124**	.029
Height/length	.177*	-.127**	-.014
Bust girth	.135**	-.094*	.029
Total body cathexis	.268**	-.258**	-.004

\*P<0.05, \*\*P<0.01, \*\*\*P<0.001

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between body cathexis and clothing satisfaction. The results were as follows.

Body cathexis were rated and factor analyzed by 4 factors; weight/girth factor (waist girth, weight, hip girth, neck girth), lower body factor (shape of legs, thigh, calf), face factor (eyes, facial complexion, nose, face color), and height/length factor (height, length of legs). Bust girth would be considered apart from other girth items.

Respondents were dissatisfied with all of their body parts, especially lower body such as thigh, hip girth and weight. Even though, most respondents were categorized in thin or normal according to Rohrer index, means of respondents' satisfaction scores on weight and height were very low. These results indicated that most respondents were not satisfied with their weight and height. On the bases of these results, it could be stated that respondents perceived their body not as it was.

Respondents in this study were not satisfied or dissatisfied so much with their clothing selection ability and their own clothes. Two factors including in this study to measure clothing satisfaction, satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability and satisfaction with one's own clothes, were related negatively. Between all of body cathexis factors and clothing satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability, positive correlations were found, and all of body cathexis factors correlated negatively to satisfaction with one's own clothes.

In this study, clothing satisfaction factors were limited to satisfaction with one's clothing selection ability and with one's own clothes, so it could not explain about clothing satisfaction sufficiently. However negative correlations between body cathexis and satisfaction with one's own clothes were significant results of this research and this result could be related to clothing deprivation. Therefore further study on the relationship between clothing satisfaction and clothing deprivation/other variable that could explain clothing satisfaction need to be explored.

## REFERENCES

- Hollander A. (1976) Fashion in nudity, *Georgia Review*, **30**(3), 642-702, cited from Kaiser S.B. (1997) "The social psychology of clothing", 2nd ed. revised, Macmillan New York.
- Horn M. and Gurel L. (1981) "The second skin". 3rd ed., Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Hwang J. (1998) The effects of body cathexis and importance of meeting the ideal body image on clothing benefits sought. *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles*, **22**(3), 293-302.
- Hwang J. (2000) Effects of body cathexis and importance of ideal body image on satisfaction with ready-to-wear. *Journal of the Korean Society for Clothing Industry*, **2**(5), 391-397.
- Hwang J. and Na Y. (1999) The relationships between body-cathexis and clothing image preferences in male college students. *Journal of Korean Society of Costume*, **49**, 65-72.
- Hwang, J. and Norton M. (1994) Body cathexis, self-esteem, and clothing of men and women aged 55 years and older. *ITAA proceedings*, **98**.
- Jeon K. (2001) The relationships between body-cathexis and clothing satisfaction of middle- and high-school girls. *Journal of Korean Society of Costume*, **51**(5), 5-16.
- Jung J. and Nam Y. (1999) A study on the degree of satisfaction of body cathexis and ideal body shape of 18 to 25 year-old women. *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles*, **23**(1), 159-169.
- Kaiser S.B. (1997) "The social psychology of clothing". 2nd ed. revised, Macmillan, New York, pp.97-110.
- Kim K., Lee K. and Chung M. (2001) The effects of multiple body image on clothing behavior. *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles*, **25**(2), 358-365.
- Kim Y. and Kahng H. (1992) The effect of clothing satisfaction, body cathexis, and school achievement related to social self-esteem. *Journal of the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles*, **16**(2), 197-209.
- Kwon Y. and Parham E.S. (1994) Effects of state of fatness perception on weight conscious women's clothing practices. *Clothing and Textile Research Journal*, **12**(4), 16-21.
- LaBat K.L. and DeLong M. (1990) Body cathexis and satisfaction with fit of apparel. *Clothing and Textile Research Journal*, **8**(2), 43-48.
- Lee Y. (1981) The relationship between body cathexis and clothing behavior of Korean middle-aged women. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Yonsei University.
- Park W. (1999) Preferred style of clothing with body cathexis by Korean and American female students. *Journal of Korean Society of Costume*, **48**, 25-36.
- Ryan M.S. (1965) Perception of self in relation to clothing. In M. E. Roach & J. B. Eicher(Eds.), "Dress, adornment, and social order" (pp. 247-249). John Wiley, New York.
- Secord P.F. and Jourard S.M. (1953) The appraisal of body-cathexis: Body-cathexis and the self. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, **17**, 343-347.
- Shim S., Kotsiopulos A. and Knoll D. (1991) Body cathexis, clothing attitude, and their relations to clothing and shopping behavior among male consumers. *Clothing and Textile Research Journal*, **9**(3), 35-44.
- Song J. (2000) The body cathexis difference between fashion model and college women. *Journal of the Korean Society for Clothing Industry*, **2**(4), 325-330.
- Sontag M.S. and Schlater J.D. (1982) Proximity of clothing to self: Evolution of a concept. *Clothing and Textile Research Journal*, **1**(2), 1-8.
- Thompson S.K. (1986) Larger than life, "Psychology Today", **70**, 38-39. cited from Kaiser, S.B. (1997) "The social psychology of clothing", 2nd ed. revised, Macmillan, New York.
- Wooley S. and Wooley O. (1984) Feeling fat in a thin society, *Glamour*, **82**, 198-252. recited from Kown, Y., & Parham, E. S.(1994). Effects of state of fatness perception on weight conscious women's clothing practices. *Clothing and Textile Research Journal*, **12**(4), 16-21.

(Received October 30, 2001)