



RESEARCH ARTICLE

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTION OF SELF-WORTH AND DETERMINANTS OF CLOTHING SATISFACTION AMONG PRE-ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

Self-worth, one of the secondary needs, consists of self-concept and self-esteem. It is during the pre-adolescent period that a child starts defining self, and this determines perception of self-worth. The focus of this paper is on the extent to which the pre-adolescents were satisfied with their clothing and assess their perception of self-worth. The foregoing study was a survey research conducted in six primary schools in Kasarani Division of Nairobi Province, using an interview schedule and essays. A sample of 144 pre-adolescents was selected and both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed. The majority of the pre-adolescents were satisfied with their clothing and most of them attributed size and colour to clothing satisfaction. Most of them had a high perception of self-worth in relation to their clothing. There was a significant relationship between clothing satisfaction and self-worth, clothing satisfaction and involvement in clothing selection. It was concluded that through symbolic interaction with significant others and peer group members, clothing satisfaction played a significant role in increasing the pre-adolescent's self-worth and, therefore, issues like involvement in clothing selection which affect pre-adolescent's clothing satisfaction should be considered by those involved with pre-adolescents' clothing.

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INTRODUCTION

**Social-psychology Developmental Characteristics of Pre-adolescents**

Most authors refer to the pre-adolescent period as the late childhood. Pre-adolescent stage is characterized by some social-psychology developmental characteristics such as self-definition, relationship with peers, popularity and how they establish friendship. According to Erickson's theory, children in this stage are in the fourth stage of personality development; they must learn the skills of their culture or risk developing feelings of inferiority. Children's initial efforts to handle the tools of their society help them to grow and to form a positive self-concept. These are important years for the development of self-esteem. As children compare their own abilities with those of their peers, they construct a sense of who they are (Papalia, *et al.*, 1987; Santrock, 1987; Collins *et al.*, 1991).

**Self-definition:** Children begin to define themselves in psychological terms. They now develop the concept of what they are like (real self) and also what they would like to be (ideal self) (Papalia *et al.*, 1987). During this period, children begin to evaluate themselves. They may like what they see when they look within themselves or they may think poorly of

themselves (Collins *et al.*, 1991). Papalia *et al.* (1987) indicate that children with high self-esteem are more popular and do better in school while those with low self-esteem are more likely to be loners and to have behavioural problems such as bed-wetting and poor academic performance.

**Peer group:** Although babies are aware of one another and pre-schoolers do begin to make friends, it is not until this childhood period that the peer group comes to its own (Mussen *et al.*, 1990). The peer group helps children form attitudes and values. Through the medium of other children from different backgrounds and with different value systems, children can see how well they hold up (Mussen *et al.*, 1990; Papalia *et al.*, 1987). Peers offer emotional security and help the child learn how to get along in society. He/she learns how and when to adjust their needs and desires to those of others (Collins *et al.*, 1991; Papalia *et al.*, 1987).

**Popularity and children:** Popular children tend to be more physically attractive than unpopular ones and this may create the desire by children to surround themselves with 'beautiful' people. Popular children also have higher self-esteem and are enjoyable to be with (Papalia *et al.*, 1987). Unpopular children, on the other hand, show unprovoked aggression and hostility. They look silly and babyish showing off immature ways. They are anxious and uncertain, lack confidence that repel other children, who don't find them any fun to be with.

In most cases, these children are unattractive and behave in a way that seems strange and are slow learners. A study by Papalia *et al.* (1987) found that children's feelings of loneliness relate to their position in the sociogram.

**Friendship:** Friends are defined as people who spontaneously seek each other's company without social pressure to do so (Anselmo, 1987). Young children tend to select friends of their own age, sex and race. Another consideration is that physically attractive children are much liked and chosen for friends than physically unattractive ones (Collins *et al.*, 1991; Papalia *et al.*, 1987; Kaiser, 1985).

### The Concept of Self

The self consists of an individual's consciousness of being, and that being comprises a tangible dimension (body and appearance symbols), as well as a conceptual and/or perceptual dimension (how one defines and appraises self) (Kaiser, 1990). According to Horn (1975), self is the object to which we refer with the words 'I', 'me', 'mine' and 'myself', and self idea has three principles: the imagination of our appearance to the other person, the imagination of his judgement of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling such as pride or mortification. The physical, social and psychological factors that relate to how we view our bodies are what constitute the concept of self (Kaiser, 1985). Among the important factors are body image, body cathexis, self-worth, self-evaluation and self-presentation.

**Body image:** This refers to the mental picture one has of his or her body at any given moment in time. This picture may or may not be accurate or consistent with other's perceptions of that body (Kaiser, 1990). According to Horn (1975), clothing does strengthen or weaken the body image boundary. Although individuals have some concept of body image, research has indicated that there is a considerable variation in the way they process information relevant to specific aspects of body image such as weight. People have distorted images of their bodies as they compare themselves with fashion models or other media figures. When they feel that they do not look the same as those models, they begin to dwell on certain parts of the body (or the body as whole) that they view as problematic (Kaiser, 1990). Some researchers attribute the problem of distorted body image to perceptual difficulties, while others emphasize on emotional or cognitive factors (Kaiser, 1990).

**Body cathexis:** Body cathexis represents the degree of satisfaction with the body, and is closely linked to the self in general (Horn, 1975; Kaiser, 1990). Kaiser's research shows that cultural ideals for males and females influence the degree of satisfaction one has with the body and there is a close relation between physical ideals and apparel styles at a given point of time (Kaiser, 1990). Body cathexis has been shown to relate positively to feelings of self-acceptance and that individuals who express a high degree of satisfaction with physical self tend to score higher on measures of psychological security (Horn, 1975).

**Self-worth:** Hira and Mugenda (1999) define self-worth as a system of thoughts and feelings concerning or focused on self. Self-worth consists of self-concept and self-esteem.

**Self-concept** is the sum total of the views which an individual has of himself or herself (Venderoff, 1981). Storm (1987) defines self-concept as the individual's mental system of organizing his or her own perceptions and concepts about self. According to Kaiser (1990), self-concept is a global perception of who one is and people internalise and integrate personal qualities and other characteristics to define self. Clothing and appearance play a vital part in the development, maintenance and modification of one's sense of self (Stone, 1965 as cited in Kaiser, 1990). One has a self-concept when he or she can interact in a meaningful way with others.

**Self-esteem** involves individual's feelings and attitude towards self (Kaiser, 1990). It also refers to one's evaluation of one's own abilities (Papalia *et al.*, 1987) and it is based on the part of the self that is capable of not only judging and responding to the self as an object but also taking satisfaction in what is observed and explained (Horn, 1975; Kaiser, 1990). A person with high self-esteem is self-accepting and self-tolerant, like the self and has proper respect for self. In contrast, low self-esteem is associated with depression, unhappiness and anxiety (Rosenberg, 1985 as cited in Kaiser (1990). As children form identities and concepts about themselves, they implicitly assign positive or negative values to their own attributes. In most cases, their self-esteem is determined by their physical attractiveness (Papalia *et al.*, 1987; Schor, 1991). Research has indicated that self-esteem is related to satisfaction with the body and appearance in general (Kaiser, 1990) and that people who evaluate themselves positively tend to use clothing as a means of social approval (Horn, 1975; Kaiser, 1990).

Low self-esteem has been linked to depression and insecurity. Depressed persons tend to be less satisfied with their bodies and view themselves as less attractive than non-depressed persons. They tend to distort their self-image in a negative manner, while non-depressed persons appear to distort their self-image positively (Kaiser, 1990). It seems that for persons who are depressed or have low self-esteem, appearance management serves an adaptive function, to bolster oneself in social life. For persons who feel positive about themselves, clothing may be used as a form of self-expression in the eyes of self more than others (Horn, 1975; Kaiser, 1990). Clothing may be a source of overt admiration resulting in increased self-esteem, self-respect and security (Horn, 1975).

**Self-evaluation:** We acquire information about ourselves to enable self-assessment through feedback from others, personal comparison with others and self-perception (Kaiser, 1990). Socially, we rely on others to supply us with feedback about what we look like, as well as how attractive and appropriate our clothes are perceived to be. In other words, our impressions of our own appearance are largely based on reflected appraisals, or we see ourselves, in part, through the eyes and impressions of others. Social feedback comes in form of direct comments, verbal or non-verbal. Research indicates that physically attractive children tend to have more favourable self-concepts than unattractive ones and this advantage is likely to be based at least in part on social feedback (Kaiser, 1990; Papalia *et al.*, 1987). Festinger (1954), as cited in Kaiser (1990), and Santrock (1988) note that humans have basic need to compare themselves with others, for purposes of self-evaluation. Appearance is so visible that it becomes an easy target for social comparison.

Thus, subjects use clothing and appearance to evaluate themselves (Morse and Gergen, 1970 as cited in Kaiser, 1990). Self-perception means that we rely on feedback from others to aid us in formulating a self-image and in determining how we want to appear to others. The self-image helps us in deciding what kinds of clothes and accessories are consistent with our images of who we are. We vary our modes of dress depending on the persons with whom we are interacting and on the roles that we play (Kaiser, 1990).

**Self-presentation:** Self-presentation is a process of displaying an identity to others in social context (Kaiser, 1990; Santrock, 1988). Our self-concepts provide guidelines for dressing (Kaiser, 1990). Papalia *et al.* (1987) talk of the real self, which is a person's concept of what he or she is like, and ideal self, which is a person's concept of what he or she would like to appear. At times our perceived selves or self-concepts do not necessarily coincide with our ideal selves, or the selves we are striving to be. Appearance management affords an outlet of approximating visually as close as possible one's ideal self. Our clothing selection and styles of grooming are influenced by how we would like others to see us (Kaiser, 1990). For most people, clothing provides a positive means of satisfying the need for self-enhancement. It can beautify the appearance of an individual, and prevent rejection (Horn, 1975).

The symbolic interactionists state that one's actions towards self depend on one's perspective, and that this perspective comes from significant others, generalized others and the reference group (Charon, 1979). From the above social, physical and psychological factors of how self is viewed, one develops a self-worth from self evaluation of one's appearance. One gets information about self through self perceptions, social feedback and social comparison. How one presents self therefore depends on self evaluation which in turn will also determine perception of self-worth.

### Issues of Perception of Self-worth and Clothing Satisfaction

Members of the society such as parents and teachers often criticize the youth over their clothing. At the same time, the youth wish to conform to the clothing styles worn by the peers. This often results in conflict between parents and the youth over their clothing and this may lead to depression and low self-worth due to dissatisfaction with the clothing proposed to them by their parents (Youth Variety Show, 2001). Self-worth is an important component of one's identity. Review of literature shows that self-worth is related to satisfaction with one's clothing and appearance, and that people with lower self-worth view themselves as unattractive (Kaiser, 1990). It is during the pre-adolescent stage that a child starts defining whom she/he is through social interaction with peers, and the type of clothing worn can make him be accepted or rejected resulting in low self-worth. A person with low self-worth tends to have emotional problems such as frustrations, depression and loneliness (Hayes, 1998; Bourne and Russo, 1998), which can lead to a search for comfort in another person (Hayes, 1998). This 'other person' could be a wrong company and could lead to problems such as indulgence in irresponsible sexual behaviour, drug abuse, poor academic performance and dropping out of school.

In the contemporary era of many social problems, including HIV/AIDS, drug abuse among others, it is worth bringing up individuals who have self-respect and self-control that result from their feeling of self-worth. An individual with a higher self-worth is responsible, committed to achieving future goals, and can make wiser decisions. While many studies on clothing and self-worth have been conducted elsewhere (Kaiser, 1990; Feather, 1976), they have not received special attention in Kenya. Studies have been done on factors considered in clothing selection for the pre-school children (Njororai, 1994), adolescents (Migunde, 1993), adults (Otieno, 1990), and the physically handicapped (Marinda, 2001, but no study has addressed the pre-adolescent's view about their clothing and the extent to which satisfaction with the clothing contributes to development of self-worth. Papalia *et al.* (1987) recommend that since self-worth is an important key to success throughout life, more research should be done on it. In view of this recommendation, the present researcher sought to find out the role of clothing satisfaction in developing positive self-worth among pre-adolescents. The purpose of this study was to investigate on clothing satisfaction, issues related to it and the role it plays in developing self-worth among the pre-adolescents. This was done by assessing satisfaction with their clothing and relating it to perception of self-worth in connection with their clothing.

### Clothing Satisfaction among other Age-groups with Regard to Self-worth

Clothing plays a major role in the enhancement of self-concept and self-esteem and feeling of acceptance into a group and sense of belonging. The clothes worn by an individual should satisfy his/her social-psychological needs as much as possible. Studies reveal different views and levels of satisfaction regarding clothing in age groups such as pre-schoolers and adolescents.

**Pre-school children:** A study conducted in Kenya indicates that children's opinion is least considered when choosing their clothes and mothers are the ones who in most cases buy the pre-schooler's clothes. It is suggested that parents should let children accompany them when purchasing their clothes (Njororai, 1994). Research conducted elsewhere suggests that there is some evidence that teachers react more positively towards attractive children in classroom contexts (Adams and Cohen, 1974 as cited in Kaiser, 1990). Although there is no evidence that attractive children are actually brighter than unattractive children, attractive children receive significantly higher grades (Kaiser, 1990). In terms of peer relations, pre-school children are perceived as 'nicer' and more popular when they are attractive than when they are unattractive (Kaiser, 1990). Attractive children are also thought by their peers to have control over their destinies and to be more capable of achieving their goals. Conversely, unattractive children are expected to have less control over their lives and are regarded as looking 'scary' or 'frightened' (Kaiser, 1990).

**Adolescents:** Research indicates that positive feelings about the body are related to a positive self-concept in adolescents (Kaiser, 1990). Adolescent males evaluate their bodies as more physically effective, while adolescent females tend to perceive their bodies as effective by use of attractiveness (Kaiser, 1990). Personal attractiveness has been found to be

related to clothes worn by adolescents (Creekmore, 1980). Adolescents who are more satisfied with clothing tend to feel more secure socially, whereas those who feel deprived in terms of their clothing are socially insecure. Self-esteem is positively related to satisfaction with clothing as well (Kaiser, 1990; Horn, 1975).

Marinda (2001) found that among the physically handicapped Kenyan adolescents in Nairobi, factors that brought satisfaction with their clothing were: clothing made from fabric that does not cling, right size of clothing, variety of styles and appropriate positioning of openings. Dissatisfaction with clothing was caused by poor quality of fabric used, colours that easily fade and monotonous styles due to mass produced clothing as was with Kenyan-made clothing.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a survey study to determine clothing satisfaction, issues related to it and its role in determining a positive self-worth among the pre-adolescents. This study was carried out in Kasarani division located in Nairobi Province. The target population consisted of all the Kenyan pre-adolescents in Kasarani Division. The accessible population was the pre-adolescent children in six primary schools, namely Githurai, Korogocho, Muthaiga, Immaculate Heart, Thika Road Academy and Thika Road Christian School. Six schools (3 public and 3 private) were selected purposively from the division. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling methods were used. The sampling frame consisted of a list of all the pre-adolescents (11 and 12 year old children) from the six schools which were stratified on basis of school, age and gender. The list was first stratified according to school. In each of the schools, the lists were further stratified according to age and to give two strata of males and females. From each of the stratum, a sample was selected by simple random sampling. In order to avoid any gender biases, the sample consisted of equal number of boys and girls. Equal number of 11 and 12 year-olds were also selected to ensure equal representation of the two age-groups.

The accessible population consisted of seven hundred and twelve (712) pre-adolescents from the selected three public schools and three hundred and twenty eight (328) from the selected three private schools. Ninety-six (96) pre-adolescents were selected from the public schools and Forty-eight (48) from the private schools. Total sample size was therefore 144, which was approximately fourteen percent of the accessible population. Data was collected using interview schedules and essays written by the respondents. Data were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively to address the objectives. Qualitative data from the essays were coded according to certain words, patterns and phrases; then they were explained in themes. Quantitative data were analysed using the computer statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to describe and summarise data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Clothing Satisfaction among the Respondents

Clothing satisfaction was determined by asking the respondents two questions; how often they felt that their

preferences were considered when their clothing were bought or given and how often they were completely happy with their clothing. Responses to both questions ranged from always, sometime to never. A clothing satisfaction index was then derived from the two questions. The respondents' attribute of satisfaction to their clothing was also determined in this section.

### How often Respondents' Clothing Preferences were Considered

Whether one's clothing preference is considered or not greatly influences an individual's contentment/discontentment with his/her clothing. As shown on Table 6, 47.2% of the respondents reported that their preferences were always considered when their clothing were bought or given. Forty-four point five percent (44.5%) reported that their preferences were sometimes considered and 8.3% reported that their preferences were never considered. This implies that among majority of the respondents, their preferences were taken into account when their clothing was bought or given to them. This could be because most of them were involved in the selection of their clothing, and given the fact that majority of their mothers who mainly bought for them clothing were at least educated and therefore understood the clothing needs of their children.

Table 1: How often Respondents' Clothing Preferences were Considered

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	68	47.2
Sometimes	64	44.5
Never	12	8.3
Total	144	100

### How often the Respondents were completely happy with their Clothing

The respondents were asked how often they were completely happy with their then, present clothing.

Table 2: How often the Respondents were completely happy with their Clothing

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	72	50.0
Sometimes	48	33.3
Never	24	16.7
Total	144	100

Fifty percent (50.0%) of the respondents were always completely happy with their clothing, 33.3% sometimes happy and 16.7% were never happy with their clothing. This showed that a majority of them were completely happy with their clothing and this could be because they were mainly involved in the selection of their clothing and therefore selected what pleased them.

### Clothing Satisfaction Index

Whether one's preference is considered and how happy one is with his/her clothing both reflects one's contentment/discontentment with clothing. The two variables were therefore used to get a clothing satisfaction index. In order to determine the extent to which the respondents were satisfied with their clothing, scores were given to the response to the two questions; 2 for 'always' 1 for 'sometimes' and 0 for 'never'. The maximum score was 4 and the minimum was 0. The scores are shown on the table below:

**Table 3: Satisfaction Scores**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
4 scores	26	18.1
3 scores	27	18.8
2 scores	37	25.7
1 scores	33	22.9
0 scores	21	14.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

In order to establish if significant relationships existed between clothing satisfaction and other selected variables, they were correlated using chi-square tests. The scores were therefore categorized and labelled as follows:

- 3-4 -----always satisfied  
 1-2 -----sometimes satisfied  
 0 -----never satisfied

Forty-eight point six percent (48.6%) of the respondents scored 1-2 (were sometimes satisfied), 36.8 % scored 3-4 (were always satisfied) and 14.6% scored 0 (were never satisfied with their clothing). The results showed that most respondents were moderately satisfied with their clothing. This could be because a majority of them participated in their clothing selection.

#### **Respondents' Attribute of Satisfaction to Clothing**

This variable was measured because it enables one to understand the main cause of clothing satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Many (38.9%) respondents attributed their satisfaction with clothing to size followed by colour (34.7%). A minority (1.4%) of the respondents attributed their clothing satisfaction to texture/comfort. The findings imply that size, how one fit in his/her clothing and colour, which is the visual appearance of the clothing were very important to the respondents as far as their clothing satisfaction was concerned. Peer group acceptance and fashion ability of the clothing were relatively important but the texture/comfort of the clothing was not very important as far as the respondents' clothing were concerned.

#### **Respondents' Perception of Self-worth**

In order to determine the respondents' perception of self-worth (one's perception and thoughts, feelings and attitudes about self) in relation to their clothing, a scale of five statements was used. The statements were:

- I am comfortable with my clothing generally,  
 I am happy with myself when I wear my clothing,  
 I feel that I am smart,  
 I am satisfied when I compare my appearance with that of my friends' and  
 My friends admire my appearance.

The responses to the questions ranged from 'Always', 'Sometimes' to 'Never'. A score of 2 was assigned to 'always', 1 to 'sometimes' and 0 to 'never'. The maximum score that could be attained was 10 and the minimum score was 0 for the five statements. The scores for the respondents were as presented on Table 4 below. The scores were then categorised so as to correlate self-worth with other variables by use of chi-square tests. The categories were:

- 7-10 -----High self-worth  
 4-6 -----Moderate self-worth  
 0-3 -----Low self-worth

**Table 4: Self-worth Scores**

Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)
10	5	3.5
9	24	16.7
8	22	15.3
7	14	9.7
6	19	13.2
5	17	11.8
4	11	7.6
3	13	9.0
2	11	7.6
1	4	2.8
0	4	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown above, 45.2 % of the respondents had a high perception of self-worth, 32.6% had moderate and 22.2% had a low perception of self-worth in relation to their clothing. This showed that most of the respondents had a high perception of self-worth in relation to their clothing and this implies that most of them had their clothing affecting their perceptions, attitudes and feelings towards self in a positive way.

#### **Themes of Self-worth from the Essays**

Self-worth refers to one's perception of self (self-concept) and feelings/attitudes towards self (self-esteem). Kaiser (1990) refers to self-concept as a global perception of who one is. Horn (1975) further notes that clothing helps to establish the identity of the individual to himself and to others with whom he/she interact. She further notes that clothes are such a visual part of the self and are often included in the conscious evaluation of self-characteristic. Self-concept is therefore associated with one's clothing and appearance. Charon (1979) notes that what we think of ourselves, feel about ourselves, like about ourselves result from interaction. Self-judgments results to a high degree from judgement by others. The findings from the essays show that the respondents use their clothing to develop self-perception (self-concept). These are also based on self-judgement and judgement from others.

*'Sometimes I think I am beautiful and decent when my friends wear clothes same as mine.'*

*'I feel proud when everyone tells me how good I look.'*

*'.....other times I feel ugly and naked because my friends have better clothes than mine.'*

The themes of self-esteem, such as feeling of acceptance, happiness, pride, lowliness, disappointment, embarrassment and shame were found to be associated with the respondents' clothing.

*'I feel accepted by my friends when I wear my clothes'  
 'My friends don't like me when I wear old-fashioned clothes.'*

Acceptance refers to when one feels that he/ she is liked and wanted in the society. A person with low self-worth does not like him/herself and feels that others don't like and accept them. Phrases such as 'friends don't like me,' 'I feel accepted by friends' and 'I feel sorry for myself' imply that the respondents associated their clothing with acceptance.

According to Kaiser (1990), a person with high self-esteem is self-accepting, self tolerant and likes the self.

*'I hate myself when friends tell me that my clothes are old-fashioned.'*  
*'My ugly clothing makes me feel sorry for myself.'*

Feelings of lowliness and disappointment were also found to be associated with the respondents' clothing. One feels low and disappointed when his/her needs/expectations are not met. A person who feels low is not proud of self. Lowliness and unhappiness were found to be associated with respondents' dissatisfaction with their clothing. On the other hand, the respondents who were satisfied with their clothing expressed feelings of happiness and pride with themselves.

*'At times I feel bad when I wear my clothes because my friends wear better clothes which look beautiful and make me feel that I am very low, and they are special while me I am not loved.'*  
*'I feel proud and important when I wear my clothes and everyone tells me how good I look. They really make me feel happy.'*  
*'When I wear my clothes, sometimes I feel rather disappointed.'*

The findings agree with Kaiser's (1990) who noted that people who are less satisfied with their appearance including clothing tend to be depressed and view themselves as less attractive. Feelings of embarrassment and shame were also found to be related to the respondents' clothing. Respondents who were dissatisfied with their clothing expressed feelings of embarrassment and shame. Those who were satisfied with their clothing were proud to be associated with their clothing.

*'Sometimes my clothes embarrass me when I walk in front of many people.'*  
*'I feel ashamed of my clothes because they are not so good like for my friends.'*  
*'I feel proud, descent and comfortable with my nice clothes.'*

Horn (1975) also noted that for some people, clothing may be a source of embarrassment, discomfort and depression. Papalia *et al.* (1987) notes that during middle and late childhood, children evaluate themselves and they may like what they see within themselves or think poorly of their selves. Generally, the findings of this study show that the respondents associated positive self-attitude with clothing satisfaction hence, higher self-worth, while negative self-attitudes were associated with clothing dissatisfaction hence lower self-worth. Clothing therefore was found to play a very significant role in increasing one's perception of self-worth. Horn (1975) notes that positive attitudes expressed toward one's clothes tend to reinforce a generalised positive feeling towards the self, while negative responses contribute to the depreciation of the self.

### Relationship between Symbolic Interaction, Clothing Satisfaction and Perception of Self-worth from the Essays

The conceptual framework in this study was based on the ideas of symbolic interactionists who believe that people judge themselves and develop a self-image based on ideas, comments and judgements from the people they interact with

(Charon, 1979). The findings from the respondents' essays showed that pre-adolescents judge their appearance as created by their clothing. How satisfied they were with their clothing depended on other people's comments (significant others and peers).

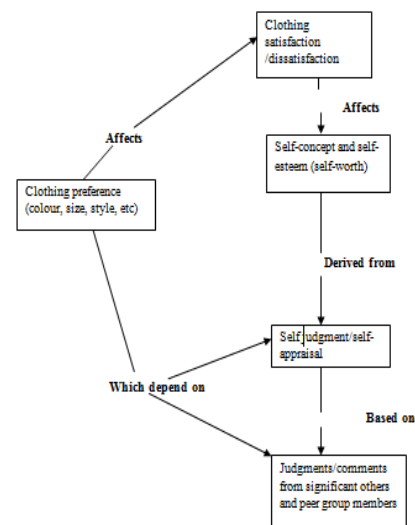
*'I like wearing clothes that people have commented that I am smart in them.'* *'Sometimes I think I am beautiful when my friends wear clothes same as mine.'*

From the comments given by others, the pre-adolescents developed a self-image which affected the feeling they had about themselves.

*'I feel proud when everyone tell me how good I look.'*  
*'I feel good about them and feel as if am in my own world.'*  
*'I feel proud, decent and comfortable when I wear clothes liked by my friends.'*

Self-worth, according to this study, refers to perceptions/mental picture about self and feelings/attitudes towards oneself, i.e. comprises one's self-concept and self-esteem. A person with a higher self-worth has positive perceptions and feelings/attitudes towards self. On the other hand, lower self-worth is associated with a negative self-image and feeling/attitudes towards self. From the findings, the respondents' satisfaction with their clothing had an implication on their self-concept and self-esteem. These were developed from self-judgements/self-appraisals which the respondent developed from judgements/comments of others about the self. The findings further suggest that the respondents' clothing satisfaction/dissatisfaction depends on whether clothing preferences, such as fashion ability, peer-acceptance, desirable colours, size, texture or comfort associated with the clothing, are considered or not.

*'When I wear oversized clothes, my friends tease me and say that I look old.'*  
*'I hate when they really have bad colours and ugly designs.'*



Source: Author

Fig. 1: Relationship between Symbolic Interaction and the Findings of the Study

**Chi-square Results for Selected Variables Influencing Clothing Satisfaction**

Chi-square tests were computed at ( $p < 0.05$ ) alpha level to determine whether there were relationships between selected variables and clothing satisfaction. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between clothing satisfaction and perception of self-worth ( $p = 0.0002$ ). A higher proportion (45.5%) of the respondents who were never satisfied with their clothing had a low perception of self-worth compared to 31.8% of those who were never satisfied having a high perception of self-worth.

**Table 5: The Relationship between Clothing Satisfaction and Self-worth**

	Self worth			Row total
	Low	Moderate	High	
Never satisfied	10(45.5%)	9(24.3%)	7(31.8%)	22(100.0%)
Sometimes satisfied	17(24.6%)	30(43.5%)	22(31.9%)	69(100.0%)
Always satisfied	5(9.4%)	12(22.7%)	36(67.9%)	51(100.0%)
Column total	32 (100.0%)	47 (100.0%)	65 (100.0%)	144

$\chi^2 = 23.84$   $p = 0.0002$   $df = 4$

A majority (67.9%) of those who were always satisfied had a high perception of self-worth compared to (9.4%) of those who were always satisfied having a low perception of self-worth. The test shows that perception of self-worth in relation to clothing increased with the respondents' clothing satisfaction. This agrees with Kaiser (1990) who found that adolescents who were more satisfied with clothing felt more secure socially and had a high self-concept and self-esteem, unlike those who felt deprived in terms of clothing. The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between clothing satisfaction and involvement in clothing selection ( $p = 0.0091$ ). The distribution of clothing satisfaction according to involvement in clothing selection showed that as many as more than twice (73.6%) of the respondents who were always satisfied with their clothing were involved in their clothing selection compared to 26.4% of those who were not involved and were always satisfied with their clothing.

**Table 6: The Relationship between Clothing Satisfaction and Involvement in Clothing Selection**

	Involvement in clothing selection		Row total
	Yes	No	
Never satisfied	8(36.4%)	14(63.6%)	22(100.0%)
Sometimes satisfied	45(65.2%)	24(34.8%)	69(100.0%)
Always satisfied	39(73.6%)	14(26.4%)	53(100.0%)
Column total	92 (100.0%)	52 (100.0%)	144

$\chi^2 = 9.437$   $p = 0.0091$   $df = 2$

Similarly, a majority (63.6%) of those who were never satisfied with their clothing were not involved in their clothing selection compared to 36.4% of those who were never satisfied and were not involved in their clothing selection. The test shows that involvement in clothing selection increases one's satisfaction with clothing. There was no significant relationship between clothing satisfaction and the school type of the respondents ( $p = 0.620$ ). The above results indicated that both respondents from private and public schools had their clothing satisfaction not relating to their schools. The number of those who were never satisfied to those who were

always satisfied in both private school and public schools was directly proportional.

**Table 7: The Relationship between Clothing Satisfaction and the School type of the Respondent**

	School type		Row total
	Private	Public	
Never satisfied	8(36.4%)	14(63.6%)	22(100.0%)
Sometimes satisfied	25(36.2%)	44(63.8%)	69(100.0%)
Always satisfied	15(28.3%)	38(71.7%)	53(100.0%)
Column total	48 (100.0%)	96 (100.0%)	144

$\chi^2 = 0.956$   $p = 0.620$   $df = 2$

Thirty-six point four percent (36.4%) from private schools and 63.6 % from public schools were never satisfied. On the other hand, 28.3% of those who were always satisfied came from the private schools, while 71.7% came from the public schools.

**Table 8: The Relationship between Clothing Satisfaction and Sex of the Respondent**

	Sex		Row total
	Males	Females	
Never satisfied	11(50.0%)	11(50.0%)	22(100.0%)
Sometimes satisfied	35(50.7%)	34(49.3%)	69(100.0%)
Always satisfied	26(49.1%)	27(50.9%)	53(100.0%)
Column total	72 (100.0%)	72 (100.0%)	144

$\chi^2 = 0.033$   $p = 0.983$   $df = 2$

The results showed that there was no significant relationship between clothing satisfaction and the sex of the respondent ( $p = 0.983$ ). Table 13 shows that both males and females were equally satisfied. For instance, 50% of those who were never satisfied were males while 50% were females. Similarly, 49.1% of those who were always satisfied were males while 50.9% were females. This trend did not show any significant relationship between clothing satisfaction and sex of the respondent.

**Table 9: The Relationship between Clothing Satisfaction and Age of the Respondents**

	Age		Row total
	11 years old	12 years old	
Never satisfied	9(40.9%)	13(59.1%)	22(100.0%)
Sometimes Satisfied	37(53.6%)	32(46.4%)	69(100.0%)
Always satisfied	26(49.1%)	27(50.9%)	53(100.0%)
Column total	72 (100.0%)	72 (100.0%)	144

$\chi^2 = 1.108$   $p = 0.575$   $df = 2$

The results showed that there was no significant relationship between clothing satisfaction and the age of the respondents ( $p = 0.575$ ). Eleven year-olds (40.9%) who were never satisfied were directly proportional to 12-year olds (59.1%) who were never satisfied. On the other hand, 11-year-olds (49.1%) who were always satisfied were also directly proportional to 12-year olds (50.9%) who were always satisfied. This trend of proportions did not show any significant relationship. The results indicated that there was no significant relationship between clothing satisfaction and the education attained by the respondents' mothers ( $p = 0.246$ ). Twenty-eight point six percent (28.6%) of the respondents who were never satisfied had their mothers having attained basic education (primary or secondary) while 71.4% of them had their mothers having attained higher education (university/college). Similarly, 18.9% of the respondents who were always satisfied had their mothers having attained basic education, and 81.1% had their mothers having attained higher education. This did not show any relationship between clothing satisfaction and education

attained by respondents' mothers because the number of those who were never satisfied and those who were always satisfied was directly proportional within the two levels of education attained by respondents' mothers.

**Table 10: The Relationship between Clothing Satisfaction and Education attained by the Respondents' Mothers**

	Education attained		Row total
	Basic education	Higher education	
Never satisfied	6(28.6%)	15(71.4%)	21(100.0%)
Sometimes satisfied	9(13.0%)	60(87.0%)	69(100.0%)
Always satisfied	10(18.9%)	43(81.1%)	53(100.0%)
Column total	25 (100.0%)	118 (100.0%)	143
	$\chi^2 = 2.803$	$p = 0.246$	$df = 2$

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since most parents were educated and had an urban influence, they had a better understanding of their children's clothing needs, most of the pre-adolescents were involved in their clothing selection and their preferences were considered. This might have influenced their clothing satisfaction and perception of self-worth in connection to the clothing since a majority of them were satisfied with their clothing and had a high perception of self-worth.

Clothing, therefore, played a significant role in developing the pre-adolescents' self-worth. Through symbolic interaction with significant others and the peer group members, pre-adolescents used their clothing to develop self-worth (self-concept and self-esteem). Satisfaction with their clothing contributed to a higher self-worth while dissatisfaction with the clothing resulted in a lower self-worth. It is worth noting, therefore, that the pre-adolescent's satisfaction/dissatisfaction with their clothing affects their perception of self-worth. Based on the findings of the study, therefore, the following have been recommended:

1. Clothing scholars should emphasise on the symbolic implication of clothing satisfaction to social interaction and its role in increasing one's self-worth and information on social psychology of clothing should be published in countrywide media to sensitise people on importance of clothing and appearance since self-worth is an important vehicle for success in life as it can affect a child's relationship with peers and significant others. In turn, this can influence social and academic life in general.
2. Researchers should do more studies on clothing in relation to psychological issues, such as self-worth.

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