

The Influence of Makeup on Individual Self-Identity: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Makeup has increasingly become an important factor affecting self-identity and social interaction among college students. With the popularity of social media and the rise of the beauty industry, more and more young people are using makeup to shape their social image and express their personalities. The purpose of this study is to explore the Chinese universities students' makeup habits, their influence on social interaction and self-identity, and how these are affected by cultural background. This study used a mixed-methods approach to collect qualitative and quantitative data from 66 respondents, and SPSS and thematic analysis were used to analyze the data. The results show that makeup has a significant correlation with social interaction and self-identity, affecting college students' personality expression, self-esteem, and group belonging. Research has an important impact on young people at a critical stage of identity, helping them to better use makeup as a tool to explore and express themselves, increasing their mental health and self-esteem.

Keywords: Makeup, Cultural Norm, Social Interaction, Self-Identity

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1. Introduction

In today's diversified and visual-driven society, makeup is more than a representation of external beauty; it affects an individual's mental expression and social interaction at a deeper level. The use of makeup as an expression of religious belief and social status could date back to ancient times. However, the meaning of makeup between the cultures has significantly changed as time has passed. From a cross-cultural and historical viewpoint, both males and females participate in the use of makeup as a tool for body enhancement and individual modification (Davis & Arnocky, 2020). Nowadays, makeup is a common tool utilized by people, especially young people, to help them change their appearances and assist them with self-expression. In the key stage of development, young people are experiencing the process of physical and mental growth. At this stage, appearance has an important impact on the establishment of self-image and self-confidence, and makeup also plays an important role in the process of self-exploration.

Become a widely accepted technique, research has shown that makeup is associated with ambiguous social perception. People who have makeup are usually seen as attractive and enthusiastic (Schneider & Moro, 2022). Through improving their external image, individuals can remodel their social charm and engage in further internal exploration. If makeup is proven to be intrinsically motivated and seen as a regulator of creativity, mastery, and social relationships, then it has more potential as a regulator of mood and self-esteem (Tran et al., 2020). Nevertheless, there is also the claim that makeup can cause self-objectification, leading to low self-esteem. The effect of makeup on self-identity will be diverse; it is not binary and the relationship of makeup with self-identity needs to be further explored.

To fill this gap, this study aims to explore the effects of makeup on self-identity, self-expression, and mental health, as well as how it shapes personality formation and self-esteem. Studying the utility behind makeup provides insights into the complex effects of makeup on self-identity and provides guidance for the mental health and identity development of college students.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study aims to explore the influence of makeup on Chinese universities students' self-identity. Figure out how the Chinese universities students makeup habits are affected by the culture, how makeup impact their mental, and how makeup can be used as a tool for self-identity. Specifically, this study will be guided by the following research questions:

- 1.1.1 How do cultural affect an individual's makeup habit?
- 1.1.2 What is the psychological impact of makeup on individuals' identity formation and social interactions?
- 1.1.3 How may makeup be used as a tool for identity construction and self-expression?

1.2 Research Objectives

- 1.2.1 To explain the participants' s awareness and habits to makeup and occasions and how it be influenced by the social culture;
- 1.2.2 To assess the psychological impact related to makeup including the expectation of beauty and the relation the makeup with self-regard;

1.2.3 To determine makeup helps with identity building, self-expression, and social interaction.

1.3 Hypothesis

The following hypothesis will conduct this study. There is no relationship between makeup and self-identity.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is significant to the following:

Students:

This study can provide students with a better understanding of makeup application and how to use makeup as a tool to enhance their self-identity. This also increase their psychological well-being and self-esteem by assisting students in making more deliberate decisions about how they express their personalities and explore who they are.

Educators:

Educators can reduce stereotypes about makeup because of the finding of this study. Make it easier to meet students' needs and design more inclusive educational environments to protect students' mental health and help them with creativity and self-exploration.

Makeup producers:

Help producers better understand the consuming preferences of college students as an essential consumer group. Assist producers in positioning new marketing strategies and carrying out product innovation in response to market demand.

1.5 Definition of Terms

Makeup-refers to cosmetics applied to the skin to change appearance or emphasize features.

Self-expression-refers to a process in which individuals express their thoughts, feelings and characteristics through speech, behavior, and appearance.

Self-identity-refers to individual's cognition and understanding of himself, including his identification with his values, characteristics, sense of belonging, and self-esteem.

Psychological impact- refers to the influence of external factors on individual mental and behavior.

2. Literature Review

The following Literature Review contains different relative studies on the topic of the influence of makeup on individual self-identity.

2.1 Cultural Norms and Beauty Standards

Cultural norms refer to behaviors and values that are commonly recognized and observed by social groups, and beauty standards are generally recognized physical characteristics and individual figures of social groups (Davis & Arnocky, 2020). These concepts are influenced by a variety of factors, such as the social group, cultural traditions, social media, and commercial advertisements. Cultural norms and beauty standards jointly shape individuals' cognitive behavior of appearance, affect their understanding and shaping of their own image, and then affect their behavior of appearance enhancement. Makeup can be seen as an important form of appearance enhancement (Davis & Arnocky, 2020).

With the popularity and development of social media networks, social media makes a great difference in shaping cultural norms and beauty standards. Social media is not only a channel for information dissemination but also a producer of aesthetic forms. On social media, the ideal appearance is seen as part of social activities, and users participate in the sharing of the ideal appearance through social media, thus influencing cultural norms and beauty standards (Sari et al., 2022). By promoting specific looks and lifestyles, the trends and influencers that are prevalent on social media platforms set new standards that are often associated with beauty standards and become what users aspire to. This phenomenon has prompted users, especially women, to tend to modify their appearance to fit these new and changing standards.

Makeup commercial advertising is also an important factor in participating in beauty standards, emphasizing appearance and the external self and shaping the standard of beauty as an idealized body image that must be achieved. Meanwhile, women's personal makeup practices tend to emphasize intrinsic value and the connection between inner emotions and outward appearance; makeup advertising focuses narrowly on external evaluations. Women adapt to individual needs by changing the messages they receive from advertising, forming dynamic interactions with the cultural norms and beauty standards imposed by advertising (McCabe et al., 2017). As a ritualized practice, makeup is influenced by advertising and cultural norms and actively participates in the construction of cultural norms.

2.2 Makeup Practices

Makeup Practice From an Evolutionary Perspective. There's constant competition to look like the perfect companion, and makeup can be considered a significant way to improve looks and promote oneself in order to increase one's own value as a potential mate (Davis & Arnocky, 2020). Under the existing cultural norms, makeup practice has gender differences; women and men adopt different strategies for appearance enhancement. Men tend to emulate traditional male role models, while women tend to emulate female teachers and celebrities (Read, 2010). Survey data show that most women have a higher rate of wearing makeup in social situations, especially when out with friends or on dates, compared to a lower rate of wearing makeup among men (Davis & Arnocky, 2020). Women usually improve their competitiveness through beauty products and services, and men through physical fitness and status. From the perspective of evolution, appearance and beauty have been prioritized in different cultures and periods. Under the heterosexual background, women and men will adjust their appearance according to the preference of the sex, thus affecting the practice of makeup.

Makeup Practice Among American Women. In the era of social media, images of women can be endlessly photographed and shared, further reinforcing the importance of appearance. However, makeup is more than just a means for women to pursue external beauty but also a way for women to seek themselves in consultation with social relationships, materiality, and commercial advertising. The American beauty standard emphasizes the external self, while the experience of American women emphasizes the practice of internal and external expression, and makeup can be used as a reflective medium (McCabe et al., 2017). Therefore, the practice of makeup as a part of identity formation brings the internal self to the external, using makeup as a tool, and produces a complete and true self. Research has shown that makeup practice helps women look healthier and more confident, meaning more professional work and greater earning potential (Nash et al., 2006). Makeup produces a sense of self-validation by connecting the exploration of external expression with an internal orientation.

2.3 Self-Perception and Identity Development

Under the cultural norm of consumerism, commercial advertisements fragment women, thus affecting women's views on themselves and society's cognition of women. Such fragmented presentation not only reduces the presentation of women as individuals, but it also shapes women's self-perception and identity development (Rocha, 2013). Female images in advertisements are often silent and one-sided, in which product advertisements try to represent women's ideas, and this phenomenon also exists in makeup practice. Women express themselves through makeup while also facing pressure to meet society's beauty standards. This contradiction leads women to constantly seek a balance between pursuing personal identity expression and adapting to social expectations.

McCabe et al. (2017) pointed out that the core meaning of makeup is to link internal self and external beauty, generate confidence in the moment of self-enhancement, and have a profound impact on the process of identity development. The practice of makeup is regarded as a symbolic carrier, an intermediary between emotion, cultural norms, and practice. Women adapt to changing social situations through makeup and prepare themselves to transform their perception of beauty into meaningful practice and self-perception. The generative sense of self-creation under the influence of time, space, and society can be seen in the makeup ceremony, which generates new entities and is expressed as new selves in the research (Bull & Mitchell, 2016). Makeup is considered a tool to aid self-perception, and the ritual of makeup is a reflective practice. In the moment of self-enhancement with makeup, women will consciously enhance their body, change self-perception, and shape identity, which will help stimulate vitality, confidence, and self-identity (McCabe et al., 2017).

In addition, the use of makeup for appearance enhancement is thought to be associated with self-objectification and may have a negative impact on self-perception and cognitive performance (Robertson et al., 2008). Anxiety, self-presentation, and compliance have been shown to be positively correlated with makeup, and makeup may be perceived as a psychological mask to cover up internal insecurities (Robertson et al., 2008). Although makeup use provides women with a tool for self-expression and identity building, the negative correlation in the study also reveals its potential side effects. This suggests that relying on makeup to promote confidence and a social image may undermine an individual's recognition and affirmation of their own intrinsic worth. Therefore, the use of makeup, while promoting self-expression and exploring self-identity, may also become a tool to objectify women and hinder deep self-exploration.

2.4 Interpersonal Relationships

The meaning and practice of makeup are influenced by cultural norms, among which interpersonal relationships also profoundly affect the practice of makeup. The pursuit of the ideal appearance is closely related to interpersonal relationships in the context of social media. By presenting images that conform to the beauty standards on social media, women seek social approval and belonging (Sari et al., 2022). The pursuit of identity and a sense of belonging is a reflection of how interpersonal relationships influence makeup application as people modify and portray their looks to build and sustain relationships. Women will change their makeup based on different interpersonal relationships to better adapt to specific relationships. Meanwhile, if women expect a social activity, they will be more interested in and attentive to the makeup ceremony. Thus obtaining higher self-interpretation and reflection (McCabe et al., 2017).

Kim and Cho (2023) stated that college students who are dissatisfied with their interpersonal relationships have also mostly accepted body dissatisfaction, and those who are dissatisfied with their bodies tend to try to decrease their body dissatisfaction through makeup management behavior. The greater the degree of dissatisfaction with their bodies, the more active they will be in their makeup management behavior. At the same time, physical self-esteem and satisfaction with one's appearance directly affect one's self-confidence and social ability. Lee and Jeong (2020) pointed out that when individuals are satisfied with their appearance, they are likely to be more confident in social interactions. Makeup can further strengthen this connection. At the same time, body awareness and body self-esteem have a significant correlation with interpersonal skills. To improve an individual's appearance and self-perception, makeup may directly affect their interpersonal skills (Lee & Jeong, 2020). Therefore, in interpersonal relationships, the self-image displayed through makeup can affect others' perceptions and reactions to the individual, thus invisibly shaping the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

2.5 Makeup as a Tool of Self-Expression

Society is generally suspicious of beauty makeup, which has been criticized as an unrealistic beauty standard disguised under the concept of self-expression (Negrin, 2000). However, Smith et al. (2020) stated from the perspective of existential philosophy that authenticity stems from self-creation, and makeup is a palette through which individuals can express their identity, emotions, and values. Self-expression provides a channel through which people who work in beauty can be seen to be free to "make up" themselves. Smith et al. (2020) emphasize that makeup is not necessarily a submission to beauty standards but a consumer's right and a self-expression of individuality. People can freely create, choose to define, and express themselves through makeup.

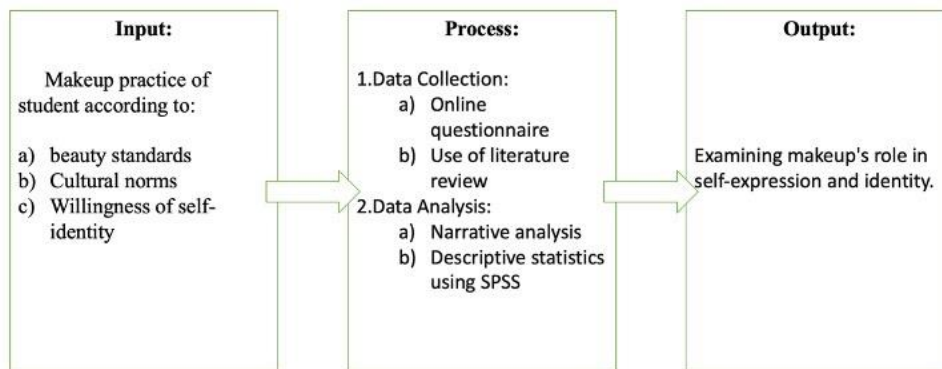
Makeup art is a form of face painting that emphasizes craftsmanship. It shows a person's ability to develop the qualities of an artwork, while the skill of applying makeup is based on an understanding of personality (Kusumadinata et al., 2024). The art of makeup can have a positive impact on the wearer as a visual medium, enhancing self-confidence and helping to express personality through non-verbal forms. It is obvious that makeup changes an individual's appearance. People who get used to makeup regularly are also affected by makeup. Makeup provides a calm space and makes people feel closer to themselves. Makeup can be an external reflection and expression of a person, and it can make people feel a sense of self-control and balance (Triolo-Rodriguez, 2023).

2.6 Identity Representation and Symbolism in Makeup Use

The Influence of Makeup on Identity Is Not a Binary Concept. Women who wore makeup in college exams had better scores than women who did not wear makeup, suggesting that makeup has an impact on academic performance through enhancing self-esteem (Palumbo et al., 2017). However, in contrast, the use of makeup is negatively correlated with social confidence and self-esteem. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) pointed out that makeup is correlated with self-objectification and has a negative impact on self-identity. The act of applying makeup is thought to be influenced by both internal motivation, which is identified as performing an activity through internal satisfaction, and external motivation, which is for separable results. When the main sources of motivation for makeup are competence, autonomy, and relevance, it is helpful for self-identity and can promote growth and health (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Makeup is closely related to interpersonal relationships and social activities, reflecting the identity tension experienced by individuals in the era of social media and the negotiation process between external beauty and intrinsic value, which can be used both as an act of self-affirmation and as a response to the requirements of beauty standards (McCabe et al., 2017). Makeup can be used as a means to show personality and identity, but this can also lead to an expression that is not consistent with your true self. Makeup may become a tool to increase self-identity, but it may also become a source of contradiction between the individual and the self. It is important to find the balance of makeup in daily life so that people can show, test, and reshape their identity in makeup, enhance social identity and adaptation, and improve mental health.

2.7 Conceptual Framework



This study adapts the IPO Model. The inputs include the makeup practices of WKU students, prevailing beauty standards, cultural norms, and the personal willingness to express self-identity through makeup. The process phase encompasses literature review, online questionnaire includes qualitative and quantitative research, and data analysis includes narrative analysis and SPSS using. The output is an examination makeup's role in self-expression and identity. The IPO model framework aims to describe how makeup as a means for young Chinese individuals to express themselves and shape their identities.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

According to the research problem, this study will investigate how the makeup habits of students at Chinese universities affect their self-identity. This study used mixed-method research, which blends qualitative and quantitative methods, to analyze the research object in a comprehensive way. Quantitative approach of this study uses structured questionnaires to collect data on students' makeup habits and the impact they believe makeup has on aspects includes self-esteem, confidence, and social interaction. The quantitative approach can contribute to quantifying the relationship between makeup and self-identity variables and providing statistical evidence. The Qualitative approach will complement quantitative data by providing depth and insights into how individuals perceive and express the makeup experience as it relates to their identity and social interactions. For the sampling strategy, the target population is the students at Chinese university. Researcher will use convenient sampling, and the sampling approach is an online questionnaire survey. The researcher will collect, display, and analyze the data at an objective level to make sure the result is reliable.

3.2 Respondent and Sampling

The target population for this study is the students at Chinese universities. The research will distribute at least 60 questionnaires and conduct data analysis. This sample size is chosen to ensure data to perform meaningful quantitative analysis while remaining manageable for qualitative follow-ups. Data will be collected through an online questionnaire survey, which is an effective method for reaching respondents within the university setting. To ensure feasibility in data collection, the researcher will select respondents using convenience sampling, which will be conducted through an online questionnaire survey.

3.3 Research Instruments

The questionnaire for this study is constructed by incorporating specific questions from surveys previously developed by Nario-Redmond et al. (2004) and Korichi et al. (2009), supplemented with self-made questions to address specific aspects of the research. The questionnaire includes closed-ended and open-ended questions such as single-choice, scale selection choices, and short-answer questions. There are three different parts in the questionnaire: the first part is makeup usage habits; the second part is cultural and social influences; and the third part is the psychological impact of makeup.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to explore the influence of makeup on self-identity and the relationship between them, this study will adopt descriptive statistics for objective analysis. The data sources are students from Chinese universities, and the data will be impartially examined in order to support the purpose of the study. For quantitative data, researcher will use SPSS as a tool for analysis to comprehensively analyze the correlation and influence between the two variables. For qualitative data, it will be coded based on full understanding. Using data analysis, examine how cultural factors affect an individual's makeup habit (objective 1). Measure the psychological impact of makeup on individuals' identity formation and social interactions (objective 2). Describe how makeup can be used as a tool for identity construction and self-expression (objective 3).

3.5 Establishing Quality

In order to obtain suitable samples quickly, convenient sampling was used in this study to select eligible participants from an easily accessible group of young adults. In terms of the content of the questionnaire, the design is partly clear, and the depth of the questions is gradually progressive, and the questionnaire does not contain directional questions to avoid bias. Also, an online questionnaire can better protect the anonymity of respondents and make the data more objective. Quantitative questions are constructed by validity questionnaires to accurately measure the data, such as cultural influence and self-esteem, while qualitative questions can better understand the respondents' complex thoughts.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

In the process of this study, some limitations will be noticed. The study just focuses on the students from Chinese universities so the results may not be applicable to other groups of people. Also, the data collected by the study is self-reported, which can introduce bias. While using questions from established surveys, the questionnaire combines with self-made questions that can influence the measurement quality. Additionally, this experiment assumes that all students are from China and have the same cultural background, which may not be rigorous enough given that students from various provinces may have diverse backgrounds.

3.7 Ethical Issues

The ethical principles of this study are well respected, focused by researcher in every process of research. All respondents participate in the study voluntarily and know that they can withdraw at any time without any consequences. Respondents' data will be anonymous and fully protected, and respondents are aware of how the data will be used. Researcher will not use the data for purposes other than academic research and will not provide respondents' private information to others.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Basic Information of the Respondents

As we can see in Table 1, the demographic distribution of the 66 respondents from Chinese universities. 87.88% of respondents were aged between 18 and 25, 9.09% were aged between 0 and 18, and 3.03% were older than 25. This age group is closely related to the study and includes a majority of young people at a critical stage of identity and social interaction. Of the 66 respondents, 19.7% were male, 78.79% were female, and 1.52% were of other genders. The data is enriched by importing men and other genders, which is rarely discussed when it comes to makeup. There is a big difference in the frequency of makeup: many respondents (43.94%) often wear makeup, a small number of respondents (4.55%) wear makeup every day, which is in contrast to 18.18% who never wear makeup, 10.61% who almost never wear makeup, and 22.73% of respondents who rarely wear makeup.

Table 1: The Basic Information of the Respondents

Category	Type	Frequency	Percentage
School	Chiese universities	66	100%
Gender	Male	13	19.70%
	Female	52	78.79%
	Others	1	1.52%
Makeup Frequency	Never	12	18.18%
	Almost Never	7	10.61%
	Seldom	15	22.73%
	Often	29	43.94%
	Everyday	3	4.55%

4.2 Cultural Effect on Makeup

4.2.1 The Impact of Gender Norms on Makeup

Based on Table 2, 54.55% of respondents believed that gender norms have no significant impact on makeup frequency, which means more than half of respondents from WKU thought gender expectations and norms did not have a significant impact on them. 30.3% of respondents thought gender norms increased their makeup frequency; 9.09% of respondents thought gender norms did not encourage them to try makeup; and 4.55% of respondents thought gender norms reduced the frequency of their use of makeup. Gender norms had an enormous impact on a minority, with 1.52% of respondents saying they had significantly increased makeup frequency and even encouraged them to wear makeup every day. The different findings highlighted the complex effects of gender norms on an individual's makeup, with a significant number of people believing that gender norms in the current cultural context would somewhat reduce or increase how often they wear makeup.

Table 2: Gender Norms Effect on Makeup

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Let you never try makeup/no idea of makeup	6	9.09%
Reduce the amount of makeup you wear	3	4.55%
No significant impact	36	54.55%
Increase the number of times you wear makeup/make you think that some occasions must require makeup	20	30.30%
Drastically increase the amount of makeup you wear/make you think that you need makeup in your daily life	1	1.52%

4.2.2 Cultural Background of Makeup

Table 3 showed that 46.97% of respondents believed that cultural attitudes were neutral and objective, while 33.33% thought that cultural attitudes were relatively conservative, and 1.52% considered them too conservative. Additionally, 15.05% of respondents believed that cultural attitudes were relatively radical, and 3.03% thought they were overly radical. These opposing attitudes reflected the diverse perceptions influenced by cultural attitudes from different perspectives, emphasizing the complexity of makeup as a cultural product.

Table 3: Perceived Cultural Attitudes Toward Makeup

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Too conservative, think daily makeup is not correct	1	1.52%
Relatively conservative, only accepts daily light makeup, criticizing heavy makeup/creative makeup	22	33.33%
Objective and neutral	31	46.97%
Relatively radical, encourage specific occasions or daily life makeup	10	15.05%
Overly aggressive, encourage makeup under any circumstances	22	3.03%

4.2.3 Beauty Standards and Appearance Anxiety

The majority of respondents thought that beauty standards had an impact on their appearance anxiety, among which 31.82% thought it was a normal influence and 45.45% thought it was a relatively important influence. 6.06% of respondents considered it to be very important. However, 10.61% and 6.06% of the respondents considered it to be relatively unimportant or not important at all. The data suggest that cultural norms of beauty standards have an effect on the majority, increasing their appearance anxiety and possibly influencing their self-perception and makeup choices.

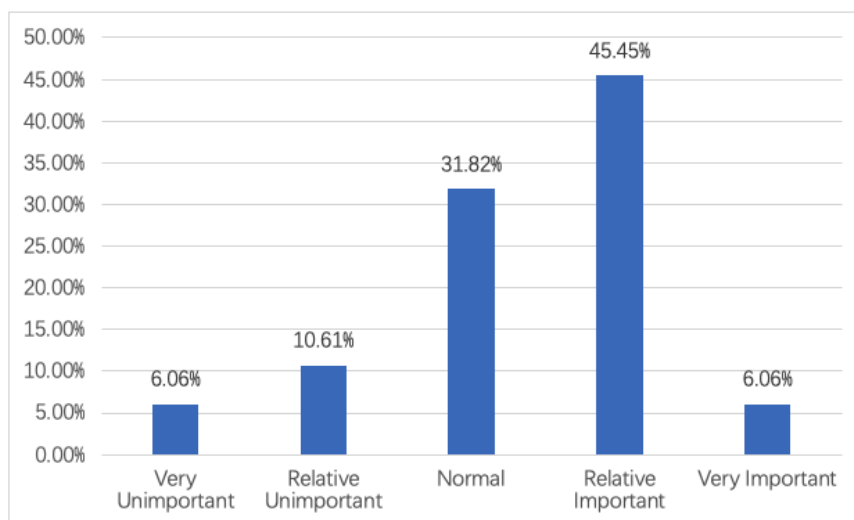


Figure 1: Influence of Beauty Standards on Appearance Anxiety

4.3 Psychological Impact of Identity Formation and Social Interaction

Correlations between makeup frequency, confidence, and social factors were examined to examine bivariate relationships. As can be observed from Table 4, the results show that the makeup frequency has a significant impact on social interaction and identity formation ($r = .56^{**}$, $p < .005$). This study used a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 is “strongly disagree” and 5 is “strongly agree.” The average score of respondents for their tendency to wear makeup in formal settings was 4.44, indicating that people are more likely to wear makeup in formal settings to help with image management and confidence. Among the approval groups, the average rating for belonging was 3.8 And the average score of the respondents' increased self-confidence when wearing makeup was 3.94. This suggests that makeup also plays a positive role in people’s integration into the group, and enhance people's self-confidence.

Table 4: Correlation Between Makeup Frequency and Confidence and Social Attractive (N=66)

Makeup	Identity Formation and Social Interaction Confidence and Social Attractive
Makeup Frequency	.56**

* $p < .005$

4.4 Hypothesis Test

H₀: There Is No Relationship Between Makeup and Self-Identity.

The results in Table 5 show that there is a significant positive correlation between makeup frequency and self-identity construction and expression ($r = .71^{**}$, $p < .005$). This strong correlation suggests that the more often participants wore makeup, the more positive effects they felt in terms of their self-identity construction and personal expression. This finding strongly contradicts the study's original hypothesis (H₀) that “there is no relationship between makeup and self-identification.” Therefore, the study rejected the null hypothesis and confirmed that makeup behavior is not only an appearance modification but also an important factor affecting an individual’s self-identity and self-exploration. This study provides an empirical basis for further exploring the impact of makeup on individual psychology and also provides a basis for the development of relevant educational interventions and support services.

Table 5: Correlation Between Makeup and Self-Identity (N=66)

Makeup	Self-Identity Identity Construction and Self-Expression
Makeup Frequency	.71**

* $p < .005$

4.5 The Multiple Effects of Makeup and Individual Identity

4.5.1 Makeup As the Expression of Personality

In the open question of how makeup enhances your identity, respondents generally believe that makeup is not only a reflection of external beauty, but also an expression of personality and social identity. Many respondents mentioned that makeup reflects their “personality” and “attitude”, and even helps them better “integrate” into social circles with shared interests. This demonstrates that makeup is not merely about appearance but also a means of expressing one's personality and social identity. Other responses emphasized how makeup “enhances identity and personality”, suggesting that makeup helps individuals more clearly define and showcase their identity, both socially and culturally.

4.5.2 Factors That Affect Makeup

From a long-term perspective, the reasons why participants changed their makeup style reflected the role of makeup in emotional expression and reflection of mental states. Some respondents mentioned that they change their makeup style because they are “in a good mood”. This highlights the importance of makeup as a tool for personal expression and emotional expression. Other respondents noted that they changed their makeup style because they found it “novel and wanted to try it”, reflecting makeup's role as a means of self-exploration and experimenting with different self-images. Notably, some responses highlighted a shift in makeup style to break away from aesthetics “dictated by the male gaze”, opting instead for styles that are more “creative” and aligned with their own “outfit, mood, and attitude”. These responses reveal that makeup is not just about pursuing beauty but also serves as an expression of gender identity and cultural resistance. These responses reflect that makeup, as a multi-functional cultural tool, has an important impact on individuals' self-expression, social interaction, and emotional and psychological states.

5. Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study was conducted primarily to: (1) examine the frequency of college students wearing makeup; (2) explore the cultural factors that affect the frequency of makeup; (3) examine the psychological impact of makeup on self-identity, especially in terms of self-confidence and social attraction; and (4) explore the role of makeup in self-expression and its cultural meaning.

The survey was completed by 66 Chinese universities students, the majority of whom were female and mostly between the ages of 18 and 25. The researcher used an online questionnaire to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The findings show that cultural norms greatly influence an individual's makeup choices. Moreover, the frequency of makeup was positively associated with increased personal confidence and social attractiveness, confirming the idea that makeup has a significant impact on an individual's self-esteem and social perception. And makeup is not only a tool to enhance the appearance but also a means to display personality and emotion.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the correlation analysis between college students' makeup frequency and personal identity construction, this study finds that makeup does significantly affect students' self-identity and social interaction. The results showed that an increased frequency of makeup was positively associated with increased confidence and social attractiveness reported by students. In addition, makeup, as a cultural practice, reflects social and cultural standards and also provides a platform for individuals to display and reshape their self-image. Therefore, the null hypothesis of the study was rejected, and there is a significant association between makeup and self-identity. Through this study, the researcher calls for educational programs to pay more attention to the interaction between makeup and personal identity and how this relationship affects young people's mental health and social adjustment.

5.3 Recommendation

This study explores the relationship between makeup and the construction of college students' personal identities, finding that makeup not only enhances students' self-confidence and social attractiveness but also plays an important role in personal expression and social identity and is influenced by cultural norms. While data from Chinese universities suggests a strong relationship between makeup and personal identity, more samples from diverse backgrounds should be included in the sample to improve the study's generalizability and representativeness. Further research should delve into more psychological factors and consider more data collection methods that delve into how such factors as body image and mental health interact with cosmetic behavior and feelings of personal identity. While this study primarily focuses on individual psychology, educational institutions and marketers can use these findings to investigate more beneficial approaches to marketing and teaching that are more appropriate for today's youth.

Appendix

Questionnaire Survey about Self-identity and Make-up

Participants consent: I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

1. Consent to study:

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw or refuse to answer any questions at any time without any consequences.

- I agree
- I disagree (Please skip to the end of the questionnaire and submit the answer sheet)

2. Your age is [multiple choice]

- 0-18 years old
- 18-25 years old
- 25 years old +

3. Gender: [single choice]

- Male
- Female
- Others
- Tend not to inform

4. How often do you wear makeup?

- Never
- Only wear makeup for special occasions such as ID photos or photo shoots
- Wear makeup for important daily occasions such as interviews and speeches
- Wear makeup as needed in daily life
- I wear makeup almost every day

5. Think gender norms/gender stereotypes influence your makeup is

- Let you never try makeup/no idea of makeup
- Reduce the amount of makeup you wear
- No significant impact
- Increase the number of times you wear makeup/make you think that some occasions must require makeup
- Drastically increase the amount of makeup you wear/make you think that you need makeup in your daily life

6. Think that the cultural background norm of the attitude towards makeup is

- Too conservative, think daily makeup is not correct
- Relatively conservative, only accepts daily light makeup, criticizing heavy makeup/creative makeup
- Objective and neutral

- Relatively radical, encourage specific occasions or daily life makeup
- Overly aggressive, encourage makeup under any circumstances

7. What do you think is the influence of adulthood on makeup

- You never try makeup/have no desire to wear makeup
- Reduce the amount of makeup you wear
- No significant impact
- You don't think you can wear makeup until you're an adult or try to do so until you're an adult
- Increase the amount of makeup you wear

8. To what extent do you think beauty standards/standards of beauty affect your appearance anxiety

Very not important 1 2 3 4 5 Very important

9. I have a positive attitude about myself

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

10. I don't like the way I look without makeup

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

11. I feel more confident when I put on makeup

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4.; 5 options

12. I tend to make up if I can on formal occasions

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

13. Think I'm attractive when I put on makeup

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

14. I use makeup to control my image, or I believe makeup can be used as a method of image control

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

15. I want to attract others when I wear makeup, or I believe I am more attractive when I wear makeup

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

16. I feel like I belong in most of my approved groups
Strongly disagree ○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Strongly agree

17. Makeup for me is a creative process
Strongly disagree ○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Strongly agree
Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

18. How do you decide which makeup to wear? [Multiple choice]
 Personal preference
 Current fashion trends
 Cultural or social norms
 Advice from friends or family
 Celebrity or influencer style
Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

19. If you want to try a new makeup style, what is your main motivation?
[Multiple choice]
 I want to see a different side of myself
 Desire to change or re-create
 Influence from the media or peers
 Mood enhancement
 Prepare for special events
 Don't like to try new makeup styles
Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

20. I feel that I can express my personality better when I wear makeup
Strongly disagree ○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Strongly agree
Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

21. I usually make up to match my mood and outfit
Strongly disagree ○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Strongly agree
Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

22.
Makeup makes me feel more like I'm a unique individual
Strongly disagree ○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Strongly agree
Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

23. Have you ever used makeup to challenge or subvert society's expectations/stereotypes about beauty or gender?
Strongly disagree ○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Strongly agree
Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

24. To what extent do you use makeup to stand out as opposed to blending in with others?

It's not a good match 1 2 3 4 5 It's a good match

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

25. To what extent do you feel your makeup choices give you control over other people's perceptions of your identity?

It's not a good match 1 2 3 4 5 It's a good match

26. Can you elaborate on what aspect of your identity do you think makeup enhances? (e.g. values, beliefs, identity, personality traits, interests, and understanding of one's role in society and culture) [Fill in the blanks] *

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

27. In the long term, have you changed your makeup style, or have you tried new makeup styles, and what are the reasons for the change? [Fill in the blank] *

Depends on question 4, number 2; 3; 4; 5 options

28. I think I can have a good way to express my personality without wearing makeup

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

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