

# *The Perception and Attitude of Beijing Residents Towards Clothing Freedom*

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**Abstract:** In daily life, many individuals hesitate to choose their preferred dressing style due to concerns about negative comments from those around them. This article discusses how to create a more inclusive environment and alleviate these concerns through investigation and research. A total of 200 valid responses were collected from Beijing residents, including 87 males and 113 females. The results indicated no significant gender difference in attitudes toward freedom of dressing ( $P = 0.051$ ). Correlation tests revealed that open personality traits ( $r = .263$ ,  $p < .001$ ), rule awareness ( $r = .526$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and the level of perceived social support ( $r = .329$ ,  $p < .001$ ) are significantly positively correlated with Beijing residents' attitudes toward freedom of dress. Enhancing these factors may help reduce individuals' concerns, thereby increasing their freedom to choose their attire. People's right to dress freely should be respected as long as it does not violate laws or personal rules.

**Keywords:** freedom to dress, open personality traits, awareness of rules, perceived social support.

## 1. Introduction

With the rise of diverse and niche cultures, many people are interested in trying cosplay activities. However, they worry about being judged by those around them and the potential hassles of wearing cosplay outfits in public. This concern is not limited to cosplay. In everyday life, many individuals hesitate to explore different fashion styles. Some are keen to try recent niche trends or brightly colored clothing but fear negative evaluations from peers, elders, or even strangers, which discourages them from experimenting with their wardrobe.

Choosing what style of clothes to wear is an important aspect of personal image, as people aim to showcase their unique style through clothing while gaining recognition from others [1]. Aesthetic preferences vary, leading individuals to have different judgments about clothing styles. When these judgments are expressed through written or verbal evaluations, they can cause stress. Many people feel unable to choose their clothing style based on their preferences, which should be part of their "freedom to dress." This right encompasses the ability to choose clothes freely without violating laws, regulations, or public order and good customs. Therefore, the authors decided to explore this issue in depth. By examining the factors that influence people's attitudes towards their own and others' clothing choices, we aim to propose ways to create a more inclusive environment where people do not have to worry excessively about others' judgments before choosing their outfits.

This study hopes to inspire individuals who lack confidence and struggle with self-expression. The authors aim to encourage them to release the pressure associated with their dressing style, regardless of their body shape or skin color. Everyone should feel free to wear their favorite style without feeling constrained or judged.

This study aims to examine whether a relatively tolerant environment can be created, allowing individuals to choose their style of clothing according to their preferences. Literature analysis reveals that achieving this goal requires people to respect differences and adhere to appropriate rules while maintaining their own rights [2]. Additionally, the authors posit that curiosity and acceptance of new things, as well as the degree of perceived support from family and friends, influence people's attitudes toward freedom of dressing. Therefore, the research hypotheses proposed in this paper are as follows:

H1: Awareness of rules is positively correlated with attitudes toward dress freedom.

H2: Open personality traits are positively correlated with attitudes toward freedom of dressing.

H3: Perceived social support is positively correlated with attitudes toward dress freedom.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Concept of freedom of dressing**

In the domestic environment, the debate about freedom of dressing often centers around the conflict between minority clothing styles, such as cosplay and Lolita, and mainstream culture [3]. Online discussions about dress freedom frequently degenerate into simple and extreme quarrels, offering little real help to the actual situation. In ancient China, clothing regulation was an externalization of etiquette with strict rules. Today, the domestic environment is much more relaxed. People understand that freedom must be respected, yet absolute freedom has never existed. True freedom lies in dressing decently while maintaining individuality. This study aims to explore people's attitudes toward the concept of freedom of dress, specifically whether individuals can freely choose their preferred style without constraint.

### **2.2. Rule Awareness**

Rules are social constraints on individuals. Personal value can only be realized through social connections, making the strength of rule consciousness an essential factor for individuals to integrate into society [4]. Rule consciousness should be an internalized concept that guides one's actions based on rules. Once rule consciousness is established, rules are no longer external constraints but become an embodiment of people's free will. In Western education, rule education is part of civic education, often integrated into subject education, encouraging citizens to recognize and accept their country's system, laws, regulations, and value orientations [5].

### **2.3. Perceived social support**

The concept of perceived social support, as opposed to actual social support, emphasizes individuals' subjective feelings and evaluations of the degree of external support they receive [6]. Studies have shown that perceived social support has a stronger predictive power on individual mental health and a more significant functional effect on mental health improvement compared to actual social support [7]. In the current online environment, where comments from strangers are often negative or even malicious, feeling supported by those around them can be crucial for individuals.

### **2.4. Open personality traits**

The openness personality trait is a dimension of the Big Five personality trait scale [8]. It refers to an individual's openness to experience, which encompasses the active search for and appreciation of new

experiences, as well as the tolerance and exploration of unfamiliar situations. This dimension contrasts individuals who are curious, novel, unconventional, and creative with those who are traditional, uninterested in art, and unanalytical [9]. This paper posits that the openness personality trait, which describes a person's curiosity and creativity towards new experiences, can also reflect their acceptance of new things.

To sum up, the current academic discussion on freedom of dressing is limited to simple qualitative analysis, lacking more in-depth and quantitative research. This paper's investigation into the correlation between these concepts aims to contribute to the creation of a more tolerant environment, allowing individuals to freely choose their style of dress and express their unique personalities.

### **3. Research methods**

#### **3.1. Research object**

From December 20, 2023, to January 20, 2024, electronic questionnaires were distributed via the Internet, and 212 Beijing residents were selected using a convenience sampling method for the survey. Participants filled out the questionnaires according to the provided instructions after confirming informed consent. All questionnaires were completed anonymously, and the collected responses were screened to exclude duplicates and incomplete answers. A total of 200 valid questionnaires were obtained, yielding a response rate of 94.3%. Of the respondents, 87 were male (43.5%) and 113 were female (56.5%).

#### **3.2. Questionnaire Design**

A self-designed questionnaire was used to collect demographic information from respondents, including gender, age, education, occupation, and other relevant details. Drawing on the network questionnaire and literature support [4], this study developed a Rule Awareness Scale comprising six questions. For assessing openness to experience, the study employed a version consisting of eight questions derived from a complete 40-item version [9].

Social support is conceptualized as having two types: objective support and subjective emotional support. Objective support encompasses tangible, visible, or actual assistance, such as direct material help, social networks, and the presence and participation in group relationships, including family, marriage, friends, and colleagues. Subjective emotional support pertains to the emotional experiences and satisfaction derived from feeling respected, supported, and understood within society, closely linked to an individual's subjective feelings. The Social Support Scale used in this study is the version consisting of 12 questions [10].

Additionally, this study designed questions for the Dress Freedom section by referencing the network questionnaire, resulting in a Dress Freedom Attitude Scale with seven questions.

#### **3.3. Analysis Tools**

Reliability analysis was conducted on the data, yielding an overall standardized Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of 0.876. The results of the KMO test indicated a value of 0.816. Additionally, the Bartlett's test of sphericity produced a significance value (P) of 0.000\*\*\*, confirming that the overall reliability and validity of the questionnaire were robust and suitable for further analysis. Statistical analysis was performed using the Questionnaire Star analysis tool and SPSS 20.0 software, encompassing descriptive statistical analysis, difference analysis, and correlation analysis.

## 4. Research and analysis

### 4.1. Descriptive statistical analysis

The survey included data from 200 residents of Beijing, comprising 87 males (43.5%) and 113 females (56.5%). Age was categorized into nine groups, spanning from 12 years old and below to 56 years old and above, in 5-year increments. The largest age group was 13-18 years, with 56 individuals (28% of the total respondents), while the smallest group was 37-42 years, with only 1 individual (0.5% of the total respondents).

To assess the educational level of the respondents, education was divided into six categories: junior high school and below, senior high school or secondary school, junior college, undergraduate, postgraduate, and above. The highest proportion of respondents had completed senior high school or secondary school, totaling 65 individuals (32.5% of the respondents). The lowest proportion was those with a junior college education, totaling 18 individuals (9% of the respondents).

Regarding the occupation of the respondents, the categories were students, employed, and unemployed. Further subdivision of the employed category revealed that students comprised the largest group, with 72 individuals (36% of the respondents), while other occupations were more evenly distributed.

### 4.2. Difference Analysis

As shown in Table 1, the data meet the criteria for homogeneity of variance. An independent sample T-test was conducted, yielding a P-value of 0.051\*. Therefore, the result was not statistically significant, indicating that there is no significant difference between men and women in terms of freedom of dressing.

Table 1: Gender Differences in Attitudes Toward Dressing Freedom

Variable	Value	Sample Size	Mean	Std	T-test	Welch's T-test	Mean Difference	Cohen's d
Attitudes toward Dress Freedom	2.0	113	21.097	4.44	T=-1.967	T=-1.941	1.305	0.281
	1.0	87	22.402	4.912	P=0.051*	P=0.054*		
Total	200		21.665	4.684				

Note: \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* denote significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Analyzing whether there are age differences in attitudes toward dress freedom, Table 2 shows that the data meet the assumption of homogeneity of variance. Using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), the result yielded a P-value of  $0.004^{***} \leq 0.05$ , indicating statistical significance. Therefore, the findings suggest significant differences in attitudes toward dress freedom across different age groups.

Table 2: Age Differences in Attitudes Toward Dressing Freedom

Variable	Value	Sample Size	Mean	Std	Variance Test	Welch's Variance Test
Attitudes toward Dress Freedom	2.0	56	20.179	3.932	F=2.963 P=0.004***	F=2.474 P=0.030**
	9.0	42	24.333	5.533		
	3.0	19	21.789	5.663		
	5.0	15	22	4.721		
	8.0	19	22.105	2.355		

Table 2: (continued).

Variable	Value	Sample Size	Mean	Std	Variance Test	Welch's Variance Test
	6.0	1	18	0.000		
	4.0	35	20.971	4.541		
	7.0	10	20.6	2.989		
	1.0	3	19.667	2.082		
Total	200		21.665	4.684		

Note: \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* denote significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

To analyze whether there are educational differences in attitudes toward dress freedom, Table 3 indicates that the data satisfy the assumption of homogeneity of variance. Employing a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), the results yielded a P-value of  $0.023^{**} \leq 0.05$ , indicating statistical significance. Therefore, the findings suggest that there are significant differences in attitudes toward dress freedom based on educational attainment.

Table 3: Educational Differences in Attitudes toward Dress Freedom

Variable	Value	Sample Size	Mean	std	Variance Test	Welch's Variance Test
	4.0	54	21.37	3.793		
	1.0	17	24.824	6.126		
Attitudes toward Dress Freedom	2.0	65	20.8	4.273	F=2.91 P=0.023**	F=1.907 P=0.121
	5.0	46	22.283	5.6		
	3.0	18	21.111	3.234		
Total	200		21.665	4.684		

Note: \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* represent significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

### 4.3. correlation analysis

Analyzing the relationships between openness to experience, rule awareness, perceived social support, and attitudes toward dress freedom, as shown in Table 4, correlation tests revealed significant positive associations. Specifically, openness to experience ( $r = .263, p < .01$ ), rule awareness ( $r = .526, p < .01$ ), and perceived social support ( $r = .329, p < .01$ ) were all positively correlated with Beijing residents' attitudes toward dress freedom. This study's three research hypotheses have been confirmed.

Table 4: The results of correlation analysis

	Openness to Experience	Rule Awareness	Attitudes toward Dress Freedom	Perceived Social Support
Openness to Experience	1	.251**	.263**	.312**
Rule Awareness	.251**	1	.526**	.209**
Attitudes toward Dress Freedom	.263**	.526**	1	.329**
Perceived Social Support	.312**	.209**	.329**	1

\*\* Significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

## 5. Discuss the conclusion

Through a questionnaire survey, this paper explores how demographic information, open personality traits, rule awareness, and social support factors influence individuals' attitudes toward dress freedom. Analyzing data from 200 Beijing residents, the study found no significant gender difference in attitudes toward dress freedom, but identified significant differences based on age and education. Furthermore, correlation tests revealed that open personality traits, rule awareness, and social support levels are positively correlated with Beijing residents' attitudes toward dress freedom.

Based on these findings, this study suggests that fostering a more inclusive environment can alleviate concerns about social evaluation and enable individuals to freely express their dressing preferences. For instance, enhancing rule awareness through integrating legal and ethical education in disciplinary curricula, bolstering law enforcement efforts, and promoting respect for regulations could contribute to this inclusive environment. Additionally, enhancing psychological education in schools and utilizing social media to encourage curiosity about new fashion trends may further support individuals in making autonomous clothing choices.

It should be noted that this study collected only 200 valid responses, suggesting the need for larger sample sizes to validate these findings. The concept of rule awareness, as utilized in this study, is broad and loosely defined; therefore, future research could refine the rule awareness scale through enhanced question design and qualitative interviews. Subsequent studies could employ in-depth interviews to explore respondents' perspectives on the questionnaire items, informing the development of guidance programs to facilitate appropriate clothing choices.

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