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# Predicting clothing behaviors of Generation Y men through self-esteem and body dissatisfaction

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## Abstract

This study investigated how various dimensions of body dissatisfaction of men in Generation Y (i.e., body dissatisfaction-weight, body dissatisfaction-muscles, and body dissatisfaction-height) influenced their clothing related behavioral responses, including clothing image avoidance and clothing purchase behavior. Self-esteem was included as a predictor variable for the three dimensions of body dissatisfaction. Data were collected through an online survey from heterosexual Generation Y men. Results indicated that self-esteem negatively influenced the three dimensions of body dissatisfaction differently; only the body dissatisfaction-weight dimension influenced men's clothing image avoidance and clothing purchase behavior, when controlling for body dissatisfaction-muscles and body dissatisfaction-height. The findings were discussed, and implications were provided in the current study.

**Keywords:** Body dissatisfaction, Clothing behaviors, Generation Y, Men, Self-esteem

## Introduction

In recent years, as more men have expressed concerns toward their bodies, it was found that a growing number of men in Western society expressed unhappiness with their bodies in the past 10 years (Jankowski et al. 2014). Men's dissatisfaction with their bodies may have resulted from their perceived increased pressure to maintain the ideal muscular male body image (Bordo 2010). Although there is evidence to show men's dissatisfaction with their bodies, most previous body image-related research has primarily focused on women rather than on men. Extant studies have commonly assumed that body image-related issues and clothing behaviors merely pertain to women because most of the body image research has examined women as the main sample population (e.g., Frost and McKelvie 2005; Green and Pritchard 2003; Grieve and Helmick, 2008; Grossbard et al. 2009; van den Berg et al. 2010), with limited research focusing primarily on men (e.g., Barry 2015; Frederick et al. 2006; Stapleton et al. 2016). The limited studies on men's body image have suggested that men's body-related concerns could vary more than women's as men demonstrated a wider variety of concerns about their bodies such as weight, height, muscularity, leanness, fitness or overall body shapes (Bergeron

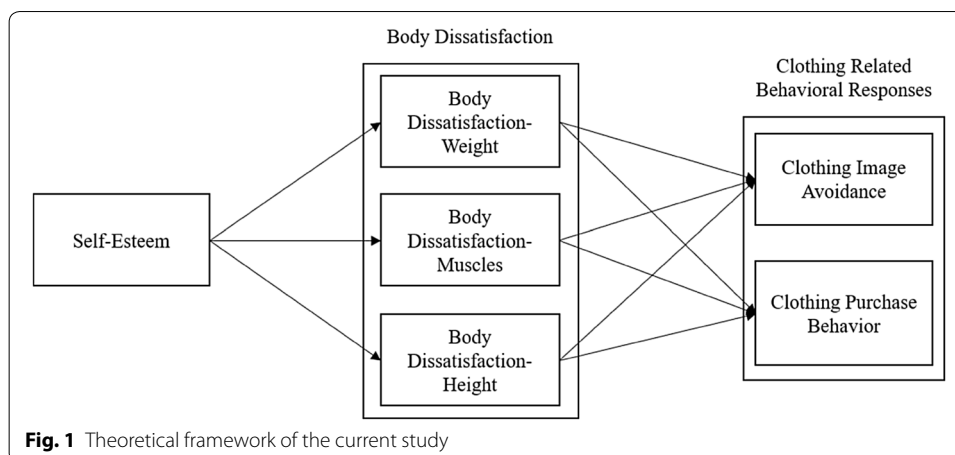
& Tylka 2007; Chattaraman et al. 2013). Given that, it is assumed that individuals may experience body dissatisfaction with different reasons, which may further cause various consequences, including their health-related behaviors (e.g., eating disorders) and clothing related behavioral responses (e.g., clothing image avoidance and clothing purchase behavior).

As an antecedent of body dissatisfaction, previous research has suggested that self-esteem is a crucial concept in the field of social psychology (Rosenberg et al. 1995). Self-esteem can be defined as one's evaluation based upon his/her overall feelings (Hobza et al. 2007). Ricciardelli and McCabe 2001 found that self-esteem is a significant antecedent of body dissatisfaction, weight loss strategies, and eating-related behaviors such as eating disturbance. That is, an individual's perception toward themselves could influence not only their health-related conditions, but it could further affect how they perceive their body. According to Chattaraman et al. (2013), body dissatisfaction is typically caused by the difference between an individual's current body image and his/her desired body image. Although self-esteem has been considered as an important predictor of body dissatisfaction in general (Ricciardelli and McCabe 2001), there has been limited research examining the influence of men's self-esteem on body dissatisfaction, nor its influence on dissatisfaction with different parts of their bodies (e.g., weight, muscles, and height).

Generation Y consumers are highly engaged in fashion, and they tend to express themselves through styles accepted among their peers and/or in society (Fernandez 2009). Research has suggested that Generation Y may decide on how to manage their appearances based on their degree of body dissatisfaction as they tend to highly compare themselves with other people (Vogel et al. 2014) and are concerned about how other people view themselves (Barry and Martin 2016). Furthermore, men's interest in clothing has increased as indicated through men's clothing sales (Bakewell et al. 2006; Frith and Gleeson 2004; Noh et al. 2015). According to Euromonitor, menswear has outperformed womenswear since 2016, and it is anticipated that the sales of menswear will show an increase of 1.9% in 2021 (Bain 2018). However, research focusing on the influence of self-esteem and body dissatisfaction on clothing related behavioral responses among Generation Y men is still limited. Given that, the main purpose of this study was two-fold: (1) to investigate how Generation Y men's self-esteem influences the three dimensions of body dissatisfaction (i.e., weight, muscularity, and height); and (2) how body dissatisfaction predicts Generation Y men's clothing related behavioral responses (i.e., clothing image avoidance and clothing purchase behavior).

### **Theoretical framework**

Building upon the symbolic self-completion theory, this study investigated if Generation Y men's self-esteem influences their body levels of Gen-Y men's body, specifically with their height, muscles, and weight, and if their body dissatisfaction influences their clothing related behavioral responses, including clothing image avoidance and clothing purchase behavior (see Fig. 1). In the current study, clothing image avoidance describes individuals' tendency to avoid certain clothes that may accentuate their body concerns, and clothing purchase behavior describes an individual's clothing purchase activities based on their aesthetic preferences.



According to Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1981) symbolic self-completion theory, individuals communicate their accomplishment(s) to others and try to enhance their self-identities through different approaches (e.g., appearance) when they feel incomplete about themselves. In the context of clothing, individuals who are unhappy with themselves may engage in certain types of clothing behaviors such as clothing image avoidance and clothing purchase behavior to make themselves feel better. This study examined heterosexual men primarily as research has suggested that heterosexual men and homosexual men may have different views toward their bodies (Jankowski et al. 2014).

## Literature review

### Generation Y consumers

Also known as Millennials, the Generation Y population born between 1977 and 1994 (Bakewell and Mitchell 2003) includes 76 million people, which comprises the second-largest generation in the United States (Giovannini et al. 2015). According to Bakewell and Mitchell (2003) Generation Y consumers spent nearly 70% of their money on purchasing fashion and apparel products based on their interests in fashion. Generation Y is also one of the largest populations to shop at fast fashion retailers such as Zara, H&M, and Topshop (Kestenbaum 2017). Although generational cohorts tend to share similar attitudes and behaviors, Fromm et al. (2011) suggested that the Millennial population consisted of six distinct groups with different characteristics and cautioned that marketers should avoid targeting all the Millennials simultaneously.

A further look at body image research including Generation Y-aged consumers showed that there were gender differences regarding body image-related concerns. For example, Mayo and George (2014) found that males tended to favor a more muscular and leaner body types than what females would prefer (e.g., thinner). Similar to females, Generation Y-aged males were also influenced by negative comments related to appearance from their peers and experienced body dissatisfaction; however, males were more likely to respond to positive comments, which usually further motivated males to look their best (Schuster et al. 2013). Also, Generation Y individuals are engaged in social media more than older generation cohorts such as Baby Boomers and Generation X (Moore 2012). Specifically, Generation-Y individuals would be more interested in sharing their photos

with other people through social media, which may in turn influence their degrees of self-esteem and body dissatisfaction (Vogel et al. 2014). Williams (2014) reported gender differences and concluded that Generation Y females are more likely to post selfies on social media than Generation Y males with the motivation to enhance self-esteem. Furthermore, research has considered body dissatisfaction a prevalent health concern associated with negative consequences such as eating disorders and depression; however, relatively limited body image research has focused on Generation Y male individuals. Thus, this research specifically focused on male individuals in the Generation Y group to examine how their self-esteem and body dissatisfaction influence their clothing related behavioral responses.

### **Self-esteem and body dissatisfaction**

*Self-esteem* refers to a general measure of one's evaluation based upon overall feelings (Hobza et al. 2007). Research has found that self-esteem increases from adolescence to middle adulthood, and reaches the peak when individuals reach the age between 50 and 60 years (Rosenberg 1965). Research has concluded that self-esteem is a significant predictor of a wide range of individuals' life outcomes (e.g., satisfaction in marriage and close relationships, physical health, mental health, and life satisfaction) (Orth and Robins 2014), and body-image related variables such as body satisfaction (Frost and McKelvie 2005) and body dissatisfaction (Ricciardelli and McCabe 2001).

*Body dissatisfaction* in this study refers to negative feelings caused by a discrepancy between an individual's perceived ideal body appearance and their perceived actual body appearance (Grieve 2007). Previous research found a negative relationship between self-esteem and body dissatisfaction. For example, Green and Pritchard (2003) found that women who had lower self-esteem were more dissatisfied with their body. Later research also found that both male and females who had lower self-esteem were highly dissatisfied with their body images (Grossbard et al. 2009).

Specifically, research has suggested that men's body dissatisfaction consists of three dimensions, including body dissatisfaction-weight, body dissatisfaction-muscles, and body dissatisfaction-height. Bergeron and Tylka (2007) suggested that men had varied perceptions toward those different body parts. Earlier research found that a large population of men was unhappy with their body and had more concerns with their body shapes and muscular build than with their weight (Frederick et al. 2006; Jones and Crawford 2005). Recently, Pallarito (2016) found that 20 to 40% men in the United States were unhappy with their body weight and muscles. More specifically, 55% of men reported that they exercised, and 29% men reported that they were engaged in dieting behaviors to lose weight. In general, men may desire to achieve certain ideal body image (e.g., being muscular) through various approaches; however, when the desire is not met, body dissatisfaction may occur. Taken together, it is expected that if men have higher self-esteem, they will be less dissatisfied with their bodies; the extent to which they are dissatisfied may vary based on the specific body characteristics such as weight, muscles, and height. Thus, the first hypotheses are stated:

*H1: Gen-Y men's self-esteem negatively influences their body dissatisfaction with (a) weight, (b) muscularity, and (c) height.*

### **Body dissatisfaction and clothing related behavioral responses**

Clothing image avoidance: Modified from Rosen et al. (1991) *clothing image avoidance* in this study refers to tendencies among individuals to avoid certain clothing that could stimulate their concerns about their body. Carver et al. (2011) found that individuals engaged in avoidance coping when people tried to avoid negative feelings related to certain issues. Avoidance coping explains an individual's tendency to avoid certain clothes when they are dissatisfied with their body because people may try to avoid certain types of clothes that could reveal certain parts of their body toward which they have negative feelings.

Earlier research has found that women used clothing as a way to camouflage their perceived body flaws and create the perception that their body shape is closer to the ideal body image, which helped them feel temporarily happier with their body (Chattaraman and Rudd 2006; Rudd and Lennon 2000, 2001; Trautmann et al. 2007). Similarly, Tigge-mann and Lacey (2009) found that women who were highly dissatisfied with their body utilized clothes either to conceal or camouflage the body parts with which they were not confident; whereas, women who were less dissatisfied with their body utilized clothes to enhance their body images and themselves. For example, a woman may avoid wearing shorts or miniskirts to help hide her legs which she might not be happy with. Woman may also choose to not wear sleeveless tops or crop tops if they feel dissatisfied with their upper body shapes/sizes, even though those styles are trendy.

Among the limited research investigating the relationship between body-related issues and clothing behaviors of men, Chattaraman and Rudd (2006) found that the degree of men's body satisfaction influenced their fit preferences of shirts as well as the fit and waist preferences of pants. That is, men preferred to wear pants with higher waistlines and shirts with looser fits when they were highly dissatisfied with their body (Chattaraman et al. 2013), which supported the findings of the studies by Chattaraman and Rudd (2006). Similarly, Walker et al. (2009) found that there were certain avoidance behaviors that men utilized, including avoidance of revealing clothes and preference to wear loose fit clothes rather than fitted clothes to better manage their appearance. In a more recent qualitative study, Barry and Martin (2016) explained that men might have the tendency to conceal their body parts to meet the accepted norms of male appearance and to style themselves with clothes in certain ways if they did not meet the ideal body image. For instance, one of the participants in their study indicated that he preferred black-colored clothing to look thinner, and the other participant tended to avoid wearing long coats because it may accentuate his shortness (Barry and Martin 2016). Similarly, Strubel and Petrie (2016) found that the more dissatisfied men were with their upper bodies, legs, and faces, the more they would spend time searching for specific apparel to help manage their appearances. Thus, men attempt to create and enhance their looks by wearing the right apparel for them (Strubel and Petrie 2016). These findings demonstrated that men, similar to women, also had desires to reveal/emphasize their bodies if they were confident about their bodies; they might choose to conceal/ hide certain body characteristics such as weight, muscles, and height through their clothing choices. Given that, it is suggested that men also engage in clothing image avoidance behaviors if they are dissatisfied with their bodies. Thus, the next hypotheses are proposed:

*H2: The levels of Gen-Y men's body dissatisfaction with (a) weight, (b) muscularity,*

*and (c) height positively influence clothing image avoidance.*

Clothing purchase behavior: *Clothing purchase behavior* is defined as individuals' purchasing activities of clothes that reflect an individual's aesthetic preference and taste, present his individuality, and do not necessarily follow the latest trends. Generation Y men have demonstrated their interest in fashion styling, and they were inclined to view styling as a way of expressing and communicating themselves (Kestenbaum 2017).

Among the existing studies, findings of the relationship between body image-related issues and clothing behaviors have been inconclusive with both male and female samples. On one hand, the negative relationship between body-related issues and clothing behaviors was witnessed in previous studies by Tiggemann and Lacey (2009), and Shim et al. (1991). On the other hand, Sung et al. (2016) found different results that Generation Y male consumers who were less dissatisfied with their body were less involved with trendy clothing and they had negative attitudes toward trendy clothing. Past findings have been inconsistent partly owing to the different samples (e.g., culture and gender) and partly due to the variables measured in each study. Specifically, Tiggemann and Lacey (2009) investigated participants' enjoyment of clothes shopping in Australia; Shim et al. (1991) investigated clothing behaviors by measuring fashion innovativeness, fashion opinion leadership, and self-confidence in clothing and shopping behaviors by measuring satisfactions with ready-to-wear in the United States; and Sung et al. (2016) explored fashion involvement and attitudes toward trendy clothing in the United States, which might be the reasons of those varied outcomes.

In the current study, building upon the symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1981) and previous research on men's motivation for fashion consumption (Barry 2015), it is proposed that men who are dissatisfied with their bodies would be more likely to purchase certain types of clothing to enhance their appearances and utilize clothing as an approach to communicate their self-identities, which could help them feel better. Further, their clothing choices may depend upon how they feel about their body characteristics such as weight, muscles, and height. Therefore, the next hypotheses are suggested:

*H3: The levels of Gen-Y men's body dissatisfaction with (a) weight, (b) muscularity, and (c) height positively influence their clothing purchase behavior.*

## **Method**

### **Sample and data collection**

Data were collected using an online survey with Generation Y adult men (i.e., born between 1977 and 1994) in the United States. The survey was created through Qualtrics and distributed through the Amazon Mechanical Turk website. As this study intended to specifically focus on Generation Y male consumer segment, the survey was only accessible to participants who met the following criteria: (1) participants who were born between 1977 and 1994 (i.e., Generation Y) (Bakewell and Mitchell 2003) were invited to participate in the survey, and (2) only men who currently reside in the United States participated as ideal body images may differ depending upon cultures (Chattaraman et al. 2013). For those who successfully completed the survey was provided \$1 incentive. The

participants received the incentive directly from the Amazon Mechanical Turk system after the researcher accepted their submitted surveys.

### Measures

Existing literature was utilized to develop a questionnaire for the current study. The participants were given the survey, including demographic background questions (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, year when they were born, nationality, and ethnicity), self-esteem, body dissatisfaction clothing image avoidance and clothing purchase behavior. The self-esteem scale was adapted from Rosenberg (1979); body dissatisfaction was measured with the Male Body Attitudes Scale (MBAS) adapted from Tylka et al. (2005); clothing image avoidance was measured with Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire (BIAQ) that was adapted and modified from Rosen et al. (1991); and clothing purchase behavior was measured with four items that were adapted and modified from Kawabata and Rabolt (1999). Three additional items were added by researchers to further investigate the participants' clothing purchase behavior. All the measurements were completed with a seven-point Likert type scale (i.e., 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree") and a seven-point Likert type scale anchored by 1 = "Never" and 7 = "Always" was utilized to measure body dissatisfaction.

### Results

A total of 354 adult men participated in the survey; however, 77 responses were eliminated from the dataset due to incomplete surveys and disqualified participants. As a result, 277 responses were utilized for further data analyses. The age range of the participants was 23 to 40 years at the time of data collection, with the mean age of 31.93. All the participants were male in the Generation Y group. Among 277 participants, over 79% reported that they were Caucasian; approximately 7% reported that they were African American; over 6% reported that they were Asian American; over 6% reported that they were Hispanic; and over 1% reported that they were mixed race.

Exploratory Factor Analyses (EFA) were conducted for multi-item scales. Content validity was examined before finalizing the factor structures for all variables. Reliability of different constructs were examined using Cronbach's  $\alpha$ : self-esteem scale  $\alpha = 0.94$ ; body dissatisfaction-weight scale  $\alpha = 0.92$ ; body dissatisfaction-muscles scale  $\alpha = 0.83$ ; body dissatisfaction-height scale  $\alpha = 0.83$ ; clothing image avoidance scale  $\alpha = 0.89$ ; and clothing purchase behavior scale  $\alpha = 0.82$  (see Table 1). Following the EFA, correlation analyses among constructs were conducted (see Table 2). As the correlation results indicated that several constructs were correlated, multicollinearity test was also conducted. The diagnostic analyses indicated no multicollinearity among the various constructs examined in this study. The variance inflation factor (VIF) for relevant regression models ranged from 1.09 to 1.95, and the tolerance values ranged from 0.51 to 0.92, and thus, fell within the acceptable ranges identified by Hair et al. (1995). Furthermore, discriminant validity was conducted for the two outcome variables—clothing image avoidance and clothing purchase behavior by comparing Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores with shared variances (Fornell and Larcker 1981) to ensure that no items were cross-loaded. The shared variance between the two

**Table 1 Results of the exploratory factor analyses and related descriptive statistics**

Items	Item loading	Cronbach's $\alpha$	Mean	SD
<i>Self-esteem</i>		0.94	5.31	1.28
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	0.89			
At times I think I am no good at all <sup>a</sup>	0.86			
I feel that I have a number of good qualities	0.76			
I am able to do things as well as most other people	0.78			
I feel I do not have much to be proud of <sup>a</sup>	0.85			
I feel useless at times <sup>a</sup>	0.82			
I feel that I'm a person of worth	0.79			
I wish I could have more respect for myself <sup>2</sup>	0.67			
All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure <sup>a</sup>	0.86			
I take a positive attitude toward myself	0.88			
<i>Body dissatisfaction-weight</i>		0.92	3.45	1.46
I think I have too much fat on my body	0.84			
Eating sweets, cakes, or other high calorie food has made me feel fat or weak	0.83			
I have felt excessively large and rounded in my body shape	0.86			
My reflection (e.g., in a mirror or window) has made me feel badly about my size or shape	0.86			
I have been so worried about my body size or shape that I feel the need to go on a diet	0.87			
I have felt that I am way too focused on my body size or shape	0.70			
I have been particularly self-conscious about my body size or shape when in the company of other people	0.84			
<i>Body dissatisfaction-Muscles</i>		0.83	3.74	1.23
I think I have too little muscle on my body	0.79			
I feel satisfied with my overall body build. <sup>a</sup>	0.83			
I have felt like my muscle tone was way too low	0.88			
Seeing muscular men has made me feel badly about my own body size or shape	0.76			
<i>Body dissatisfaction-Height</i>		0.83	3.26	1.63
I wish I were taller	0.93			
I am satisfied with my height. <sup>a</sup>	0.93			
<i>Clothing image avoidance</i>		0.89	3.46	1.44
I avoid certain clothes that make me look chunky	0.74			
I wear certain clothes that I do not like to make my body shape look better	0.70			
I wear clothes that help put less emphasis on certain part(s) of my body	0.88			
I wear clothes that are larger to try to cover up my problem areas	0.90			
I wear clothes that will divert attention from my weight	0.91			
I don't wear "revealing" clothes (e.g., fitted clothing)	0.69			
I wear loose clothes to look bigger	0.57			
<i>Clothing purchase behavior</i>		0.82	5.34	1.03
I buy clothing that fits my personal style	0.83			
I buy clothing that is aesthetically appealing to me	0.85			
I buy clothing that expresses my personal identity	0.82			
I buy clothing that fits me and looks good on me without following fashion trends specifically	0.72			

All items were measured with a seven-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree)

<sup>a</sup> Reverse-coded items



**Table 2 Correlation analyses**

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Self-esteem	–					
2. Body dissatisfaction-weight	– .41**	–				
3. Body dissatisfaction-muscles	– .48**	0.59**	–			
4. Body dissatisfaction-height	– .22**	0.26**	.26**	–		
5. Clothing image avoidance	– .36**	0.76**	.48**	0.24**	–	
6. Clothing purchase behavior	.29**	– 0.17*	– 0.07**	– 0.08	– .15	–

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ **Table 3 Simple regression analysis for self-esteem predicting body dissatisfaction**

	<i>df</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i> -value
Dependent variable: body dissatisfaction-weight Self-esteem	271	0.17	55.70***	– 0.41	– 7.46***
Dependent variable: body dissatisfaction-muscles Self-esteem	271	0.26	83.11***	– 0.48	– 9.12***
Dependent variable: body dissatisfaction-height Self-esteem	273	0.05	13.79***	– 0.22	– 3.71***

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ 

variables was not greater than the AVEs of each construct, which provided evidence of discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

Three sets of simple regression were conducted with (a) body dissatisfaction-weight, (b) body dissatisfaction-muscles, and (c) body dissatisfaction-height as the dependent variables and self-esteem as an independent variable to test Hypothesis 1a, 1b, and 1c stating the negative relationship between self-esteem and body dissatisfaction. The overall model predicting body dissatisfaction-weight was significant ( $R^2 = 0.17$ ,  $F = 55.70$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and the result showed that self-esteem negatively influenced body dissatisfaction-weight ( $\beta = -0.41$ ,  $t = -7.46$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The overall model predicting body dissatisfaction-muscles was significant ( $R^2 = 0.26$ ,  $F = 83.11$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and the result showed that self-esteem negatively influenced body dissatisfaction-muscles ( $\beta = -0.48$ ,  $t = -9.12$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The overall model predicting body dissatisfaction-height was also significant ( $R^2 = 0.05$ ,  $F = 13.79$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and the result showed that self-esteem negatively influenced body dissatisfaction-height ( $\beta = -0.22$ ,  $t = -3.71$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 1a, 1b, and 1c were supported (see Table 3).

Multiple regression was conducted to test Hypothesis 2a, 2b, 2c, 3a, 3b, and 3c. First, multiple regression was conducted to examine whether the dimensions of body dissatisfaction (i.e., body dissatisfaction-weight; body dissatisfaction-muscles; and body dissatisfaction-height) would influence clothing image avoidance when considering all three factors concurrently. The result showed that the overall model was significant ( $R^2 = 0.58$ ,  $F = 118.89$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and only body dissatisfaction weight positively influenced clothing image avoidance ( $\beta = 0.71$ ,  $t = 14.16$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Both body dissatisfaction-muscles ( $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $t = 1.12$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and body dissatisfaction-height ( $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $t = 1.23$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) did not influence clothing image avoidance when controlling for other body dissatisfaction factors. Thus, hypothesis 2a was supported, and hypothesis 2b and 2c were not supported. Second, multiple regression was conducted using clothing purchase behavior as

the dependent variable and body dissatisfaction-weight, body dissatisfaction-muscles, and body dissatisfaction-height as independent variables. The results showed that the overall model was significant ( $R^2=0.04$ ,  $F=3.57$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), and only body dissatisfaction-weight influenced clothing purchase behavior in a negative fashion ( $\beta=-0.21$ ,  $t=-2.77$ ,  $p<0.05$ ); and both body dissatisfaction-muscles ( $\beta=0.06$ ,  $t=0.37$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), and body dissatisfaction-height ( $\beta=-0.06$ ,  $t=-0.89$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) did not influence clothing purchase behavior when controlling for other body dissatisfaction factors (see Table 4). Therefore, hypothesis 3a was partially supported and hypothesis 3b and hypothesis 3c were not supported.

## Discussion

The current study investigated the relationships among self-esteem, body dissatisfaction with three dimensions (i.e., weight, muscles, and height), and clothing-related behavioral responses (i.e., clothing image avoidance and clothing purchase behavior) among Generation Y males. Findings of this study were consistent with previous research that presented the negative relationship between self-esteem and body dissatisfaction (e.g., Green & Pritchard 2003; Grossbard et al. 2009). Among the three varied dimensions, body dissatisfaction-muscles was mostly influenced by self-esteem ( $\beta=-0.54$ ), which mirrors the finding from Bergeron and Tylka (2007). The different strengths of the relationships between self-esteem and body dissatisfaction-weight, body dissatisfaction-muscles, and body dissatisfaction-height further supported Chattaraman et al. (2013), which suggested men's concerns toward their bodies could be more complex and they have different perceptions toward different body parts of theirs.

The findings further revealed that having those body concerns influenced their clothing-related behavioral responses. Specifically, body dissatisfaction-weight positively influenced clothing image avoidance when controlling for body dissatisfaction-muscles and body dissatisfaction-height, which demonstrated that weight was the major source in the participants' clothing image avoidance. That is, the participants avoided certain clothes to conceal their body parts mostly when they were highly dissatisfied with their weight. The findings of the present study supports previous finding that men who are unhappy with their weight attempt to utilize clothing as a way of concealing their

**Table 4 Multiple regression analysis for body dissatisfaction predicting clothing image avoidance and clothing purchase behavior**

	<i>df</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i> -value
Dependent variable: clothing Image avoidance	267	0.58	118.89 <sup>***</sup>		
Body dissatisfaction-weight				0.71	14.16 <sup>***</sup>
Body dissatisfaction-muscles				0.06	1.12
Body dissatisfaction-height				0.05	1.23
Dependent variable: clothing purchase behavior	270	0.04	3.57 <sup>*</sup>		
Body Dissatisfaction-weight				-0.21	-2.77 <sup>*</sup>
Body dissatisfaction-muscles				0.06	0.37
Body dissatisfaction-height				-0.06	-0.89

\* $p<0.05$ , \*\* $p<0.01$ , \*\*\* $p<0.001$

dissatisfied body parts (Frith and Gleeson 2004). As previous research has shown that 77% of men desired to lose weight; whereas, only 16% of men desired to gain weight, it explains that the majority of men are concerned about their body being overweight (McArdle and Hill 2009).

The symbolic completion theory suggests that individuals who desire to enhance their self-identities and to make themselves feel better will do so through their clothing choices (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). The results of the study further revealed that when felt dissatisfied with their bodies or threatened in their identities, Generation Y men would choose to strengthen their self-identifies by wearing certain types of clothing as symbols to reinforce their self-identities to others. The findings supported both Walker et al. (2009) and Chattaraman et al. (2013) that men avoided revealing clothes when they were unhappy with their body and preferred to wear loose fitting clothes rather than fitted clothes, which may help them conceal their dissatisfied body parts that they would not like to reveal. The findings also supported previous study that body dissatisfaction positively influenced an individual's concerns toward clothing fit and size and his/her overall appearance (Kim and Damhorst 2010; Shin and Baytar 2014), which led to greater engagement in clothing image avoidance behaviors. Similar to women, when men were unhappy with their body, specifically with their weight, they avoided certain types of clothes to temporarily feel happier with their body features. Likewise, avoidance coping behaviors could help explain this finding as men might avoid certain clothing that could stimulate their concerns about their bodies as a way to cope with the situation (Carver et al. 2011).

Contrary to the hypothesized direction, the findings demonstrated that the participants were less likely to purchase clothing that reflect their personal styles when they were unhappy with their weight. The finding can be supported by Barry (2015) that when men had negative attitudes toward their bodies, they did not enjoy shopping for clothes as much because they had difficulties finding clothes that fit. Both the relationships of clothing purchase behavior with body dissatisfaction-muscles and body dissatisfaction-height were not significant when controlling for other aspects of body dissatisfaction. One possible reason could be that men might not consider clothing as a helpful tool to make them feel better about their height. Although men may be willing to manage their appearances to feel complete about themselves, as suggested by the symbolic completion theory, they may not be able to manage their appearance regarding their heights because height is usually not changeable. Even though there are ways to change people's perceptions about how tall a person looks (e.g., certain hairstyles), those approaches may not help as much. Although previous research has suggested that clothing helps individuals compensate for how they feel (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1981), this study did not confirm the finding on the basis of men's dissatisfaction toward their muscularity or height. Men may utilize other products such as shoes, accessories, automobiles, and electronics (Solomon 1983) to convey their self-identities instead of trying different clothing styles.

### **Conclusions and implications**

The study expands the understanding of the relationships among body dissatisfaction and other examined variables (i.e., self-esteem, clothing image avoidance and clothing purchase behavior) with three specific theoretical implications. First, to the researchers'

knowledge, this study was the first to investigate the relationships among self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and clothing behaviors using the Generation Y male sample as there is very little body image-related research focusing on the Generation Y consumers. Findings suggested that Generation Y men's perceptions toward their bodies influenced their clothing-related behavioral responses. Second, this study conceptualized body dissatisfaction into the three varied dimensions and identified different influences in men's clothing related behavioral responses. The examination of men's body dissatisfaction regarding weight, muscularity, and height provided better understanding of men's dissatisfaction toward their body. Third, the findings of this study provided new information on clothing-related behavioral responses pertaining to body dissatisfaction among men considering noticeably limited research based upon men's clothing related behavioral responses.

The findings provide managerial implications for the industry, as well. First, menswear designers should consider that men's concerns toward their bodies may influence types of clothing that they avoid purchasing or wearing. The designers could create clothes with more assorted styles and patterns to meet the psychological needs of men who are unhappy with their bodies, especially weight. Furthermore, menswear marketers could provide fashion styling tips to educate male consumers who are unhappy with their weights to help them better manage their appearance and feel more confident. Second, the findings of this study reflect dressing tips commonly seen in the media. For instance, Cassie (2012) suggested that men who are dissatisfied with their weight should avoid wearing baggy pants, jacket with long sleeves, and pants with longer hems that pass their heels that make them look heavier, which are helpful suggestions for men who have weight concerns. Similarly, it is suggested for them to avoid large and noticeable patterns which accentuate their body shapes and they should wear a dark color top and bottom with the same color for the single-color effect if they desire to look thinner (Boye and Fischbein 2015). Likewise, considering the growth of men's general interests in fashion and their tendency to express self-identities through their dresses and styling (Kestenbaum 2017), the findings of this study confirm the important roles of both menswear designers and marketers to cater more appropriate designs for these Generation Y male consumers who are concerned about their bodies, specifically with their weight.

Although this study provides diverse implications, the study further proposes the following suggestions for future research. As this study merely investigated male population in the Generation Y group, it will be beneficial for future research to conduct more diverse age groups (e.g., Generation Z) to compare the differences of the degree of men's body dissatisfaction and its influence on their clothing related behavioral responses. Further, online subscription services such as Stitch-Fix provide clothing assortments that tailor to different body sizes and personal styles for men, women and kids. It would be valuable to examine the relationship of self-esteem and body dissatisfaction among male consumers in the context of online subscription services in future research.

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The current research is based upon JS thesis work that was advised by RNY. Thus, both authors contributed to each and every section. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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**Availability of data and materials**

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

**Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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