



Society's view on women wearing western outfits

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Abstract

India is a country that is diverse in many aspects such as social, cultural, religious etc. and our custom also vary from each other. Traditionally the dress for Indian women devoid of caste, creed and culture is sari and salwar. Due to the westernization and modernization the Indian women started to wear western dress (modern dress includes except sari and salwar). The objective of the study is, to identify the mentality of the society towards women wearing western outfits, to identify if women are restricted to wear dresses of their own choices, to identify if women feel comfortable to wear that dresses. For this purpose the researcher collected data from 20 people (10 male & 10 female) they belong to 20-30 years of age category from Rajiv Gandhi national institute of youth development Sriperumbudur, an institute for post graduate students. The researchers used interview method for data collection. Seven questions to female and six questions to male were asked during the interview, content validity was done by two experts. It is a qualitative study. Findings of the study will be discussed in the full paper.

Keywords: women, western outfits, society

Introduction

Attitude of society towards women wearing western outfits

India is a country with diverse culture, known for their traditional clothing in various states. Each state follows its own culture and dressing styles. It is majorly based on their culture, religion and climate. Traditional Indian clothing for women is saris, long skirt, pavada worn with choli and dupatta scarf, gagra choli, salwar kameez, etc. At present Indian women dressing is well influenced by the western style dress, which are mostly adapted by the youth population, the young women in most parts of the India choose to wear Indo-western clothing like tops paired with jeans, leggings, jeggings and various other women bottom wear. The distinctive elements in Indo-western fashions is the difference in the sleeve length like foregoing sleeves, or replace it with spaghetti straps, etc., kurtas and shirt lengths to be shorter than the traditional length of it resembling western style blouses; and plunging necklines in contrast to the traditional salwars. The start of the western style influence on dressing were due to the colonization from different countries in India has a great influence in the dressing styles of the present Indian scenario and later it is due to the technological development and the mindset of people especially the youth population who are eager to explore in every field and dressing is a major part of it. Researches has proved that it is the youth population that carries the tradition of the nation which includes the dressing tradition and the marketers target the youth population to sell their products as they are easily influenced and the foreigners tend to sell their products targeting this population who can be easily attracted to new trends.

As India is a country that gives more importance to the cultural practices, the acceptance of the new trends in clothing is a matter of question as it is visibly seen that yet in

rural parts of India women are forbidden from leaving the house after six in the evening. After seventy years of independence India still tends to be a patriarchal society prohibiting women from choosing their lifestyle. Urban culture promotes women to follow their clothing styles but it is seen that most of them fear for safety while wearing western clothing even in cities. In the Delhi rape case the statement by the criminal blamed the victim for her dressing reason for the incident. Blaming women for rape is what hundreds of millions of men are taught to believe in India due to traditional belief system about women where they were set the code for women in this country like, Dress modestly, don't go out at night, don't go to bars and clubs, and don't go out alone. If women break the code, they will be blamed for the consequences. The thing to be pitied is that educated society tends to protect women by restricting her from activities rather than accepting the changes and development of women.

Questions asked during the interview

1. What is your view about women wearing western dresses?
2. What do you think is the view of society about women wearing western cloths?
3. Do you feel comfortable wearing western cloths and going to public places? (for female participant alone)
4. Do you think women in society feel comfortable wearing western clothing and going to public places?
5. Do you think women are restricted from wearing western cloths and which population of the society do you think are prohibited from wearing western cloths?
6. What is your view about women wearing western cloths and going for parties and pubs; and what do you think society's view on it?
7. Do you think women are feeling safe while they wear western outfits and go to public places?

The data obtained through interview

Women's perception on women wearing western outfits

1) What is your view about women wearing western dresses?

- It is the women's choice to wear whatever dress she wishes to wear and I don't have opinion on it.
- I don't think that there is something like western clothing. It has become a culture and it need not be specifically spoken about.
- It is their wish but it is best to wear modest or decent dresses so that they don't get into trouble.

2) What do you think is the view of society about women wearing western cloths?

- Even though we are educated and people say that they accept the changes and modernization in wearing western outfits by women they still have the sting in their mind that women are supposed to avoid western outfits.
- Society thinks them as whore, slut and feels that it is wrong to wear western outfits.
- Society thinks badly about people wearing western outfits.
- People's view differs according to the culture, societal norms, place, etc. Urban people's view differs from rural people's view.
- Social media influences people's mindset about women wearing western outfits. They are viewed to have bad tag on them.
- The society is having a positive view on women wearing western outfits.
- The society things them as not the family type and have a view that they tend to enjoy their life and have fun without caring about others.
- The society is moving towards acceptance for women wearing outfits.

3) Do you feel comfortable wearing western cloths and going to public places?

- For travel purpose it is comfortable
- I am comfortable in wearing western outfits because of society, the way they look or gaze at me.
- I don't feel comfortable wearing western outfits.
- I feel comfortable wearing western outfits.
- I feel comfortable wearing western outfits as I dress up decently.

4) Do you think women in society feel comfortable wearing western clothing and going to public places?

- I think women in society feel comfortable wearing western outfits.
- Yes they feel comfortable but due to society, family, cultural influences on people causes some kind of uncomfortable feeling for women.
- Not everyone feel comfortable.
- Those women who feel comfortable only wear western outfits.
- Just because they feel comfortable they wear western outfits.
- They feel comfortable unless they wear exposing clothing inviting problems.

5) Do you think women are restricted from wearing western cloths and which population of the society do you think are prohibited from wearing western cloths?

- Yes I feel women are restricted from wearing western

outfits mostly by their family, social norms of the community they belong.

- I think women are indirectly restricted by the society by the way people gaze at them and pass comments in inappropriate ways so they themselves stop from wearing western cloths.
- There is partial restriction on women considering their safety purpose.
- In most cases when women are brought up in a particular way to wear only traditional dresses by the family members it is not directly seen as restriction.
- Yes women are restricted to wear western dresses but it need not be considered to be a matter of issue as the society keeps changing and people are progressing to the acceptance stage.
- The society thinks that the Muslim community, purdah system, few caste of Hindu religion, people from rural areas, illiterate people, people following tradition irrespective of their age tend to restrict women from wearing dresses of their choice.

6) Do you think women are feeling safe while they wear western outfits and go to public places?

- No, absolutely it is not safe.
- Dressing can only be an adding point for causing trouble to women's safety but it is not the only reason why women are unsafe in the society.
- It is women's responsibility to take care of her safety; it would be good if she avoids wearing dresses that expose too much so that she doesn't get into trouble.
- Women wearing western outfits that tend to be decent usually don't get into trouble and they are safe.

Men's perception on women wearing western outfits:

1) What is your view about women wearing western dresses?

- I don't have any particular opinion about it. They can wear what they wish to wear but it comes to my wife I will not allow her to wear western clothing.
- I prefer traditional outfit for women but it would be better if they wear a combo of western with traditional outfits. We can't judge them for it but when a fat women wears western outfits they look ugly.
- It is their choice on what they should wear.
- It depends on their comfort. If they feel comfortable they can wear western clothing but if faced with problems they should know to defend themselves.
- I don't think that there is a problem in women wearing western outfits but it is necessary to consider the fact that there are two types of western outfits, if they choose the one that seems to be vulgar then they are inviting problems for themselves.
- If the outfit is decent, then it is not a problem.
- They can wear whatever they wish to wear but I feel like some women dress up in a vulgar way.
- Women are assets of the family, she should be preserved properly. They should expose their body only to their husband. If she wears western outfit her respect decreases. Whatever she dresses it is vulgar. She should cover her whole body or else she will be teased, given bad comments, described about her body shape which decreases her respect. If at all she wears a decent top for jean, then too it will be preferable if she wears properly as women nowadays does not use for its right purpose.

2) What do you think is the view of society about women wearing western cloths?

- Society does not accept it and majority of them prefer traditional outfits.
- Society see women wearing western outfits as a person with negative character or the parenting is wrong in their family and fat women look vulgar in western outfits.
- Society thinks and speaks badly about them. They link their dressing with their character.
- According to their age have different views. Like elderly people feel why women deviate from the tradition; adults are confused about what should be given preference either safety or freedom of the women and youth get sexually attracted to women wearing western outfits.
- Society thinks that women in western outfits try to sexually attract men.
- Society partially agrees and partially disagrees with it.
- Women in the name of finding equality with men wrongly thinks that if she wears western outfits she can achieve the status but this mindset or misconception needs to be changed. Women are used as the product of selling their body, pleasure givers, etc. Sometimes we feel like whether they are dressed up or not.

3) Do you think women in society feel comfortable wearing western clothing and going to public places?

- It is depending on their view or the individual’s perception whether they feel comfortable or not.
- They feel comfortable wearing western outfits.
- They feel comfortable wearing traditional outfits.
- They should wear traditional outfits only so that they

can feel comfortable.

- They absolutely do not feel comfortable wearing western outfit and going out as they look vulgar in those dresses and leading to extreme situations like rape.
- They feel comfortable to wear it but when they receive bad comments from others they feel uncomfortable.

4) Do you think women are restricted from wearing western cloths and which population of the society do you think are prohibited from wearing western cloths?

- Yes women are restricted to wear western outfits in few community, all religion to some extent restrict women’s dressing outfits notably Muslim, few castes in Hindu community, etc. due to the society’s view about them, cultural values, family view, tradition, urban areas, etc.
- Sometimes women feel they are judged if they wear western outfits, so they restrict from wearing such clothing.
- Women are not fully restricted but they are restricted to wear tight dresses exposing their body shapes.
- They are restricted on consideration of their safety.
- Unless they reach certain level of vulgarity women are not restricted from wearing western outfits.

5) Do you think women are feeling safe while they wear western outfits and go to public places?

- Safety is not related to their dressing; whatever dress they are wearing it is not safe for the women in the society.
- Dressing adds on to the safety issues for women.
- Safety is not only related to their outfits but also the timing and place they live, like urban or rural.

Comparing male and female responses

Table 1

Questions	Men’s View	Women’s view
1. My view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Their wish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Their wish ▪ Vulgarity not accepted ▪ Women are asset of the family and hence they should not wear it. ▪ Decent western cloths or traditional cloths are preferred
2. Society’s view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Society says they accept it but in reality it is not the case. ▪ They tag them as bad girl, whore, slut, etc. ▪ Society moves towards acceptance and has a positive view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Society does not accept. ▪ They prefer traditional dresses. ▪ Has a negative view on them.
3. View on women’s comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does not feel comfortable because of men’s gaze. ▪ I prefer decent western outfits so that I can make myself feel comfortable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They feel comfortable. ▪ As they wear vulgar dresses they don’t feel comfortable.
4. View on women being restricted to wear outfits of their choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes they are restricted in most cases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes they are restricted in most cases.
5. Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is not because of dress alone. ▪ It is her responsibility to be safe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They don’t feel safe and when they wear western outfits it adds on to it.

Findings of the study

- It had always been a matter of debate about women wearing western clothing.
- The women population is, in most cases restricted to wear dresses of their choice- due to concern for their safety, respect of the family, etc.
- Muslim and few Hindu castes in India fully restrict women from wearing western outfits.

- Women do not feel safe in the society irrespective of their dressing style.
- Educated youth population feels it that women should not be restricted to wear western outfits but speaks a lot about vulgarity in women dressing style.
- Women dressing style is related to their character.
- Some women do not feel comfortable wearing western dresses due to the gaze or the way men look at them.

Conclusion

It is seen that the society tends to relate women's dressing style to their character because of which there is an indirect way of restriction that is felt by the women who wish to wear western outfits. Some men's view contradict with their statement saying that Women can choose their choice of dress except their daughters, wife and other female family members indicating that it's for their safety, forgetting that other women are also someone else's daughters, wife and sisters. The acceptance of women wearing western outfit among the society is on the progress but some part of the society, men and even women indirectly restricts or afraid of the change in their culture or tradition.

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