

TREND-FOLLOWER:

Fashion, influence and teenage girls.



by LOLA

Course 2022-2023

To my grandmother,

I wish you had seen this.

Enfrontades pels canvis i incerteses que implica l'adolescència, la salut mental de les noies joves es veu amenaçada. Ara més que mai, amb les xarxes socials, els mitjans de comunicació i el consumisme sent part del seu dia a dia, la moda esdevé un factor de risc. Aquesta investigació estudia les implicacions de la moda en la salut mental de les noies adolescents, específicament aquelles que es troben entre els 13 i els 21 anys d'edat. La recerca es basa en dues parts, una recerca bibliogràfica sobre la moda, la psicologia, la relació d'aquestes i els seus efectes en les adolescents, i una d'empírica on un estudi avalua el que senten les noies de forma personal. Les evidències obtingudes durant la recerca ens permeten veure com la moda afecta de forma directa els estàndards de bellesa que influencien les adolescents, tenint un impacte negatiu en la seva imatge personal i, així, en la seva salut mental.

Enfrentadas a los cambios e incertidumbres que implica la adolescencia, la salud mental de las chicas jóvenes se ve amenazada. Ahora más que nunca, con las redes sociales, los medios de comunicación y el consumismo siendo parte de su día a día, la moda se convierte en un factor de riesgo. Esta investigación estudia las implicaciones de la moda en la salud mental de las chicas adolescentes, específicamente aquellas que se encuentran entre los 13 y los 21 años de edad. El estudio está basado en dos partes, una investigación bibliográfica sobre la moda, la psicología, la relación entre estas y sus efectos en las adolescentes, y una de empírica donde un estudio evalúa lo que sienten las chicas de forma personal. Las evidencias obtenidas durante la investigación nos permiten ver cómo la moda afecta de forma directa a los estándares de belleza que influyen a las adolescentes, teniendo un impacto negativo en su imagen personal y, así, en su salud mental.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many are those who have helped me make *Trend-follower* what it is today. I would like to begin this by thanking every person who has been involved throughout my research work for making it possible for me to finish it.

First and foremost, I want to give a special acknowledgement to all the teenage girls who participated in my study and shared it to their environment, as none of this would have been possible without their honest answers and help. Moreover, I would like to thank interviewee Aroa Roncero for her time and dedication.

My family is also to thank, as I would not have been able to finish this work without my mother , who helped me when I was stuck; the support of my sister , and the patience of my grandparents.

And most importantly I would like to acknowledge , my tutor, who has assisted me in every step of the way, rereading my work, making retouches and orientating the research. Without her, I would not have been able to create *Trend-follower* without getting stuck in the way.

To finish with, I would I like to thank anyone else who has been with me during these months, friends, family and teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since I can remember, I have been interested in fashion and clothing. I used to dream of being a fashion designer and would always ask for design books in my letter to the *Reis Mags*. When I entered my teenage years, I realised that the fashion industry was rooted in impossible beauty standards I did not fit and began to distance myself from my dream.

My insecurities continued growing, I made an Instagram account and realised none of the girls I saw looked like me; I began watching movies and TV shows where not fitting into the beauty standard was deemed bad, and I started receiving negative comments about the way I looked. At first, I thought that something was wrong with me and that not being conventionally attractive meant that I was less of a person, until I saw that my case was the same for most of my fellow teenage girls. That was the moment I realised that it was not me who was faulty, it was the ideal of beauty and "perfection" that is pushed onto us.

Last year, when the time to decide the theme for our *Treball de Recerca* came, I was clueless about what to choose. That was until I saw an article on Teen Vogue titled "How White Supremacy and Capitalism Influence Beauty Standards". Suddenly, the penny dropped and I realised that I could combine my now set aside passion for fashion with a problem I was facing in my day to day life. Thus, *Trend-follower: Fashion, influence and teenage girls* was born.

This investigative work is based on the question *In which ways does fashion affect the minds of teenage girls?* With the objective to answer it, I set out to do a research based on a bibliographical investigation, performed using information from the World Wide Web and a series of relevant books, and a practical study based on a survey.

The theoretical part of *Trend-follower* is divided into three sections. First, the concepts of fashion and trends are defined, making a very general analysis of how

they have evolved over time, from a necessity to a way of expression. This introduction to fashion is followed by a dissection of the most impactful trends from the last 30 years. Secondly, fashion and psychology are related and analysed, with an inquiry into the effects of fashion on the self and beauty standards. To finish this part, a detailed study of the fashion trends specific to teenagers and the mental health trends that impact them is concluded with the establishment of the relationship between the both. This section of the research is focused on the global state of fashion and mental health in the last 30 years, lasting from the 1990s to today.

The practical part of this paper consists on a study based on a survey, which was sent to girls from my social environment; a series of testimonies shared by some of them, and an interview with an educational psychologist. The objective of this was to discover how today's teenagers feel about themselves and how that relates to fashion.

The drafting of this *Treball de Recerca* has faced a series of issues and limitations that, while having been troublesome, have allowed me to make this journey into a learning process. When I was starting my research, I had trouble finding reliable sources, as there were no previous studies or articles specifically centred on the question of my work. This caused lots of stress from my part, as I felt at times overwhelmed with the extensive amount of information available that was not as precise as I needed it to be.

When the moment to take on the practical part arrived, I struggled to find psychologists to send the prepared interview to, and most of those I did send it to did not respond. Moreover, I would have liked to obtain a more distributed age variety in the questionnaire responses, as I feel it would have allowed for a broader look into what a greater diversity of teenage girls think.

After all of this research was done, I faced one final problem. When it was time to synthesise and organise all of the obtained information into the final product you have in your hands today, I found it difficult to decide where to start. All things considered, I am thankful to say I was able to overcome the hardships faced during this project.

Despite the complications I have faced, the work put into the making of *Trend-follower* has helped me reach a satisfying conclusion. As a result of the investigative work that allowed me to craft the theoretical part of the research and the study conducted in the practical part, I have been able to see what the effects of fashion are when it comes to the mental health of teenage girls.

HYPOTHESIS AND OBJECTIVES

In which ways does fashion affect the minds of teenage girls?

Throughout my *Treball de Recerca* I will be trying to prove **that fashion and trends have an impact on the mental health of teenage girls**. In that way, I have set up a series of objectives that will help me work towards answering my hypothesis.

1. Establish the relationship between fashion and psychology,
2. Determine the meaning of trend; research how trends began and the way they work, and analyse them since their beginning.
3. Find out how trends relate to teenage girls and why they might be important to them.
4. Research the ways fashion affects the perception of the self, beauty standards and body image.
5. Paint a picture of the overall mental health of teenage girls and analyse the main tendencies it presents.
6. Define the way fashion and trends relate to the most prevalent mental health issues in adolescent girls.
7. Investigate the current state of teenage girls' mental health and establish a relation with fashion, focusing on those from my close environment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. FASHION

1.1. An introduction to fashion as a concept.

The definition of fashion is an elusive one. While it is described by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as "a popular or the latest style of clothing, hair, decoration, or behaviour", with similar definitions being found in other dictionaries, it can also be described as the way we use our external appearance to express and present ourselves. Valerie Steel, an American fashion historian, curator and the director of the Fashion Institute of Technology's Museum, describes fashion as "the expression of someone's personal identity". [Steel, 2018]

Because fashion is more than just clothes. On the one hand, there is no point in arguing that fashion does not heavily relate to other forms of physical self-expression, like makeup, hair or accessories. But the most interesting concept is that fashion is not just a tangible thing. When we talk about fashion, we are also talking about style.

We can define style as in trends, those tendencies that dictate what is and is not "in fashion". Because the truth is that, without trends, fashion would be non-existent, since they are what tells us how to dress. And one could argue that trends just make us all look the same, but, according to fashion psychologist Carolyn Mair, "the essence of fashion is that it keeps reinventing itself" [Mair, 2018]. What this essentially means is that, as consumers, we need new things, as freshness is what keeps us wanting more. In an effort to differentiate themselves from others, designers are constantly trying to create that brand new thing that will catch our attention.

Trends are what bring us to the next meaning of style, self-expression. Because whether you want to feel part of "the group" or are looking to differentiate

yourself from it, it all comes down to how you use those trends to shape your style.

With so many ways to interpret the same word, it is important to distinguish it from other easily interchangeable terms. In order to properly understand and differentiate them, I am going to be using the word *fashion* interchangeably to describe both the use of clothes as a form of expression and the different styles that make it up. In such a manner, *trends* will be used to refer to popular styles of clothing and styling and *style* will reference personal clothing choices. *Apparel*, *clothing* and similar words will simply refer to garments in general.

1.2. A brief history of fashion.

Many anthropologists have argued all over the years about the origins of clothing. However, it is estimated that it was somewhere between 200 000 and 30 000 BCE, when Neanderthals substituted their stone tools with others made of bone, which tore through animal skin more cleanly and allowed them to salvage fur and make it into garments. These first "clothes" were mere coverings, draped or tied around the body to provide warmth and protection. It was not until later that sewing was invented, when simple needles made out of animal bone were used to sew leather and fur. [Bellis, 2019]



Figure 1:

Caped Neanderthal

Knowing this, we can clearly see that clothing was born out of need, since it was invented with the intention of keeping people's bodies protected from weather conditions. But from this necessity, clothing has evolved from serving a purely functional purpose into functioning as a decorative one as well. It is

believed this change happened due to the fact that clothes covered body decorations, which were used in rituals and as a sign of status. These now hidden decorations were incorporated into the clothing and, as a result, garments began to be dyed, embroidered and jewelled accordingly. [Mair, 2018]

With this evolution in the purpose of clothes, fashion was born. With the passing of time, clothes were not simple coverings anymore, they became statements. In this way, people were able to use the way they dressed as a symbol of status, identity or personal style.

Clothing has been equal to status since its very beginning. If gold is expensive, the rich flaunt it to exhibit their wealth. When a certain pigment is rare, it is the privileged that wear it on their robes. If fabric is expensive, those who can afford it wear the most elaborate, lavish dresses. This wealth show-off has happened for many years, and continues today even when it is condemned. Because we see celebrities¹ and influencers² dressed in the latest designers and, deep down, we think "Oh, I wish I were them".

But, while status has been a part of fashion for a long time, in the past one hundred and fifty years, style has become as important, if not more. Thanks to the industrial revolution and the rise of new technologies, making clothes has become easier, faster and cheaper. With the rise in the availability of clothes, we can now choose what we want to wear and how we want to wear it. This allows us to craft our identity in a more superficial way.

¹ **Celebrity (noun):** A person who is famous, especially in the entertainment industry.

² **Influencer (noun):** A person who has the ability to influence the opinions or behaviour of others. In this context, it is someone who has gotten famous through social media and uses that to influence their following.

Nevertheless, despite the many ways in which we use clothes outside of our necessity for them, the main characteristic that makes one purchase an item of clothing typically comes down to its comfortability. The evolution of fashion has mostly been



Figure 3:
Egyptian art
from the XIX

due to the fact that, as humans, we needed it to adapt to our needs. Because, while Mesopotamians wove wool and made felt to protect themselves from cold temperatures,



Figure 2:
Mesopotamian
statues.

Egyptians sought fresh air with their light linens. In a similar way, although with different motives, we tend to choose clothes that adapt to us and our lifestyle, clothes that we feel comfortable in. Because no matter how much we just *love* something, we will not buy it unless we feel good wearing it. [Mair, 2018]

1.3. The origin of trends.

As aforementioned, the word *trend* does not only relate to clothing items. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines the word as both “a general development or change in a situation or in the way that people are behaving” and “a new development in clothing, make-up”. Looking at this, we can define a fashion trend as a style of clothing that is both new and popular, with many people engaging in it.

Fashion trends have existed for a very long time. If we look at any period of time, we can distinguish it by analysing the certain types of clothing that were used. For example, if we see a painting of a woman dressed in a lavish, frilly dress made with pastel fabrics, we can



Figure 4:
Rococo fashion plate.

assume it is from the French Rococo era of the late 18th century.



Figure 5:
Japanese kimono.

Similarly, clothing styles can also tell us a lot about the place something or someone comes from. For instance, when we see someone dressed in a kimono we can assume they are Japanese in the same way a woman wearing a sarafan could be identified as Russian.



Figure 6:
Russian sarafan.

However, the current definition of *trend* differs a little bit from the above. Looking at these old clothing trends, we can see that they essentially represent the singular style of clothing that we find in the time and place we are looking at. These tendencies were almost exclusively followed by wealthy people and tended to evolve slowly over time, generally lasting for decades while undergoing only small changes. Nowadays, fashion moves at a much faster pace. [Mair, 2018]

Not so many years ago, purchasing a garment was a luxury reserved to the wealthy. Unless you could afford to purchase the expensive fabric, have someone measure and design a dress specifically for you, and wait for them to sew it all up by hand, you just made simple items yourself with what you had available. The invention of the Singer treadle sewing machine in 1869 meant that the mass production of clothing had become a reality [Miller, 2018]. The economic boom the industrial revolution brought to the people of the new middle classes increased the demand for goods and, evidently, clothing. The “commoners” could now afford to purchase more than one change of clothing and, by the end of the 19th century, retail stores began to open all across the first world in order to meet that demand. [Mair, 2018]

During the following century, companies began to market their products, encouraging consumerism as an element of self-worth. Whenever we buy something, its purchase satisfies us and, especially with clothing, it makes us feel like we are a part of something [Mair, 2018]. This meant that ordinary men and women began to become more aware of fashion and what being fashionable meant.

With different trends coming and going each time at a more rapid pace, we arrive at the 1990s. With the approach of the new century, the '90s were a decade of new movements; from music to activism, the world was evolving. These changes could also be seen in fashion, with new, unique aesthetics, the character and style of '90s fashion often designate it as the golden decade of modern styling [Escalante, 2022].

On the one hand, the nineties signified a great change in the societal norms prominent in past eras. During the sixties, seventies and eighties, social revolutions were mostly led by the younger generations. But those who rebelled then were now adults, who had more liberal ideas than their more conservative ancestors. [E. Côté, 1996]

What this meant by fashion is that people had a much less enclosed idea of what was and was not okay to wear. The punks of the sixties, hippies of the seventies and the goths of the eighties paved the way for '90s teenagers, who were now able to express themselves with more liberty and less prejudice. With people being able to develop their style outside of the norm, new fashion

subcultures began to emerge, such as minimalism, grunge, preppy or bohemian. [Côté, 1996]



Figure 7:
60s punks.

Figure 8:
70s hippies.

Figure 9:
80s goths.

On the other hand, the fast technological advancements of the end of the 20th century meant that people were now able to see more photos and video footage of everything that was happening in the fashion world, a world that had previously seemed too luxurious and out of reach. People looked at the images of designers, models and fashion in general, and aspired to the lifestyles that were portrayed. [Mair, 2018]

In this way, we could say that the nineties were the birthplace of what we know today as *influencer*, or at least a cousin of them. The up-and-coming celebrities of the era became the ultimate *It-girls*³. Supermodels such as Kate Moss and Linda Evangelista, actresses like Drew Barrymore and Gwyneth Paltrow, or singers such as Aaliyah and Gwen Stefani were rocking the latest styles on the red carpet, in the movies and music videos, or even in paparazzi pictures.

This subgenre of rich, young and cool celebrities continued throughout the 2000s until today. But the more traditional style of celebrities like Lindsay Lohan, Britney Spears, Blake Lively or Gigi Hadid have been joined by a more organic kind, influencers. Nowadays anyone can become the new It-girl by

³ **It-girl (noun):** An informal way to refer to famous young women, specially used in the fields of fashion, cinema and music.

just posting themselves on social media and gaining a following. Just look at Emma Chamberlain, Chiara Ferragni or Maria Pombo, who have become household names in the world of fashion.

When this easy access to the latest scoops in the fashion world combines with the technologies of today it can only mean one thing: people are buying, and they are buying a lot. The latest styles are only a click (and a credit card) away. This enormous demand for clothing has given rise to fast fashion. Designer outfits worn on the runway or by celebrities in events are cheaply replicated and quickly available for purchase at a much more attractive price. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, fast fashion literally means “inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends”.

All of this combined has created a never-ending cycle, changing the way fashion is designed, produced and consumed. Designers are pressured to work faster and cheaper, just to keep up with the latest trends and, at the same time, come up with something innovative. With a constant flow of new styles of clothing, which are being spoon-fed to us by celebrities and influencers alike, we struggle to find our true style and buy more than we need just to feel worth-it. [Mair, 2018]

1.4. Post-1990s fashion.

The 1990s signified a drastic change in the way we used to see and consume fashion. With the concept of trend having changed then, I will be focusing my research on teen girls’ fashion during the last thirty years, which I will separate in its corresponding decades. In order to conceptualise the different styles of the eras and provide some context, I will summarise the general trends, both men and women’s, that shaped the fashion of the time.

1.4.1. Fashion in the 1990s.

Fashion in the '90s is a little bit hard to pin down. With the quick rise of many different trends and the vast amount of subcultures born in the era, the fashion of the closing decade of the 20th century only had one thing in common, casualness. After the volume of the 1980s, with padded shoulders, power suits, puffer jackets and big hair being the norm, the style of the 1990s went back to the basics, searching for a low-maintenance and minimalist aesthetic.

The youth-oriented culture of the decade was fertile ground for many of its most important styles. From the beginning of the nineties, grunge took over the world of fashion both on and outside of the runway. After Marc Jacobs's ground-breaking S/S 93 collection for Perry Ellis, teens and 20-somethings embraced worn jeans, band tees, flannels and chunky boots.



Figure 10:

Teenage girls dressed in grunge in the 1990s.



Figure 11:

Kate Moss at the 1995 CFDA Fashion awards.

In the mid-90s, women polished grunge into a more feminine minimalism. Inspired by supermodel Kate Moss, silky slip dresses, sheer fabrics and a neutral colour palette were added to it. This femininity evolved into the "sexy schoolgirl" look, seen in movies



Figure 12:

Brittany Murphy, Alicia Silverstone and Stacy Dash in *Clueless* (1995).

such as *Clueless* (1995) or *Jawbreaker* (1999), and in Britney Spears' "...Baby One More Time" music video in 1999. This

feminine but still casual style featured tartan tennis skirts, baby doll t-shirts, knee high socks and flattering jeans.

Outside of the more mainstream trends, we can find mall goths, a subculture that began in the late 90s and described teenagers who dressed goth for the fashion rather than the culture. Rocking black leather, spiky accessories and a clear grunge influence.



Figure 13:
Mall goths in the 1990s.



Figure 14:
1990s hip-hop style.

On the other side of the spectrum, the influence of hip-hop music in fashion was evident between more marginalised groups, such as people of colour and those of lower classes. Influenced by celebrities such as Will Smith, Aaliyah and Eminem, they wore mostly brightly-coloured sportswear, such as basketball shorts, hoodies and baseball caps.

The end of the decade saw a return to casual fashion. Inspired by more bohemian styles, comfortable loose jeans were worn together with basic t-shirts, simple sweaters and crop-tops.

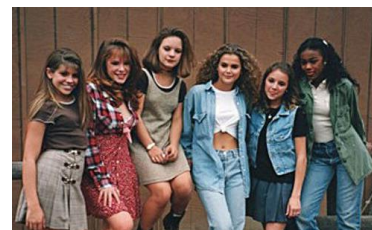


Figure 15:
Teenage girls in the late 1990s.

[Reddy, 2020]

1.4.2. Fashion in the 2000s.

After the casual minimalism of the 1990s, fashion in the 2000s made a turn into a more extra approach to clothing. The style of the time is often

described as a global mashup, where trends saw a fusion of vintage style and modern silhouettes combined with trends from all over the world.



Figure 16:
Christian Dior Couture F/W
1999/2000.

The beginning of the 2000s was all about the new millennium. The emphasis on new technology created a style heavily inspired by the *Matrix* movies. Brought to the runway by Balenciaga, Dior and Yves Saint Laurent, it was all about black leather, trench coats and sexy cutouts.

Taking back the schoolgirl aesthetic of the 90s, women began to implement more colour and casual pieces to the monochromatic looks, giving rise to Y2K fashion. Mesh tops, small sunglasses, baguette bags, velour tracksuits, low-waisted flared jeans, miniskirts, tube tops and anything shiny became a staple of the era, with the influence of Y2K lasting through the entire decade until today.



Figure 17:
Socialites Nicole
Richie and Nicky
Hilton in 2003.

The bohemian look became a more modest option, being a more sophisticated version of the grunge of the nineties, utilising stylised second-hand pieces in combination with designer accessories. In parallel, the TV-show *Sex and the city* popularised a fancier and more formal style, putting stilettos, designer handbags, big dresses and hats on the best-selling lists.



Figure 18:
Kristin Davis, Sarah Jessica Parker,
Cynthia Nixon and Kim Cattrall in
Sex and the City: The Movie (2008).



Figure 19:
Boyband *NSYNC in the early 2000s.

Male fashion continued to tend towards casualness. Hip-hop fashion of the 90s developed into casual sports clothes, with tracksuits, polo shirts, cargo pants and rugby shirts being worn by rappers and A-list actors alike.

In the mid-2000s, a resurgence of mid-century styles meant the rise of boho-chic in women and the re-popularisation of British pop styles of the 60s in men. Women took inspiration in Sienna Miller's 60s and 70s bohemian influences, wearing long



Figure 20:
Actress Sienna Miller in the 2000s.



Figure 21:
Burberry F/W 2009/2010 campaign.

floral skirts, cowboy boots, large belts, embroidered jeans and baggy cardigans. Men took a more informal approach to the decade, popularising the smart casual look with wool sweaters and letterman jackets.

In the latter part of the decade, there was a return to 1940s and 1980s structured silhouettes, mostly worn by middle-aged women. Younger people took inspiration from the popular TV-shows and music stars of the time. Girls became obsessed with the preppy fashion of *Gossip Girl*, which was equal parts polished and rebellious. The popularisation of indie rock translated into skinny jeans, black nails, skinny ties and blazers both for boys and girls.



Figure 22:
Leighton Meester and Blake Lively in season 2 of *Gossip Girl* (2008).



Figure 23:
"Scene" music band My digital escape.

Outside of the more mainstream fashion, the most noticeable subcultures were the emo and "scene kids". While scene kids incorporated neon colours into their outfits, both styles featured lots of black, spiky hair, tartan, tight jeans and lots of silver jewellery.

[Reddy, 2021]

1.4.3. Fashion in the 2010s.

The beginning of the decade continued the legacy of 1940s and 1980s style in business-casual attire, with



Figure 25:
Man dressed in hipster style.

nipped-in waists, shoulder pads, pencil skirts and platform heels contributing to a feminine professional look. In men, these influences translated into shawl collars, cardigans, knit sweaters, tailored suits and pocket squares. The combination of this style with flannel shirts, skinny jeans and Timberland boots gave birth to the hipster look.

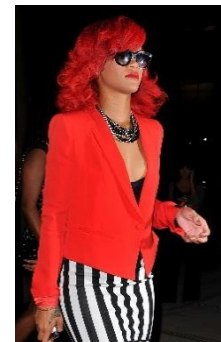


Figure 24:
Singer Rihanna in 2010.

As we approached the mid-2010s, sportswear and informal looks took over the fashion world, being seen even in the most exclusive designer shows such as Chanel's Autumn/Winter 2014 show. The most influential models and celebrities, such as Gigi Hadid and Cara Delevingne, rocked the look, being seen in elastic skinny jeans, leggings, cropped sweatshirts and chunky sneakers more often than not.



Figure 26:
Model Gigi Hadid in 2016.



Figure 27:
Actor Chadwick Boseman in 2018.

Athleisure and streetwear also inspired men's fashion, with items such as sweatpants, hoodies, and t-shirts being acceptable to be worn anywhere.

The latter half of the decade saw the rise of colourful, camp⁴ fashion thanks to Alessandro Michele's Gucci

debut for their Fall/Winter 2015

campaign. Inspired by film director Wes Anderson's quirky aesthetic, it was characterised by maximalist patterns, fun colours and androgynous styles.



Figure 28:
Gucci AW15 Campaign.



Figure 29:
Woman dressed in *normcore*.

All through the 2010s, *normcore* became a popular style between ordinary fashion enjoyers. Born as an antidote to highly-stylised runway shows, it put an emphasis on minimalist casual looks and preached authenticity. This minimalist approach to fashion, supported by the rise of Instagram influencers, brought Scandi style into existence. Featuring neutral colours and simple, polished shapes, it was inspired by the staples found in the closets of northern-European women.



Figure 30:
Woman dressed in Scandi style



Figure 31:
80s inspired outfit.

The end of the decade was also heavily inspired by '80s and '90s trends, mostly thanks to the indie music and film scene. Thanks to the popularisation of thrifting, vintage pieces were slowly incorporated into people's wardrobes until soon stores began filling with mom

⁴ **Camp (adj.):** Deliberately exaggerated and theatrical behaviour or style.

jeans, slip dresses, flannels, small sunglasses, combat boots, chokers and scrunchies.

[Reddy, 2022]

1.4.4. Fashion today.

In the early years of the 2020s, fashion has become directly related to social media. Whether we are talking about haute couture⁵ or everyday style, designers are both inspired by those clothes trending on social media and trying to come up with the next big thing. Thanks to influencers and content creators, trends are now more mainstream and available to anyone, with subcultures being now called *aesthetics*.

After having gone through the '80s and 90s, women's fashion is now all about Y2K nostalgia. After being reborn online and popularised by celebrities like Dua Lipa and Olivia Rodrigo, stores



Figure 33:
90s inspired
male fashion.

are now full of sweatsuits, platform shoes, mini dresses, crop tops and bootcut jeans, making everyone's wardrobe have at least one

nostalgic piece. Men's clothes are also heavily inspired by the era. In combination with the more minimal trends of the '90s, polos, rugby jeans, loose jeans, sweaters and trucker hats have made a big comeback. [Stuart, 2021]

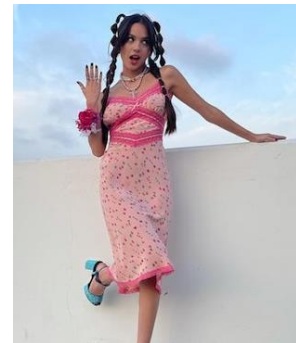


Figure 32:
Singer Olivia Rodrigo
in 2021.

⁵ **Haute couture (noun):** Expensive, fashionable clothes produced by the leading fashion houses.

Thanks to the sixties influences in 2000s fashion, 2021 saw a quite literal revival of the trends of the time. After being shown in most Spring 2021 runways, miniskirts; flared trousers; knitwear; coloured tights or pants, and bold prints were on every store. [Flynn, 2022]



Figure 34:
Miu Miu SS 2021.



Figure 35:
Cottagecore aesthetic.

The COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 also inspired fashion, mostly thanks to social media, with women creating *cottage core* style in response to their desire to escape cities for a more rural life. With a romantic palette, it was all about floral prairie dresses, gingham patterns, midi skirts, embroidery and cowboy boots [Jennings, 2020]. The style translated

into the now popular *coastal grandmother* trend. Popularised by TikTok influencer Lex Nicoleta in the summer of 2022, it is described as a “beachy, romantic aesthetic” and heavily inspired by the rural American Eastern Coast and movies like *Mamma Mia* or *Something’s gotta give*. It features a palette of whites, tans and blues, in the form of flowy pants; white jeans; turtleneck sweaters; oversized blouses, and straw hats and bags [Satran, 2022].



Figure 36:
Influencer Lex Nicoleta.



Figure 37:
Members of the rock band Måneskin.

While the style in question is not new by any means, the 2020s have also seen the rise – and peak- of genderless clothing. A trend started by non-binary people on social media, androgynous fashion is now found in retail stores and fashion shows alike. In 2020, Stella McCartney released her Shared capsule

collection which was inspired by the style of the youth and featured gender-neutral pieces. Celebrities have also become main trendsetters in genderless fashion with singer Sam Smith, rock band Måneskin, actress Kirsten Stewart and singer Miley Cyrus being some of the most notable ones. [Fallais, 2020]

2. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FASHION

2.1. An overview on psychology.

The British Psychological Society, the professional body for the development and application of psychology in the United Kingdom, defines psychology as "the scientific study of the mind and how it dictates and influences our behaviour, from communication and memory to thought and emotion".

Psychologists are concerned with understanding the behaviour, thoughts, feelings and motivations that make up the human mind. By analysing those aspects of our functioning, they can help us address and decode not only our personal issues and concerns, but also the social problems that most affect us as a community.

It is through scientific methodology that psychologists observe, measure and test, with the objective to form theories and extract conclusions about our society. The development of these thesis enables them to help us improve our quality of life.

[Northumbria University]

2.2. Fashion and psychology.

2.2.1. Fashion psychology.

Pretty much every single aspect of our lives is connected to psychology in some way or another. Just think about anything related to the human experience and you will find some way in which it can be psychologically analysed. Fashion is no exception to this rule. [Mair, 2018]

With the commercial rise of fashion, more and more experts in the field of psychology have been interested in researching how it relates to their speciality. This fairly new and still evolving discipline has been named fashion psychology.

It is sometimes assumed that fashion psychology is only concerned with the things our clothes say about us. But, as well as fashion in general, it goes far beyond the impact clothes have on the way in which we perceive and judge both ourselves and each other. This often overlooked field of psychology also covers every single aspect of the fashion process from the design of garments to their manufacture, sale and eventual disposal, analysing how all that is connected to human behaviour. [Schiffer, 2015]

These concerns include how marketing techniques influence us into buying clothes; the possible reasons we are inclined to over-consume and the ecological impact of it; the concept of retail therapy⁶, and how fashion relates to beauty, which is perhaps its greatest focus.

⁶ **Retail therapy (noun):** The act of purchasing things, in this case clothing, as a way to feel better when unhappy.

2.2.2. The importance of psychology in fashion.

In the third episode of Alexa Chung's "The Future of Fashion" web series for Vogue UK, she interviews Carolyn Mair on the topic of positive body image and diversity. In the video, she begins her interview with the words "fashion is psychology because it's about human behaviour". [Vogue, 2015]

Fashion has an inseparable relationship with our bodies. It can even be considered a sort of second skin, sitting next to our true skin and becoming an integral part of our identities. In that way, our choices of clothing are, in part, the vehicle in which we promote ourselves to others. We dress how we want others to perceive us and whether you see this as a bad thing or a good thing, there is no point in denying that clothing is a part of communication. [Mair, 2018]

In her book *The Psychology of Fashion* (2018), Carolyn Mair explains that, culturally, fashion provides instant visual communication. The meanings and symbols we give to clothing are interpreted and responded to by those we interact with, showcasing qualities such as character, sociability, competence or intelligence. One could argue that these interpretations are merely constructs based on cultural stereotypes, which is the exact reason why psychology is involved in deciphering this "social code" we give to clothing. [Mair, 2018]

Despite this, clothing and fashion can be positively used in many ways. When we separate ourselves and our mindsets from these stereotypes, we discover a way to use clothes to express ourselves and our identity, increasing confidence, self-esteem and general wellbeing. These are also psychological constructs involved with fashion in our day-to-day.

In another note, psychology has an important role in the fashion industry. According to Fashion United, the global apparel market is valued at more than 3 trillion US dollars⁷. Accounting for 2% of the world's gross domestic product and with 57.8 million people employed by it, this industry plays an important role not only in their personal lives, but also in our society as a whole. [FashionUnited]

In that way, psychology can be applied in many different ways within the fashion industry, approaching aspects such as marketing, brand loyalty, employee wellbeing, sustainability, consumer behaviour, inclusivity or ethics among many others.

Fashion has become something integral to our everyday life. Because of its nature and inextricably close relationship with our bodies and our minds, it is inherently concerned with human behaviour and, in retrospect, psychology becomes a necessary approach to it. [Mair, 2018]

2.3. Self and identity in fashion.

In his 1890 book *The principles of psychology* (vol. 1), William James, who is often considered the father of modern psychology, defines the *self* as containing "all that the person can call his or her own, not only his and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and his children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account." [James, 1890]

Although outdated in content, the concept of James' definition of self has stood the test of time. In essence, he describes it as every single piece that

⁷ Equivalent to 3 billion euros in the European numerical scale.

makes up a person's identity, from the things we call "Me" from those we describe as "Mine".

Clothing is an essential part of our identities, as we use fashion to articulate our character and to present ourselves how we want to be seen. Appearance and, in result, clothing play a major part in the development, maintenance and evolution of the self, conveying major characteristics of our personas such as social group, culture, economic background or personality.

In this way, our clothes serve as a way of "social organisation". Intentionally or not, what we wear either aligns us with a particular social group or separates us from others. Fashion is that thing that allows us to simultaneously stand out from others or fit in with the group.

[Mair, 2018]

2.3.1. Individuality.

A huge part of why fashion is important to our identities is the fact that it is somewhat unique to ourselves. While everyone has some similarities in their style, it is almost impossible for two people to dress the exact same all of the time.

In this way, we use clothing to create our *self*, that thing that makes us who we are and differentiates us from others. But in this age of new technologies, our unique self is being threatened by a particular thing, trends.

From the most exclusive designers to online fast fashion brands, clothing retailers love trends. In them, they find a sort of bulletproof way to ensure people are going to buy their products. According to Tommy Hilfiger fashion buyer Mahir Can Işık, fashion brands rely on trend forecasting agencies to ensure consumers will actually purchase what they offer. In

fact, more than 12,000 of the most popular brands are currently getting their forecasts from the same agency. What this means is that every single one of these companies is getting the same input on what will be on trend, so they all produce similar clothing in response to these predictions, afraid of not selling what they produce if they do not follow. [Can Işık, 2018]

Apart from this clear lack of variety in the production of clothing, another issue has surfaced in the more recent years. As mentioned before, with the quick rise of social media, influencers and celebrities have found a way to be relevant in the fashion industry through it. These fashionistas⁸ have become instant trendsetters⁹, casting their influence on their following, which happens to be composed mostly of young girls, and directly impacting the way they dress, look and even act.

Now more than ever, with uniqueness being threatened through clothing, the concept of embracing our identity through fashion has become increasingly relevant. While it is not a bad thing to take inspiration from others, we must learn to find a style that is truly unique to who we are. Because individuality is not always about setting ourselves apart from the crowd, it is first and foremost about embracing who we are.

2.3.2. Inclusivity.

But, while as human beings we are individuals, we are also social creatures who thrive when we belong and who want to feel included. On that account, inclusivity comes in two different ways; social inclusion and representation.

⁸ **Fashionista (noun):** A devoted follower of fashion, someone who is very fashionable.

⁹ **Trendsetter (noun):** A person who leads the way in fashion or ideas.

Being part of a social group, especially one we deem “better” than others, gives us a sense of social inclusion and belonging that inherently boosts our self-esteem and satisfies our need for entitativity¹⁰. Although our social groups are mostly determined by class, profession, age, interests, ethnicity, beliefs or upbringing, they are also influenced by some degree of physical cohesion. This visual unity comes, for the most part, through fashion, especially in teenagers and young women. [Mair, 2018]

Subcultures are social groups of people who have a common culture and way of being, and who share similar ideas. These groups may also be influenced by things such as music, opinions, values, literary taste or aesthetics. In this last category we find fashion subcultures, groups that base themselves on those aspects of clothing and appearance that make them unique and distinguishable from others, often separating themselves from mainstream fashion. Since their rise in the 1990s, many subcultures have emerged all over the world, mostly through the hands of young people, such as the 2000s emos, the Japanese lolitas or the VSCO girls of the late 2010s.



Figure 38:
2000s emos.

Figure 39:
Japanese lolitas.

Figure 40:
VSCO girl.

¹⁰ **Entitativity (noun):** The perception, either by the group members themselves or others, that the people are together as a group.

While fashion subcultures enable us to feel socially included by those around us on a smaller scale, our sense of belonging in fashion is also hugely influenced by the representation we see of ourselves in the industry. Knowing that the “ideal” in fashion has been a White, young, tall and thin woman for many years, the industry has a huge lack of representation for diverse populations, leaving them ignored, marginalised and misrepresented. Later on, we will talk about this misrepresentation in fashion and how it affects its consumers. [Mair, 2018]

Looking at the *self* through the lens of fashion, we can see that it shows itself both through uniqueness and belonging. While it is important that our personal style is true to ourselves, it does not mean that we cannot enhance our identity through our alignment with desirable social groups and subcultures. In essence, confidence in the self and our identity depend solely on the confidence we have about who we are and who we want to be.

2.4. The influence of fashion on beauty standards and body image.

2.4.1. Beauty standards and misrepresentation in fashion.

It is no secret that since the rise of mainstream fashion, the industry has glorified the model look: a tall, slim and young; able-bodied, cisgender woman who is also, as a general rule, white. If we look at the most famous and highest-paid female models from the past thirty years, we can see that all of them fit in this standard, with only a few women of colour as the exception of the rule. [Singer, 2022]

According to psychologist Naomi Wolf, only one in 40,000 women fit in this standard. This narrow ideal of beauty leaves many groups

unrepresented in the industry. For instance, it is rare to see people of colour, older individuals, those with disabilities and larger people on the catwalks¹¹ and other media. In her 1991 book, Wolf argues that this unrealistic and impossible standard can lead to feelings of shame and poor body satisfaction, which hugely affect our self-esteem and make us feel like there is something wrong with the way we look. [Wolf, 1991]

While it is important to note that general beauty standards have been slightly changing since the 1990s, the standard in fashion has remained the exact same as it was years ago. Although there have been improvements in the recent years, with brands capitalising off diversity and using it as a marketing technique, it is still an exception to see a diverse population in the runways, campaigns and social medias of the most popular brands.

These small improvements in diversity come mostly through the inclusion of more models of colour and some not-underweight people. In the late 2010s, the ideal body made a 180° turn, when Instagram influencers popularised the *slim-thick* body type. From what seemed day to night, the ideal female body went from waif-thin¹² to a small waist, flat stomach and larger hips, breasts, bottom and thighs, characteristics usually found in women of colour that many sought through surgery. Thanks to this, we began to see more women of colour with this body type in fashion. [Singer, 2022]



Figure 41:
Slim-thick body type.

¹¹ **Catwalk (noun):** A catwalk is the long, narrow stage that models walk along in a fashion show. These fashion shows can also be referred to as *catwalks*.

¹² **Waif-thin (adj):** In fashion and related popular culture, the term "waif" is commonly used to describe a very thin person, usually a woman.



Figure 42:
Y2K fashion on a
skinny model.

But with the 2021 rise of *Y2K* fashion, which features clothes inspired by early-2000s trends, we can see that the beauty standard has gone back to its slender beginnings. If we take a look at the most recent campaigns, exposed skin seems to be the norm, with mini-skirts, cutouts, crop-tops and low-slung waistbands being rocked by ultra-thin models. [Singer, 2022]

While fashion keeps on changing on what seems like a daily rate, the ideal fashion body has pretty much remained the same for years. The most sought after people in the world of modelling are still young, white, thin and tall able-bodied ciswomen; leaving many, if not most, misrepresented in an industry where clothes are supposedly for everyone.

2.4.2. The manipulation of beauty through fashion.

Fashion in itself is not the damaging factor that affects the perception women have of their bodies. In fact, clothes are one of those things that can help us feel confident and happy with the way we look. But the true issue lies within its industry, an industry that continues to push unrealistic ideals towards its consumers, perpetuating the beauty standards that affect their body image.

This idea of fashion retailers selling the idea of a perfect “mannequin” for their clothes is neither unknown nor new. While thin models were the norm since the 1990s, it was the fashion of the early 2000s that set the precedent for body-exclusive fashion. When we take a look at the trends of the time, it is clear that they only cater to those with a very specific



Figure 43:
90s supermodels.

body type: slim. Low-waisted pants, mini-skirts, tiny crop-tops, skinny jeans and low-cut dresses became all the It-girls of the time were wearing, all skinny of course. [Lamy, 2022]

Thanks to the chick flick¹³ renaissance of the late '90s and early '00s, which featured the time's biggest young female stars, the style quickly took off between young women, mostly due to the portrayal of those who were wearing it as attractive, popular and stylish girls. Seeing the quick rise in popularity of the Y2K style, named after a computer virus, companies began to create more clothing that fit its characteristics, further sustaining the unrealistic standards of the body that it promoted.



Figure 44:
Abercrombie & Fitch
advert.

A brand at the forefront of this ideal was Abercrombie & Fitch. The American apparel brand was the subject of the 2022 Netflix documentary "White Hot: The Rise and Fall of Abercrombie & Fitch", which explored the ways it was trying to create the image of the "all American teen". What this means is that the brand based its premise on exclusion, with its former CEO Mike Jeffries stating in an interview with Salon.Com: "In every school there are the cool and popular kids, and then there are the not-so-cool kids. Candidly, we go after the cool kids. We go after the attractive all-American kid with a great attitude and a lot of friends. A lot of people don't belong (in our clothes), and they can't belong. Are we exclusionary? Absolutely." [Lamy, 2022]

While it was apparent that the brand only catered to teens who were white, conventionally attractive and, based on its price-range, wealthy, the

¹³ **Chick flick (noun):** A slang term, created with a derogatory meaning that refers to films typically enjoyed by women and gay men.

“not-so-cool” kids were still buying into the brand, hoping to become a version of the people the brand was selling. [Lamy, 2022]

A more recent example of exclusionary clothing is the Italian clothing brand Brandy Melville. The retailer, which exclusively caters to teenage girls, has been under fire since its reappearance in 2014 for its “one-size fits all” policy, which only includes small and extra small. This narrow range of sizes has been categorised as fatphobic and exclusionary, especially considering how the brands social media only features thin white girls. [Taylor, 2021]



Figure 45:
Publication from Brandy Melville’s social media.

These claims have been proved to be more than simple theories. In September of 2021, Kate Taylor released an article on Business Insider which exposed the CEO of Brandy Melville, Stephen Marson. In an interview with Franco Sorgi, the man who opened the first Brandy Melville in Canada, he revealed that Marson had told him that “overweight and black customers would ruin the brand” and that he wanted “good-looking rich little girls” in their store. [Taylor, 2021]

With people coming in all shapes and sizes, the exclusionary ideals that many brands create are simply manipulation techniques, meant to influence its customers into thinking that they must fit into a perfect standard in order to be seen as more cool, likeable or desirable. Unconsciously, people tie this image of the person that they deem ideal to the same brand that promotes it, causing them to purchase their clothes just to fit into it.

This is an issue that mostly affects young people, especially girls. Teenagers are at an age in which fitting in is the most important part. In

a time of change and insecurity, it seems like they need the approval of others to feel confident. Brands that cater to teens take advantage of this self-doubt to sell them the idea of the perfect teenager and, simultaneously, their clothes. [Lamy, 2022]

2.4.3. The consequences of unrealistic beauty standards.

With the fashion and cosmetic industries constantly pushing their unrealistic standards into the brains of consumers, the psychological effects of these are fatal to one thing in particular: our body image.

The term *body image* was first defined by Paul Schilder, an Austrian psychiatrist, in 1935 as "a person's perception of the aesthetics or sexual attractiveness of their own body". [Schilder, 1935] Since some modern experts argue that a person's body image is merely a product of their circumstances, such as culture, opinions or personal experiences, a more clear definition would be the way an individual sees their own body and the feelings associated with this perception, as is looking at itself through a "mental" mirror. In this way, our body image can be warped by things external to ourselves.

The beauty of our body, the human body, has always been an important topic in our society, with our perceptions of what is beautiful and what is not changing across history and culture. We obsess over our beauty and try to match the ideal of our time and place, creating a perfect image of who we want to become. When we become so obsessed about the way we look, seeing some things as "wrong" according to society's unrealistic standards, we distort our body image and perceive ourselves as inferior to others. [Mair, 2018]

Nowadays, in the era of technology and communication, the development of a negative body image starts from early childhood. Since we are toddlerhood, we are constantly receiving feedback about the way we look from family, friends and peers, along with the unrealistic standards prompted to us by toys such as Barbies or action figures. While this is something that has been happening for many years, these nonstop criticisms of the "unideal" body are now followed by constant similar messages from the media. From diet-pill commercials to criticism about celebrities' bodies to movies that glorify ideal body types, we are continually exposed to damaging messages that subconsciously alter our body perception. [Mair, 2018]

When we see ourselves as "less-than", we let the need to change and seemingly improve ourselves overcome us. Many researchers have found that it is during adolescence that the rates of body image concerns begin to rise abruptly. Teenagehood is coincidentally the period of time in which people tend to develop more eating disorders, begin obsessing over cosmetic improvement procedures, become dominated by fitness and get diagnosed with mental illnesses severely influenced by self-hatred. [Childs, 2022]

When we compare ourselves negatively to the people we are made to believe are perfect, we become deeply unsatisfied by who we are. Our individual body image becomes warped and distorted, we see ourselves as uglier and therefore resort to unhealthy methods we believe will improve the way we look. Since we have memory, our surroundings condition us to think that, making us develop dissatisfaction with our bodies and creating rooted insecurities that are almost impossible to get rid of. [Mair, 2018]

3. FASHION AND TEENAGE GIRLS

3.1. The teenage It-girl.

3.1.1. What is an It-girl?

It-girl is officially defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “a famous young woman who is known for going to a lot of parties and social events”. The term is a relatively recent invention, as we can trace its origins to the introduction of “It” in the slang of the British upper classes of the late 20th century, which was used to refer to a factor some women had that attracted men around them [ModernGurlz, 2022].

Its popularisation can be attributed to the 1927 silent film *It*, starring Clara Bow. Elinor Glyn, who wrote its screenplay, stated the definition in the following terms: “With ‘It,’ you win all men if you are a woman and all women if you are a man. ‘It’ can be a quality of the mind as well as a physical attraction.” [Gordon, 2015]

While the term “It” was originally used to refer to people of any gender, it was its titular film that led to the term being associated with women. Thus, the It-girl was born.

An It-girl is, broadly, a woman who is admired for the person they are and indefinable in essence, carrying with her a sort of magnetism that draws people towards her person. To put it shortly, she is someone that “everybody” wants to be.



Figure 46:
Promotional poster
for *It* (1927).

3.1.2. The It-girls of the 1990s.

In the 1990s we saw the rise of the supermodel and the popularisation of many young actresses. These super-famous and mysteriously glamorous young women were put in the centre of media attention, being idolised by teenage girls and even older people, thus gaining the It-girl label.

In the beginning of the decade, 80s supermodel Naomi Campbell and industry newcomer Kate Moss were considered the main It-girls of the time, with the latter being the poster girl for the term *heroin chic*, used to glorify thinness and drug use [Doukas]. Alicia Silverstone gained huge popularity thanks to the 1995 movie *Clueless*, which prompted her to gain the title of "teen idol". Actress Chloë Sevigny, who starred in the controversial 1995 film *Kids* became an immediate it-girl of the underground scene thanks to her eclectic¹⁴ style and *cool* presence.



Figure 47:
Supermodels Naomi
Campbell and Kate
Moss in 1999.

Figure 48:
Actress Alicia Silverstone
in 1996.

Figure 49:
Actress Chloë Sevigny
in 1996.

[ModernGurlz, 2022]

¹⁴ **Eclectic (adj.):** Deriving ideas, style or taste from a diverse range of sources. In this context, wearing a mixture of original clothing from different styles.

3.1.3. The It-girls of the 2000s.

The tabloid culture of the early 2000s gave rise to the It-girls of the time. Their scandals; parties, and shows of wealth and beauty put them at the centre of public attention, with the media incentivising their status in order to capitalise off their fame.

Young singers Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera quickly rose to international stardom during the early years of the century, becoming fashion icons and centres of media attention. Heiresses Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie became a fixture of the 2000s after their hit reality TV series *The simple life*, they were nicknamed the party girls of the decade. Actress Lindsay Lohan, the face of young Hollywood at the time, also became a big spotlight for journalists after her partying controversies. The reality culture of the late 2000s was responsible for the rise to household fame of the Kardashians, who instantly became stars after the premiere of their TV show *Keeping up with the Kardashians*.



Figure 50:

Singers Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera in 2000.

Figure 51:

Socialites Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie in 2004.

Figure 52:

Actress Lindsay Lohan in 2004.

Figure 53:

Promotional poster for *KUWTK* (2006).

[ModernGurlz, 2022]

3.1.4. The It-girls of the 2010s.

With the growing power of the internet and, especially, social media, the 2010s were a time in which everyone had access to others at the click of a button. This led to many celebrities being given the label of It-girl by their respective following. Despite the variety of opinions, few were the women that really had the influence of "It".

Former model Alexa Chung became one of the most important fashion icons of the decade, gaining recognition for her unique but trendy sense of style. In 2010, she became an editor for British Vogue, further solidifying her role in the fashion industry. Chung even released a book titled *It* in 2013, making a reference to the public's perception of her. The model industry saw the rise of Cara Delevingne, whose wild beauty and relatable style caught the attention of designers such as Karl Lagerfeld. The huge influence Instagram had on the 2010s propelled the youngest of the Kardashians, Kylie Jenner, into the spotlight. With her grunge-inspired look, which was all the rage at the time between teenagers and her tickets to every popular music festival, she became the teenager every young girl wanted to be.



Figure 54:

Model and journalist
Alexa Chung in 2014.



Figure 55:

Model Cara Delevingne in 2012.



Figure 56:

Influencer Kylie Jenner
in 2015.

[ModernGurlz, 2022]

3.1.5. The It-girls of today.

The beginning of the 2020s have been the pinnacle of social media and, of course, influencers. Nowadays, anyone with a phone can create an account and build a following, which has made it difficult to identify those who truly have "It". Moreover, the culture of social media has made it ordinary for its users to share everything about their lives, eliminating the aura of mystery that used to surround the famous.

Still, there have been some notable names in the fashion and entertaining industries that many feel could deserve the It-girl title. Despite having been in few projects, actress Zendaya has become a household name. Her beauty and sense of style, combined with a goofy but elegant personality and private character have made the public gravitate towards her. The most recognisable face in the modelling industry of today is Bella Hadid, who keeps a casual online presence while staying booked by the most important designers. An influencer who has managed to transition into the mainstream fashion world is Emma Chamberlain. Starting her career on YouTube, her relatable personality and trendy style quickly attracted people. Nowadays, she has become the face of leading fashion brands and is present on social media while keeping her personal life private.



Figure 57:
Actress Zendaya in 2021.

Figure 58:
Model Bella Hadid in 2021.

Figure 59:
Influencer Emma Chamberlain in 2022.

[ModernGurlz, 2022]

3.2. Mental health and teenage girls.

Picture the following scene: Rachel Kelly, journalist and mental-health advocate, walks into a school in west London. She enters the wood-panelled hall where she is to teach a workshop on psychological wellbeing to around eighty girls, aged 14 to 15, assembled on tiered seating. She asks the question: *How many of you have suffered from any kind of mental problem?* Almost every hand shoots up. [Kelly, 2022]

This picture is the reality that many girls all over the world are living through at this very moment. Now more than ever, young women are struggling with themselves, subjected to the pressures and difficulties that being a teenage girl implies.

While adolescents have always been susceptible to mental health disorders, with anxiety and depression being the most diagnosed ones, many studies sustain the idea that the chances of developing a psychological condition are much higher when talking about girls. In a UK-based study conducted by STEER Education, an organisation that helps schools deal with their student's psychological issues, it was revealed that by the time girls reach 18, they are more than twice as likely to experience poor mental health than boys of the same age [Kelly, 2022].

But we can begin to see signs of this trend, in which girls are more prone to mental health issues than boys, in early adolescence. In the same study conducted by STEER, it was found that girls aged 11 are 30% more likely to suffer from poor mental health than boys of the same age. [STEER Education, 2022]

According to Dr. Christine M. Crawford, associate medical director for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI),

The teenage years bring on so much change, especially for teenage girls, this includes body changes, appearances, social and school life — and most importantly, as the body matures, so does the brain. With all the new changes in teenagers' lives, new stresses and worries can come up about their family, friends, school, body, future and identity, causing many signs of mental health conditions to emerge during this developmental stage.

[Fabian, 2022]

While undergoing the changes adolescence implies is one of the main causes for the psychological issues teenage girls experience, many are the external factors that contribute to the increasing development of said disorders. From social media to academic pressure and impossible standards, it is crucial to identify the outer causes that put young women's mental health in danger.

3.2.1. Social relationships.

In a broad sense, social relationships refer to the ties that people have with one another as a result of ongoing interactions that are perceived by themselves to have personal significance [August and Rook, 2013]. During the adolescent years of our lives, these connections acquire a more significant meaning.

As aforementioned, humans are social animals, who thrive when they feel like they belong and who instinctively live in society. Neuroimaging¹⁵ studies done in recent years have shown how the neural networks that mature and develop most during our teenage years are those that activate with social interactions, the so-called "social brain". [Lynch, 2019]

¹⁵ The study of the structure and function of the human brain's central nervous system.

In that way, we can assume that the maturing of those areas of the brain connected with socialisation is intrinsically linked with the development of mental disorders that are associated with them. In an interview with The Washington Post about tween¹⁶ girls' mental health, Jennifer S. Silk, professor of clinical and developmental psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, talked about how "the brain areas involved in the sensitivity of social evaluation become more active during puberty. And the more active this part of the brain is, the more at risk one is for depression, anxiety and even suicidality." [Kecmanovic, 2022]

This idea is evidenced in a study conducted by Harpreet Kaur, an assistant professor at Batala College of Education. In a study conducted with 200 students, he found that positive social relationships within peers and a feeling of inclusion in a social group were directly correlated with better mental health. [Kaur, 2021]

3.2.2. Academic pressure and stress.

In the autumn of 2021, the University of Manchester, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families conducted *#BeeWell*, a survey about emotional well-being amongst secondary school students in Manchester. The study reported that teenage girls face more pressure to be a "perfect" teenager, both in life and, mostly, in school. This results in an increased report of serious emotional difficulties in girls, who are three times as likely to do so as boys. [Jeffreys, 2022]

Another study by researchers from the University of Exeter found that girls felt more pressure to maintain high grades, participate in extracurricular

¹⁶ **Tween (adj.):** From tweenager, defining a child between the ages of about 10 to 14.

activities and “be popular and beautiful”. These feelings tend to develop into a sense of failure, with young women believing that the achievement of a set of academically-related goals and conditions determine their success in life. The inability to achieve said objectives can contribute to the development of stress; anxiety, and bad eating, sleeping and socialising habits. [Stentiford; Koutsouris, and Allan, 2021]

3.2.3. Social media.

In the last 20 years, social media has become an essential part of every teenager's life. They use platforms to connect with each other, share experiences and tell the world about themselves. But with social media being such an important part of their lives, research has shown that it can have negative consequences for adolescents' mental health. [Huntsman Mental Health Institute, 2022]

But, while social media affects every single one of its users, Haley Shafir, a mental health counsellor and addiction specialist affirms that research has shown that girls are more affected by the harmful effects it might have, especially those related to excessive use. The glorification of mental health issues, the unrealistic expectations and the need for online validation that are pushed into their minds by social media directly contribute to the development of mood and eating disorders. [Fabian, 2022]

3.2.4. COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic signified a huge change in the way we used to live beforehand. According to Dr. Ashley-Marie Berry, assistant professor of psychiatry at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, the unpredictability of life; the loss of loved ones; the feelings of isolation,

or the missing out from important parts of adolescence that have increased since the pandemic have greatly affected the mental health of teenagers [Fabian, 2022].

As maintained by data collected by the CDC in a 2021 study, 37% of high school students in the United States experienced poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and 44% reported persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness since then. [CDC, 2021]

3.2.5. Impossible standards and insecurity.

Like mentioned before, one of the main causes for mental health issues in teenage girls is "unhealthy perfectionism". A big part of this need to be perfect is concerned with physical aspect, as many young women feel as if they need to be deemed attractive and desirable according to society's standards to become worthy. [Fabian, 2022]

This is hugely exacerbated by social media, in which girls compare themselves to influencers and celebrities who share their "perfect" faces, bodies and lives with their millions of followers. These women they follow are praised for their appearance by said followers, increasing the need teenagers feel to change their appearance and become more like them in order to obtain the same level of external acceptance. In a 2020 study, Girlguiding UK found that 48% of girls and young women aged 11-21 regularly use apps or filters to make photos of themselves look better online. [Kelly, 2022]

3.3. How fashion affects mental health trends in teenage girls.

When we see the It-girls of teenage girls, those celebrities and influencers they love and follow, it is easy to see that they all coincide with general

society's beauty standard. If we look at the most booked models, the women with more followers on Instagram, the trending actresses, or the most idolised singers, we can easily see some of the characteristics they have in common. All of those idols are conventionally beautiful; many of them are white, and almost all are skinny and able-bodied.

In that way, we can see how all of the women that teenage girls admire follow that same beauty standard that has been going on for the last three decades. A beauty standard they worship and desperately want to fit into. This need young women have to become "perfect" only strengthens that standard. [Mair, 2018]

In other words, girls follow the women they believe they want to become: rich, beautiful, funny, attractive, successful and influential. This simultaneously furthers the idea that said women are the ideal standard they hope to achieve. In that way, it creates a sort of cycle that makes teenagers resort to extreme measures in an effort to follow.

The beauty standard created by society and further pushed by social media and celebrity culture has created an unrealistic expectation for young girls, who believe that what they see is what they can and "should" be. But creating unrealistic expectations is also a marketing technique used by the fashion industry, which takes advantage of young girls' insecurities and their desire to be accepted in order to sell more.

As we have mentioned beforehand, clothing brands have been using this type of marketing technique on young people for many years, with Abercrombie & Fitch and Brandy Melville being the most radical examples. But fashion brands now use more subtle variations of this advertisement through influencer ambassadors, attractive commercials or beautiful models. [Management study guide]

But these expectations pushed by the industry are not only unrealistic but also fabricated. Brands create false realities through advertising and distort the actual one in order to be more appealing. In October of 2009, Polo Ralph Lauren sparked controversy after *photoshopping* Filippa Hamilton and distorting her body into absurdly skinny proportions [McMahon, 2009].



Figure 60:
The 2009 *photoshopped* Ralph Lauren campaign and a 2006 image of Filippa Hamilton.

Looking at that, we can see how fashion companies do not only sell clothes, they also sell beauty. By over-representing highly-attractive people, who they portray as more desirable, they perpetuate the notion that “beautiful is good”. But this idea of beauty does not exist, it is fabricated by the industry in itself, with promotional images being full of digital retouches, models having undergone plastic surgery, and influencers being paid for promotion.

The failure to meet these false expectations puts an unnecessary pressure on teenage girls to meet them in order to be perceived as “perfect”. This can create huge insecurities that lead to depressive episodes, anxiety and, especially, eating disorders. Research has found that the rates of body image concerns and disordered eating in women increase rapidly during adolescence, with over 45% of young girls feeling dissatisfied with themselves. The extremely skinny body ideal promoted by fashion and media has been found to be the main cause of these conditions, as young women tend to negatively compare themselves with those standards. [Mair, 2018]

The array of insecurities created by fashion take a huge toll on the self-esteem of young women. Subjected to images of “perfection”, the still-developing minds of adolescent girls become obsessed with achieving it and, if they can’t, they begin to feel unattractive and, as a result, unwanted.

But for teenagers, and especially girls, confidence is as important as it is rare. In a study conducted by the Dove Self-Esteem Project, it was found that “7 in 10 girls believe that they are not good enough or don’t measure up in some way, including their looks, performance in school and relationships with friends and family members. In the same study, it was found that 75% of girls with low self-esteem engage in harmful activities such as bullying, smoking drinking, or disordered eating, compared to the 25% of girls with higher confidence. [Shapiro, 2014]

And while it is thanks to fashion that many people find the means and the confidence to be themselves, most teenagers follow fashion trends looking for social embrace. The desire to be accepted and gain social status, both between peers and through social media, results in girls using fashion to change who they are, wanting to become the version of themselves others want them to be. [Griffin, 2020]

PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK

4. FASHION AND ME

4.1. Methodology.

In order to answer my research question, a survey entitled "Fashion and me" was designed with the objective of discovering how today's teenage girls feel about themselves and how that relates to fashion, all through a personal perspective [Annex 1]. To complement the study, a total of 20 testimonies from adolescent girls were collected [Annex 3] and an interview with a youth psychologist was conducted [Annex 4]. All these were performed in Catalan, in order to ensure those surveyed had a better understanding of the questions.

The survey was conducted through Google Forms from the 28th of October of 2022 to the 27th of November of 2022, being open for a total of 31 days. It was shared via link through social media, WhatsApp and email. Participants were also welcomed to share the survey through a given link. Those participants, mostly from my social environment, were therefore from the city of Lleida and its surroundings, although some were also from Valencia, Barcelona and France.

The questionnaire contained a total of 24 questions, the first two of which were used to determine the gender and age of the participants. The main questions were divided into three categories: *La meva relació amb la moda* (my relationship with fashion); *La meva relació amb les influències* (my relationship with influences), and *La meva relació amb mi mateixa* (my relationship with myself). They were designed to be answered using the Likert scale, so as to obtain more specific responses. In that way, respondents used a scale from one to five to express their grade of agreement with the question,

being 1 *Gens* (not at all) and 5 *Molt* (a lot). However there were also some Yes/No and multiple choice questions, as they were unable to be answered through a scale, and some free responses, which were made to be answered more specifically.

All answers to this questionnaire were treated as anonymous, with only the gender and age of its participants being known. No personal information from the respondents is known or will be shared.

4.2. Population.

The online survey was aimed at those identifying as women between the ages of 13 and 21. Its first two questions were used to determine the gender and age of the respondents, with those not fitting the needed criteria being sent to the end of the survey.

The survey received a total of 297 responses, of which 53 were discarded in the first question and 16 in the second one. In that way, the remaining 228 valid responses make up the sample population for this inquiry. The following pie chart shows the age variety of the respondents, all female.

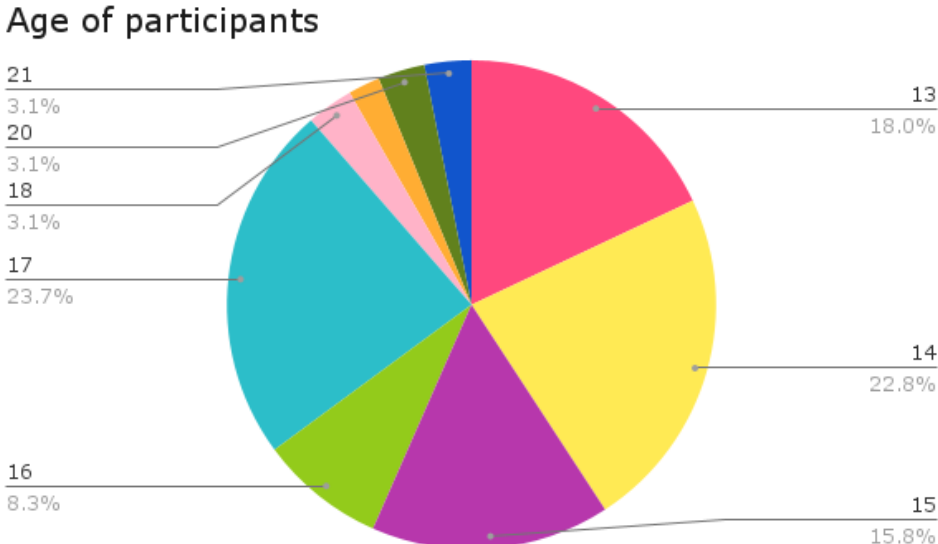


Figure 61: Age of respondents of the *Fashion and me* survey.

4.3. Analysis of responses.

4.3.1. Individual analysis.

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH FASHION

Question 1: Are you up to date with the current trends in fashion?

Estàs al corrent de les actuals tendències en moda?

228 responses

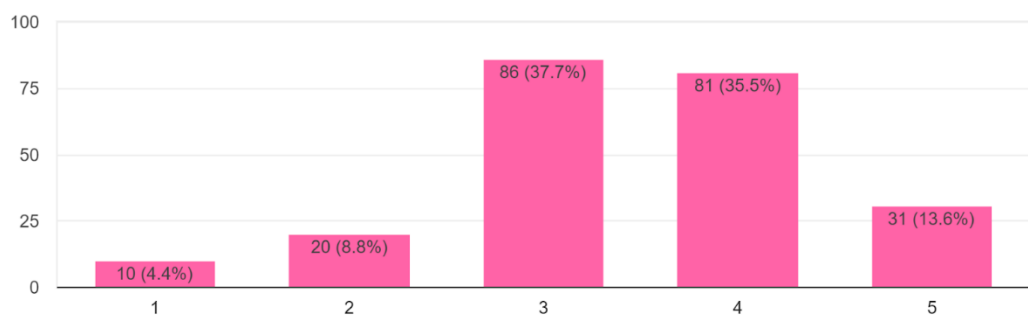


Figure 62: Responses for question 1 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

In an overview of this first question's results, we can see that most of the surveyed teenage girls (86.8%) have a moderate to high fashion knowledge, having chosen numbers 3 to 5 to grade it. Only 13.2% of the respondents stated they did not keep up to date with current trends of fashion.

Question 2: Does being "fashionably" dressed make you feel better about yourself?

Anar vestida "a la moda" et fa sentir millor amb tú mateixa?

228 responses

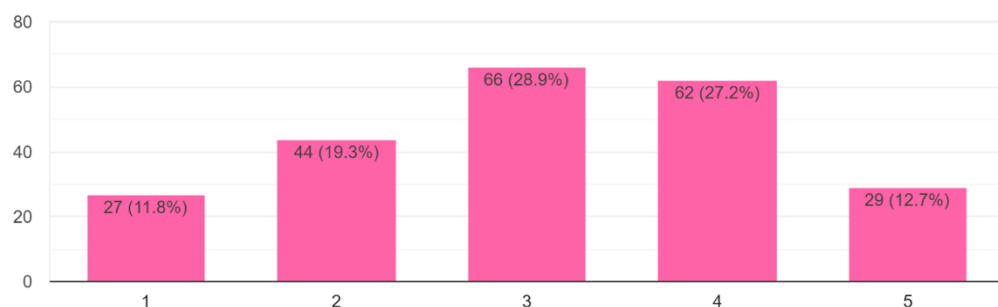


Figure 63: Responses for question 2 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

The majority of respondents gave a neutral answer to this question, with 75.4% choosing values from 2 to 4. Still, if we compare both poles, we can see how the amount of girls who feel better when dressing fashionably is slightly higher, with 39.9% answering numbers 4 and 5 compared to the 31.1% who answered numbers 1 and 2.

Question 3: Do you dress like you would like to dress?

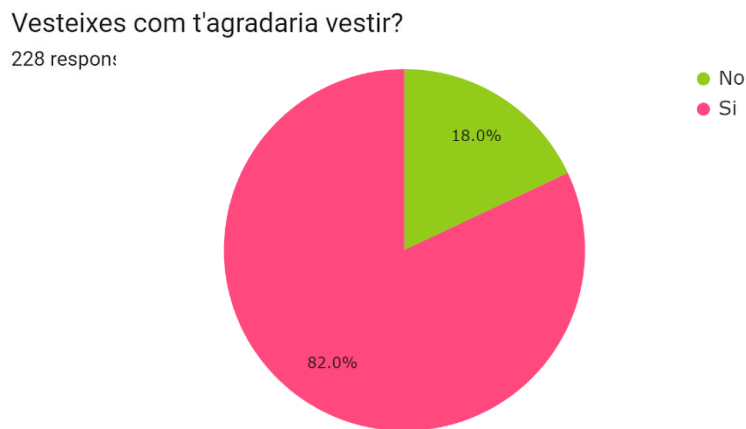


Figure 64: Responses for question 3 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

The majority of surveyed girls gave the third question a positive answer, with 187 *Yes* responses and only 41 *No* answers.

Question 4: Why do you not dress like you would like to?

The answers [Annex 2] to this open ended question were varied. A big part of the respondents (48.9%) mentioned the elevated price of clothing or the lack of their parents' permission to wear the clothes they would like to. But another 44.3% gave reasons more related to their body image, such as lack of self-confidence; no personal style or well-fitting clothes, and fear of other's opinions. The other 6.7% answers were related to other less major causes such as sustainability or small clothes.

The following pie chart illustrates the general reasons why teenage girls do not dress as they would like to.

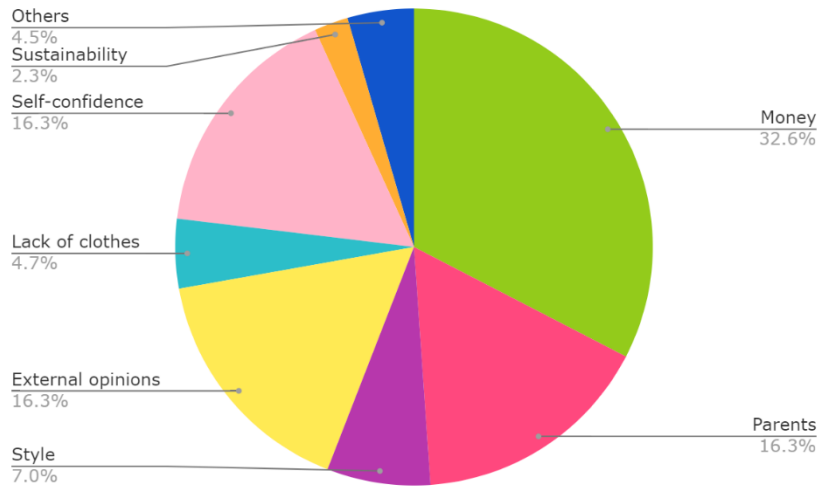


Figure 65: Responses for question 4 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

Question 5: Do you think you have a similar style to your friends?

Consideres que tens un estil similar al de les teves amigues?

228 responses

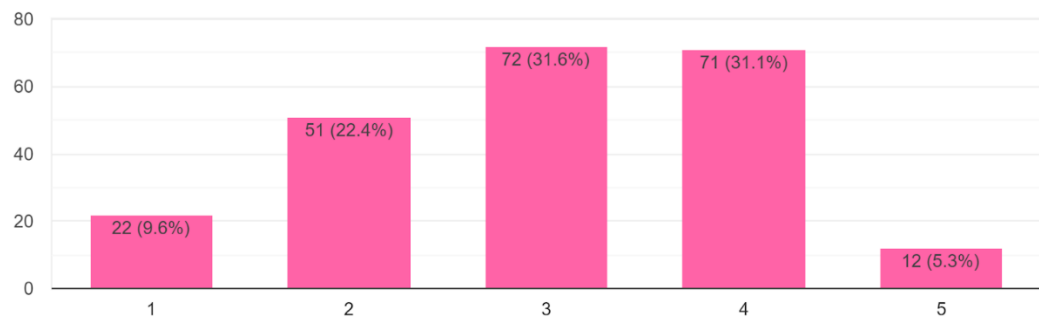


Figure 66: Responses for question 5 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

Looking at the answers to the fifth question, we can see how most girls also gave a neutral answer to it. Still, the majority of respondents (63.7%) gravitated towards 3 and 4, considering that they have a moderately similar style to their friends.

Question 6: Does dressing in a certain way make you feel more included in the group?

Anar vestida d'una certa manera et fa sentir més inclosa en el grup?

228 responses

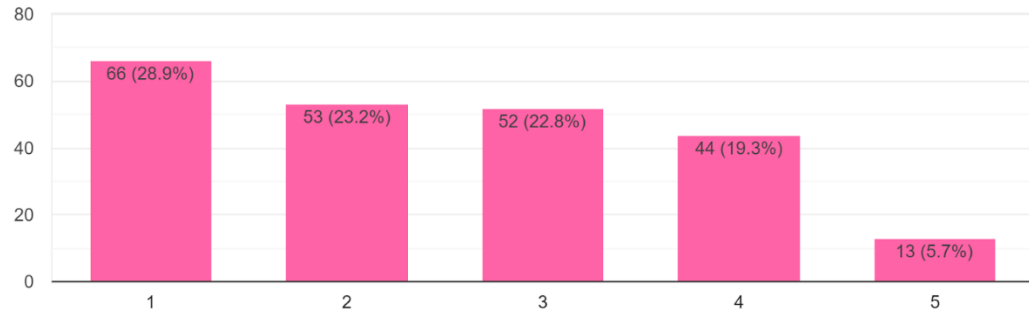


Figure 67: Responses for question 6 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

Most of the respondents for the survey answered that dressing a certain way does not dictate how included they feel in the group, with 52.1% of girls giving answers from 1 to 2. Positive answers to this question were not as notable, with only a small percentage (5.7%) of them stating the opposite.

Question 7: Do you consider the fashion industry inclusive? Does it have good representation for every type of person?

Consideres que la indústria de la moda és inclusiva? Té una bona representació de tots els tipus de persones?

228 responses

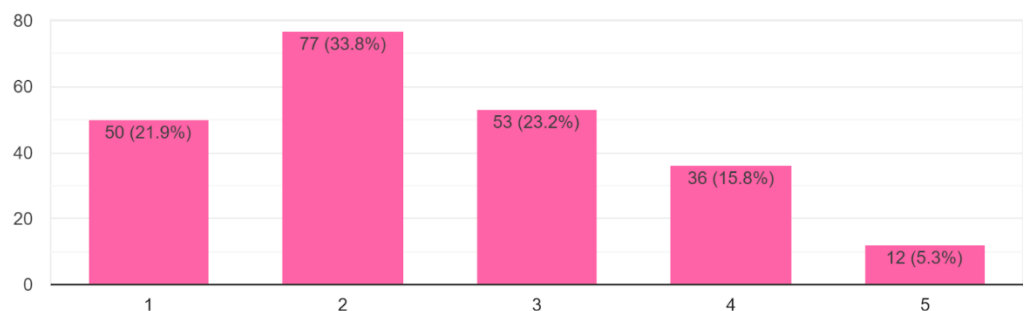


Figure 68: Responses for question 7 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

The answers to this question are very clearly directed towards the more negative pole of the numerical scale, with 55.7% of the respondents

believing the fashion industry not to be inclusive. 23.2% of the surveyed girls gave a more neutral answer and only 5.3% truly believed the fashion industry has good representation for every type of person.

Question 8: Do you feel represented in the fashion industry?

Et consideres representada en la indústria de la moda?
228 responses

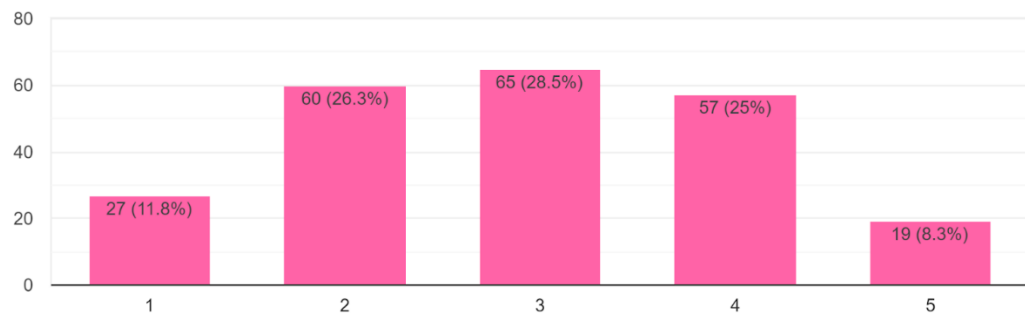


Figure 69: Responses for question 8 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

The eighth question was also answered more neutrally, with 79.8% of the responses being between numbers 2 and 4. Still, looking at the opposing poles, we can see that the amount of girls who feel misrepresented in the fashion industry (11.8%) is slightly higher than those who feel represented (8.3%).

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH INFLUENCES

Question 9: Is your style influenced by what you see in influencers, celebrities or movies?

El teu estil està influenciat per el que veus en les influencers, la gent famosa o les pel·lícules?
228 responses

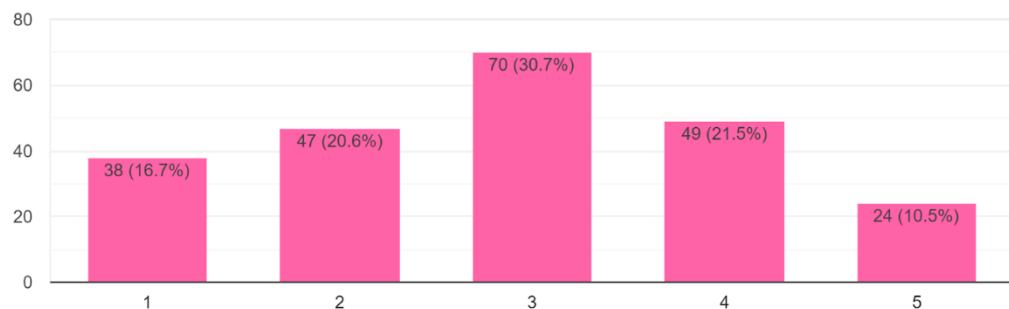


Figure 70: Responses for question 9 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

The majority of respondents gave a neutral response to this question, with 30.7% answering number 3 to indicate they let media influences dictate their style moderately. The opposing sides of the number scale are pretty equal, with 37.3% having answered 1 and 2, and 32% giving 4 and 5 as answers.

Question 10: Do you follow any influencers?

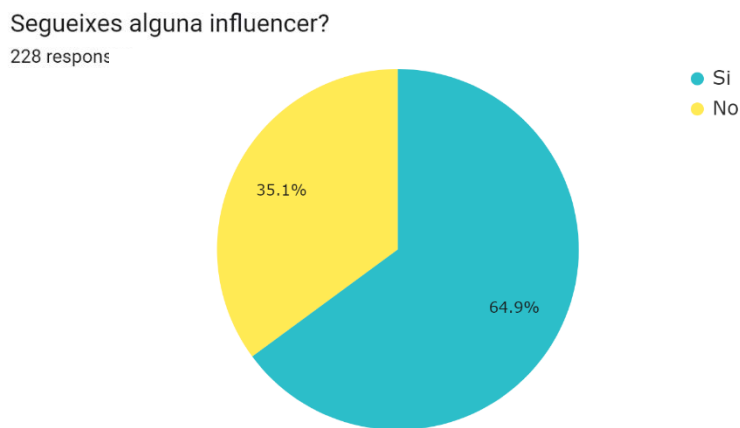


Figure 71: Responses for question 10 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

More than half of the surveyed teenage girls currently follow influencers. 64.9% of them gave a positive response to the question while 35.1% answered *No*.

Question 11: Which influencers do you follow?

While the responses to this question [Annex 2] were varied, some of the most mentioned influencers were: Aida Domènech 'Dulceida', Lola Lolita, Emma Chamberlain, Maria Pombo, Bella Hadid, Marta Diaz, Charlie d'Amelio, Lucia Bellido, Sofia Surfers, Elena Gortari and Kylie Jenner.

Question 12: Do you use social media to inspire your personal style?

T'inspires en les xarxes socials per definir el teu estil?
228 responses

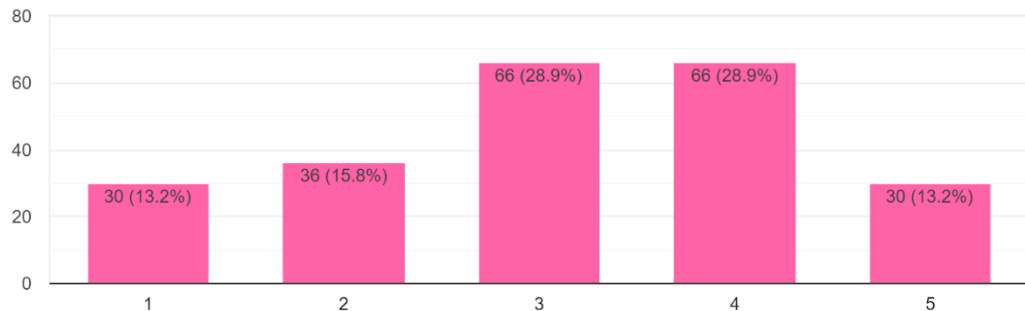


Figure 72: Responses for question 12 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

The vast majority of surveyed teenage girls tend to moderately use social media to shape their personal style, with 71% of respondents giving answers from 3 to 5. Only 29% of girls do not or barely use social media for style inspiration.

Question 13: Which ones?

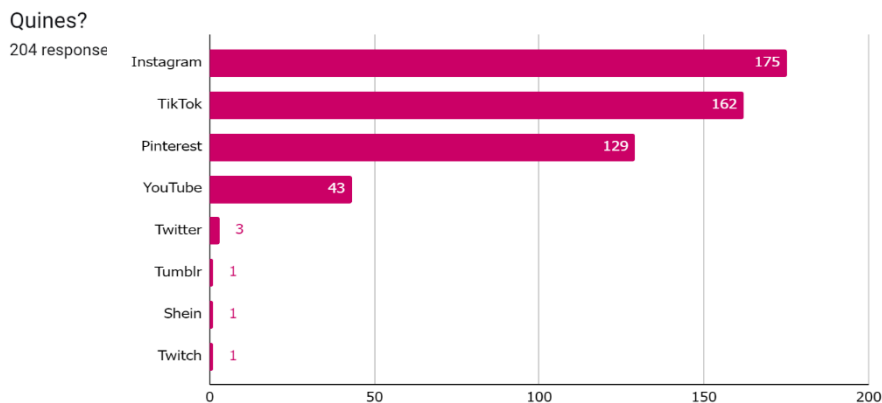


Figure 73: Responses for question 13 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

The vast majority of teenage girls use Instagram, TikTok and Pinterest as sources of inspiration for their personal style. Although with less relevance, some also use YouTube. Other less popular social platforms for fashion inspiration are Twitter, Tumblr, Shein and Twitch.

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MYSELF

Question 14: Do you feel confident with yourself?

Et sents segura en tú mateixa?

228 responses

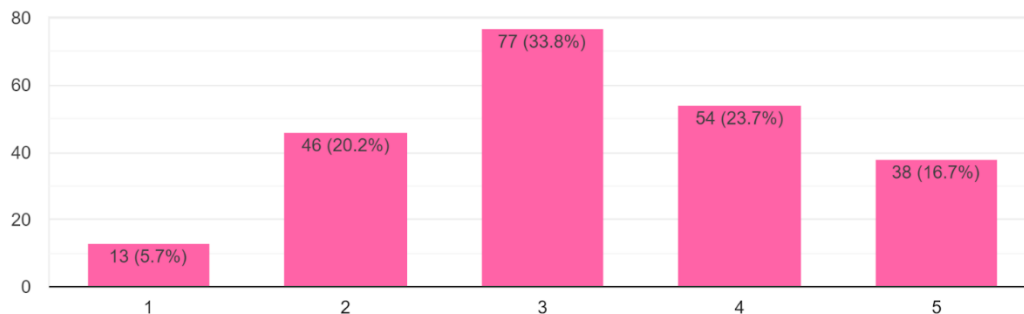


Figure 74: Responses for question 14 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

A high percentage (74.2%) of the teenage respondents for this survey admitted they have a moderate to high self-esteem, with many (33.8%) giving 3 as a neutral answer. About a quarter of respondents (25.9%) stated they had low confidence in themselves.

Question 15: At what approximate age did you start feeling insecure?

Aproximadament a quina edat vas començar a sentir-te insegura?

228 responses

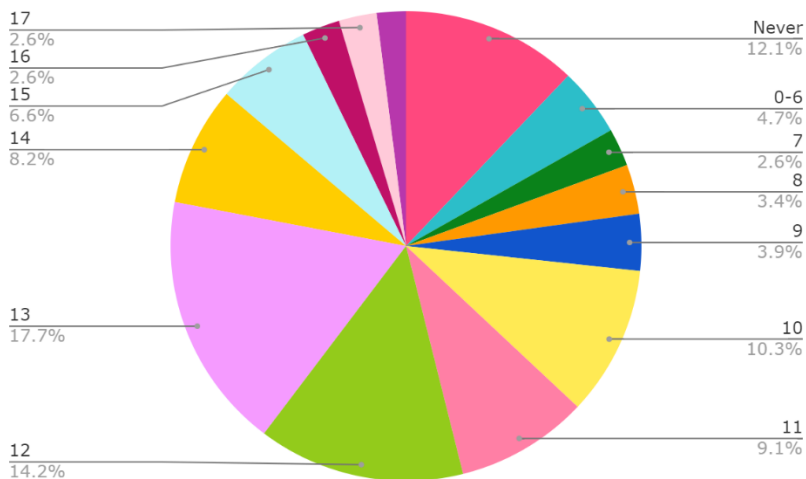


Figure 75: Responses for question 15 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

Looking at the responses to question number 15, we can see that the vast majority of surveyed girls, specifically 59.5% of them, began feeling insecure between the ages of 10 to 14. Only 12.1% of respondents claimed to have never felt insecure.

Question 16: Would you like to look different from the way you look now?

T'agradaria tenir un aspecte diferent al que tens ara?

228 responses

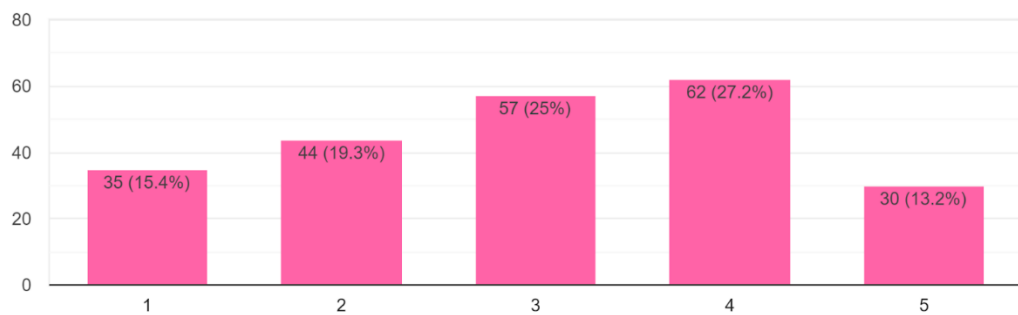


Figure 76: Responses for question 16 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

While the answers to this question are quite distributed, we can see a spike in number 3 and 4, with 52.7% of girls stating that they would like to change their physical appearance to some degree. 15.4% of respondents would not want to change the way they look and 13.2% would like to highly change it.

Question 17: Does the acceptance from others influence your confidence?

L'acceptació per part dels altres influeix en la teva seguretat?

228 responses

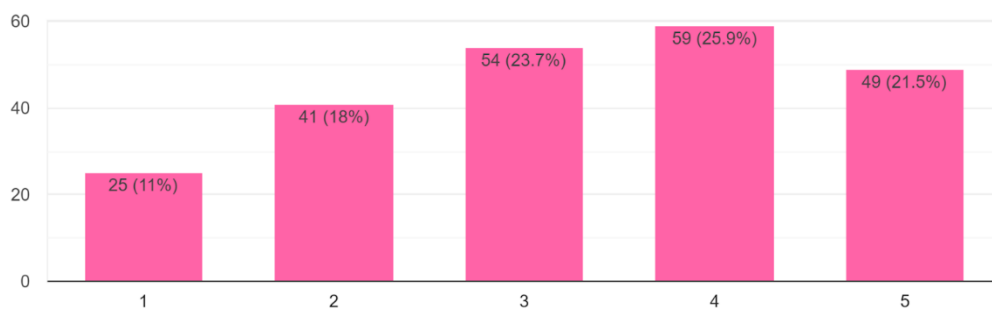


Figure 77: Responses for question 17 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

With this question, we can clearly see that most of the respondents base their self-confidence on acceptance in the others' hands. In that way, looking at the opposite poles of the scale, we can see that 47.4% of girls choose answers 4 and 5 compared to the 29% who chose 1 and 2 and the 23.7% who remained neutral.

Question 18: Does seeing influencers, models or other celebrities who look like they have a "perfect" body make you feel insecure?

Veure influencers, models o altres celebritats que sembla que tinguin un cos "perfecte" et fa sentir insegura?

228 responses

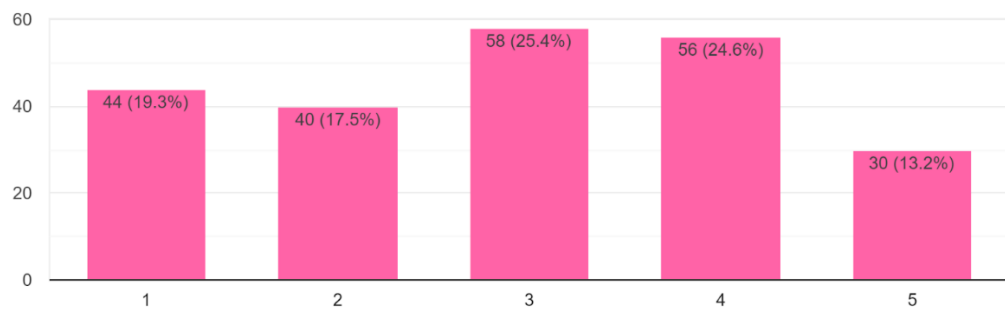


Figure 78: Responses for question 18 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

For question 18, a majority of respondents gave a more neutral answer, with 67.5% being more inclined to answers 2, 3 and 4. Still, if we compare the two opposite poles of the scale, we can see that they are pretty equal, with 36.8% choosing answers 1 and 2, and 37.8% choosing 4 and 5.

Question 19: Do you feel or have felt the need to change your appearance because of external influences?

Sents o has sentit la necessitat de canviar la teva imatge per influències externes?

228 responses

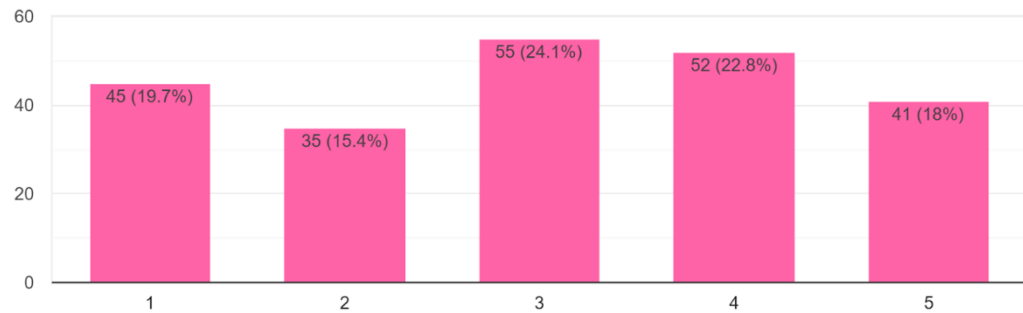


Figure 79: Responses for question 19 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

The answers to this question are pretty distributed, with most (24.1%) leaning towards number 3. Still, we can note how the amount of girls who have ever felt the need to change their appearance due to external circumstances (40.8%) is higher than of those who have not (35.1%).

Question 20: What things make you want to change your appearance?

Although the answers to this free-response question [Annex 2] have been varied, we can note some of the most mentioned. While some have cited personal evolution or a will to improve their lifestyle as reasons for change, most have attributed their will to become different to a bad body image and the insecurities it causes them. Some of the given reasons for saying they have bad body image are the way others look, social media, food issues, other's opinions and judgement, their social environment, and society's beauty standards.

Question 21: Have you suffered from any kind of Eating Disorder (ED)?

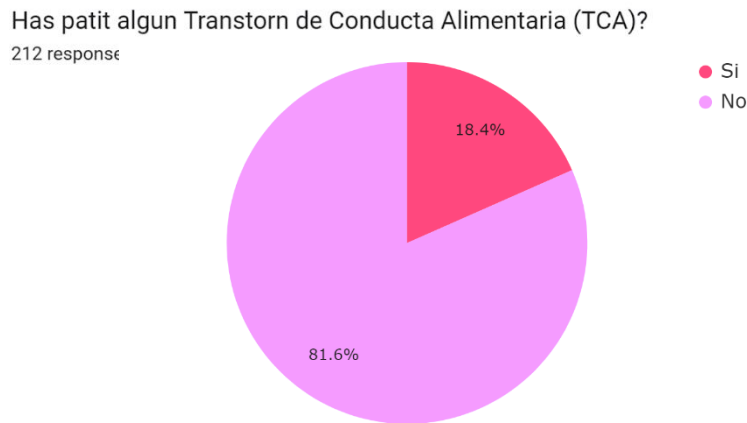


Figure 80: Responses for question 21 of the *Fashion and me* survey.

While 81.6% of those who answered this non-compulsory question stated they had never suffered from an eating disorder, 18.4% of girls admitted to having had one.

4.3.2. Discussion.

With most girls having an average to high knowledge and interest in fashion, it is clear that style takes a big part in the way they feel about themselves. When we compare the scores, we can see that the vast majority of respondents who gave high answers in the first question also expressed how dressing a certain way makes them feel better about themselves, with the following chart showing the responses to question two of those girls who answered 4 and 5 to the first one.

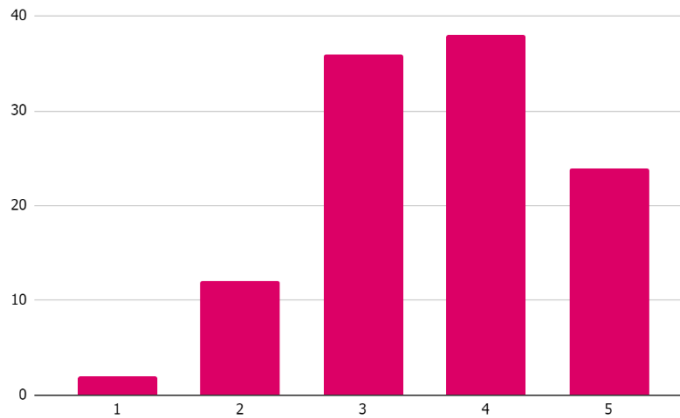


Figure 81: Responses for question 2 of the *Fashion and me* survey for those who are up to date with fashion trends.

No particular relationship was noted between the first two questions and the third one, as there were no remarkable differences between those who dress as they want to and those who do not when it comes to how fashion makes them feel. In the same way, there was not a direct connection between those girls who have a similar style to their friends and those who feel that dressing a certain way will make them more included in the group.

Looking at questions seven and eight, we can see that those who feel like they are represented in the fashion industry have a more positive view of the amount of inclusivity it offers. In contrast, those who feel they are not portrayed in fashion had a more negative view of said inclusivity. The following charts show the disparity in answers to question seven between those who voted between 4 and 5 (blue), and 1 and 2 (pink) in question number 8.

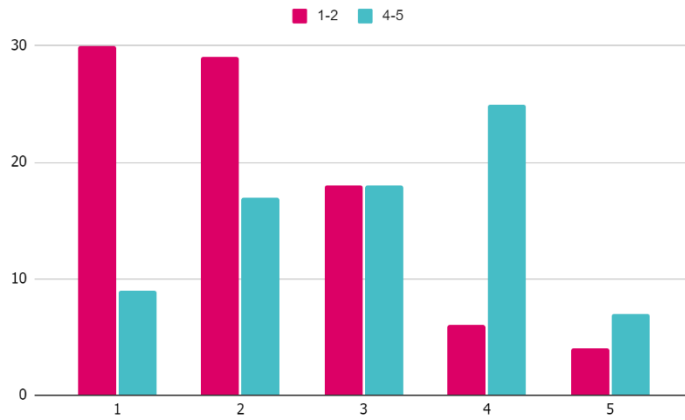


Figure 82: Comparison between the answers for question 7 of the *Fashion and me* survey of those who feel represented in the fashion industry (pink) and those who do not (blue).

No significant difference was found between those girls who tend to follow influencers and those who do not when it comes to how they use social media to create their personal style.

Looking at the data obtained from questions number 14 and 15 we can see that those girls who feel less confident in themselves are more prone to want to change their appearance. As illustrated in the following chart, those girls who gave low 1 and 2 scores on question number 14 expressed their wish to look different in the following question.

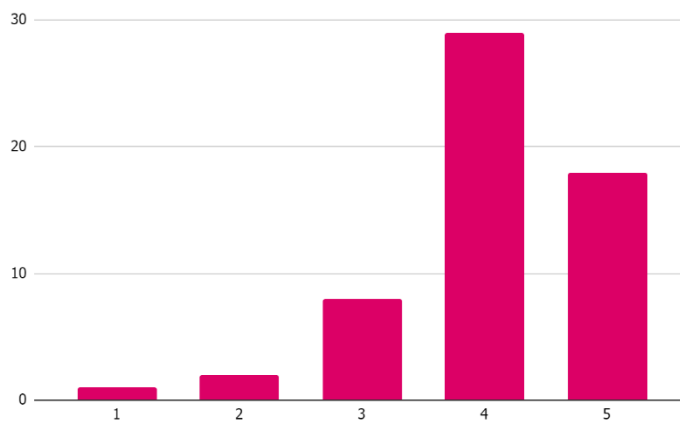


Figure 83: Responses for question 15 of the *Fashion and me* survey for those who feel less confident in themselves.

In a similar fashion, there is a significant relationship between those girls who would like to change their appearance and those who stated that the others' opinions influence their confidence. The chart below shows the answers to question number 17 from those who gave responses of 4 and 5 to question 16.

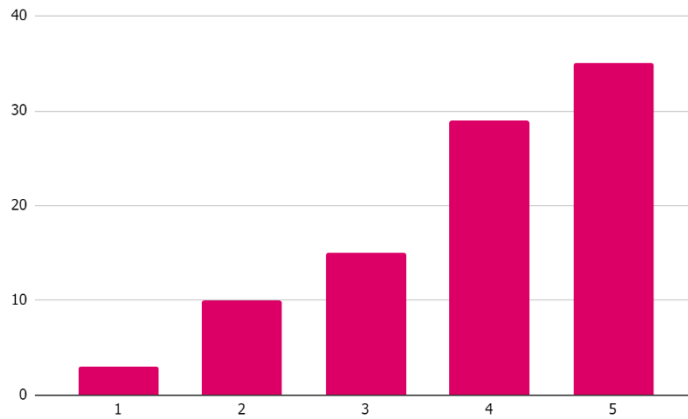


Figure 84: Responses for question 17 of the *Fashion and me* survey for those who would like to change their appearance.

As illustrated by comparing the responses to question 21 from those who gave high and low answers to question number 16, we can clearly see how those who want to change their appearance (blue chart) are more prone to eating disorders than those who do not (pink chart).

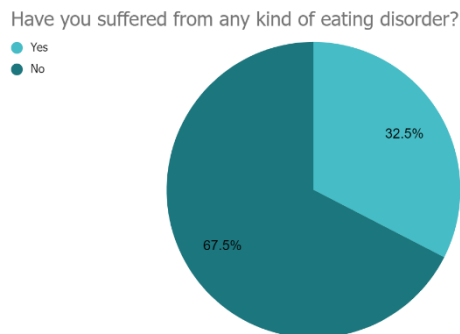


Figure 85: Responses for question 21 of the *Fashion and me* survey for those who want to change their appearance.

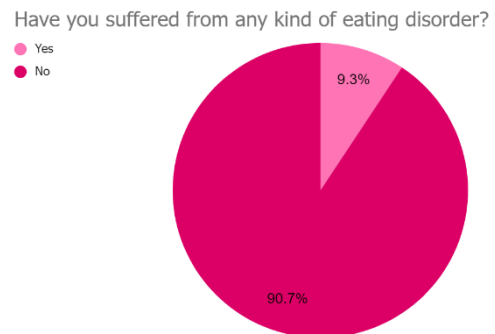


Figure 86: Responses for question 21 of the *Fashion and me* survey for those who do not want to change their appearance.

4.4. Conclusions.

From the obtained results for the *Fashion and me* survey, we can clearly see how much of an impact fashion has on teenage girls' lives, with a vast majority of them stating they keep up to date with what is going on in the fashion world to at least an average degree. In that way, many use fashion and, more specifically, trends, as a way to feel more confident in who they are, as most of them dress as they like to. Those who would like to dress differently mostly attribute it to the high cost of clothes and a lack of permission to do so, although some also struggle with feeling confident and worry about external opinions.

While a big number of respondents admitted to having a roughly similar style to their friends, few were those who considered doing so as a way to feel more included in their group, with no notable connection between both factors. When it comes to inclusivity in the fashion industry, the majority of those surveyed believe that there is no good representation for everyone in it. In that way, few were those who said they felt represented in fashion.

Few are the teenage girls who deny using social media to help define their personal style, with most taking fashion inspiration from many different sites, the most notable being Instagram, TikTok and Pinterest. Some are also influenced by those celebrities and influencers they follow on social media, such as Maria Pombo, Emma Chamberlain, Bella Hadid, Lucia Bellido or Elena Gortari. When we look at these influencers, we can see how the vast majority of them fit the traditional beauty standard, being white, thin, able-bodied and conventionally attractive.

When it comes to how girls feel about themselves, many struggle with confidence and few are completely comfortable with who they are, especially when that means not being accepted by others. With insecurity beginning in

the tween years, more than half of respondents gave numbers between the ages of 10 and 14 when asked about it. Many reported feeling insecure when seeing pictures of others, mostly influencers and famous people, who look like they have a "perfect" body. In such a manner, more than 50% of girls do want to change at least something about their appearance and many of them attribute this fact to external influences like social media, insecurities, the opinions of others, social pressure and unrealistic beauty standards.

As illustrated in many of their testimonies [Annex 3], most girls attributed their struggles with mental health to the very same factors that affect their self-confidence, as well as to insecurity in itself. Most of them mentioned that they wanted to look a certain way because it is the beauty standard they see on social media and because of past comments directed at their appearance made by family members, friends and school peers, stating that they had made them feel bad about themselves. This pressure developed for many into eating disorders and fitness obsessions. However, it is important to note that a big part of them have found better confidence thanks to professional psychological help and through clothing.

In an interview [Annex 4] with Aroa Roncero Bullich, an educational psychologist who specialises in teenagers, a big part of the teenage girls she treats presents issues with their wellbeing and mental health, caused for the most part by insecurity and a lack of validation. A big percentage of them have problems with their personal image, which are caused by the pressure they feel to fit with the predefined standard of beauty. She describes how social media and influencers contribute to the bad image girls have of themselves by portraying an ideal life to their followers. This false reality makes teenagers feel a need to become "perfect", hoping to achieve the level of happiness influencers depict. In that way, these girls work on improving their self-concept and self-esteem through psychological support. These

confidence issues have also caused an alarming growth in the number of eating disorder diagnoses and hospitalisation. As she explains, many girls develop eating disorders because of low self-esteem, perfectionist tendencies, bad personal image, troubled family situations, bullying, and negative comments about their body. She concludes affirming that fashion trends do have an effect on the mental health of teenage girls, stating that they make them feel like their value depends on whether they follow them.

Looking at this, we can conclude that the results obtained during the theoretical part of this research coincide with those obtained in the practical research.

CONCLUSION

We can define the word fashion in many ways but, when it comes to clothing, fashion can be described as the use of clothing and personal style as a form of expression. While clothing began because of a need, it quickly developed into a statement, with people using garments to identify themselves as individuals or part of a group.

The development of technology and media, together with a change in societal norms, made the 1990s the so-called "golden decade of modern styling". Many new styles emerged at a fast pace, especially thanks to the youth, which gave the word *trend* the meaning it has nowadays. Trends continued to rapidly evolve, shaping the fashion of the last 30 years.

With the rise of fashion, many psychologists have become intrigued by its impact, giving birth to the still-evolving discipline of fashion psychology. Experts such as Professor Carolyn Mair believe it is important to apply psychology in the context of fashion because of its intrinsic relationship with human behaviour. In addition to its applications in the industry, fashion psychology studies the way it concerns our perception of the self; how it crafts our identity, and the ways it affects beauty standards and, in consequence, body image.

Clothing is as part of our identity and self-expression as much as any other part of our persona. We use it to simultaneously express our individuality and distinguish our unique self from others, and to satisfy our innate need to feel part of "the group". The industry takes advantage of our need to belong, pushing a beauty standard that leaves most misrepresented. Through their clothing and advertisements, they promote their idea of a perfect "mannequin", creating a sense of exclusivity that pushes consumers into buying.

The unrealistic standards promoted by the fashion industry have dangerous consequences when it comes to our body image, the perception we have of our

own bodies. We are subjected to an ideal of beauty that makes us feel inferior and prompts us to change when we fail to meet it. This feeling of being “less-than” increases during adolescence, the period of time in which researchers have found to be an increment in mental health issues.

When it comes to teenage girls, with adolescence comes an array of new pressures and difficulties that make them more susceptible to psychological disorders. Girls, subjected to unrealistic images of women, academic pressure, relationships, social media and insecurities, obsess over the need to be “perfect”. The wish to achieve perfection quickly becomes unhealthy, making them develop eating disorders, fitness obsessions, depression, anxiety, insecurity, stress and other disorders.

Fashion also takes a big part in the mental health of young women. The fashion industry and all forms of media related to clothing, such as social media or movies, push the beauty standard they deem to be perfect towards them. They create an unrealistic expectation of what girls should be through influencer ambassadors, attractive commercials or beautiful models, all with the objective to sell more. Subjected to these images, they feel insecure and unwanted, sentiments that prompt them to develop low self-esteem and, in consequence, unhealthy coping mechanisms. While fashion also helps girls craft their identity and achieve more confidence in who they are, many also blindly follow trends in hopes of being accepted.

Fashion is an incredible tool for self-expression, with the ability to inspire confidence and the power to make us flourish. But for teenage girls, who are stuck in a time of change and more susceptible than ever to mental health issues, the seemingly positive power of fashion can easily transform into a negative thing. In the era of influence and followers, fashion and trends have become a dangerous factor for the psychological well-being of adolescent girls.

Going back to the initial research question and hypothesis, we can affirm that fashion and trends do have an impact on the mental health of teenage girls. As evidenced in both the theoretical and empirical parts of the research, we can see the way fashion influences beauty standards and how the industry uses them as a marketing technique; how these ideals give teenagers an unrealistic expectation of who they should be in order to achieve perfection, and the ways failing to meet them distorts their body image and leads to mental disorders. Nonetheless, the impact of fashion on mental health is not always negative, as many girls acknowledge their use of fashion as an expression tool and the ways it helps them achieve more confidence in who they are.

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Figures 61 to 86: Own.

ATTACHMENTS

Annex 1: *Fashion and me* survey.



Fashion and me

Hola, sóc la _____, alumna de 2n de batxillerat a l'Institut _____.
Actualment, estic fent el meu Tdr, titulat *Trend-setter: Fashion, influence and teenage girls*, un treball de recerca sobre moda, com aquesta afecta els estàndards de bellesa i els efectes que té en la salut mental de les noies adolescents.

Aquest qüestionari té l'objectiu de trobar aquesta relació entre les tendències i com ens fan sentir. És totalment anònim i àgil de fer.



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El meu treball està especialment centrat en les noies adolescents i, per tant, necessito respostes de persones que s'identifiquin amb el **gènere femení** i que tinguin **entre 13 i 21 anys**.

Us convido també a que el compartiu amb noies del vostre entorn que encaixin amb aquestes característiques, ja que m'aniria bé tenir una gran varietat de respostes. Podeu utilitzar aquest link:

<https://forms.gle/e92LtCqawNxybSac7>

Gènere *

- Femení
- Masculí
- Altres

Edat *

- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- Altres

La meva relació amb la moda

Aquest qüestionari utilitza l'escala de Likert, un mètode d'enquesta que utilitza valors numèrics de l'1 al 5 per concretar les respostes a les preguntes donades, sent **1 Gens** i **5 Molt**.

Aquesta secció té també alguna pregunta de resposta SI/NO i alguna d'oberta molt breu de contestar.

Estàs al corrent de les actuals tendències en moda? *

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Gens | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Molt |

Anar vestida "a la moda" et fa sentir millor amb tú mateixa? *

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Gens | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Molt |

Vesteixes com t'agradaria vestir? *

- Si
- No

Per què no vesteixes com voldries?

Contesta només si en l'anterior pregunta has respost NO.

Contesta només si et sents còmoda fent-ho.

Your answer

Consideres que tens un estil similar al de les teves amigues? *

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Gens | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Molt |

Anar vestida d'una certa manera et fa sentir més inclosa en el grup? *

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Gens | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Molt |

Consideres que la indústria de la moda és inclusiva? Té una bona representació de tots els tipus de persones? *

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Gens | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Molt |

Et consideres representada en la indústria de la moda? *

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Gens | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Molt |

La meva relació amb les influències.

Aquest qüestionari utilitza l'escala de Likert, un mètode d'enquesta que utilitza valors numèrics de l'1 al 5 per concretar les respostes a les preguntes donades, sent **1 Gens** i **5 Molt**.

Aquesta secció té també alguna pregunta de resposta SI/NO i alguna d'oberta molt breu de contestar.

El teu estil està influenciat per el que veus en les *influencers*, la gent famosa o ^{*} les pel·lícules?

Gens 1 2 3 4 5 Molt

Segueixes alguna *influencer*? ^{*}

- Si
- No

Quines *influencers* segueixes?

Contesta només si en la pregunta anterior has respost SI.
Només cal que donis un o dos exemples.

Your answer _____

T'inspires en les xarxes socials per definir el teu estil? ^{*}

Gens 1 2 3 4 5 Molt

Quines?

Contesta només si utilitzes les xarxes socials com a font d'inspiració.
Selecciona tantes opcions com creguis necessàries.

Instagram

TikTok

Pinterest

Tumblr

Twitter

Youtube

Other: _____

La meva relació amb mi mateixa.

Aquest qüestionari utilitza l'escala de Likert, un mètode d'enquesta que utilitza valors numèrics de l'1 al 5 per concretar les respostes a les preguntes donades, sent **1 Gens** i **5 Molt**.

Aquesta secció té també alguna pregunta de resposta SI/NO.

Et sents segura en tú mateixa? *

Gens 1 2 3 4 5 Molt

Aproximadament a quina edat vas començar a sentir-te insegura? *

Choose ▼

T'agradaria tenir un aspecte diferent al que tens ara? *

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Gens | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Molt |

L'acceptació per part dels altres influeix en la teva seguretat? *

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Gens | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Molt |

Veure *influencers*, models o altres celebritats que sembla que tinguin un cos "perfecte" et fa sentir insegura? *

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Gens | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Molt |

Sents o has sentit la necessitat de canviar la teva imatge per influències externes? *

Pensa en xarxes socials, pel·lícules, campanyes de moda, comentaris d'altra gent...

| | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Gens | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Molt |

Quines coses et fan voler canviar la teva imatge? *

Your answer

Has patit algun Transtorn de Conducta Alimentaria (TCA)?

Contesta aquesta pregunta només si et sents còmoda fent-ho.

Si

No

Abans d'acabar, t'agradaria compartir el teu testimoni o afegir algún comentari?

Aquí pots compartir la teva història de forma totalment anònima.

Si ho prefereixes, també pots deixar el teu correu i em ficaré en contacte amb tú.

Your answer

Fashion and me



(not shared) [Switch accounts](#)



Moltes gràcies per la teva col·laboració!

Et torno a demanar que **comparteixis aquest qüestionari** amb noies del teu entorn, ja que necessito una gran varietat de respostes. Pots utilitzar aquest link:

<https://forms.gle/e92LtCqawNxybSac7>

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Fashion and me

Moltes gràcies! La teva resposta ha estat enregistrada.

Annex 2: Transcript of answers to the open-ended questions of the *Fashion and me* survey.

Some answers have been edited to ensure clarity.

Some irrelevant answers have been removed from the transcript.

Question 4: Per què no vesteixes com voldries?

No puc comprar-me roba sempre que vull.

No tinc clar quin és el meu estil, suposo que potser no cal tenir-ne un de definit.

Societat.

Els preus són poc assequibles en plena temporada.

Perquè no em queda bé l'estil que m'agrada.

M'agrada com vesteixo però, si pogués, em compraria més coses vintage i dels anys 80.

Perquè la roba que m'agrada no em fa sentir còmoda.

A casa no em deixen.

Per motius econòmics i sostenibles.

Perquè vesteixo segons els cànons de bellesa per ser més acceptada, però potser jo vestiria diferent i em fa vergonya.

Perquè la roba que vull val molt i perquè no sé on aconseguir-la.

Voldria tenir més varietat de peces al meu armari.

No em deixen els pares.

Perquè no tinc suficients diners.

No tinc diners. La roba està molt cara.

Em fa vergonya vestir d'una manera poc habitual en mi i tinc por del que pugui pensar la gent.

Perquè no trobo el meu estil.

Perquè no tinc un estil en concret i m'agrada vestir-me diferent, per això es necessiten diners per poder comprar diferents estils de roba.

Perquè la meva mare no em compra el que jo vull.

Perquè no tinc els recursos necessaris per poder comprar tot el tipus de roba que m'agrada, ja que és molt cara.

Pel que dirà la gent.

Hi ha roba en la que no m'agrada com em veig i també molta que m'agrada però és molt cara.

Perquè en les botigues normalment no està.

La roba que està de moda actualment és molt cara, per tant costa renovar tot l'armari de cop. A més, un cop el canvies la roba ja ha canviat.

Perquè no tinc els diners suficients per comprar-me la roba que m'agrada.

Per por al que diguin els altres.

Perquè la meva mare no vol que triï la meva roba.

Perquè els meus pares no em deixen comprar segons quina roba.

No hi ha diners.

Perquè si vestís com jo voldria de veritat hem mirarien malament i es preguntarien per què ho faig.

Perquè no m'agrada com em queda la roba que m'agradaria portar.

Perquè no trobo el meu estil.

Per por al que la gent pugui pensar.

Perquè no em deixen els pares.

Per un complex amb la meva esquena.

Perquè la meva mare no em compra el que jo vull.

La meva mare no em deixa.

Perquè la roba que vull val molts diners.

Perquè ma mare no em vol comprar roba i no en tinc.

Question 11: Quines *influencers* segueixes?

Abiscari, Aitana Soriano, Ángela Mármol, Aida Domènech 'Dulceida', Abril Cols, Jesica, Marina 'La Rivers', Charlie D'Amelio, Martina González, Namie, Jessica Goicoechea, Ona Gonfaus, Lola Lolita, Marta Diaz, Addison Rae, Nailea Devora, Emma Chamberlain, Laura Escanes, Bella Hadid, Aitana, Elena Gortari, Maria Pombo, Lucía de Luis, Marru, Amaia, Ángela Aguilar, Xime Ponch, Lucía Bellido, AriGameplays, Biyin, Cristinini, Mayichi, Berta Aroca, Mada Graviat, Aroa Garcia 'Aroyitt', Bonbon Reich, Alicia 'By Hermoss', Carlota Maranon, Lidia Rauet, Chiara Ferragni, Claire Rose, Valeria Lipovetsky, Yai Hidalgo 'Deyaivu', Nikita Correia, Domelipa, Fernanda 'ImFerv', Kimberly Loaiza, Olivia 'Olhirst', Kendall Jenner, Hailey Bieber, Gemma Perez Ortega, Carla Laubalo, Gigi Hadid, Jisso, Jennie, Kindapatri, Saeko Kyoka, Kylie Jenner, Andrea Batres 'La Batres', Davida 'Davidatwerk', Rosalía, La Vecina Rubia, Bad Gyal, Laura Brunet, Maria Martí, Andrea Mengual 'Andreiflu', Mónica Morán 'Monismurf', Claudia Garcia, Mar Lucas, Nadia Vilaplana, Victòria Caro, Mercedes Sierra, Mery Rodríguez, Maria Bottle,

Violeta Margriñan, Aina Simón, Claudia Martínez, Sofia Moreno, Nina Houston, Dominique Both, Nuria Blanco, Jenn Muchuelas, Núria Jordà. Maria Lara 'Marialarat', Olivia Rodrigo, Paula Collantes, Paula Gonu, Andrea Palazón, Samantha Constantini, Cintia García, Sara Bace, Sol Carlos, Patricia Gómez 'Patrigoe'.

Question 20: Quines coses et fan voler canviar la teva imatge?

L'alimentació d'algunes influencers.

El meu cos.

Els comentaris de la gent.

Els comentaris d'altra gent.

Xarxes socials, amigues i persones conegudes.

Roba que s'adhereixi millor al meu tipus de cos.

Gent del carrer, influencers, etc.

La gent del meu entorn.

Esport.

L'entorn social.

La inseguretat.

Inseguretat, canvis de gustos en la roba.

L'acceptació dels altres.

Com queda la roba a l'altra gent.

Gent que es maquilla i gent que li queda bé tot.

El fet de sentir-me bé amb la meva salut, de tenir una bona relació amb el meu cos.

Comparar-me amb altres.

Quan la gent del meu voltant no té un cos semblant al meu; l'anar a les botigues i no trobar roba; el mirar la televisió i no trobar cap actriu amb un físic semblant al meu; quan es critiquen físics semblants al que tinc jo, etc.

El meu estil va evolucionant, a mesura que descobreixo coses noves llavors m'agrada molt canviar molt sovint.

L'acceptació de mi mateixa. Sentir-me pudorosa, modesta, cosa que em fa sentir una persona respectable. I escullo aquests principis, no per seguir la moda de la societat en la qual vivim, sinó per ser jo mateixa.

Les inseguretats que et crea la societat.

La gent criticant el cos dels altres i els estàndards marcats per la societat.

L'opinió dels altres.

La societat en general.
El bon cos de les altres.
La roba.
Comentaris o comparacions que fa gent que estimo.
Els comentaris.
Cossos perfectes.
Comentaris.
Veure com la roba queda als altres i després provar-me-la i que no sigui igual.
Alguns comentaris que fa la gent.
Models i celebritats amb "el cos perfecte" o "la cara perfecta".
Llavis, cabell, altura.
Algunes pel·lícules o sèries.
Que no em vagi bé la roba que ja tinc.
La societat i com se suposa que hem de ser físicament.
Influencers.
Inseguretats.
Cabell.
L'altra gent.
El cos de les influencers és perfecte i físicament en general són perfectes.
Comentaris dels meus amics i familiars, les xarxes socials.
Alguns comentaris que fa la gent.
La gent.
Els cossos.
Els bons comentaris que fa la gent a les noies amb bon aspecte.
TikTok.
El pensin de mi i jo mateixa.
Moltes vegades per TikTok et surten coses com rutines per aprimar-te, tenir el ventre pla...
El meu pes, la meva front...
L'acceptació dels altres.
Que els altres em jutgin.
Les xarxes socials.
Veure a altres persones més guapes, comentaris.
La pressió que representa viure en una societat amb uns perfils de cossos perfectes tan exigents i establerts.
Els comentaris d'altra gent.

El que diran.
Els insults de l'altra gent.
Prototips allunyats de la realitat.
El que s'accepta com "normal" o no. Els cossos normatius, estils normalitzats...
Si la roba que tinc m'apreta la panxa.
Comentaris dels altres.
El treball.
Veure com la majoria de gent que "té més fama" són persones amb el físic que està considerat com perfecte per la societat.
Els meus dits.
L'estil d'altres persones que em sembla guay.
Mai veure un cos com el meu en ningun lloc, fins i tot en les visibilitzacions body positive.
A més, un problema d'imatge lligat a un TCA.
Aspecte físic.
Allò que veig que em falta en comparació amb el considerat bonic.
Les meves dents, em donen molta vergonya i inseguretat.
Veure a la gent d'internet i voler ser com ella.
Molts tipus de comentaris.
Veure la perfecció dels altres.
Les idealitzacions i els estereotips marcats per la societat.
Veure gent "perfecta" sobretot a les xarxes socials.
Vídeos i fotos d'altres noies.
La moda, ja que segons la gent, si no vas "modernitzat" dones cringe i riuen dels teus gustos i estil.
El meu físic.
Que no em veig atractiva.
Les xarxes socials, ja que sembla que la gent sigui perfecta, o el constant canvi de coses que es posen de moda.
La meva cintura, abdomen, esquena, cames, braços...
Comentaris externs.
El veure gent amb una aparença física que desitjo.
Comparar-me amb les influencers.
L'opinió de l'altra gent.
La seguretat de les influencers.
Jo mateixa per veure'm millor.
Comparar-me amb la gent del voltant.

Veure persones amb molt estil i bon cos.

El meu cos.

El meu ventre.

El meu nas i els meus ulls.

L'opinió de l'entorn.

Veure que no compleixo l'estàndard de bellesa imposat, veure persones que penso que tenen molt bon cos.

Veure cossos perfectes que envejo.

La meva cara.

Els grans de la cara.

Perfecció.

Veure gent vestida amb la roba que m'agradaria portar i que li queda bé.

Veure gent amb nassos "perfectes".

El veure gent amb una aparença física que desitjo.

Comparar-me amb els altres.

Els estereotips de bellesa.

L'opinió dels altres, a vegades tinc por de no encaixar.

El comparar-me.

L'estereotip de "noia amb corbes".

Quan veig pel carrer una noia amb un estil que m'agrada.

La societat, que és molt cruel.

Veure que una persona es guapíssima i que té una part del seu cos de certa forma.

Veure com vesteixen les meves amigues.

Les mirades d'altres.

Els comentaris de la societat i els seus estàndards.

Els meus objectius personals, però sense cap influència de la moda.

Quan veig a les meves cantants preferides, perquè solen ser massa primes.

Comentaris i no veure'm bé jo mateixa.

La meva panxa.

Des de petita m'ha passat però l'adolescència en va fer empitjorar molt en quant a l'autoestima. Actualment estic canviant-ho, però és un procés lent. Vull canviar la meva imatge perquè no sento que sigui actualment el cos que em representa.

Veure els cossos d'altres noies.

La gent amb la que em relaciono.

La gent i els comentaris que vas sentint.

El no veure'm cais mai bé i sentir que no tinc el físic que realment m'agradaria tenir.

Inseguretats físiques o aspectes físics que no m'agraden i em fan sentir malament.
Veure l'altra gent, ja sigui per publicacions d'Instagram o les meves amigues a l'institut.
Que es burlin de mi.
No sentir-me suficient o pensar que la gent es riurà de mi.
El que pensin els altres.
Veure les coses que no m'agraden al meu cos i veure coses que sí que m'agraden al de les altres persones.
Comparar-me amb els altres.
Comentaris de la família, pressió social per aconseguir un cos perfecte.
Comentaris i fotos del cos ideal.
Hi ha vegades que no et sent a gust amb tu mateix.
Veure que molta gent de casi la mateixa edat que jo té cossos molt bonics, roba bona...
Els comentaris o l'influència de l'altra gent.
Imatges de gent millor que jo o persones que són "perfectes".
Les fotos amb bikini, la vida de les influencers, noies molt guapes, etc.
Veure a gent molt perfecta, tant físicament com d'estil.
Veure que el cos "perfecte" és el que tothom desitja.
Les altres.
Jo mateixa.

Annex 3: Transcript of testimonies.

Some answers have been edited to ensure clarity.

Some irrelevant answers have been removed from the transcript.

The following testimonies were collected through question 22 of the *Fashion and me* survey. All respondents have been kept anonymous.

Actualment, la moda ens influencia a tots d'una manera indirecta encara que no vulguem i és cert que també moltes vegades no et pots vestir com t'agrada pels comentaris, crítiques i la societat en general. A més a més, quan la gent veu algú vestit "diferent" doncs tendeix a la crítica.

No és el mau cas, però tinc una amiga que va tenir un TCA i no només hi interfereixen la moda i els cossos d'Internet perquè va recaure més que res pels comentaris (vas molt fresca, això et poses?, res et queda bé, per exemple) per part del seu novio.

Sóc una persona molt segura i a la vegada molt insegura, cada dia intento estar millor amb mi mateixa.

Sóc una noia que va patir bullying des dels 5 anys fins als 18, i aquests insults m'han perjudicat a l'hora de confiar en mi mateixa.

Des de 'xicoteta he crescut en un ambient on l'aparença física era un problema. Ma mare pateix un TCA sense diagnosticar i, com que sempre ho ha vist com una cosa normal, ella tampoc li ha ficat un nom al seu problema. Les dietes intermitents han marcat la meva infantesa i la selecció de "menjar bo" i "menjar dolent" també. A més a més, el meu pit no es va desenvolupar com el de les altres xiquetes, sinó que patiren una malformació inofensiva anomenada "mames tuberculoses" i això em va crear també una inseguretat. Als 11 anys més o menys vaig començar a amagar la panxa, als 15 a saltar-me menjars i als 16 a vomitar per un problema que anava més enllà del físic. Però la roba em va ajudar a

guanyar confiança en mi mateixa, perquè al dur noves modes em sentia acceptada i inclosa. No dic que gràcies a ella m'he curat, encara que estic treballant-ho, però m'ha ajudat (sé que no d'una forma sana) a deixar de no menjar, perquè he après que amb la roba i el maquillatge no importa com ets de veritat. En volta d'alimentar un TCA afavoreixo a empreses corruptes que fan malbé el planeta i que m'ajuden a que l'acceptació dels demás calmi la meva falta d'amor propi. No està bé, però és millor que el d'abans.

No és una experiència, però últimament un factor que preocupa molt als adolescents és poder-se definir en un estil en concret.

M'agradaria potser canviar el meu físic i ser més oberta amb les persones, perquè moltes vegades tinc por a no ser acceptada per com sóc.

Per culpa dels comentaris d'altra gent m'he sentit. Però això ha canviat perquè altra gent m'ha fet sentir molt millor.

Els comentaris de la gent molts cops m'han fet sentir malament amb mi mateixa, i durant un temps em van fer menjar menys del que m'agradaria i fer molt més esport per aconseguir tenir "bon cos". Això em passa a temporades, però actualment em sento bastant bé amb mi mateixa.

Va haver un temps on casi caic en un TCA per inseguretats físiques i sobre tot influències de l'entorn que no eren saludables. Per sort, amb l'ajuda d'un psicòleg vam parar-ho a temps.

No és sobre les modes, perquè no m'interessen. El que vull comentar és que els comentaris de la gent poden arribar a fer molt mal

Sóc una persona que vesteix el que se li fa bonic a la vista, no el que als altres els agrada. M'agrada tenir el meu propi estil encara que de vegades m'inspiro en algú altre.

Bones!!! Quan era petita vaig patir un accident al dit i se'm va quedar la cicatriu, cosa que hem va donar molta inseguretad. Ara ho porto molt millor. Jo sóc morena de pell i el cas és que des de petita he tingut experiències racistes amb gent senyalant-me i dient comentaris. El meu color de pell es va tornar una inseguretad fins que un dia una mestra va dir "ja voldria jo tenir el color de la - ." Allò em va fer adonar-me de que no tinc perquè tenir vergonya i que sóc perfecta. També quan era petita un dia unes amigues hem van senyalar dient-me "Estàs gorda!" i fins el dia d'avui és una inseguretad que a poc a poc estic superant. La meva forma de vestir és una barreja entre molts estils, com l'elegant. Hem fico uns pantalons fins als peus i unes botes amb plataforma. El cas es que un dia unes noies em miraven i hem senyalaven. Jo hem donava compte i mirava a dalt i caminava com una model. Per mi la meva forma de vestir és com sóc jo, i si no m'acceptes mira però jo no canviaré per ningú.

Espero que d'aquí al futur la gent, inclosa jo, canviem la mentalitat i que tots puguem anar lliures sense tapar-nos el nostre cos i sense ser jutjats.

Tinc una amiga que té un TCA i ho sabem tots, però ella no ho ha admès mai en veu alta (ella sap que nosaltres ho sabem). Jo la vull ajudar però no sé com fer-ho, si ella no vol ser ajudada no puc fer res. La intento convèncer de que ho digui als seus pares i que vagi al psicòleg però mai em fa cas i em sembla que els seus pares ja ho saben i la obliguen a menjar a la força, que no ajuda gaire. Estic molt frustrada i tinc por i estic molt preocupada també.

No em fa por dir-ho, ni vergonya. És quelcom que va passar i ho he de superar. Des de ben petita he tingut sobrepès i he visitat diferents doctors (de tot tipus: nutriólegs, endocrins, etc.) Segons ells, la culpa sempre era de la meva mare. Quan tenia 13 anys, em van dir q tenia el pàncrees malament, que proporcionava massa insulina i que això em feia engrossir. Llavors vaig començar una dieta que em feia créixer més i més, no va funcionar-me per estar ni més sana ni més prima. A més vaig estar al gimnàs anant 1 hora cada dia i després al arribar a

casa feia 100 abdominals i 100 flexions. Als 15 anys, farta d'esforçar-me i no aconseguir res, vaig desenvolupar bulímia. Encara recordo com cremava el vòmit per la gola... Vaig estar vomitant durant casi bé 3 mesos, vaig parar perquè em va baixar una menstruació molt abundant que va durar 2 setmanes i mitja. Això, junt amb la bulímia, va provocar que acabés a l'hospital amb una transfusió de sang que va durar una nit sencera. Va ser llavors quan em vaig adonar que tenia que deixar la bulímia, fos com fos. Finalment, vaig deixar d'anar voluntàriament als nutriólegs y endocrins de la sanitat pública. Fa uns mesos em van detectar que tinc quistos als ovaris i vaig començar la dieta Keto, receptada per una nutrióloga de la sanitat privada per ajudar a que aquests quistos marxin. He acabat la dieta, no he aconseguit el cos que volia però estic començant a estimar-me una mica més. Continuo fent exercici i, encara que el procés és lent, tinc esperança. Tot això, al cap i a la fi, el meu cos, el meu passat, m'influencien en quant a la moda. Perquè cada cop que surto a comprar roba, torno moltes vegades sense res. Perquè no hi ha roba que sigui de la meva talla L-XL i que m'agradi com em queda fins al punt de comprar roba 3 talles més grans perquè no vull que se'm noti el cos.

Vull afegir que les xarxes socials, pel·lícules, sèries, etc... m'han ajudat a definir un estil més propi i a descobrir coses (com accessoris o diferents tipus de roba) que m'agradaria portar ara o en un futur.

Des de que em van operar l'any passat quan tenia 13 anys vaig començar a sentir-me insegura. No m'agrada res del meu cos i hem van detectar un TCA.

No he tingut cap experiència traumàtica per voler canviar la meva imatge, simplement a vegades se'm baixa l'autoestima però després ja se'm passa.

The following testimony was obtained through a personal interview with an anonymous teenage girl. Said interview was conducted via Gmail on the 20th of November of 2022.

1. Quina relació tens amb la teva imatge?

Dolenta.

2. Has canviat alguna vegada la teva persona (roba, aspecte físic, personalitat, gustos...) per agradar més a algú o sentir-te més inclosa? Si és així, t'ha aportat satisfacció a llarg termini?

Sí, per sentir-me més inclosa. No m'ha aportat satisfacció a llarg termini, només m'ha fet canviar com sóc realment.

3. Has patit algun trastorn mental (depressió, ansietat..)? Ha estat d'alguna manera relacionat amb la teva imatge?

He tingut bastanta ansietat causada pel meu físic, però no li havia comentat mai a ningú.

4. Quan et proves alguna peça de roba que no et va bé o penses que no et queda bé, et fa sentir malament en tu mateixa?

Sí, perquè noto que estic més gran que abans i em fa sentir insegura.

5. Els comentaris innecessaris que fa la gent sobre el teu cos/la teva persona tenen algun efecte en com et sents amb tu mateixa? Com?

M'importa molt el que la gent diu o comenta sobre mi, sobretot amb el físic.

6. Has patit algun trastorn de la conducta alimentaria (TCA)? Què va ser el que va fer que comencassis a tenir problemes amb el menjar?

Durant les últimes setmanes d'institut, vaig començar a menjar molt menys i no volia casi menjar.

7. Segueixes influencers? Per quins motius ho fas / no ho fas?

Sí, però no sé per què. L'únic que sé és que em donen enveja.

8. Si segueixes alguna influencer, creus que per tu representen una espècie d'ideal que t'agradaria aconseguir?

-

9. Consideres que jutges a les altres persones segons el seu aspecte físic o que aquest suposa un factor determinant en la teva relació amb elles?

No importa el meu físic i les meves amistats, però hi ha algunes amigues meves que sí que les envejo pel seu cos.

Annex 4: Transcript of the interview with a youth psychologist.

The following is a transcript of the interview conducted with Aroa Roncero Bullich, educational psychologist at [redacted]. The interview was conducted through Gmail on the 28th of November of 2022.

Some answers have been edited to ensure clarity.

1. Comencem l'entrevista amb una pregunta una mica més personal, quina és la teva relació amb la moda? Estàs usualment al corrent de les principals tendències?

No estic massa al corrent de les tendències actuals de moda ja que sempre he intentat tenir el meu estil. M'he centrat en vestir-me de la manera que m'agrada intentant ser independent als cànons establerts. Tot i això, és inevitable estar-ne al marge ja que via xarxes socials, publicitat digital...ens bombardegen amb aquest tipus de contingut.

2. Actualment, quantes noies adolescents tractes com a psicòloga? Quin és el seu rang d'edat?

Actualment, com a psicopedagoga dins del centre educatiu, faig el seguiment directe de 62 nois i noies d'edats compreses dels 16 als 22 anys. De les 62 persones, atenc de manera individual a unes 32 noies; en fer orientació personal, acadèmica i professional.

3. De manera general, hi ha alguna tendència a nivell del que comparteixen amb tu? És a dir, consideres que hi ha algun problema en específic en el que coincideixen molt?

En el meu cas, atenc a molta diversitat. D'una banda, a alumnat que presenta necessitats específiques de suport educatiu. D'altra banda, a alumnat que encara no té massa clara la seva trajectòria acadèmica. Finalment, a alumnat

que presenta necessitats més relacionades amb el propi benestar i la salut mental. Hi ha alumnat que presenta dificultats per a gestionar certes emocions, altres que presenten trastorns alimentaris... Responent a la pregunta que em plantejes i relacionant-la amb l'àmbit més personal, podem dir que són persones que presenten més sensibilitat o que tenen dificultats per resoldre algunes situacions adverses que es presenten en la quotidianitat. Són persones que per circumstàncies no han pogut sentir-se validades i, per tant, dubten del que senten. Poden mostrar certes dificultats a l'hora de relacionar-se amb la resta, elevat malestar i ansietat. Cal tenir en compte que hi ha una base de trets de personalitat que són clau.

4. Quina és la relació que tenen la majoria de noies adolescents amb la seva imatge?

A nivell social hi ha unes exigències molt estereotipades sobre el cos de les noies. Un percentatge molt baix es troba a gust amb el seu cos, ja moltes manifesten no complir amb aquests criteris preestablerts.

5. Quin percentatge, més o menys, venen a tu per problemes que tenen a veure amb la seva pròpia imatge?

La imatge és un aspecte que abordem, però al cap i a la fi, el principal abordatge es basa en el treball del propi autoconcepte i l'autoestima, de l'autoprotecció envers la imatge que tenen els demés de nosaltres...

6. Les xarxes socials, la necessitat d'encaixar amb el grup, els cànons de bellesa de la societat... En les noies que tu tractes, són aquestes les causes majoritàries dels seus trastorns o problemes amb la pròpia imatge? Hi afegiries alguna altra? Quina diries que és la causa més destacada?

Tenim tendència a recórrer a aquest pensament i no ens equivoquem, però també he de dir que no sempre hi ha una distorsió amb la pròpia imatge.

En ocasions cal mirar més enllà, ja que un TCA visibilitza un malestar que va molt més enllà. Per exemple, una negació de la maduració, una necessitat de control... Tot i això, des del centre el que fem és acompanyar en tot aquest procés i qui realitza el seguiment més concret i terapèutic és el psicòleg/a extern, qui atén a la noia.

7. Una de les principals raons per les que una es pot sentir insegura és la necessitat de encaixar en uns estàndards de bellesa imposats per la societat. Com poden afectar al valor que es donen les noies com a persones?

-

8. Creus que una mala imatge té alguna cosa a veure amb les falses expectatives de les xarxes socials o les pel·lícules? Quin paper tenen les influencers i altres celebritats en tot això?

Naturalment que les xarxes i les influencers projecten una imatge idíl·lica del què són, de com són... En l'adolescència busquem referents a qui assemblar-nos, a qui idealitzar, i ara amb les xarxes socials tenim un accés casi il·limitat a la vida d'aquestes persones. Ens enamorem del que ens ensenyen, del seu físic, de les seves parelles, de l'estil de vida... Una falsa realitat i una falsa felicitat que ens atrapa i que ens vincula amb la idea de que per ser felices com són elles, hem de ser "perfectes".

9. L'Acadèmia Americana de Psiquiatria Infantil i Adolescent (AACAP) estima que una en cada deu dones pateix un desordre alimentari en la seva vida, un risc que s'incrementa en l'adolescència. Consideres que aquesta afirmació és acurada a la teva experiència com a psicòloga?

Totalment d'acord. Cada vegada estan incrementant més els trastorns de la conducta alimentària. Especialment durant la pandèmia es va incrementar de manera alarmant i preocupant el nombre de noies ingressades per TCA

a la Unitat de Psiquiatria on treballava. Pensa que estem parlant d'ingressos hospitalaris, és a dir, de situacions greus. Imagina la quantitat de noies i nois amb desordres alimentaris que no estan, per ara, en una situació crítica. És realment, molt preocupant.

10. Quins són els principals factors que influeixen en el desenvolupament d'un desordre alimentari?

Hi ha moltíssims factors que poden suposar un risc per desenvolupar un TCA. D'una banda, l'entorn on creixes et pot condicionar a desenvolupar-lo. D'altra banda, de les característiques de personalitat, com ara si ets una persona molt perfeccionista, el nivell d'autoestima, l'autoconcepte que tens de tu mateixa... A nivell familiar, doncs realitats de famílies separades, la sobreprotecció, o l'absència dels rols paterns i materns, fets traumàtics... A vegades, que algun membre de la família també pateixi desordres alimentaris, faci dietes... A nivell social, doncs haver patit algun tipus de situació d'abús com ara bullying o comentaris cap al propi cos...

11. Finalment, consideres que les tendències en moda poden causar problemes psicològics en adolescents? Influeixen aquestes en com ens sentim amb el nostre propi cos i afecten el nostre valor com a persona?

Totalment. La mateixa societat s'encarrega de dir-nos que si no formem part "d'allò" no tenim la vàlua com a persones. Afortunadament han nascut molts moviments de protesta que donen veu a com ens sentim les dones en aquest aspecte.

Un element que hem de tenir en compte és la mirada patriarcal en la que estem sotmeses les dones en TOTS els àmbits de la vida, i la moda, és un més.

