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ASSESSMENT OF THE PROXIMITY OF CLOTHING TO SELF SCALE FOR ADOLESCENTS IN THE ITALIAN CONTEXT

GIUSEPPE LEONE
DAIANA COLLEDANI
PASQUALE ANSELMI
UNIVERSITY OF PADOVA

This paper presents the results of one of the first Italian works in the field of social psychology of dress. The work aims at investigating the psychometric properties of the Proximity of Clothing to Self (PCS) scale in the Italian context and at exploring the relationships of its subscales with gender, socioeconomic status, and average spending on clothing. The PCS scale was administered to a sample of 444 individuals attending the high school. The results showed that the Italian version of the PCS scale has a 4-factor 20-item structure. No significant differences emerged between the socioeconomic status, whereas gender was found to moderate the relationships between the score at the PCS scale and the average spending on clothing. Discussion of findings and recommendations for future research are presented.

Keywords: Social psychology of dress; Validation; Factorial analysis; Proximity of clothing to self; Quantitative methods.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Giuseppe Leone, Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy, and Applied Psychology — FISPPA, University of Padova, Via Venezia 14, 35131, Padova (PD), Italy. Email: giuseppe.leone.1@studenti.unipd.it

The Proximity of Clothing to Self (PCS) is defined as the psychological closeness of clothing to self (Sontag & Schlater, 1982), which specifies the association between the concerns (i.e., aspects of life to which the individual experiences emotions; Andrews & Withey, 1976) and the self in the individual's framework of perceptions. The concept of psychological closeness, as well as the quality-of-life theory (Sontag, 1979), can be considered as the basis of PCS. Several scholars, such as Cooley (1902) and Stone (1962), proposed that clothing is an external manifestation of the self. Expressions like "the second skin" (Crawley, 1931) and "the visible self" underline how clothing is thought to be close to the body but also to the self. Moreover, clothing, as suggested by Sontag (1979), is the closest material environment for the individual. In the same study, Sontag proposed the open-ended question "Why do you feel as you do about clothing?" to a middle-age group (25-55 years, M = 38.2) and, based on the responses, proposed six dimensions. In particular, PCS is denoted by the extent to which clothing is: (a) perceived as one with the self or as a component of the self, (b) recognized as an important symbol of the individual's identity or mood, (c) an aspect of appearance by which the self is established and validated, (d) perceived as an expression of self-esteem, (e) recognized as an aspect of an affective response to self-evaluation or (f) close to body cathexis.

At the basis of the theorization of the PCS scale dimensions there are also theories of social psychology of dress and, in particular, those by James (1890), Cooley (1902), Mead (1913), Rosenberg (1965, 1979), and Stone (1962). James (1890) proposed the concept of material self (the person's body and material possessions which are identified with self). Clothing is a component of the material self and contributes to a

sense of unity. Cooley (1902) proposed the concept of the looking glass self, a concept focused on the process by which the individual imagines his/her appearance and reacts to others' hypothetical judgments. Obviously, these judgments will have an impact on the self-feelings. Instead, Stone (1962) focused on the concept of the appearance that is defined as one of the ways by which meaning is established in social transactions and, in particular, in communicating aspects of the self to others through nonverbal symbols (i.e., the clothing). Stone, moreover, identified two concepts: program and review. Program refers to the way in which the individual responds to his/her appearance. Review refers to the responses about the individual's appearance by others. The self is validated when there is no discrepancy between program and review.

The PCS scale has been used in some studies. For example, Yurchisin et al. (2006) investigated the associations between the presence of a liminal state (the discrepancy between the ideal and the real self), self-esteem, negative emotions, PCS scores, and compensatory consumption behavior. The study showed that both PCS scores and low levels of self-esteem are predictors of compensatory consumption behaviors.

An interesting and recent model about how self discrepancies drive consumption behaviors is the Compensatory Consumer Behavior Model (Mandel et al., 2017). The model outlines five strategies by which consumers deal with discrepancies: direct resolution, symbolic self-completion, dissociation, escapism, and fluid compensation. In addition, Mandel and colleagues point out that discrepancies can result from negative feedback about one's self-concept, in accordance with Stone's (1962) theory, from social comparison (particularly an upward comparison), from exclusion with respect to an important reference group, or from the assignment of attributes with negative valence to a social group that is important to the individual. Whatever the motivation behind the discrepancy, it produces affective, physiological, and cognitive consequences that can lead to compensatory consumption behaviors. Self discrepancies lead to cognitive inconsistency that can be resolved in several ways, such as: (a) engaging in behaviors and thoughts to reduce the perceived discrepancy, (b) minimizing the importance of the discrepancy itself, and (c) reducing its salience.

Another study that should be mentioned for its contribution in the area of compensatory consumption behaviors is that of Yu et al. (2020), especially since it presents methodologies related to the neuropsychological field. This study assessed purchase intention for symbolic products in individuals with impaired self-concept and explored the underlying information processing stages. In particular, the study showed that the individual is driven toward consumption by the symbolic meaning associated with the product. In addition, the study demonstrated how consumption can be influenced by a transient and accidental mental state and highlighted various applications in marketing and advertising. Kim and Kang (2015) found a relation between the appearance management behaviors (AMBs) and the body dissatisfaction, that was moderated by PCS. Dogan (2015) investigated the effect of materialism and PCS on the ratio of feeling younger (RFY), which is a measure of how much individuals feel younger. The author found that materialism, defined as an individual giving more value to materials than to his/her experiences (Richins, 2004), has a positive effect on RFY while the PCS has a negative one.

Proximity of Clothing to Self: Scale Development

Referring to the main theories in the field of social psychology of dress, Sontag and Lee (2004, 2012) came to devise a scale for the assessment of PCS: the Proximity of Clothing to Self (PCS) scale. The instrument was developed through two studies. In the first study (Sontag & Lee, 2004), the authors developed 78 items and revised the PCS dimensions. The revised dimensions follow:

Dimension 1: Clothing in relation to self as structure. Clothing is part of an organized set of perceptions of the self. Clothing, as a component of the material self, contributes to a sense of unity with the person and is also part of the person's identity. As such, clothing reflects or expresses a person's identity, personality, values, attitudes, or moods. The person strives for consistency between clothing and self-image.

Dimension 2: Clothing in relation to self as process — Communication of self to others. Clothing can also communicate information about a person's identity, values, moods, and attitudes, and can facilitate the enactment of social roles. A person can select clothing to convey messages (i.e., communication of self to others) about the self or also to experiment different identities.

Dimension 3: Clothing in relation to self as process — Response to judgments of others. The person, through clothing, imagines how the self appears to others and responds affectively, cognitively, or behaviorally to a real or imagined judgment. This judgment may affect self-validation. The dimension refers to the response to judgments of others.

Dimension 4: Clothing in relation to self-esteem — Evaluative process dominant. Clothing can affect a person's evaluation of self-worth, self-regard expressed as cognitive or affective evaluation. In particular, clothing can positively or negatively affect person's self-efficacy, mastery of the environment, social adequacy, and desirability. The person, in an implicit or explicit way, engages in cognitive or affective evaluation of the self in comparison with social standards (the personal one is the ideal self). This evaluation can affect person's global self-esteem or confidence in his/her abilities, qualities, or performances. The focus of this dimension is on the evaluative process of self-esteem.

Dimension 5: Clothing in relation to self-esteem — Affective process dominant. Clothing can evoke an emotional response directed to the self. This response may take the form of positive or negative affects related to self-love or self-acceptance and may also have behavioral consequences. The care that the person gives to clothing reflects or affects self-feelings. This dimension does not refer to all emotions but only to those directed to the self. Here, compared to Dimension 4, the focus is on the affective process of self-esteem.

Dimension 6: Clothing in relation to body image and body cathexis. Clothing can also affect and modify body image or body cathexis. This process is bidirectional. Then, body image or body cathexis may affect body satisfaction, and clothing can reflect this or compensate for body dissatisfaction.

Through three rounds of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) and the elimination of all the items that did not match with their own dimension, Sontag and Lee (2004) came up with a 4-factor 24-item structure with good psychometric properties. In a further study, Sontag and Lee (2012) validated a 3-factor 19-item model to use with elderly individuals (65 years or more).

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the present study is twofold. First, we want to validate the PCS scale in the Italian context. Second, we want to investigate the relation between PCS and different variables. In this respect, we investigate the relationships of the total score at the PCS scale and its specific dimensions with the average spending on clothing (ASC), gender, and socioeconomic status (SES). In particular, we tested a series of moderated regression models in which PCS scores were entered as independent variables, gender and SES were the moderators, and ASC was the dependent variable. The choice of using this variable as the criterion was based on a study by Yurchisin et al. (2006) where a positive association between PCS score and compensatory consumption behaviors was found. Assuming that adolescents may put into effect this kind of behavior, we suppose that PCS scores may be positively associated with spending on clothing. The moderating role of SES and gender in the relationships between the specific dimensions of the PCS scale and ASC

was considered since these variables may impact consumer behaviors. In particular, it is expected that individuals belonging to a social class with higher purchasing power spend more than those with lower purchasing power. This analysis may add to the literature a new perspective focused on an economic point of view, considering that socioeconomic aspects were taken into account in addition to a psychological variable.

Materials and Method

Participants and Procedure

The sample consists of 444 individuals (Male = 37.39%, Female = 62.61%). The majority of them were Italian (11.48% from other nationalities) and their ages ranged from 13 to 19 years (M = 15.99, SD = 1.50). All respondents were enrolled through the collaboration of four high schools located in the North (Padua; 36.49%) and South (Naples; 63.51%) of Italy.

All participants were presented with a questionnaire including the Italian version of the PCS scale and a few questions concerning demographics and consumer behaviors. The completion of the questionnaire took place during class time, required about 40 minutes, and was in paper-and-pencil format.

All participants were informed that their participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary. The permission to participate in the research was obtained from the headmaster of each institute. Written informed consent was collected from all participants and, for minors (< 18 years old), it was also obtained from their parents.

Measures

The PCS scale validated by Sontag and Lee (2004) is a 24-item scale with a 4-factor structure. The items are answered on a 6-point rating scale (1 = *Never or almost never true for me*, 2 = *Usually not true for me*, 3 = *Sometimes true for me*, 4 = *Often true for me*, 5 = *Usually true for me*, 6 = *Always or almost always true for me*). Examples of items are: "What I wear is consistent with who I am," "My clothing gives others an idea about my interests or activities."

All the 39 items of the initial pool developed by Sontag and Lee (2004), for which the authors initially hypothesized a 6-factor structure, were included in the questionnaire presented to participants. This was done to underline possible differences between the study of Sontag and Lee (2004) and the present one. The PCS scale was translated from English to Italian by a bilingual translator, and then back-translated by another bilingual translator to ensure linguistic equivalence (see the Appendix for the Italian version of the scale. The item labels correspond to the original English version). Concerning item PCSD105 ("What I wear is consistent with who I am"), Sontag and Lee (2004) proposed two versions. One of them was aimed at limiting the possible misunderstanding linked to the word "consistent." The authors argued that this specific word may be confusing for adolescents and, for this reason, suggested an alternative formulation of the item: "What I wear is who I am." In the Italian version, there is a single version of this item, derived from both the English versions.

In addition to the PCS scale, another questionnaire was developed and administered to participants. It included a set of items aimed at investigating demographics (age, gender, SES, and nationality) and consumer behaviors. SES was inferred using five items that were developed following the suggestions by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat). In particular, Istat (2017) identified five explicative variables (age, profession, presence of foreigners in the family, level of education, number of people in the family)

from which the social class of an individual can be inferred. These five indicators were used to develop five items to which each participant had to answer with regard to both parents (five items for each parent). The SES variable was discretized according to the two levels of high and low SES.

Finally, one item was administered to evaluate consumer behaviors. It required respondents to report how much they spent, on average, on clothing per season.

Analysis Procedure

Psychometric Properties of the Italian Version of the PCS Scale

First, parallel analysis (PA) was carried out to identify the number of factors underlying the 39 items of the original version of the scale. PA is one of the most strongly recommended methods to determine the number of factors to retain in factor analysis and it is often used in applied research (e.g., Colledani, Capozza, et al., 2018; Gaygısız et al., 2017; Pearson et al., 2013; Thompson, 2004). PA was performed considering 1,000 random correlation matrices. The number of factors to retain was determined considering the number of eigenvalues, estimated on the real data, that resulted to be larger than the 95th percentile of the distribution of the eigenvalues estimated on the 1,000 random correlation matrices. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was also run to further investigate the factor structure of the scale. EFA was run using the goemin oblique rotation and the robust maximum likelihood (MLR; Yuan & Bentler, 2000; see also Brown, 2006; Muthén & Muthén, 2012) as the estimator. The results of this analysis were used to identify and remove poorly performing items. Three main criteria were considered for such purpose: weak factor loading on the intended factor ($\lambda < .32$; Tabachnick et al., 2007), large loadings on a wrong factor (i.e., different from that for which the item was intended), and meaningful cross-loadings. Meaningful cross-loadings were identified calculating the ratio between the highest and the second-highest loading of the item. If this ratio was below 2, the item was taken to exhibit cross-loadings (Barbaranelli, 2007).

In the next steps, a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were performed. In the first model, all items were loaded on the dimensions theorized by Sontag and Lee (2004), and factors were allowed to correlate (i.e., correlated factor model). Afterward, a higher-order factor model and a bifactor model were applied. In the higher-order factor model, the items were the indicators of the first-order factors (i.e., the specific dimensions of the scale), whereas the first-order factors were the indicators of a higher-order dimension (i.e., PCS). A bifactor model is a model hypothesizing a general factor and a series of domain-specific factors. Each item loads onto the general factor and onto the domain-specific factor that is measured by the item. In the bifactor model considered in this study, PCS was the general factor and the specific dimensions of the PCS scale were the domain-specific factors. The overall fit of the models was evaluated using several indices: χ^2, comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR; Bentler, 1995), root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudeck, 1993), and Akaike information criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1974). A nonsignificant χ^2 ($p \geq .05$) suggests adequate fit. Since this statistic is sensitive to sample size, in evaluating the models the other fit measures were also considered. A model fits the data well when CFI indices are above .95 (.90 to .95 for reasonable fit), SRMR values are less than .08, and RMSEA is smaller than .06 (.06 to .08 for reasonable fit; see Brown, 2006; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Marsh et al., 2004). Concerning AIC, smaller values are indicative of a better fit. Relative differences in AIC values (ΔAIC) were evaluated according to commonly accepted rules of thumb for judging model improvement: $\Delta AIC > 2$ and < 7 indicates a substantial difference between models, while $\Delta AIC \geq 10$ indicates a considerable difference (Burnham & Anderson 2004; Burnham et al., 2011). All

CFA models were run using the Mplus7 package (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) and MLR as the estimator (Muthén & Muthén, 2012; Satorra & Bentler, 1994).

To further explore the properties of the PCS scale, two common indices, available in the framework of bifactor models, were computed: the explained common variance (ECV; Sijtsma, 2009; Ten Berge & Sočan, 2004) and McDonald's (1999) omega (ω) coefficients. The first represents the ratio between the common variance accounted for by the general factor and the total common variance (Rodriguez et al., 2016). High values indicate that the items of a scale are homogeneous and assess a unidimensional factor. Conversely, McDonald's (1999) ωs were computed for the domain-specific factors only. These coefficients are model-based estimates of internal consistency (Revelle & Zinbarg, 2009; Zinbarg et al., 2007). Cronbach's α was also used to evaluate the internal consistency of the PCS subscales.

The psychometric properties of the single items were evaluated considering their corrected item-total correlation (ITC) and their differential functioning (DIF) across gender and SES groups. ITC represents the correlation between an individual item and the total score without that item. For ITC, values greater than .30 for an item suggest that the item is adequately related to the overall scale (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Concerning DIF, both uniform and nonuniform biases were evaluated. Uniform DIF occurs when the likelihood of providing a certain answer to an item is systematically different for individuals of different groups (e.g., males vs. females). Conversely, nonuniform DIF represents a nonsystematic bias that exhibits a different impact on groups across the different trait levels. DIF is a serious weakness for psychological questionnaires that can prevent the possibility of making meaningful comparisons across groups. Several authors warned that controlling for DIF represents a crucial step in the development of psychological assessment instruments (e.g., Anselmi et al., 2021; Colledani, 2018; Colledani, Anselmi, & Robusto, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2021; Colledani, Robusto, & Anselmi, 2018; Fagnani et al., 2021; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). DIF was evaluated using the package "lordif" (Choi, 2016) for the R software (R Core Team, 2018). This package performs an ordinal logistic regression DIF analysis using item response theory estimates of trait levels as the conditioning variable. To identify uniform DIF, the impact of trait levels and group membership (SES groups or gender groups) on item responses is considered, while to identify nonuniform DIF, also the interaction term between trait levels and group membership is taken into account. If an item exhibits uniform DIF, then it is systematically easier for the members of a specific group (e.g., they systematically obtain higher scores on the item). If an item exhibits nonuniform DIF, then the differences in the easiness of the item across groups vary with the trait levels (e.g., the differences in the easiness of the item across groups are observed only at high trait levels). For the items identified as DIF (uniform, nonuniform, or both), the magnitude of the bias was determined through the McFadden Pseudo R^2 statistic from the package. The considered cutoffs were < .035; .035-.07, > .07 for negligible, moderate, and large effect sizes, respectively (Jodoin & Gierl, 2001).

Analysis of Relationships among PCS Scores, Average Spending on Clothing, Gender, and SES

A series of regression models was run to analyze the relationships between the scores at the PCS subscales and the ASC. In these models, PCS scores were the predictors whereas the ASC was the dependent variable. The moderating effect of SES and gender in these relationships was also explored. Regression models were run in two steps. First, the predictors and the moderating variable (gender or SES) were entered into the model. Subsequently, the interaction terms were introduced. To increase the interpretability of the results, all continuous predictors were mean centered before computing the interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991; Hayes, 2017). When significant interaction effects were observed, simple slope analyses were used to

determine whether the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable varied across the levels of the moderator (i.e., SES groups or gender). The moderation was confirmed if the interaction term was significant and if there was a significant increase in R^2 after its introduction in the model. All the analyses were run using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 22).

Results

Italian Validation of the PCS Scale

PA suggested a 4-factor structure. This result is consistent with Sontag and Lee (2004). It is worth recalling that the authors hypothesized six dimensions for the PCS scale but, from their analyses, a 4-factor structure emerged. In particular, Dimension 1 was paired with Dimension 2, and Dimension 4 with Dimension 5.

As previously indicated, an EFA was run on the 39 items of the scale, asking for both four and six factors. This analysis was performed to underline similarities and differences between the factor structure resulting in the present study and that described by Sontag and Lee (2004). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity provided satisfactory results. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was .92 and Bartlett's test was 7,011.92 ($df = 741$, $p < .001$). Both models reached a successful fit (Table 1). However, 15 items loaded on unexpected dimensions, had low factor loadings ($\lambda < .32$) on the intended factor, or exhibited meaningful cross-loadings. Thus, these items were eliminated and a new EFA was run. The new model included 24 items and four factors, as suggested by PA and consistently with the findings of Sontag and Lee (2004). This model showed satisfactory fit indices and all items had the primary loading on the intended factor. From this first round of analyses, a pool of 24 items was selected, almost the same described in Sontag and Lee (2004).

Following EFA, a first CFA was run on the 24 selected items. However, this model did not show an adequate fit (Table 1). For this reason, four items (PCSD106, PCSD406, PCSD409, and PCSD608) were eliminated according to the suggestions of modification indices and trying to balance the number of items in the different dimensions. The CFA run on the remaining 20 items showed a good fit (correlated 4-factor model in Table 1) and all items had large and significant loadings on the intended factor (λs from .40 to .73; Table 2).

Table 1
Fit indices of factor models

	χ^2	*df*	*p*	RMSEA	90% CI	*p*	CFI	SRMR	AIC
EFA 39 items 6-factor	871.35	522.00	< .001	.04	[.034, .043]	1.00	.94	.03	56172.97
EFA 39 items 4-factor	1064.36	591.00	< .001	.04	[.038, .047]	1.00	.91	.03	56313.88
EFA 24 items 4-factor	289.54	186.00	< .001	.04	[.027, .043]	1.00	.96	.03	35119.18
CFA 24 items 4-factor	681.86	248.00	< .001	.06	[.057, .069]	< .001	.84	.07	35444.32
CFA 20 items 4-factor (correlated 4-factor model)	39.93	164.00	< .001	.06	[.049, .063]	.08	.90	.06	29351.98
Higher-order factor model 20 items 4-factor	40.64	166.00	< .001	.06	[.050, .064]	.06	.90	.06	29358.22
Bifactor model 20 items	258.72	144.00	< .001	.04	[.034, .051]	.93	.95	.04	29242.50

Note. *df* = degrees of freedom; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; 90% CI = 90% RMSEA confidence interval; CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual; AIC = Akaike information criterion.

TABLE 2
Results of the factor models

	Correlated 4-factor model					Bifactor model				Higher-order factor model				
Item	D1-2	D3	D4-5	D6	General	D1-2	D3	D4-5	D6	D1-2	D3	D4-5	D6	PCS
PCSD105	.61				–.02†	.70				.62				
PCSD108	.65				.32	.58				.65				
PCSD207	.70				.37	.60				.70				
PCSD208	.66				.21	.62				.66				
PCSD211	.52				–.01†	.59				.53				
PCSD212	.62				.33	.53				.62				
PCSD302		.81			.77		–.26**				.80			
PCSD309		.58			.48		–.29				.58			
PCSD312		.66			.41		–.82				.66			
PCSD313		.54			.59		–.06†				.55			
PCSD403			.73		.28			.67				.74		
PCSD413			.46		–.02†			.50				.45		
PCSD502			.40		.02†			.43				.40		
PCSD506			.69		.27			.63				.69		
PCSD508			.67		.08†			.71				.67		
PCSD511			.62		.32			.54				.62		
PCSD605				.60	.24				.54				.59	
PCSD609				.66	.32				.56				.66	
PCSD610				.59	.16**				.58				.59	
PCSD611				.66	.09†				.71				.67	
Correlations between factors						Correlations between factors								
D1-2		.32	.52	.36			.03	.47	.29					.54
D3			.39	.44				–.24**	–.29**					.47
D4-5				.75					.72					.93
D6														.81

Note. In item label, PCS denotes the scale (Proximity of Clothing to Self), D with the digit immediately following it denotes the dimension, and the last two digits denote the number of the item in the original version of the scale (e.g., item PCSD611 refers to item 11 of PCS, Dimension 6). All parameters were significant at $p \leq .001$, excluding those indicated with *$p \leq .05$, **$p \leq .01$, †$p > .05$. In the Italian version of the scale, item labels correspond to the original English version.

A higher-order factor model was also run. In this model, the first-order factors (the four PCS dimensions) measured a single second-order dimension (i.e., PCS). The analysis showed a good fit (Table 1). Finally, a bifactor model was estimated. For this model, fit indices were satisfactory (Table 1) and the AIC values indicated this as the best fitting model (ΔAIC between the correlated 4-factor and the higher-order models = –6.24; ΔAIC between the correlated 4-factor and bifactor models = 109.48; and ΔAIC between the higher-order and bifactor models = 115.72). However, in this solution, six items did not load on the general factor, and Dimension 3 (Clothing in relation to self as process — Response to judgments of others) was not well defined, with several weak, nonsignificant, or negative loadings (Table 2). The ECV was .25, .85, .38, .89, and .82 for the general factor, Dimensions 1-2, 3, 4-5, and 6, respectively. The low ECV of the general factor suggests that it accounted only for a small proportion of the total variance and this may be taken as an

indication that the scale does not express a single common construct. Conversely, the specific factors may be considered as effective measures of the domain-specific dimensions (a moderate ECV was observed for Dimension 3). Overall, the results discourage the use of a general PCS factor and suggest that the scale is essentially multidimensional and well represented by a 4-factor structure.

The internal consistency resulted to be satisfactory for all the PCS subscales (αs = .80, .74, .77, and .73 for Dimensions 1-2, 3, 4-5, and 6, respectively; ωs = .81, .80, .78, and .73 for Dimensions 1-2, 3, 4-5, and 6, respectively).

The item-level analyses, which were performed on the 20 items selected through factor analyses, showed adequate values. Specifically, ITC was satisfactory for all items (Table 3), and also DIF analyses provided good results. Several items exhibited uniform or nonuniform gender DIF. However, only one of them had uniform DIF of moderate effect size (i.e., PCSD611, "I choose clothes that accent the parts of my body that I like"; *M* = 4.27, *SD* = 1.37, for females; *M* = 2.63, *SD* = 1.55, for males), while the remaining nine had DIF of negligible effect size (i.e., below .035). No item exhibited uniform or nonuniform SES DIF.

TABLE 3
Item-total correlation (ITC) and differential item functioning (DIF) analyses

Item		SES DIF				Gender DIF			
	ITC	UDIF	NUDIF	ES-UDIF	ES-NUDIF	UDIF	NUDIF	ES-UDIF	ES-NUDIF
PCSD105	.57	.943	.769	.000	.000	.095	**.032**	.003	.002
PCSD108	.56	.518	.265	.005	.004	.076	.068	.002	.001
PCSD207	.61	.435	.405	.003	.001	.476	.428	.005	.000
PCSD208	.58	.973	.971	.000	.000	.843	.639	.001	.000
PCSD211	.47	.991	.907	.001	.000	**.001**	.262	.004	.000
PCSD212	.52	.100	.818	.011	.001	.728	.471	.003	.000
PCSD302	.65	.666	.534	.004	.002	.776	.637	.003	.000
PCSD309	.49	.923	.888	.001	.000	.490	.371	.004	.000
PCSD312	.53	.934	.777	.000	.000	.979	.936	.001	.000
PCSD313	.45	.956	.859	.000	.000	**.000**	.133	.016	.001
PCSD403	.61	.475	.224	.018	.018	**.001**	.386	.003	.000
PCSD413	.42	.138	.140	.013	.009	**.013**	**.019**	.004	.004
PCSD502	.36	.935	.822	.001	.000	**.001**	.140	.005	.001
PCSD506	.57	.318	.968	.009	.002	**.000**	.255	.002	.001
PCSD508	.59	.390	.182	.005	.005	**.001**	.684	.012	.000
PCSD511	.53	.823	.845	.004	.003	**.023**	.225	.001	.001
PCSD605	.52	.227	.297	.009	.004	**.001**	.576	.012	.000
PCSD609	.48	.398	.969	.004	.002	**.001**	**.038**	.026	.004
PCSD610	.53	.569	.335	.001	.001	**.001**	.288	.031	.001
PCSD611	.52	.946	.950	.001	.000	**.001**	.382	**.042**	.001

Note. In item label, PCS denotes the scale (Proximity of Clothing to Self), D with the digit immediately following it denotes the dimension, and the last two digits denote the number of the item in the original version of the scale (e.g., item PCSD611 refers to item 11 of PCS, Dimension 6). SES = socioeconomic status; UDIF = uniform differential item functioning; NUDIF = nonuniform differential item functioning; ES-UDIF = effect size of uniform differential item functioning; ES-NUDIF = effect size of nonuniform differential item functioning. Items exhibiting DIF are in bold. In the Italian version of the scale, item labels correspond to the original English version.

Analysis of Relationships among PCS Scores and Average Spending on Clothing, Moderated by Socioeconomic Status or Gender

The results of the regression model aimed at exploring the moderating effect of SES on the association between PCS scores and ASC are reported in Table 4. In this model, only the Dimension 1-2 (i.e., Clothing in relation to self) showed a positive and significant association with ASC, while the other predictors and the moderator were nonsignificantly associated with it, R^2 = .06, F(5, 142) = 1.826, p = .11. The interaction terms between the predictors and the moderator, which were introduced in the second step of the analysis, resulted to be nonsignificant as well. A t-test confirmed that high and low SES groups did not significantly differ in ASC, t(146) = –.795, p = .428, M = 286.05, 181.98, SD = 833.75, 311.85, for high and low SES, respectively.

TABLE 4
Associations between PCS scores and average spending on clothing (ASC), moderated by socioeconomic status (SES) or gender

	Model with SES as moderator					Model with gender as moderator			
	Step 1		Step 2			Step 1		Step 2	
	B	*SE*	B	*SE*		B	*SE*	B	*SE*
Intercept	152.59	110.02	178.97	113.11	Intercept	198.41	35.13	218.22	36.54
SES	98.28	129.56	52.95	135.22	Gender	197.47**	65.28	212.53***	66.14
Dimension 1-2	171.88*	68.99	79.50	115.00	Dimension 1-2	68.44*	28.81	–4.62	37.20
Dimension 3	61.04	54.86	–22.92	91.54	Dimension 3	27.87	26.13	–21.24	32.38
Dimension 4-5	–93.22	83.99	4.25	152.98	Dimension 4-5	12.64	35.21	32.81	50.02
Dimension 6	–1.35	59.14	–43.74	99.99	Dimension 6	13.54	27.85	–12.64	35.61
SES × Dimension 1-2			151.80	144.42	Gender × Dimension 1-2			151.71**	57.60
SES × Dimension 3			141.11	114.99	Gender × Dimension 3			121.81*	54.03
SES × Dimension 4-5			–183.64	184.76	Gender × Dimension 4-5			–82.91	70.03
SES × Dimension 6			62.77	124.09	Gender × Dimension 6			78.87	55.96
R^2	.06		.09			.04**		.09***	
ΔR^2			.03					.05***	

Note. Step 1 = models including predictors and moderator; Step 2 = models including predictors, moderator, and interaction term; B = unstandardized coefficients; *SE* = standard error.
*$p \leq$ .05, **$p \leq$ .01, ***$p \leq$ .001.

The results concerning the associations between PSC scores and ASC, moderated by gender, are reported in Table 4. In this model, the moderator and one out of the four PSC scales, namely Dimension 1-2 (Clothing in relation to self) showed significant associations with the criterion variable, R^2 = .04, F(5, 422) = 3.91, p = .002. These results indicate that males spend more than females on clothing and that higher scores on the scale "Clothing in relation to self" predict higher spending for clothing. Among the interaction terms introduced in the second step of the analysis, those between gender and Dimension 1-2 and between gender and Dimension 3 were significant and determined a significant R^2 increase (R^2 increase due to interaction = 5%, p =

.001; Figure 1). This supports the moderating effect of gender in the relationship between "Clothing in relation to self" and "Clothing in relation to self as process — Response to judgments of others" scores and ASC. Simple slope analysis indicated that the score on the scale "Clothing in relation to self" was positively associated with ASC in males (β = 181.02, $p < .01$) but not in females (β = –.75, $p = .97$; Figure 1). Simple slope analysis indicated that also the score on the scale "Clothing in relation to self as process — Response to judgments of others" was positively associated with ASC in males (β = 158.02, $p < .01$) but not in females (β = –22.27, $p = .21$; Figure 2).

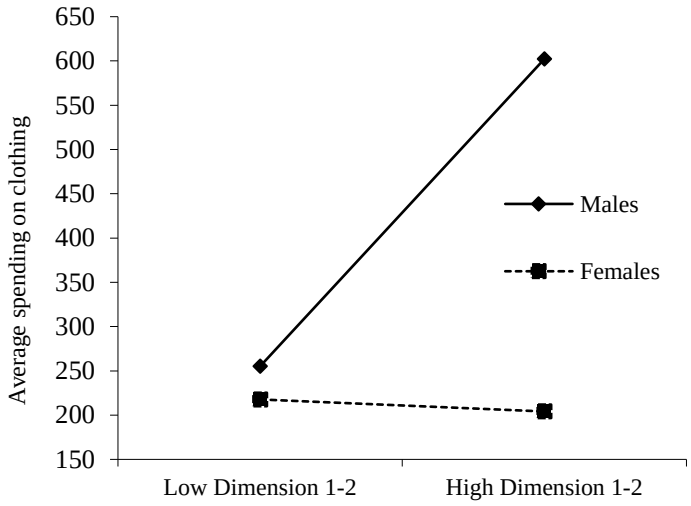

FIGURE 1
Low and high Dimension 1-2 indicate one *SD* below and above the sample mean, respectively (*M* = 3.24, *SD* = 0.99)

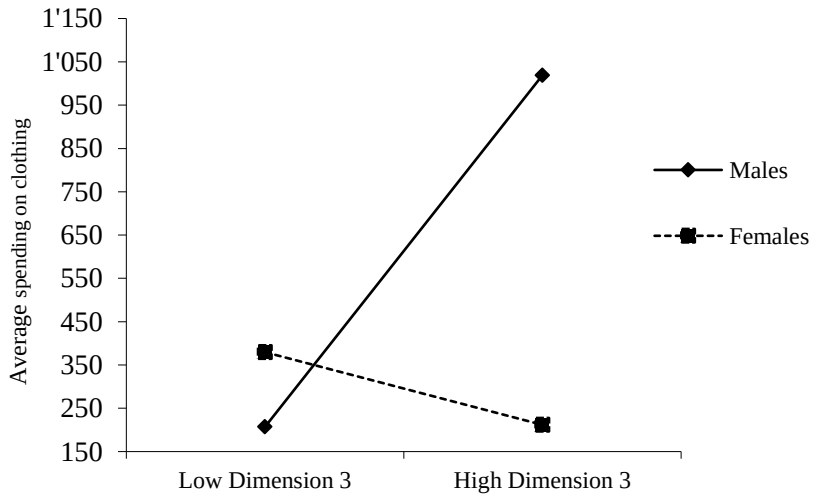

FIGURE 2
Low and high Dimension 3 indicate one *SD* below and above the sample mean, respectively (*M* = 2.47, *SD* = 1.07)

Discussion

The present study aimed at investigating the psychometric properties of the PCS scale in the Italian context and at exploring the relationships of the total score at the PCS scale and its subscales with gender, socioeconomic status, and average spending on clothing. With respect to the PCS scale, consistently with our expectations, we found a factor structure close to that described in Sontag and Lee (2004). The Italian version of PCS scale for 13-19 years old individuals is a 4-factor 20-item scale. As emerged in Sontag and Lee (2004), also in this study Dimension 1 and Dimension 2 turned out to be positively associated and paired, this suggesting that, during adolescence, clothing can be used to experience different identities.

The hypothesis according to which individuals with high PCS total score spend more on clothing was confirmed only for men.

In our opinion, the relation between the score on Dimension 1-2 and the average spending on clothing may be explained by referring to the Symbolic-Self Completion Theory (Gollwitzer et al., 1982) and by bearing in mind that adolescence is a stage of life where identity is still under construction. According to this theory, clothing is a way to achieve a self-definition. When this self-definition is not achieved, that is, when there is a discrepancy between the ideal and the actual self, the individual will use numerous symbols to achieve it and may fall into compulsive buying behaviors (Sharron et al., 2017). This may be the case with adolescents.

We also want to dwell on the possible implications that the instrument could have in the Italian context. First of all, we believe that one of its possible applications is in the clinical field, especially in relation to the discrepancy between actual and ideal self. Clothing, in fact, represents one of the main means through which we convey parts of our self. Understanding the domain in which the individual presents greater psychological proximity of the self to clothing could provide the clinician with considerable information, especially if the individual presents discrepancy of the self and strong emphasis on appearance. Furthermore, from an economic point of view, the instrument could be included in market research to understand which domains consumers pay more attention to so as to produce advertising campaigns that evoke specific symbolic meanings. According to Sirgy's (1982) theory, this should bring more attractiveness to the brand as there is a match between symbolic meaning conveyed by the product and individual self-concept.

In future research, the construct validity of the PCS scale should be tested with another independent sample. We recommend starting with the 20-item 4-factor scale that emerged on adolescents. In addition, the PCS scale should be validated for other age groups. In this case, it may be useful to begin with the set of 39 items. Future studies could also investigate the nomological validity of the PCS scale in order to shed light on the linkage between PCS and related constructs. Structural equation models could be used to this purpose (see, e.g., De Carlo et al., 2020). Furthermore, we would like to point out some potential variables that could be added in future studies: actual-ideal self discrepancy, fashion-self congruence, appearance emphasis, and finally the theory of enclothed cognition that could be the background for an experiment.

Limitations of the study could lie in the fact that the participants, because of their young age, may not have correctly reported information about the household, that the sample presented low geographical heterogeneity, and that the average spending on clothing reported by the participants may not reflect the real one.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first Italian study in the field of Social Psychology of Dress. Its long-term goals are to continue the investigation of the functioning of PCS scale in the Italian context and to develop a theory that can explain the contribution of PCS to the quality of life. Clearly, the investigation of the functioning of the PCS scale may coincide with theory construction, but a theory should be tested with a valid and reliable instrument. The project presented here is a contribution toward this end.

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APPENDIX

Italian version of the PCS scale

Dimension	Italian version
Dimension 1	*L'abbigliamento in relazione a sé come struttura*
PCSD105	Ciò che indosso mi rappresenta.
PCSD106	Il mio abbigliamento non rappresenta solo un bene personale ma è una parte di me.
PCSD107	L'abbigliamento mi aiuta a diventare la persona che voglio essere.
PCSD108	Gli abiti che indosso mi aiutano ad essere chi sono.
PCSD109	Il mio abbigliamento rispecchia ciò che provo per me stesso.
PCSD111	Il mio abbigliamento rispecchia il tipo di persona che sono.
Dimension 2	*L'abbigliamento in relazione a sé come processo – Comunicazione del sé agli altri*
PCSD202	Attraverso il mio abbigliamento gli altri percepiscono un'idea dei miei interessi e delle mie attività.
PCSD203	Il mio abbigliamento rivela agli altri ciò che provo e penso di me stesso.
PCSD204	Attraverso il mio abbigliamento cerco di presentare agli altri una determinata immagine di me.
PCSD207	Spesso indosso capi che lasciano intendere alle persone che tipo di persona io sia.
PCSD208	Voglio che il mio abbigliamento esprima chiaramente chi sono senza necessità di parlare.
PCSD211	Ciò che indosso e il modo in cui lo indosso esprimono le mie inclinazioni personali.
PCSD212	Attraverso il mio abbigliamento posso esternare i miei valori.
Dimension 3	*L'abbigliamento in relazione a sé come processo – Risposta ai giudizi degli altri*
PCSD302	Come appaio vestito è determinante perché voglio essere accettato dagli altri.
PCSD309	Mi importa che gli altri giudichino che tipo di persona io sia in base al mio modo di vestire.
PCSD312	Mi interessa il giudizio degli altri sul mio aspetto e sul mio modo di vestire.
PCSD313	Presto attenzione agli stili e agli specifici brand che indosso poiché influenzano il rispetto degli altri nei miei confronti.
Dimension 4	*L'abbigliamento in relazione all'autostima –- Processo valutativo*
PCSD402	I vestiti che amo indossare favoriscono in me un senso di sicurezza.
PCSD403	Vestire in modo appropriato favorisce in me una maggiore autostima.
PCSD404	Cerco di acquistare capi che mi facciano sentire attraente.
PCSD406	Indossare capi che mi fanno sentire a mio agio mi rende più competente nel parlare con gli altri.

(appendix continues)

Appendix (continued)

Dimension	Italian version
PCSD407	Vestirmi bene mi fa sentire importante.
PCSD409	Indossare abiti di qualità che mi stiano bene mi fa sentire competente.
PCSD410	Il mio abbigliamento è determinante nell'acquisire una sensazione di controllo sulla mia vita.
PCSD413	Sono sicuro di me se mi sento a mio agio con ciò che indosso.
Dimension 5	*L'abbigliamento in relazione all'autostima – Processo affettivo*
PCSD506	Prendermi del tempo per curare il mio abbigliamento mi fa sentire orgoglioso del mio aspetto.
PCSD507	Sono soddisfatto se sto bene con ciò che indosso.
PCSD508	Sono a mio agio se sto bene con ciò che indosso.
PCSD509	Quando sto bene con me stesso faccio attenzione a vestirmi.
PCSD511	Mi sento bene con me stesso quando ho qualcosa di nuovo da indossare.
PCSD513	Mi sento più a mio agio quando sono vestito bene.
Dimension 6	*L'abbigliamento in relazione all'immagine del proprio corpo e alla body cathexis*
PCSD603	Gli abiti che indosso mi stanno meglio quando sono al mio peso forma.
PCSD605	Evito di indossare abiti di stili e colori che non migliorano la mia corporatura o figura.
PCSD608	Indosso determinati stili di abiti per modificare il mio aspetto.
PCSD609	Il modo in cui mi stanno gli abiti incide sulle sensazioni che provo verso il mio corpo.
PCSD610	Se l'aspetto di una parte del mio corpo non mi soddisfa, indosso abiti che spostino l'attenzione da quel particolare.
PCSD611	Scelgo abiti che accentuino quelle parti del mio corpo che mi piacciono.
PCSD613	Quando acquisto capi che mi stanno bene sono soddisfatto dell'aspetto del mio corpo.

Note. The item labels correspond to the original English version of the scale.