

Dress Code in Chinese High Schools: A Preliminary Design towards its Sociological Impacts

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Abstract. The dress code is enforced at several high schools in China, mandating that students adhere to certain guidelines. These guidelines prohibit the wearing of braces, skirts that are deemed too short, and anything that is considered attention-grabbing. It is intriguing to note that clothing codes often impose greater restrictions on women as compared to males. Certain educational institutions require their students to adhere to a dress code that mandates the wearing of complete ensembles daily. The independence of several pupils is constrained by intricate and stringent regulations, which also reinforce the notion of gender differentiation between boys and girls. Numerous attires exhibit a lack of comfort, hence impeding students' ability to effectively engage in learning and perform optimally. Individuals are often informed that these regulations are implemented to mitigate the impact of their attire on fellow members inside the institution, therefore potentially impeding their ability to engage in learning and professional activities. The objective of the rigorous experiment is to assess its efficacy. The occurrence of social desire bias may arise when both individuals involved in a trial possess an awareness of its proceedings. This phenomenon occurs when individuals provide responses that are widely embraced by society, but fail to accurately reflect their true beliefs and opinions. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is used to ensure the validity of the experiment. By using this preliminary experimental design, further analyses, and investigations might use more dependable data to examine the whole of the matter.

Keywords: Dress Code, Student, Gender.

1. Introduction

The dress code under consideration is considered inappropriate due to its potential to have a detrimental influence on the existing social atmosphere. The process of adorning oneself in a way that facilitates individual self-expression should not be conflated with attire that is considered inappropriate. People often see such statements on the Internet, they usually appear in the comments sections of Internet celebrities and influencers. Many organizations including schools and workplaces have also established clothing standards and created dress codes. In many places, non-standard dress even makes a person face many problems or be put in a serious situation [1-3]. One example is that many Chinese high schools have a dress code for students, which includes instructions not to wear suspenders, short skirts, or strange, eye-catching clothes on campus [4]. Interestingly, such dress codes usually articulate more restrictions towards females than males. Other schools require students to wear full uniforms every day. These complex and strict rules limit the freedom of many students and remind them of gender differences. Many uniforms have low comfort, which affects students' learning status and efficiency. People are often told that these rules are established to prevent improper dress from affecting others in the organization and reducing their learning and work efficiency.

Another point is that dress habits and standards are also very different in different cultures and countries. This phenomenon may also lead to varying evaluations and interpretations of garment exposure across various nations. In contrast to Asia, Western nations tend to provide individuals, regardless of gender, more autonomy in matters of personal attire, hence fostering a more inclusive environment. During the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, it was seen via televised coverage that a significant number of Qatari women chose to don black or white robes, which provided extensive

coverage for their bodies. The attire of the female individuals from the Western region in the crowd exhibited notable variations.

Although people are now accustomed to seeing clothes as an important part of everyday life, evolutionarily, there have been times in human history when wearing clothes was not necessary. Carefully think about it, it's normal that humans didn't wear clothes in primitive times. But why do people have to wear strictly controlled clothes in society now? What kind of clothing is considered immoral or hurts others? Before further exploration of these questions, it is necessary to clarify what is the definition of morality. There is no dispute that morality refers to a rule or guideline that people require themselves to follow, whether it is correct or not. People are expected to follow it in a wide range of conditions, even in some cases they do not get satisfaction from it. Historically, the definition of morality has widely been discussed by not only psychologists but also philosophers. The ultimate moral principle, the Principle of Utility raised by Bentham requires us to prioritize the best overall consequences for everybody who will be affected when making choices [5]. Other theories see morality as a mix of instincts and rationality, with natural endowments such as empathy and a sense of justice [6, 7]. These theories will be further discussed in the context of dressing in later sessions.

There are many reasons for this development of human society, and from an evolutionary perspective, wearing clothes can keep people safe, because in ancient times, just being cut and infected could kill a person. Tight clothing can better wrap the body to prevent injury and ensure survival. Wearing shoes in the heat of the desert can also prevent burns, so some religious areas may require specific clothing related to the local temperature and environment. In recent centuries, because people, both men and women, needed more time to exercise and work, people's clothing was changed to be more simple and convenient for movement [8]. On this basis, people generally feel that people who show a lot of bodies are immoral, and one possibility is that this arouses their sexual desire [8]. An experiment is designed to find out whether there is a direct correlation between the amount of clothing and the level of morality. The hypothesis is people would explicitly state that dressing is irrelevant to morality as long as it follows relevant laws, yet implicitly, people would still associate revealing clothing with immoral.

2. Method

The rigorous experiment is planned for testing. In some cases, when both parties are aware, social desire bias occurs in the experiment. This happens when the answers given by the participants are more acceptable to society, but they do not represent the true thoughts of the participants. To ensure the accuracy of the experiment, an Implicit Association Test (IAT) is used [9]. When the participants don't know what the test is measuring, they are more likely to reflect their true subconscious thoughts.

In this experiment, participants do not have to be divided into two groups which are the control group and the experiment group since they will all be asked to participate in the same reaction speed testing game. The number of participants is strictly controlled so that the experiment result can be used to predict the real phenomenon in society. The independent variable set in the experiment is the degree of exposure to clothing, and the dependent variable is moral evaluation. The controlling variable is anything in the photo other than skin exposure. manipulating variable is a participant's information because people with different environments and backgrounds may think and judge differently. Md. Anowar Hossain tested the clothing choices of workers of different genders and occupations at universities in several different countries. The results varied widely, with men choosing shirts and long pants most, while women chose salwar, kameez, and orna most [10]. After completing these processes, we will analyze implicit and explicit attitudes towards this topic and figure out the reasons that lead to such results.

2.1. Participants and measurements

A total of 100 participants, with a 1:1 male-to-female ratio, came from a Hangzhou high school in 11th grade. Participants in the experiment will receive 10 RMB compensation. According to

Karpinski and Steinman's (2006) single-category IAT template, this test should be divided into two halves, so subjects will receive two trials [9]. Subjects received two sets of trials, each with six stimuli, for a total of 12 stimuli, these stimuli were selected in the pretest for the most and least revealing dressed men and women. In addition, each trial will have six stimuli that are not related to the study, and these data will not be included in the calculation of the results

A pre-test will be prepared for the participants to detect which pictures we will eventually use in the real experiment since they are consistent with most people's standards. 30 people will participate in this pre-test, they are from the same high school in the 11th grade in Hangzhou, China. Specifically, participants will be shown 15 photos of men and women respectively with different levels of exposure. The most exposed photo of a woman is with a bra and underpants, man is with only short underpants. The least exposed woman and man pictures are with fully wrapped black clothing. For each photo, participants are asked to score how exposed they think it is from 1 to 10. This reflects if they agree with us on which picture is the high-exposure one and which is less exposed. For the most exposed pictures, we will select the three highest-rated pictures to represent the high-exposure group. We will select the 3 least rated pictures for both female and male for the least exposed picture. A total of 12 pictures will be used in the following experiment

Before the experiment begins, participants will also be asked to complete a simple screening questionnaire that includes their gender, country, religion, etc. since they may all act as third variables. Therefore, knowing the subjects' education level helps us control for these variables. Among them, we pay more attention to the factor of gender, because the standard of revealing clothing is different for different genders, and social comments on individual clothing are influenced by gender. As we mentioned earlier, the dress code is different for male and female students in the school, because in this experiment we wanted to receive a more balanced response from different genders. Ideally, the ratio of male to female participants is 1:1. These confirmed that they had no special conditions that distracted the final results.

In the first experiment, the participants were asked to press the "z" button on the left-hand side when the images of the high-exposure group appeared on the computer and to press the "." button on the right side when the images of the low-exposure group appeared. This step is designed to reinforce participants' memories of exposure. Similarly, when images of immoral behavior were shown on the screen, such as two people hitting each other or abusing each other, participants had to quickly identify them as low morals and press the "z" button. On the other hand, if it is a picture of two people hugging or cooperating, it is highly moral, should press the dot button.

In the next experiment, they were asked to press the "z" button when a high-exposure and low-ethical picture were shown together. This process is repeated reversely again with pictures at different positions, to avoid the fact that they have created an instant memory and affect the outcome of the experiment. If the participant answers correctly, the next question will appear within 300ms, and if the participant answers incorrectly in this target, the "error" mark and the correct answer will remain on the screen for 2000ms. If the participant does not respond after 1500ms, the screen will say "Too slow!" And skip to the next target. This is to ensure that all answers are made subconsciously.

2.2. Measurements of implicit attitude

They were then shown pictures of men and women nude and dressed in full clothing to determine the definition of high and low exposure. There are also two photos of two people hugging and beating each other, representing high exposure and low morality. The high-exposure and low-exposure images were then alternated with the high-ethical and low-ethical images, and participants had to press certain buttons when they saw different combinations. Participants thought they were being tested for reaction speed, which reflected whether they thought high exposure represented low morality, or vice versa.

2.3. Measurements of explicit attitude

In our experiment, participants were also asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to measure their explicit thoughts. They were asked to rate their ideas on a scale of one to five (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Questions included "Are you uncomfortable with this image" alongside a highly exposure photo, and "Do you think the person in the picture is immoral?" By analyzing the questionnaire and the reaction speed of the participants, we can see the difference between implicit and explicit thoughts. In testing the explicit thoughts, we predicted that many people would indeed find highly exposed images distasteful, but that their choices would be less extreme. Another question could be added here, such as asking participants to describe in one word how they felt when they saw the picture. Like whether he felt offended, shameful, or free and healthy when he saw high-exposure images. The idea was to look at the participants' specific feelings for negative or positive emotions and determine whether they were making the judgment based on personal feelings or normal moral standards.

For this experiment, there are several possible results, people respond faster when low-exposure images are placed with low morality, low-exposure images with high morality, high-exposure images with low morality, and high-exposure images with high morality. Or the worst data, there are no significant differences between the groups and there are no clear relationships. The different results have specific meanings, such as whether people's criticism of clothing is the result of evaluating ideals or is based on intuition. This is useful for penetrating people's judgments. This helps us know where to start if we want to influence others to build a more open perspective. Our final hypothesis is that participants were significantly faster to press the button when they saw a nude photo alongside a picture of two people beating each other, meaning that they subconsciously thought it was immoral for people to expose their bodies in public.

The difference between the results of the two tests can reflect that some people outwardly show that they can accept different clothes, but in fact, their inner bias is still not corrected. Although people now advertise that people should wear what they like, regardless of gender, and others should not have a prejudice against the style of dress that they cannot accept, many people's unconscious thoughts have not changed. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that people are not updating their perceptions and biases as quickly as the changing times require.

3. Discussion

First of all, dress codes and similar rules are necessary and useful in certain conditions. While it can be a constraint for many adults, younger children need some guidance. This causes the children to establish incorrect values and leads to abnormal development. With proper guidance, when these children grow up, they will be able to make better choices and judgments based on more experience and rational thinking. It can be seen that highly revealing clothes are still not very accepted and considered immoral by some people. Although this idea cannot be said to be completely correct, but familiar with these rules can help them better integrate into society and not be harmed.

Secondly, as mentioned above, although the progress of society forces many people to change their ideas to integrate into the group, many people have only made changes on the surface, but they still resist in their hearts. This can easily lead to Internet violence and other phenomena that disturb others' lives because once the information is hidden or anonymous, people will express what they believe. Therefore, more people need to be aware of their biases and prejudices and update their ideas. Research on implicit and explicit attitudes shows that the formation and updating mechanisms behind these attitudes are very different. The formation of implicit attitudes is usually the result of many factors, including environment, experiences, and knowledge base. The formation process is mostly unconscious but has a strong impact on the behaviors. Meanwhile, implicit attitude updating is always a hard question for psychologists since it updates slowly. Even though revision happened in some cases, the change is in the very short term. In contrast, the explicit attitude forms consciously and updates at a fast speed. The change is also long-lasting. Such different mechanisms cause differences

between implicit and explicit attitudes. The same theory could be applied to moral standards such as people's explicit attitude toward dressing. As society becomes more open and diverse, people's thoughts about dressing standards may also change. For example in an interview, some people may claim dressing styles should be free and no matter which gender, people should be able to choose certain exposed clothes that they like. However, in IAT, participants may still link high-exposure images with immoral words. Nowadays, many people have been severely reprimanded and despised for their dress style, such as being cyberbullying. All these situations reflect researchers should pay attention to various between the two kinds of attitudes in future studies.

In addition, this study has to acknowledge that there are differences between people's moral standards as morality is a complex system based on many aspects. Their living environment, for example, influences their moral judgment. In an inclusive society, people should understand and respect each other's culture and habits and should not use their moral concepts to judge other's standards. After all, requiring all populations in an area to have the same moral standards is unrealistic and impossible.

Finally, unified morality is good for groups because it improves the cohesiveness among people. That explains why people who come from the same cultural and religious backgrounds would hold similar moral values. However, it is not a good thing for people who seek the truth, such as scientists, because it distorts a lot of facts and limits opportunities for independent thinking. It is easy to forget that the moral criteria held by a group that one belongs to are not correct. Moreover, Haidt raised a point that the majority of moral psychologist is liberal, which might lead to the alienation of conservative moral values, yet different voices should be heard [11]. This means that our analysis of experimental results may apply to only a subset of society, not all groups, so we should also expand the scope of testing and activities to more areas so that different opinions can be included and valued.

4. Conclusion

Restrictions on clothing exist all over the world. Evolution initiates the need for clothing for possible reasons including to protect the body and suppress the sexual desire to maintain order and safety in the group. In today's society, clothing is attached to other meanings such as morality. Many people will also criticize some clothes for hurting others or for causing children to have unhealthy psychological development. To test whether people generally believe the amount of cloth is directly related to the level of moral level, an Implicit Association Test can be used to measure the non-conscious attitude towards the issue. Meanwhile, participants' explicit attitude is also measured using surveys and interviews. The experiment result would reflect the thoughts of people on the relationship between morality and the exposure level of the body. Moreover, it would help to understand the source of the people's judgment on the topic. Specifically, do people make judgments based on intuitions or the rational components of moral values, there is a gap between people's intuitive and rational judgment. During the process of experiment planning, some questions would be evoked, including the gender differences among the participants' responses and whether undeveloped children need guidance for their clothing. Furthermore, people have to constantly refresh their minds and ideas to line up with the world when they realize it. Lastly, different people with various backgrounds do have not the same perspective on a moral level. While most experts in the field come from liberal backgrounds, it is crucial to include opinions other than this. Further study should consider a design that crosses a wider range of cultures, religions, etc., and reveal a more inclusive understanding of the issue.

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