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Research Paper

Understanding the Relationship between Colour Preferences, Meanings, Mood, and Body Image among Middle-Aged Women

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ABSTRACT

The interplay between fashion and psychology offers valuable insights into how clothing choices affect emotional well-being and self-perception. Fashion is not merely a matter of aesthetics but deeply intertwined with psychological processes, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and experience emotions. This study explores the impact of fashion on mood and self-perception among 30 women aged 45-60, using psychometric tests including the Brunel Mood Scale, a body shape and image questionnaire, and a colour preference test. Data is collected through online surveys using Google Forms. Statistical analysis examines correlations between fashion preferences, mood states, and external factors like economic influence and media and market influence. Results demonstrate that fashion choices significantly impact mood and self-perception. Women who favour bright, vibrant colours report higher levels of happiness and calmness, while those preferring darker colours experience increased tension and fatigue. Additionally, public-facing occupations correlate with poorer body image, while roles emphasising skills and creativity over appearance promote better body image perceptions. Dependence on others for financial support can increase self-consciousness and pressure to conform, while financial independence can enhance self-esteem and body image by fostering a sense of empowerment and personal agency. Conclusively, personalised fashion advice that integrates colour preferences, body shape, and style choices is crucial for improving mood and self-esteem. The findings underscore fashion's role in enhancing psychological health and highlight the importance of considering factors such as mood, body image, body shape, and colour preference in fashion-related psychological studies.

Keywords: *Mood, Colour Preference, Body Image, Body Shape, Fashion Psychology*

Fashion clothing and aesthetics play a significant role in the lives of individuals across different demographics. For younger people, fashion is often about experimentation, identity formation, and social belonging. Teens and young adults use clothing to express their individuality and align themselves with specific social groups. For professionals, fashion serves as a means of conveying competence, authority, and professionalism. In contrast, older adults may use fashion to project maturity, stability, and timelessness. Each group engages with fashion differently, reflecting their unique life stages, challenges, and aspirations.

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Research indicates that fashion and clothing choices significantly influence individuals' perceptions and interactions. According to Kaiser (1997), clothing is a form of personal expression as well as a tool for managing impressions in social interactions. This idea is confirmed further by Edwards' (2021) book "How to Read a Dress: A Guide to Changing Fashion from the 16th to the 21st Century," which emphasises how fashion has historically paralleled societal developments and individual self-expression.

Fashion, often perceived as a superficial aspect of daily life, holds profound psychological implications that extend beyond mere aesthetics. It is a form of nonverbal communication that sends a wide range of messages about an individual's personality, socioeconomic standing, and cultural identity. Fashion is also a negotiation of cultural identities, blending traditional and modern influences to create unique personal styles. The rise of fusion fashion, where traditional garments are reinterpreted with contemporary elements, exemplifies this dynamic interplay between cultural heritage and modernity.

Fashion choices are influenced by a myriad of factors, both external and internal, that shape an individual's idea of style and self. The decision of what to wear each day is often a complex interplay between intrinsic preferences and external influences. These external factors include the dressing style of a particular community, the purchasing power, educational backgrounds shaping fashion awareness, latest trends and media influence, societal beauty standards and social expectations, and cultural parameters. Each of these factors interlinks with an individual's internalised perceptions, such as personal identity and self-expression, to ultimately determine daily clothing choices. This paper will explore each of these external and internal factors in detail, highlighting their significant influence on contemporary fashion.

History of Dressing Styles among Women: India
The evolution of Indian women's fashion reflects the country's diverse heritage and interactions with various cultures. Traditional attire like sarees, lehengas, and salwar kameez are symbols of India's cultural identity, known for their intricate designs, vibrant colours, and luxurious fabrics. (Tarlo, 1996b) These garments highlight India's status as a major textile producer and exporter. The roots of Indian fashion can be traced back to ancient civilizations like the Indus Valley, where evidence suggests the use of woven cotton fabric, flax, and silk. Women's clothing styles included knee-length skirts, and jewellery was an essential part of both men's and women's attire, as seen in the figurines from Mohenjo-Daro (Elegance, 2017).

British colonization in the 18th and 19th centuries introduced Western clothing styles, initially adopted by the urban elite. This period saw a fusion of Western and Indian styles, resulting in hybrid garments such as the blouse and petticoat worn with the saree, blending traditional and new fashion sensibilities. The colonial influence also brought about changes in fabric usage, tailoring techniques, and the introduction of new accessories, further diversifying the Indian fashion landscape (Elegance, 2017).

Despite Western influences, traditional attire remains central to Indian culture. On occasions like weddings and festivals, Indian women continue to wear traditional clothing, which carries cultural significance and is often passed down through generations. This enduring preference for traditional garments underscores the importance of cultural heritage in Indian society. The cyclical nature of fashion trends, where old styles are revived with modern

twists, is also evident in how traditional garments are reinterpreted by contemporary designers (Elegance, 2017).

In recent years, Indian fashion has gained international recognition. Designers from India have showcased traditional garments on global runways, with luxury items like designer sarees and lehengas gaining popularity among both the Indian diaspora and international celebrities. This global trend reinforces India's image as a leading exporter of high-quality textiles and contributes to the global appreciation of Indian cultural heritage.

The history of Indian women's fashion illustrates the country's ability to preserve its rich heritage while adapting to changing times. Understanding this context is crucial for exploring contemporary fashion preferences and psychological aspects among middle-aged Indian women, as the interplay between tradition and modernity continues to shape their fashion choices (Elegance, 2017).

History of Dressing Styles Among Women: Beyond the Indian Subcontinent
Fashion is a dynamic entity reflecting historical, cultural, and societal changes. Women's dress has historically mirrored their roles and cultural standards. For instance, the 16th century was marked by elaborate dresses characterised by rich fabrics, intricate embroidery, and structured silhouettes. Corsets and farthingales created a stiff, conical shape, symbolising the opulence and rigidity of the era. Gold threads, a mark of royalty, were used to signify wealth and status. This period, heavily influenced by the court of Queen Elizabeth I, saw clothing as a signifier of social status and wealth, with a clear demarcation between the upper classes and the working class, who wore simpler fabrics. Moving into the 17th century, fashion softened, with fuller sleeves and slightly raised waistlines. Lace and ribbons became popular decorative elements, reflecting the Baroque period's emphasis on drama and grandeur, leading to more ornate and extravagant clothing. This shift mirrored the increasing complexity and opulence of societal structures and art of the time (Edwards, 2021).

The 18th century continued with elaborate styles from the Rococo period, featuring wide skirts supported by panniers and pastel colours, reflecting the French court's opulence. As the Age of Enlightenment took hold, there was a shift towards more decorative and expressive styles. The early 19th century saw a stark contrast, with the Empire silhouette becoming popular, characterised by high waistlines under the bust and simpler, lightweight fabrics like muslin. This period, influenced by neoclassical ideals and the French Revolution, favoured simplicity and classical beauty. The Victorian era then marked a return to more structured garments, with crinolines and bustles becoming essential for creating an hourglass figure. Queen Victoria's reign brought strict social codes and elaborate mourning dress customs, while industrialization allowed for mass production of clothing, bridging the gap between the elite and the working class in terms of clothing availability. However, significant differences remained in fabric quality and embellishments.

By the early 20th century, fashion became freer with the flapper style of the 1920s, reflecting evolving societal roles and a shift towards comfort. Women began wearing pants and skirts, breaking traditional norms. Global trade introduced diverse cultural influences, with regional styles from places like India and Persia becoming more accessible, yet every country maintained its unique fashion identity. The differentiation between the rich and the poor was no longer solely about the style but also the quality of fabric and the amount of clothing one possessed (Edwards, 2021).

Moreover, historical events such as economic downturns and technological advancements have also played pivotal roles in shaping fashion. The Great Depression of the 1930s saw a move towards more practical and durable clothing, while the post-World War II era, with its economic boom, led to the birth of ready-to-wear fashion and mass production. Technological advancements, from the invention of the sewing machine to the rise of digital fashion design, have continually transformed how fashion is created, marketed, and consumed.

Economic and Media Influence on Fashion Choices
Economic conditions and media dynamics play pivotal roles in shaping fashion trends and consumer behaviour. The emergence of the middle class and increasing disposable income have democratised fashion, making it accessible to a broader population. Historically, fashion was an exclusive domain of the wealthy, with luxurious fabrics and intricate designs symbolising social status. However, economic shifts, such as the Industrial Revolution and the rise of mass production techniques, have transformed fashion into a more inclusive realm (Lipovetsky, 1994). As economic prosperity rises, so does the propensity for extravagant and experimental fashion trends, as seen during the Roaring Twenties and the post-World War II era. Conversely, economic downturns lead to more conservative and practical fashion choices, such as the resurgence of minimalism and sustainability following the 2008 financial crisis, with consumers prioritising value and longevity over fleeting trends.

Cultural heritage has increasingly become an economic asset in the global fashion industry. Traditional garments, once seen as regional, have gained international recognition and economic value due to their cultural significance. This trend reflects a growing appreciation for cultural diversity and has influenced fashion brands' strategies as they cater to a global audience. This cross-cultural exchange enriches the fashion landscape, promoting a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity and heritage. However, it also raises questions about cultural appropriation and the ethical implications of borrowing cultural elements without proper acknowledgment or respect (Granolagradschoolandgoffman, 2015).

Economic factors also influence the dichotomy between fast fashion and luxury markets. Fast fashion brands like Zara and H&M have capitalised on the demand for affordable, trendy clothing, thereby democratising fashion on a global scale. This accessibility, however, has sparked conversations around sustainability and ethical production practices (Joy et al., 2012). On the other hand, luxury fashion continues to thrive, driven by consumers' desire for exclusivity and status symbols. The economic boom in emerging markets such as China and India have further fueled the growth of both fast fashion and luxury segments, reflecting diverse consumer preferences and spending patterns (Balchandani et al., 2023).

Media influence, through traditional outlets like magazines and television, as well as newer platforms like social media, plays a critical role in shaping fashion trends. Globalisation and cross-cultural exchange have made it easier for fashion trends from diverse cultures to influence global markets. For instance, the popularity of Indian textiles and designs in Western markets, or the global spread of K-pop culture, reflects the intersection of economic, media, and cultural forces in shaping fashion choices. Social media platforms have further accelerated this cultural diffusion, allowing fashion from different regions to inspire trends across the globe.

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The proliferation of social media has revolutionised the fashion industry, allowing influencers and consumers to participate actively in trendsetting. Fashion influencers and bloggers have become powerful voices in the industry, leveraging their platforms to promote brands, styles, and trends to their followers, thereby challenging traditional fashion hierarchies and making fashion more inclusive and diverse (M. & K., 2017). Celebrity endorsements further amplify this impact, as celebrities' fashion choices often set trends and influence consumer behaviour. The widespread popularity of athleisure, for example, was largely driven by celebrities like Kanye West and Rihanna.

Celebrity endorsements also play a significant role in shaping fashion trends. Celebrities' fashion choices often set trends and influence consumer behaviour, as seen in the widespread popularity of athleisure, largely driven by celebrities like Kanye West with his Yeezy brand and Rihanna's Fenty line. Both brands have achieved massive success, with Yeezy reportedly generating over $1.7 billion in revenue in 2020 alone, and Fenty becoming a billion-dollar company by 2021. In the domestic market, Indian celebrities like Virat Kohli, with his clothing brand Wrogn, and Hrithik Roshan, with his athleisure brand HRX, have also made significant impacts. Their endorsements and brands contribute to the ever-growing fashion industry, demonstrating how celebrity influence translates into both trendsetting power and substantial profits.

Together, economic factors and media influence create a dynamic feedback loop in the fashion industry. Consumer preferences shaped by economic conditions influence fashion trends, while media and celebrity endorsements further reinforce and propagate these trends, continuously shaping consumer behaviour and the fashion landscape.

Educational Influence on Fashion Choices
Education significantly shapes individuals' fashion choices by influencing their attitudes, awareness, and understanding of fashion as a cultural and personal expression. Higher education levels are often associated with a more discerning approach to fashion, as educated consumers tend to have a broader exposure to diverse fashion trends and a deeper appreciation for fashion's historical and cultural contexts.

Educated consumers are more likely to engage with fashion as a form of personal branding, using clothing to convey their professional competence, social status, and personal values. Fashion also serves as a means for individuals to negotiate their cultural identities, blending traditional and modern influences to create unique personal styles. This cultural interplay is evident in the rise of fusion fashion, where traditional garments are reinterpreted with contemporary twists. For example, the incorporation of traditional African prints into modern silhouettes or the adaptation of Indian sarees with Western-style blouses reflects this fusion of cultural influences.

Educated customers tend to favour sophisticated, understated styles that reflect their professional environments and personal tastes. Education also fosters an awareness of ethical and sustainable fashion practices, leading to more conscientious consumer behaviour. Educated consumers are more likely to seek out brands that align with their values and prioritise sustainability, fair labour practices, and environmental responsibility (Reichheld, 2023).

Furthermore, education influences the ability to interpret and adopt fashion trends critically. Educated consumers are often better equipped to understand the nuances of fashion marketing and media representation, allowing them to make informed choices that reflect their personal identity and values. This critical engagement with fashion is reflected in the growing popularity of niche and independent fashion brands among educated consumers, who seek unique and authentic styles that differentiate them from mainstream fashion trends.

Societal Beauty Standards and Social Expectations

Societal beauty standards and social expectations have a profound impact on fashion choices. These standards, often perpetuated by media and advertising, shape perceptions of attractiveness and acceptability, influencing self-esteem and body image. Research indicates that exposure to media portrayals of idealised beauty standards can lead to body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem, particularly among women (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008).

Societal beauty standards and social expectations have a profound impact on fashion choices. These standards, often perpetuated by media and advertising, shape perceptions of attractiveness and acceptability, influencing self-esteem and body image. Research indicates that exposure to media portrayals of idealised beauty standards can lead to body dissatisfaction and lower self-esteem, particularly among women (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). Historically, the fashion industry has heavily relied on extremely slim models to showcase clothing, creating a narrow standard of beauty that has contributed to body dysmorphia among young women. Many fashion brands, especially in Western markets, catered to smaller sizes, often excluding larger body types, which could easily trigger body dysmorphia and related issues. For instance, Victoria's Secret, a prominent fashion brand, very clearly marketed itself towards slender women with smaller breasts. Not being able to fit into clothing supplied by these types of brands can very easily trigger body dysmorphia. (Melissa, 2022).

In India, traditional beauty standards once favoured fuller figures, with societal expectations encouraging women to maintain a more rounded physique, often seen as a sign of health and prosperity. However, the increasing influence of Western ideals has shifted this trend, leading to a growing preference for slimmer body types within the country. This shift has resulted in a rise in self-esteem issues, particularly among young girls and even boys, as they struggle to conform to these changing standards (Her Circle, 2024).

Fashion choices are often driven by the desire to conform to societal beauty standards and social expectations. This can lead to the adoption of trends that emphasise certain body types or features, such as the thin ideal promoted by the fashion industry. However, there is also a growing movement towards body positivity and diversity in fashion, challenging traditional beauty standards and promoting inclusivity. Brands are increasingly embracing diverse models and body types, reflecting a broader societal shift towards acceptance and representation.

Social expectations also influence fashion choices through the lens of cultural norms and values. For instance, modest fashion, which aligns with cultural and religious beliefs about modesty, has gained popularity among consumers seeking styles that reflect their values.

This trend highlights the interplay between societal expectations and personal identity in shaping fashion choices.

Internal Factors: Psychological Implications of Fashion
The general attitude towards the study of the psychological implications of fashion has evolved significantly over the years. Initially considered a superficial area of research, it is now recognized as an essential field that intersects psychology, sociology, and fashion studies. Researchers and practitioners acknowledge that fashion choices can profoundly affect individuals' mental health and social interactions. As such, there is a growing emphasis on understanding the underlying psychological mechanisms and leveraging this knowledge to promote well-being through fashion. This perspective is supported by Edwards (2021), who argues that fashion has historically been a reflection of societal changes and personal identity.

The psychological implications of fashion and its role in enhancing mood and self-confidence, especially among middle-aged women, have not been extensively studied. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring how colour perception influences mood regulation and well-being in this demographic.

For middle-aged women, fashion is particularly significant. This group, which generally ranges from 45 to 60 years old, frequently wants to convey specific characteristics via their dress choices. They may want to portray confidence, competence, and vitality while navigating cultural expectations and personal transformations such as menopause, career changes, or becoming empty nesters. Middle-aged women frequently strive to boost their confidence and have a consistent wardrobe that represents their established sense of style. Unlike younger women, who may regularly change their fashion preferences, middle-aged women benefit from a stable and well-curated wardrobe that is tailored to their lifestyle and work demands (Peggy, 2024).

The colours we wear have a major impact on our mood and self-perception. Vibrant colours like red and yellow are frequently connected with energy, positivity, and attention, whilst cooler tones like blue and green can elicit feelings of peace and tranquillity. In her book "How to Read a Dress: A Guide to Changing Fashion from the 16th to the 21st Century" written in 2017, Lydia Edwards emphasises how colour has traditionally been used to represent various emotions and social classes. Understanding these psychological effects is crucial for middle-aged women who seek to enhance their mood and self-confidence through their clothing choices.

Colour psychology research supports these observations. For example, Jonauskaite (2019) discovered that colours had a direct effect on mood and behaviour. Yellow hues were systematically associated with joy while yellow-green hues with relaxation. Lighter colours were matched to joy and relaxation (positive moods) than fear and sadness (negative moods). Individuals can benefit from the psychological influence of colours by making informed colour choices.

Middle-aged women have a unique relationship with fashion, shaped by their socioeconomic standing and life experiences. This demographic has more discretionary funds and is more aware of their style preferences, making them an ideal group to study the relationship between fashion and psychology. They have the financial means to invest in high-quality

clothing, as well as the life experience to recognize the significance of dressing for various circumstances (Peggy, 2024). Furthermore, this age group has seen the growth of social media influencers and a greater emphasis on fashion among younger generations. Understanding the psychological roots of fashion decisions allows middle-aged women to better manage these influences and use fashion to boost their self-esteem and mood.

Body image issues are a critical aspect of this research. Although body image is a complex and multifaceted construct encompassing many aspects of body experience (Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990), in contemporary society the major research focus has been on body shape and weight. In this, other important contributors to body experience have been relatively neglected. Many middle-aged women struggle with body image satisfaction, which can be exacerbated by societal expectations and media depictions of ideal beauty. This paper explores how fashion choices, guided by psychological understanding, can help overcome these challenges. For example, wearing clothes that flatters one's body shape and aligns with one's personal style preferences can boost self-esteem and encourage a good body image. Thompson and Stice (2001) argue that body image concerns can significantly impact mental health, leading to issues such as depression and anxiety. By addressing these concerns through fashion, women can improve their self-image and overall psychological well-being.

This paper will delve into how external factors such as market dynamics, media influence, societal beauty standards and social expectations have been internalised by women and can be seen as the psychological implications of fashion. By examining these factors, researchers and industry professionals can gain deeper insights into the complex interplay between fashion and societal influences, informing the development of fashion that meets consumers' aesthetic desires while supporting their psychological well-being. The research examines the psychological aspect of colour perception in fashion, its implications for mood regulation, and the methodologies used to investigate this relationship, offering useful insights for improving mood and self-confidence in middle-aged women. By combining psychological concepts with fashion, this study demonstrates the enormous influence that clothing choices may have on emotional well-being and self-perception. Through a comprehensive analysis of colour preferences, body image satisfaction, and socio-economic factors, the study aims to empower middle-aged women to use fashion as a tool for personal empowerment and psychological well-being. This study not only contributes to the academic understanding of fashion psychology, but also provides helpful guidance for middle-aged women to improve their self-confidence and mood through wardrobe choices.

METHODOLOGY

Participants and sampling techniques
The participants were 30 middle-aged (aged 45-60) women. The sample was chosen using convenience sampling, selecting participants who were readily available and willing to participate. This sample frame provided a snapshot of the target demographic, allowing us to draw preliminary conclusions about the relationship between fashion, mood, and body image.

Instrumentation
The study made use of standardised questionnaires which were administered to the respondents (N=30) via Google Forms. There was no time limit and there were no incorrect answers.

- **Brunel Mood Scale**: The Brunel Mood Scale (BRUMS) is widely used to assess mood states. Originally adapted from the Profile of Mood States (POMS), the measure has six subscales of four items each (i.e., Tension—items nervous, anxious, worried, panicky; Depression—items unhappy, miserable, depressed, downhearted; Anger—items bitter, angry, annoyed, energetic; Vigor—items energetic, active, lively, alert; Fatigue—items exhausted, tired, worn out, sleepy; and Confusion—items mixed up, muddled, uncertain, confused). Participants respond on a 5-point Likert scale of 0 = not at all, 1 = a little, 2 = moderately, 3 = quite a bit, and 4 = extremely, with total possible subscale scores ranging from 0–16. The standard question is to ask respondents "How do you feel right now?" The scale also includes subscales for "Happy" and "Calmness" to generate insights into positive emotions as well. The questionnaire does not generate an overall score, and each scale should be examined individually, although the constructs are related.

The following table displays the dimensions of BRUMS (Brandt et al., 2010):

DIMENSION	DEFINITION
TENSION	State of musculoskeletal tension and worry.
DEPRESSION	Emotional state of despondency, sadness, unhappiness.
ANGER	State of hostility, for others.
VIGOR	State of energy, physical force.
FATIGUE	State of tiredness, low energy.
CONFUSION	State of feeling stunned, instability in emotions.

- **Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ)**: The Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ) by Cooper et al. (1987) measures body image satisfaction levels by assessing how individuals perceive their body shape and size. A short 9-item version of the questionnaire was utilized in the present study. Additionally, an image of the types of body shapes was also added and participants were asked to 'choose the body shape that' was closest to theirs.
- **Colour Preference Questionnaires**: In order to test the colour preference of the respondents, a 10-item survey was created with questions such as "Which colours do you think suit you best?". These questions helped the research in exploring how colour in fashion influences mood and self-perception.

Research design and statistical analysis
In this study, data were tabulated and analysed using Datatab, a versatile tool that accommodates various data types and analytical methods. A mixed methods approach was employed to handle the diverse nature of the questions included in the survey. The questionnaire comprised short answer questions, ranking questions, multiple-choice questions, and Likert scales, each contributing uniquely to the data set. This approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data. Correlation and descriptive statistics were utilised to identify relationships between variables and to summarise the data.
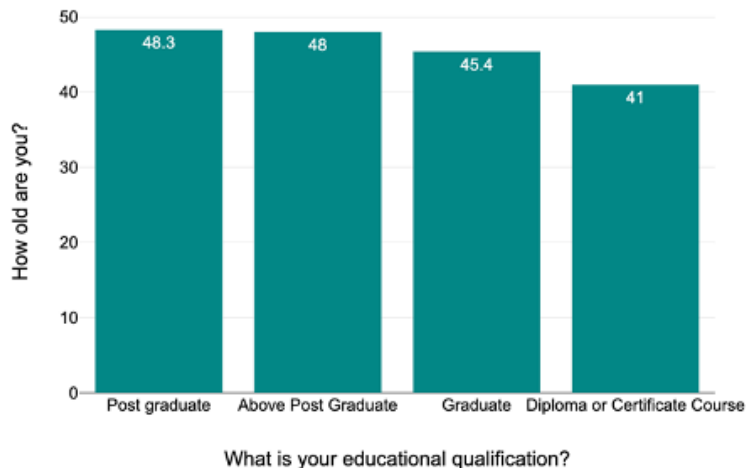
RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

Figure 1: Age and Educational Qualification of the respondents (n=30)

The bar graph reveals that participants with higher educational qualifications tend to be older on average. For instance, the mean age of participants with postgraduate qualifications is 48.3 years whereas, participants with diploma or certificate courses average around 41 years.
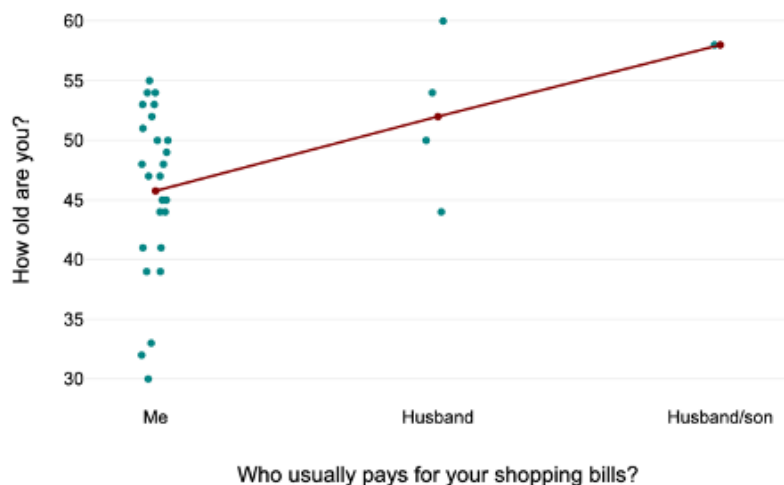

Figure 2- Line graph showing the age of the respondents and who pays for their shopping bills

The line graph depicting participants' ages against who usually pays for their shopping bills reveals an interesting trend that correlates age with financial responsibility for shopping expenses. The data points show a clear upward trend, indicating that as participants' ages increase, they are more likely to rely on others, such as husbands or sons, to pay for their shopping bills. For instance, at the younger end of the age spectrum, around 46 years old, participants predominantly finance their own shopping. However, as age progresses, there is a significant shift towards dependency on family members, particularly husbands, as shown by peaks at ages 53 and 58, where husbands are primarily responsible for shopping expenses.
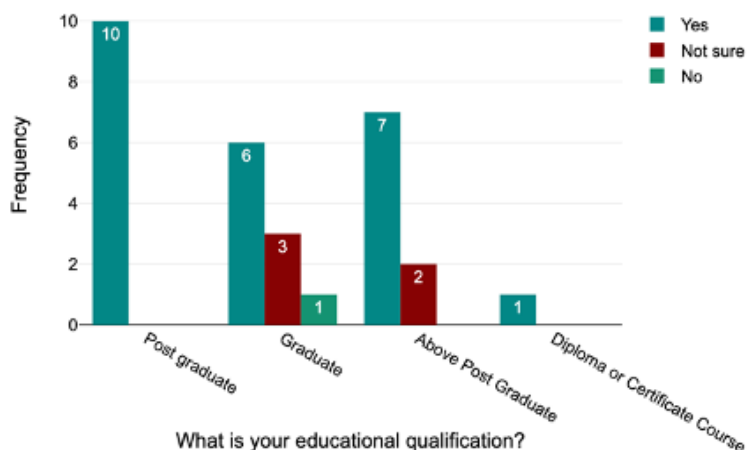
Figure 3- Bar graph describing presence of personal style and the educational qualifications of the respondents

Among postgraduates, a significant majority of participants reported having a personal style. This suggests that higher educational attainment, such as postgraduate studies, may contribute to a stronger sense of personal style, possibly due to increased exposure to diverse influences, critical thinking, and self-awareness developed through higher education.

Similarly, among graduates, 6 out of 10 participants reported having a personal style, with an additional 3 participants expressing uncertainty and only 1 participant indicating no personal style. This indicates that while a majority of graduates also identify with having a personal style, there is a slightly higher level of uncertainty compared to postgraduates.

Participants above postgraduate level showed a robust inclination towards having a personal style, with 7 out of 9 participants affirming this, and 2 participants being unsure. This suggests that individuals with advanced educational qualifications beyond graduation may have a more defined and confident sense of personal style, possibly influenced by their professional status, social circles, or broader exposure to cultural and intellectual influences.
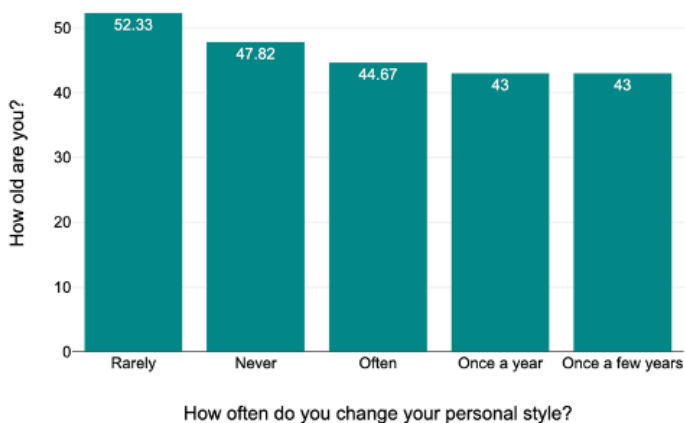
Figure 4- Age and the frequency of change in personal style of the respondents

Participants who indicated that they rarely change their personal style have a notably higher mean age of 52.33 years. This suggests that older individuals tend to establish a stable and enduring personal style, possibly influenced by a deeper sense of self-awareness, established fashion preferences, and less inclination towards frequent stylistic changes. This

demographic trend aligns with the general notion that older adults may prioritise classic and timeless fashion choices over trendy or rapidly changing styles.

Conversely, participants who reported never changing their personal style have a slightly lower mean age of 47.82 years. While still relatively older, this group may also reflect a cohort that has settled into a consistent fashion identity and is less likely to experiment with new trends or drastically alter their personal style.

In contrast, younger participants appear more inclined to change their personal style more frequently. For instance, those who indicated they often change their personal style have a lower mean age of 44.67 years. This demographic trend suggests that younger adults, who may still be exploring and defining their identities, are more open to experimenting with different fashion trends and adapting their style more frequently to reflect evolving tastes and societal influences.

Mood inventory
Descriptive statistics
Table 1. Descriptive statistics for items on the BRUMS

	Anger	Tension	Depression	Vigour	Fatigue	Confusion	Happy	Calmness
Mean	5.6	6.27	4.8	12.93	7.8	6.43	13.27	13.3
Variance	4.73	4.41	1.89	4.69	9.96	4.6	4.62	3.46
Minimum	4	4	4	8	4	4	7	10
Maximum	11	11	10	16	16	11	16	16

The descriptive statistics from the Brunel Mood Scale (BRUMS) reveal insightful trends about the participants' emotional states. The mean score was the highest for Calmness (M=13.3), Happy (M=13.27), Vigour (12.93), Fatigue (7.8), Confusion (6.43), Tension (6.27), Anger (5.6), and the lowest for Depression (4.8). This indicates that calmness is most reported amongst the participants, followed by happiness, and the lowest reported mood is depression.

In the context of this research, these findings provide a comprehensive overview of the emotional states of the participants, which is crucial for understanding their psychological profiles. The generally high levels of positive moods (vigour, happiness, calmness) and moderate to low levels of negative moods (anger, tension, depression, confusion, fatigue) indicate a relatively well-balanced emotional state among the participants. This emotional backdrop is essential for interpreting the impact of fashion choices and preferences, as mood can significantly influence how individuals perceive and interact with their clothing and style. Understanding these mood patterns helps contextualise the participants' fashion behaviours and preferences, providing a richer analysis of the psychological aspects of fashion in middle-aged women.

Correlation

Table 2. Correlation between the subscales of the BRUMS scale

	Anger	Tension	Depression	Vigour	Fatigue	Confusion	Happy	Calmness
Anger	1	0.54	0.6	-0.1	0.41	0.47	-0.23	-0.11
Tension	0.54	1	0.57	-0.34	0.55	0.58	-0.31	-0.35
Depression	0.6	0.57	1	-0.26	0.41	0.46	-0.62	-0.43
Vigour	-0.1	-0.34	-0.26	1	-0.52	-0.31	0.46	0.45
Fatigue	0.41	0.55	0.41	-0.52	1	0.3	-0.22	-0.38
Confusion	0.47	0.58	0.46	-0.31	0.3	1	-0.24	-0.27
Happy	-0.23	-0.31	-0.62	0.46	-0.22	-0.24	1	0.76
Calmness	-0.11	-0.35	-0.43	0.45	-0.38	-0.27	0.76	1

The correlation table from the Brunel Mood Scale (BRUMS) provides insights into the relationships between different mood states. The correlation coefficients range from -1 to 1, where values closer to 1 or -1 indicate strong relationships, and values near 0 indicate weak or no relationships.

There is a strong positive correlation between anger and tension (0.54), indicating that as participants feel more anger, they are also likely to experience higher levels of tension. Similarly, depression shows a strong positive correlation with both anger (0.6) and tension (0.57), suggesting that these negative moods tend to coexist. Fatigue is also positively correlated with tension (0.55) and depression (0.41), implying that higher levels of tension and depression are associated with increased fatigue. Confusion shows moderate positive correlations with anger (0.47), tension (0.58), and depression (0.46), suggesting that confusion often accompanies these negative moods.

In contrast, vigour, which represents energy levels, shows negative correlations with several negative mood states: tension (-0.34), depression (-0.26), and fatigue (-0.52). This indicates that higher energy levels are associated with lower levels of these negative emotions. Furthermore, happiness has strong negative correlations with depression (-0.62) and moderate negative correlations with tension (-0.31) and confusion (-0.24), suggesting that happiness is inversely related to these negative moods. Calmness, similarly, shows negative correlations with tension (-0.35), depression (-0.43), and confusion (-0.27), indicating that a calm state is typically associated with lower levels of these negative emotions. Interestingly, happiness and calmness are strongly positively correlated (0.76), highlighting that these positive states often occur together.

These correlations provide a nuanced understanding of how different mood states interact with one another among the participants. The strong positive correlations between negative moods (anger, tension, depression, confusion, and fatigue) suggest that individuals experiencing one negative mood are likely to experience others, leading to a compounded negative emotional state. Conversely, the negative correlations between vigour, happiness, calmness, and the negative mood states underscore the protective effects of positive moods against negative emotional experiences.

In the context of the research on middle-aged women's fashion preferences and moods, these correlations are significant. Understanding the interplay between various mood states can help explain how emotional well-being influences fashion choices and vice versa. For instance, individuals experiencing high levels of positive moods (happiness, calmness, vigour) may be more inclined to experiment with their style, reflecting their positive

outlook. Conversely, those experiencing compounded negative moods might prefer more conservative or comforting fashion choices. This comprehensive understanding aids in tailoring fashion advice and interventions to enhance overall well-being.

*Descriptive Statistics on Mood Inventory*
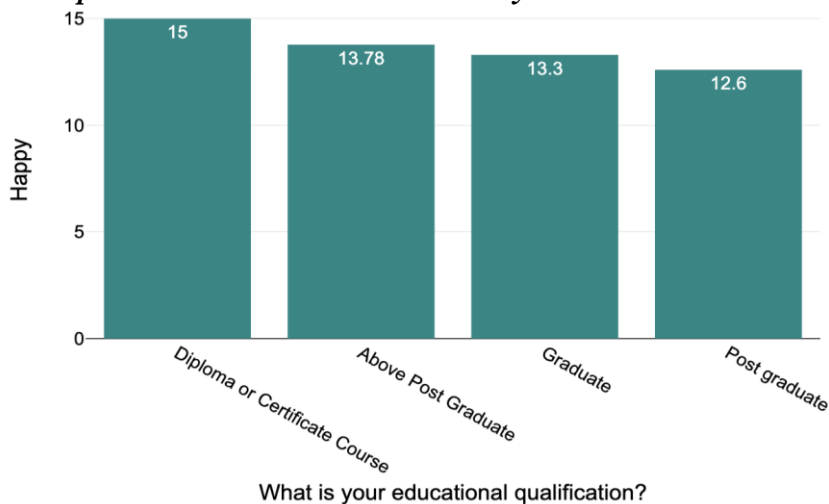
Figure 5- Bar graph depicting the happiness and educational qualification of the respondents

According to Figure 5, participants with a "Diploma or Certificate Course" report the highest mean happiness score at 15. This is followed closely by those with qualifications "Above Postgraduate" at 13.78, "Graduate" at 13.3, and "Post Graduate" at 12.6.

The graph indicates a slight trend where individuals with a "Diploma or Certificate Course" report higher happiness levels compared to those with more advanced qualifications. This observation could suggest that the levels of educational attainment beyond a diploma or certificate course might not necessarily correlate with increased happiness or could even be associated with slight decreases in reported happiness.

In the context of the research, this finding is significant as it highlights that higher educational attainment does not always equate to higher levels of happiness among middle-aged women. This insight can be crucial for understanding the broader implications of educational pursuits on emotional well-being.
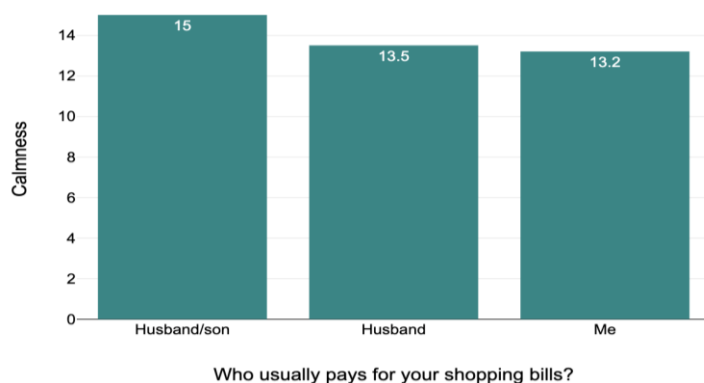
Figure 6- Bar graph displaying the mean calmness scores and who pays the shopping bills of the respondents

The bar graph illustrates the mean calmness scores from the Brunel Mood Scale, categorised by who typically pays for the shopping bills among the participants. The results reveal that participants whose shopping bills are paid by their "Husband/son" report the highest mean calmness score of 15. Those whose bills are paid by their "Husband" have a slightly lower mean calmness score of 13.5, and participants who pay their own shopping bills report the lowest mean calmness score of 13.2.

This analysis suggests that having someone else, such as a husband or son, pay the bills appears to be associated with higher levels of calmness. This could imply that financial support or shared financial responsibilities might alleviate stress and promote a greater sense of calm among these participants. Conversely, managing one's own shopping expenses may contribute to slightly lower calmness levels, potentially due to the additional stress or responsibility associated with personal financial management. Additionally, another insight that can be taken from this graph is how there is a larger difference between the mean calmness scores of women who have a husband and a son to rely on compared to women who pay their bills themselves or women who have their husbands pay their bills. This can be attributed to the stability that comes with having a greater number of people to rely on, creating a sense of safety.
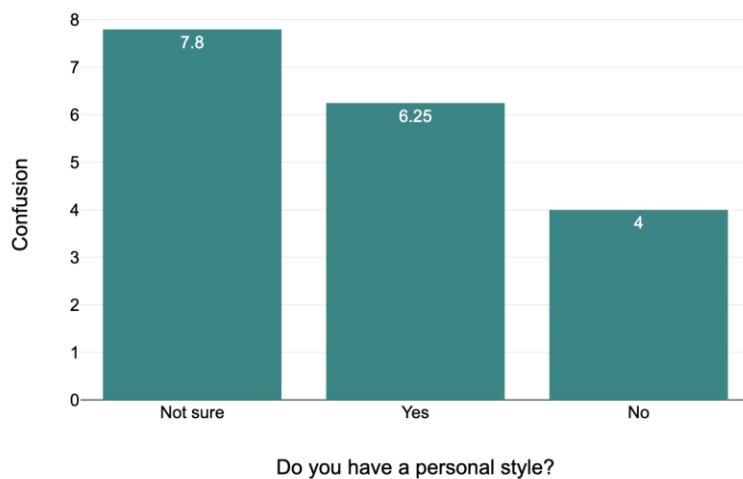
Figure 7- Bar graph depicting the mean scores of confusion and the presence of personal style in the respondents

According to *Figure 7,* participants who are unsure about their personal style exhibit the highest mean confusion score of 7.8. This suggests that uncertainty in self-perception significantly increases feelings of confusion. On the other hand, those who affirm having a personal style have a lower mean confusion score of 6.25, indicating that a clear sense of personal style helps reduce confusion, possibly by providing a more defined self-concept.

Participants who do not engage with or consider having a personal style show the lowest mean confusion score of 4. This implies that avoiding personal style considerations leads to fewer internal conflicts and lower confusion levels. Those with a well-defined sense of style experience less confusion, while those uncertain about their style experience the most confusion.

Body Image
Descriptive Statistics
Table 3. Descriptive statistics of body image score of the respondents

	Body image score
Mean	21.27
Mode	14
Variance	75.51
Minimum	9
Maximum	41

The descriptive statistics for the body image scores of the participants reveal significant insights into their perceptions. The test, which utilised Likert scales ranging from 1 to 6 indicates a diverse range of body image concerns among the participants. With a mean score of 21.27 out of a possible 48, it suggests that, on average, participants experience moderate body image issues. The mode of 14 indicates that a significant number of participants have worse body image perceptions, as this is on the lower end of the scale. The variance of 75.51 shows substantial variability in the body image scores, highlighting differing levels of body image satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The minimum score of 9 further underscores the presence of participants with notably poor body image, while the maximum score of 41 suggests that some participants have relatively positive perceptions of their body image.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum) of body image against body shape of the respondents

|		Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Body image score	Pear	11	21.91	8.17	10	41
	Hourglass	9	20	9.91	9	39
	Round	5	27.4	6.5	19	36
	Rectangle	3	13.67	0.58	13	14
	Inverted Triangle	2	19.5	13.44	10	29

The descriptive statistics table provides insights into body image scores across different body shapes, with higher scores indicating worse body image perception. Participants with a Pear body shape *(n=11)* have a mean score of 21.91 (*SD=8.17*), with scores ranging from 10 to 41, showing significant variability in body image perceptions. The Hourglass group (n=9) has a mean score of 20 (*SD=9.91*), with scores ranging from 9 to 39, indicating somewhat better but highly varied perceptions.

The Round body shape category (n=5) shows the poorest body image perceptions, with a mean score of 27.4 (SD=6.5) and scores between 19 and 36. In contrast, the Rectangle body shape (n=3) has the best perceptions, with a mean score of 13.67 (*SD=0.58*) and scores tightly clustered between 13 and 14. The Inverted Triangle group (n=2) has a mean score of 19.5 (SD=13.44), indicating moderate but highly variable perceptions, with scores ranging from 10 to 29.

Overall, body image perceptions vary widely across body shapes. Round shapes tend to have the poorest perceptions, while Rectangle shapes have the best.
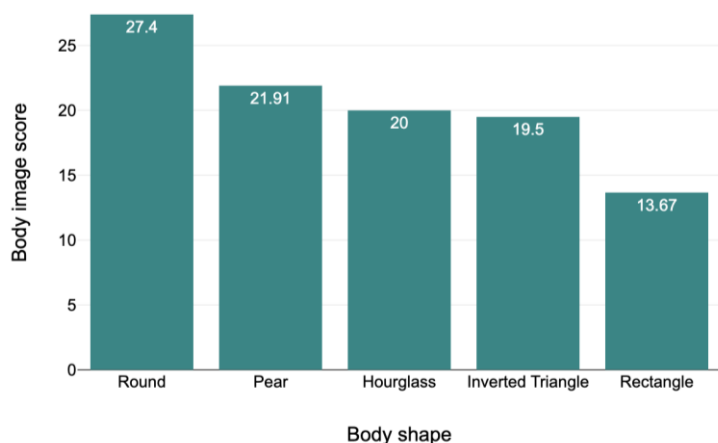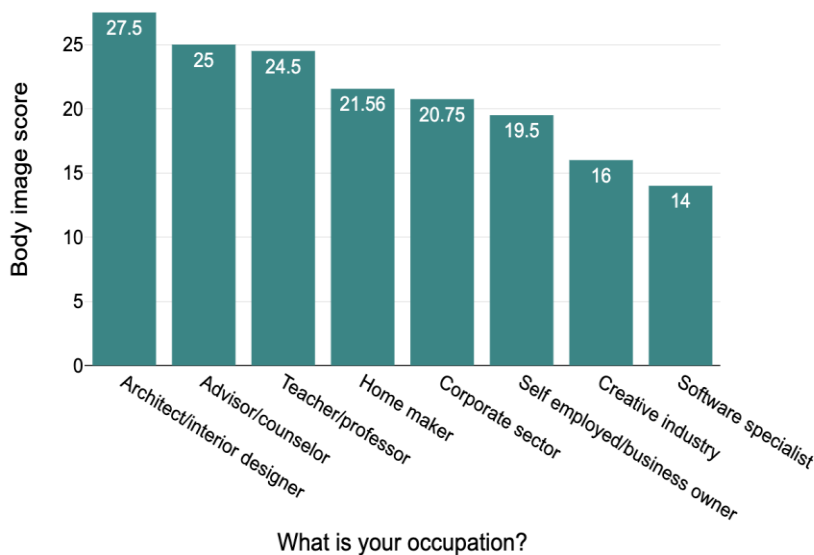
Figure 8- showing the mean score of body image and body shape of the respondents

Participants with a Round body shape have the highest mean score of 27.4, reflecting the poorest body image perception. This may be because clothing often fits round body types poorly, leading to dissatisfaction and negative body image. In contrast, those with a Rectangle body shape have the lowest mean score of 13.67, suggesting the best body image perception. Rectangle body types are generally more flexible with clothing, as most styles tend to fit well and look flattering, contributing to a more positive body image.

Participants with Pear and Hourglass shapes have mean scores of 21.91 and 20, respectively, indicating moderate body image concerns. These shapes might face issues with finding clothing that fits both their upper and lower bodies proportionately. Those with an Inverted Triangle shape have a mean score of 19.5, also reflecting moderate concerns, possibly due to difficulties in finding clothing that accommodates broader shoulders. This data underscores the impact of clothing fit on body image, suggesting that better inclusivity in fashion design could improve body image perceptions for various body shapes.

Body image against Demographics

Figure 9- Showing the mean score of body image and occupation of the respondents
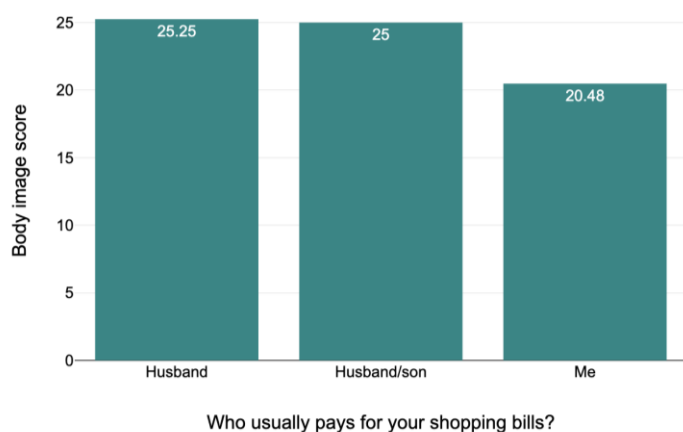
The bar graph shows mean body image scores across various occupations, with higher scores indicating worse body image perceptions. Architects and interior designers have the highest mean score of 27.5, suggesting they experience the poorest body image. This may be due to the high aesthetic standards in their field, which can increase body consciousness. Advisors and counsellors, along with teachers and professors, have mean scores of 25 and 24.5, respectively. These roles often involve significant public interaction, which might heighten self-awareness and body image concerns.

Homemakers have a mean score of 21.56, reflecting moderate body image concerns. Their focus on caregiving and family may reduce personal care, but societal pressures still play a role. Corporate sector employees have a slightly better body image with a mean score of 20.75, possibly due to professional attire norms that offer more confidence and a structured presentation.

Self-employed individuals and business owners show a lower mean score of 19.5, indicating relatively better body image perceptions. Their control over their work environment might contribute to a healthier self-image. Creative industry professionals have a mean score of 16, and software specialists exhibit the best body image perception with a mean score of 14. Roles in the creative and tech sectors often emphasise skills and output over physical appearance, which may foster a more positive body image.

These findings suggest that occupations with high public visibility and aesthetic demands correlate with poorer body image perceptions, while roles emphasising skills and creativity over appearance may promote better body image perceptions.
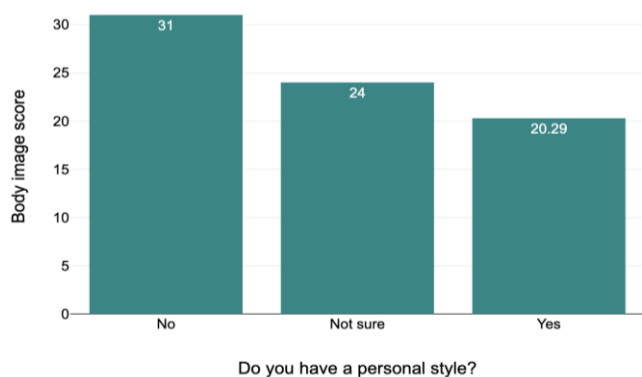

Figure 10- showing the mean body image scores and who usually handles the shopping bills of the respondents

The bar graph displays mean body image scores based on who typically pays for shopping bills. Women whose husbands pay have the highest mean body image score of 25.25, followed closely by those whose husband and son jointly pay, with a mean score of 25. This suggests that relying on others, particularly male family members, for financial support might correlate with poorer body image perceptions. These women may feel additional pressure to conform to perceived expectations from their financial supporters, leading to heightened self-consciousness.

In contrast, women who pay their own shopping bills have a significantly lower mean body image score of 20.48. This indicates better body image perceptions, likely due to the sense of autonomy and freedom associated with financial independence. When women have control over their purchases, they may feel less pressured to meet others' expectations and more empowered to make choices that align with their personal preferences and comfort.

These findings highlight the impact of financial autonomy and purchasing power on body image perceptions. Dependence on others for financial support can increase self-consciousness and pressure to conform, while financial independence can enhance self-esteem and body image by fostering a sense of empowerment and personal agency.

Figure 11- displaying the mean body image scores and presence of personal style in the respondents

The bar graph illustrates mean body image scores based on participants' perception of their personal style. Women without a personal style have the highest mean score of 31, indicating the poorest body image perception. This suggests that not having a defined style might correlate with greater body dissatisfaction, potentially due to a lack of confidence in self-presentation.

Those unsure about their personal style have a mean score of 24, reflecting moderate body image concerns. This ambiguity might contribute to insecurity about their appearance. Conversely, women with a personal style have the lowest mean score of 20.29, indicating a healthier body image. A defined personal style likely enhances self-esteem and body confidence, as these women may feel more comfortable and authentic in their appearance. These results underscore the significance of personal style in body image perception. Having a clear style appears to boost confidence and reduce body dissatisfaction, while its absence may heighten feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty about one's appearance.

Table 5. Correlation between the subscales of mood inventory and body image

	Anger	Tension	Depression	Vigour	Fatigue	Confusion	Happy	Calmness	Body image score
Anger	1	0.54	0.6	-0.1	0.41	0.47	-0.23	-0.11	0.08
Tension	0.54	1	0.57	-0.34	0.55	0.58	-0.31	-0.35	0.13
Depression	0.6	0.57	1	-0.26	0.41	0.46	-0.62	-0.43	0.28
Vigour	-0.1	-0.34	-0.26	1	-0.52	-0.31	0.46	0.45	-0.09
Fatigue	0.41	0.55	0.41	-0.52	1	0.3	-0.22	-0.38	0.16
Confusion	0.47	0.58	0.46	-0.31	0.3	1	-0.24	-0.27	0.25
Happy	-0.23	-0.31	-0.62	0.46	-0.22	-0.24	1	0.76	-0.04
Calmness	-0.11	-0.35	-0.43	0.45	-0.38	-0.27	0.76	1	0.18
Body image score	0.08	0.13	0.28	-0.09	0.16	0.25	-0.04	0.18	1

The correlation table reveals nuanced relationships between mood inventory sub-scores and body image scores. The highest positive correlation is between depression and body image (*r= 0.28*), suggesting that higher depression levels are modestly linked to poorer body image perceptions, aligning with the understanding that depressive symptoms often include negative self-evaluation. Confusion also shows a modest positive correlation with body image (*r=0.25*), indicating that psychological disorientation may contribute to a negative self-view. Interestingly, happiness has a weak negative correlation with body image (*r=-0.04*), suggesting that positive emotions are almost unrelated to body image scores in this sample.

Calmness exhibits a modest positive correlation (*r=0.18*), implying that greater calmness might slightly improve body image perceptions.

Other mood states, such as anger (*r=0.08*), tension (*r=0.13*), vigour (*r=-0.09*), and fatigue (*r=0.16*), show weak correlations with body image, indicating minimal impact on body image perception. Overall, these findings suggest that while mood states like depression and confusion influence body image, the relationships are relatively weak, highlighting that body image perceptions are shaped by a complex interplay of factors beyond immediate mood states.

Colour Preference Questionnaire
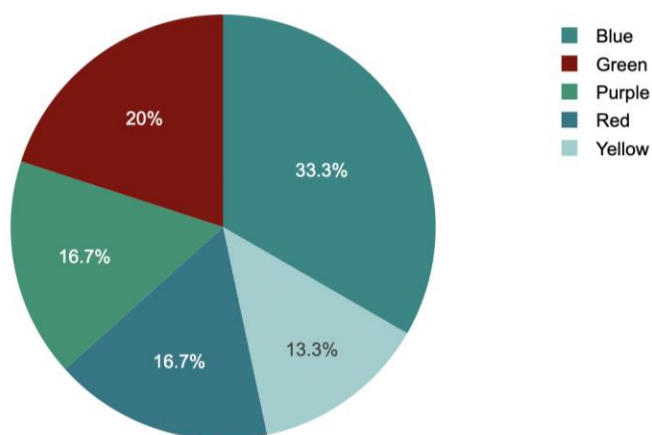
Figure 12- Displaying the colour preference of the respondents

The pie chart shows favourite colours among middle-aged women, with blue being the most preferred by 33.3% of respondents. This suggests a desire for calmness and stability. Red, favoured by 20%, indicates a preference for passion and energy. Green and purple, each chosen by 16.7%, reflect values of growth, harmony, and creativity. Yellow, at 13.3%, signifies optimism and cheerfulness.

These preferences can be contextualised within the demographic details of middle-aged women, a group that likely values emotional stability, creativity, and a balance of energy in their daily lives. Despite societal tendencies to gender colours, these women exhibit a broad spectrum of preferences, challenging stereotypical colour associations and underscoring their diverse personalities and emotional needs. The strong preference for blue, a colour not traditionally gendered for women, suggests a shift towards valuing universally appealing qualities like calmness and trust.

Colour preference and demographics
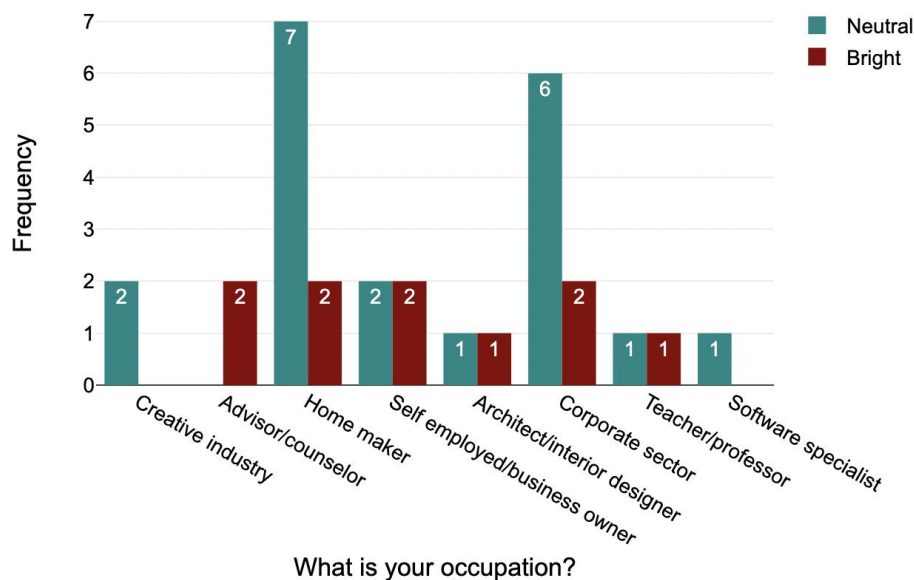
*Figure 13- depicting the colour preference and occupation of the respondents*

The chart reveals nuanced preferences for bright and neutral colours among different occupational groups of middle-aged women. Homemakers and those in the corporate sector exhibit a marked preference for neutral colours, with 7 out of 9 and 6 out of 8 participants respectively, indicating a tendency towards practicality and subtlety in these roles. This preference might reflect the need for a versatile wardrobe suitable for varied tasks and environments and may reflect the practical and adaptable nature of neutral colours, which can be easily incorporated into a variety of settings and activities typical of homemaking as well as the corporate sector.

Among the self-employed/business owners *(n=4)*, architects/interior designers *(n=2)*, and teachers *(n=2)* there is a balanced preference with half choosing bright and half choosing neutral colours. This balance suggests that all three of these groups value both vibrant individuality and the versatility of neutral tones, likely reflecting the dual demands of entrepreneurial creativity and business professionalism.

Interestingly, both of the participants from the creative industry chose neutral colours while both of the participants that were advisors/counsellors chose bright colours. This reflects the expectations and needs of the roles. While the participants from the creative industry might want to portray a more put-together and professional front, the advisors/counsellors might be more open to bolder, brighter colours to seem more approachable and amiable.

This analysis indicates that colour preferences among middle-aged women are significantly influenced by their professional roles and the corresponding demands for appearance and practicality. The data suggests that while neutral colours are generally favoured, there are specific occupational contexts where bright colours are embraced, reflecting a diverse range of professional and personal identities among middle-aged women.
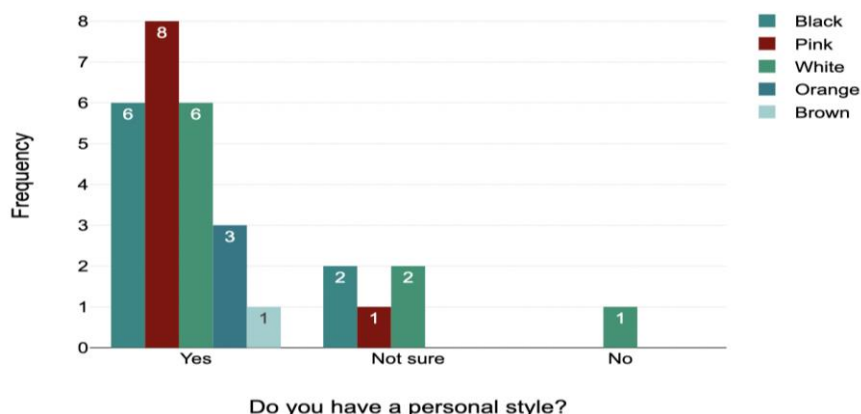
Figure 14- showing participants' preferences for colours they believe suit them best and whether they have a defined personal style.

The data reveals that individuals who affirmatively claim to have a personal style exhibit more diverse and definite colour preferences. Among these participants, black *(n=6)*, pink *(n=8)*, and white *(n=6)* are the most frequently chosen colours. Additionally, there are some preferences for orange and brown, although in smaller numbers. This range of choices suggests that individuals with a self-defined personal style have a more considered and thought-through approach to colour selection, indicating a deeper engagement with their fashion choices and a clearer understanding of their personal aesthetics.

In contrast, those who are unsure about having a personal style or explicitly state they do not have one exhibit less diversity and certainty in their colour preferences. Among participants who are unsure, the favoured colours are evenly distributed, with 2 individuals each choosing white and orange, and only 1 choosing pink. This even distribution might indicate a lack of definitive preference and perhaps less consideration given to their fashion choices. For those who do not believe they have a personal style, only one participant chose a colour, preferring white, which underscores the lack of engagement in personal style considerations. Personal style serves as an expression of individuality and can significantly impact one's self-perception and the way one is perceived by others. By consciously choosing colours that resonate with them, individuals with a defined personal style are likely engaging in a process of self-expression and identity reinforcement. This conscious engagement with personal aesthetics can contribute to a stronger sense of self and a clearer personal identity, showcasing the psychological impact of fashion and colour choices in one's life.

Colour preference and mood inventory
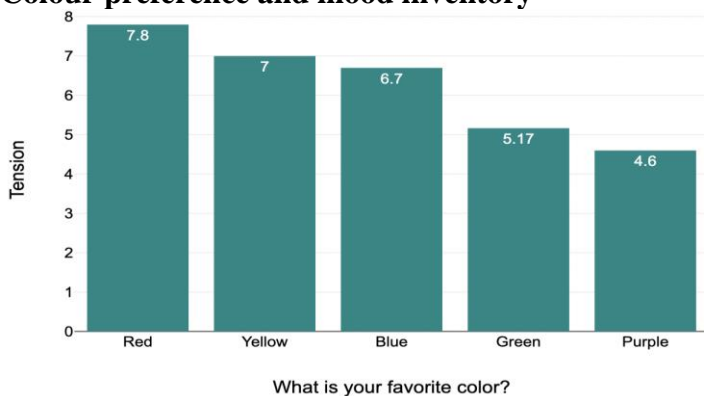
*Figure 15- Displaying mean scores of tension and colour preference of the respondents*

In *figure 15* the mean tension levels were the highest for respondents who chose the colour red (*M = 7.8*), followed by yellow (*M=7*), blue (*M = 6.7*), green (*M=5.17*) and purple (*M=4.6*). These findings are suggestive of the properties associated with different colours. Red for instance is associated with anger and rage, yellow with energy and stimulation, blue with calmness and stability, green with creativity and tranquillity and purple with ambition and wisdom. The findings also suggest that despite the calmness that is marker for the colour blue, the reported tension levels of the respondents were still higher. Overall, this data implies that colour preferences can significantly influence individuals' emotional states, with warmer colours like red and yellow correlating with higher tension and cooler colours like green and purple aligning with lower tension levels.
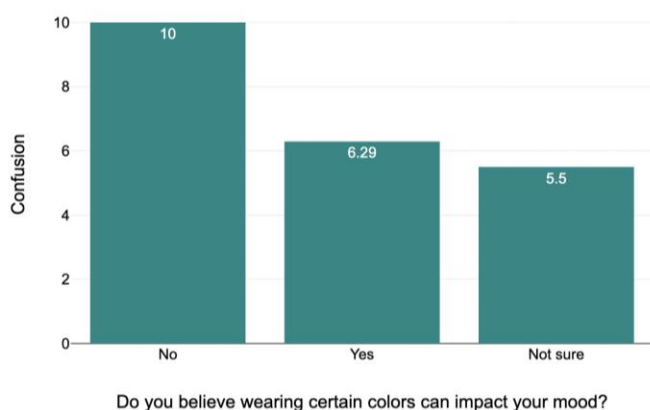
Figure 16- Depicting mean scores of confusion and whether the participants believe wearing certain colours can impact mood

The graph highlights a significant observation: participants who do not believe that wearing certain colours can impact their mood exhibit the highest mean confusion scores (*M=10*). This elevated confusion might stem from a lack of consideration or awareness of the psychological effects of colour, leading to indecision or cognitive dissonance when faced with questions about mood and colour preferences. In contrast, those who either believe in or are unsure about the impact of colours show notably lower confusion scores. This may indicate that acknowledging or exploring the potential effects of colour on mood, even without a firm belief, can contribute to a clearer and more stable cognitive state.

Colour preference and body image
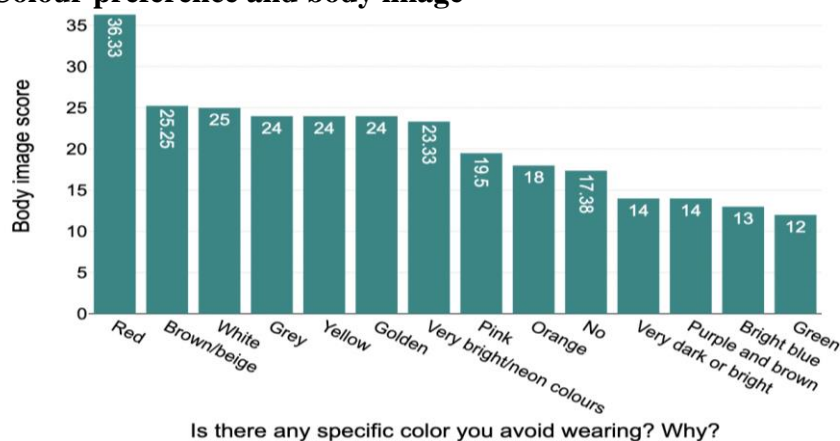
Figure 17- Showing the body image scores and the colours that respondents avoid wearing

Notably, red is the most avoided colour among individuals with higher body image scores (*M=36.33*). This suggests that people who are more unconsciously insecure about their bodies tend to avoid bright and attention-grabbing colours like red. Instead, they seem to prefer colours that allow them to blend in more with their surroundings. Other colours such as brown/beige, white, grey, and yellow also have relatively high body image scores, further supporting this tendency to shy away from more conspicuous colours. Conversely, colours like green, bright blue, and purple, which are less avoided, are associated with lower body image scores, indicating a possible comfort in wearing more noticeable colours among those with better body image perceptions. The avoidance of bright colours, in general, points to a preference for less attention and a desire to feel less conspicuous among those with higher body image concerns.
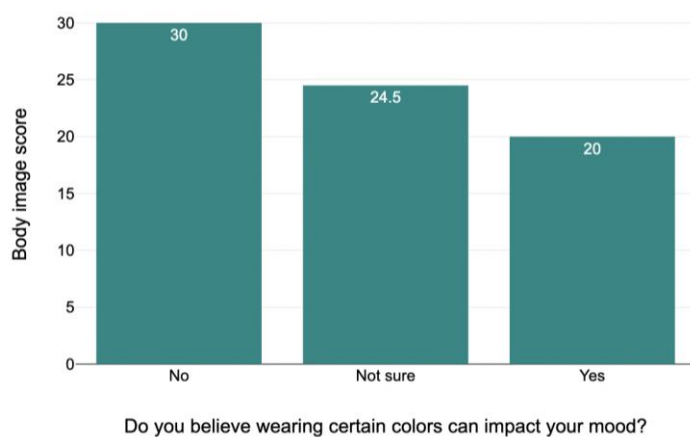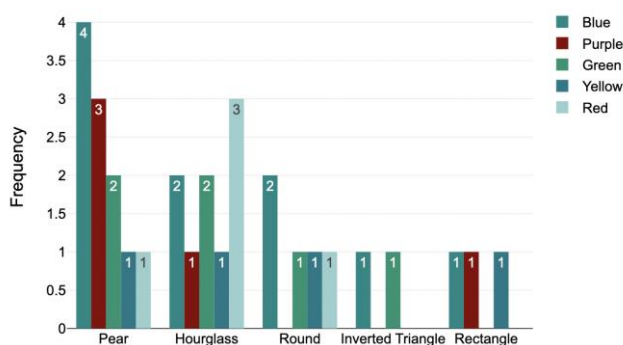

Figure 18- Depicting whether the respondents believe that wearing certain colours can impact mood and body image scores

According to Figure 18, participants who do not believe that wearing certain colours can impact their mood have the highest body image scores, averaging at 30, suggesting a strong correlation between scepticism towards the influence of colour on mood and higher body image concerns. On the other hand, those who are unsure about the impact of colour on mood have a moderately high body image score of 24.5, indicating a level of uncertainty or ambivalence that might still be linked to body image concerns. Participants who believe that wearing certain colours can impact their mood have the lowest body image scores, averaging at 20, indicating that individuals who acknowledge the psychological effects of colour might have a better body image or be more conscious about the influence of colour on their emotional and psychological state. This suggests that belief in the impact of colour on mood might be associated with a more positive body image or a higher level of psychological awareness, while scepticism or uncertainty about this impact might correlate with greater body image concerns, potentially indicating a preference for rationalising or dismissing the influence of external factors like colour on mood as a coping mechanism.

Colour preference and body shape

Figure 19- Depicting colour preference and body shape of the respondents

The graph illustrates the distribution of colour preferences among respondents with different body shapes. Notably, individuals with a pear-shaped body predominantly prefer blue (*n=4*) and purple (*n=3*), suggesting a tendency towards calming and regal colours. This pattern might indicate that pear-shaped individuals prefer to balance their appearance with both soothing and sophisticated tones. For those with an hourglass figure, the most preferred colour is red (*n=3*), followed by blue and green (*n=2 each*). This preference for red, a bold and attention-grabbing colour, suggests that individuals with an hourglass body shape may feel more confident and comfortable in their skin, embracing colours that highlight their curves.

Round body shape respondents show a balanced preference with blue (*n=2*) being the most favoured, and green, yellow, and red (*n=1 each*) following. This indicates a more varied approach to colour choice, reflecting a possibly adaptable and flexible attitude towards fashion. The inverted triangle body shape, represented by only two respondents, shows a preference for blue and green (*n=1 each*), suggesting a liking for natural and calming colours, potentially indicating a preference for understated elegance.

Lastly, respondents with a rectangular body shape display an equal preference for blue, purple, and yellow (*n=1 each*). This varied preference might imply a diverse approach to colour selection, indicating openness to different styles and moods. Overall, blue emerges as the most consistently preferred colour across all body shapes, underscoring its universal appeal, while red's popularity among hourglass-shaped individuals highlights its association with confidence and a striking presence.

DISCUSSION

The interplay between mood states, colour preferences, and body image provides a comprehensive understanding of the psychological aspects of fashion among middle-aged women. The demographic trend of older, more educated participants experiencing higher levels of calmness and happiness may be influenced by their financial stability and self-sufficiency. This stability could reduce stress and enhance their mood, allowing for more experimental and confident fashion choices.

Mood states, as measured by the BRUMS, showed that positive emotions were prevalent among participants, which likely influenced their preference for calming colours like blue and green. This preference aligns with findings from Elliot and Maier (2014), who found

that colour can significantly affect mood and cognitive performance. Their research supports the idea that exposure to calming colours like blue can reduce anxiety and induce a state of calmness, further reinforcing the observed trend among participants in this study.

Further, a study by Küller et al. (2006) revealed that colour environments can impact stress levels and mood, indicating that colour choices in clothing might extend beyond fashion into personal well-being. This adds depth to the observation and aligns with the idea that participants preferred calming colours not only because they find them aesthetic but also due to psychological strategies to enhance emotional stability.

Additionally, Madden, Hewett, and Roth (2000) found that colour preferences can shift with age, with older adults showing a preference for softer, more subdued colours. This finding correlates with the trend observed among the study's participants, who favoured calming colours, possibly reflecting their changing aesthetic preferences as they aged. This suggests that as women grow older, their fashion choices may increasingly reflect a desire for tranquillity and stability, which is expressed through their colour preferences.

The correlations between mood states further support this integrated understanding. For example, the strong negative correlations between vigour, happiness, calmness, and negative moods imply that participants with higher energy and positivity are less likely to experience negative emotions like tension and depression.

In terms of body image, the positive self-perception reported by participants correlates with their high happiness and calmness scores. Tiggemann and McGill (2004) found that positive body image is closely linked to overall well-being and positive mood states, which suggests that women with higher body satisfaction are more likely to engage confidently with their fashion choices, seeking styles that express their personality and emotional state. This reinforces the idea that a positive body image, which was prevalent among the participants, is a crucial factor in their fashion decisions.

Overall, the findings suggest that middle-aged women who are older, more educated, and financially stable tend to experience higher levels of positive moods, which influence their colour preferences and body image positively. These interrelated factors contribute to their overall psychological well-being and are reflected in their fashion choices. The research highlights the importance of considering multiple psychological and demographic factors when understanding fashion behaviour, providing a nuanced perspective on how mood, colour preference, and body image interact to shape personal style among middle-aged women.

CONCLUSION

By integrating findings from the Brunel Mood Scale, colour preference surveys, and body shape questionnaires, the research provides a holistic view of how these factors interact to influence personal style and fashion choices. The study's comprehensive approach allows for a deeper insight into the psychological mechanisms underlying fashion behaviour in this demographic, shedding light on the nuanced ways that emotions, self-perception, and demographic factors shape fashion preferences.

Implications of the Findings

The findings underscore the importance of positive emotional states, such as happiness and calmness, in fostering a positive body image and influencing colour preferences that reflect these moods. This suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing positive moods could indirectly promote healthier body image perceptions and more expressive fashion choices. This emphasises on the potential for integrating psychological insights into fashion design and marketing strategies, ultimately promoting emotional well-being through personal style. Furthermore, the study highlights the potential for using fashion as a tool for mood regulation, where colour and style choices can be tailored to enhance emotional well-being.

The research also opens avenues for further exploration. Future studies could investigate these relationships in different cultural contexts or age groups to determine if similar patterns exist. Additionally, exploring the impact of specific fashion interventions on mood and body image over time could provide actionable insights for the fashion industry and mental health practitioners. Another promising area of research could involve examining the role of social media and digital influences on fashion choices and body image among middle-aged women.

In summary, this study has made significant strides in bridging the research gap in fashion psychology concerning middle-aged women. By measuring the interrelations between mood states, colour preferences, and body image, the research offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how these factors collectively influence fashion behaviour. The study's contributions lie in its holistic approach and detailed analysis, which provide a nuanced understanding of the psychological aspects of fashion in this demographic.

Limitations of the Study

The present study is not devoid of limitations. The sample of the study was limited in number, age, gender, and socioeconomic sector. This reduces the generalizability of the findings to a wider population with distinct characteristics. Additionally, the study only took specific factors into consideration including mood, colour preference, and body image and shape of the participants. The study is limited in its findings since its approach is limited to only these factors. Still, this research bridges a significant gap by measuring and analysing the complex interactions between psychological factors and fashion preferences among middle-aged women. It underscores the importance of considering psychological well-being in fashion behaviour and opens up new pathways for research and practical applications in both the fashion industry and mental health fields.

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