

**What factors relate to an individual's choice to dress liberally
in an organization**

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Abstract

In recent years, interest in diversity has been on the rise, and various companies are implementing organizational changes to increase diversity. The liberalization of clothing is one example of a new organizational change movement aimed at increasing diversity within organizations. However, based on the discussion of organizational change theory, it is possible that individual employees may not necessarily choose to dress freely even if a new initiative of the liberalization of clothing is encouraged. Therefore, this paper analyzes what factors are related to whether or not individuals choose to dress freely (i.e., dress casually). The results of a questionnaire survey of 105 workers in Japan found that the supervisor's choice of casual clothing was the most significant factor correlated with whether individuals dress casually. This paper contributes to the discussion of diversity and organizational change by showing the factors associated with the transformation of individual behavior in organizations in the context of the liberalization of clothing.

Keyword: Diversity, Organizational Change, Organizational culture, The liberalization of clothing, Individual personality

7, 827 Words

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in improving diversity in companies globally. For example, diversity is seen as an important component of environmental, social, and governance investments (Bhatia & Marwara, 2022). This is because addressing diversity is important for corporate legitimacy gaining (Ye et al, 2019) and is thought to improve outcomes (Boone & Hendriks, 2009).

A similar situation has arisen in Japan. In Japan, diversity management has begun to attract attention in response to the declining workforce due to the low birthrate and aging population, changing market needs due to globalization, and diversifying values regarding employment (Hotta, 2015). The Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) has been promoting companies to engage in diversity management by awarding the "New 100 Diversity Management Companies" since 2012 to companies that maximize the abilities of their diverse human resources and leverage them for business success¹.

In response to this trend, research on diversity has been conducted in business administration. Existing studies have considered race (Herring, 2009), LGBTQ (Ragin & Cornwell, 2001), and individual work styles (i.e., remote work) (Westbrook, 2023) as a type of diversity and have conducted various studies. Specifically, research has been carried out on how diversity can be increased (Ragin & Cornwell, 2001) and what outcomes can be achieved by increasing diversity (Boone & Hendriks, 2009).

In this context, one of the new trends in organizational transformation aimed at increasing diversity, especially in recent years, Japanese companies have been introducing free dress code policies. For example, in 2019, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation revised its rule of wearing suits as a standard practice and allowed employees to dress freely throughout the year². Other companies in various industries, including Goldman Sachs Asset Management Co. and Fujitsu Limited, have also relaxed their dress code. Some companies cite increased

diversity as the reason for their liberalization of dress codes. Shinko Corporation reports that it has allowed its employees to dress more freely due to respect for diversity³.

To create a diversity-oriented organization, Legoland has allowed its employees to have any appearance by allowing blonde hair and piercings. (Nikkei Business, 2023). In academic research, clothing is also regarded as a form of diversity. Superficial diversity (i.e., diversity based on visibly distinguishable characteristics) (Harrison et al., 2002) refers to race, gender, sexual identity, and anything else that shapes identity, including clothing (Ely & Thomas, 2001). In addition, as with the diversity management mentioned earlier, there is also an effect of liberalization of dressing, and research has shown that being able to choose what to wear for work improves self-esteem (Kim et al., 2023).

Unlike other diversity studies, however, very little research has been conducted on the liberalization of clothing. In the context of free dressing in particular, there are indeed numerous discussions of whether the liberalization of clothing promotes women's empowerment (Terjensen et al. 2009) and the acceptance of LGBTQ (Ragin and Cornwell 2001).

In general, employees do not necessarily accept new policies, even if it is conducted, and therefore, even in the case of the liberalization of clothing, it is necessary to focus on whether individual employees really choose to dress freely in the workplace. However, such a study has not yet been conducted.

Therefore, based on this research gap, this paper will investigate the research question, "What factors are related to employees dressing freely?"

Through preliminary interviews and a questionnaire survey of 105 employees of companies, we will determine what factors at the company-wide, workplace, and individual levels are associated with an individual's choice to dress freely.

The structure of this paper is as follows. The next section once again provides an overview of diversity management research, clarifies how clothing is positioned within that research, and presents the research question for this paper. In the following section, we

articulate our hypotheses, focusing respectively on the organization-wide, workplace, and individual focus. The fourth section explains the methodology, and the fifth section describes the analysis results. Finally, the sixth section provides discussion and future challenges.

2.Theoretical background

2-1.Diversity management

Diversity management is recognized as a crucial topic in the field of international business (Stahl & Maznevski, 2021) and holds significance in business administration overall (Richard, 2000). As companies expand globally, the recruitment of a diverse workforce and dealing with diverse clients have become a natural behavior of companies, and diversity is now a growing concern for investors (Bhatia & Marwara, 2022), which makes it imperative for companies to increase diversity actively. Failure to increase diversity can result in challenges in gaining legitimacy (Ye et al., 2019), placing the company at a business disadvantage. Consequently, many companies have regarded increasing diversity as a central goal.

Several studies support the idea that increasing diversity can be advantageous for companies. For instance, Belderbos et al. (2022) found that increasing international diversity in the management team positively impacts a firm's international R&D performance by leveraging diverse experiences. The prevailing belief is that increasing diversity enables the utilization of a wide range of knowledge, subsequently improving overall firm performance.

Given this context, there is an ongoing discussion on strategies to increase diversity within firms. Ragin and Cornwell (2001) contend that implementing LGBTQ-friendly policies within a company can effectively reduce discrimination against LGBTQ individuals. Terjensen et al. (2009) also propose that augmenting the representation of women on the management team will ultimately foster female advancement throughout the company. Thus, in the

corporate context, methods to promote overall diversity are discussed with a central focus on gender.

2-2. Clothes as a source of diversity

This paper addresses the way individuals dress when they work as a form of diversity.

According to Ely and Thomas (2001), clothing can be a component of diversity. Therefore, the right to dress freely is thought to increase diversity by allowing individuals to be more diverse.

This is consistent with actual corporate initiatives such as Legoland (Nikkei Business, 2023).

However, as mentioned earlier, prior research has not adequately studied whether individuals dress freely. To begin with, few management studies have focused on the liberalization of clothing, and they do not adequately address real corporate trends. Diversity studies also tend to focus on discussions of gender, and there are few studies on the liberalization of clothing.

Therefore, prior research has not sufficiently addressed how to create a situation in which individuals are free to dress as they wish.

2-3. The Position of Dress Liberalization in the Discussion of Organizational Change

Theory

In light of the above, the liberalization of clothing can be viewed as a movement to increase diversity within organizations. However, at the individual level, the trend toward dress liberalization does not necessarily mean that everyone chooses to dress freely. This is supported by discussions on the behavioral change of organizational members. Existing research suggests that even if top management issues a policy of change, it is not necessarily for employees to accept the policy and lead to a change in their behaviors (Heyden et al., 2017). This is because employees may not accept the new policy in the first place, or there may be psychological resistance or obstacles to changing behavior (Shin et al., 2012).

In actual Japanese companies, some employees have been observed who do not follow the policy of liberalization of clothing even when it is conducted. For example, although Panasonic and ITOCHU have lifted the ban on wearing jeans to work, with the aim of introducing flexible thinking rather than being bound by formalities, only about 20% actually wear jeans, which shows a difference between 40% of respondents who would like to wear jeans in business situations⁴. Some people also said they felt pressure and found them difficult to wear. In light of these real issues, it is necessary to re-discuss which employees accept the behavior of dressing freely. Based on the above, the following research question is presented in this paper.

RQ: What factors are associated with whether employees choose to dress freely?

3.Hypothesis development

This paper initiated a preliminary investigation to construct hypotheses, recognizing the need for a qualitative understanding of new events. The methodology employed closely resembled that of Knight and Cavusgil (2004), involving interviews with 10 IT firms on October 19, 2023 (1 hour) and one manufacturer on October 24, 2023 (1 hour).

From these surveys, two key observations emerged. Firstly, the term "free dress" primarily encompassed "casual wear." Employees in companies typically wore uniforms, suits, and semi-formal, or casual clothing. Uniform refers to company-prescribed clothing, such as a station attendant's clothing. Formal is the so-called business suit style clothing. Formal is clothing that is generally considered appropriate for visiting clients and dealing with visitors, such as a tie for men and a tailored jacket, midi-length skirt or straight pants for women. Semi-formal clothing, termed "office casual," included a jacket and slacks without a tie for men or a

blouse and medium-length skirt or pants for women. Casual wear covered items like polo shirts, T-shirts, hoodies, and jerseys, falling outside the semi-formal category (Timothy Franz & Norton Steven D., 2001).

Moreover, it was established that in contemporary Japan, casual clothing signified a choice to dress freely. Therefore, we defined dress liberalization as "wearing casual clothes at work". Thus, from now on, a high percentage of casual clothing will be defined as having a liberal clothing choice. Secondly, it was noted that individual behavior regarding clothing choices varied based on company-wide, workplace, and individual factors. This finding aligns with existing research on organizational change management (Esther & Mike, 2019). Therefore, the subsequent hypotheses are developed to address the factors influencing individuals' clothing choices at the company-wide, workplace, and individual levels.

3-1. Policy

3-1-1. Policy

This paper will primarily focus on the organization-wide perspective when introducing new initiatives. In the context of organizational change, the presentation of a comprehensive policy is crucial (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Ely & Thomas, 1996). Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) underscore the significance of outlining a plan or articulating a mission in the early stages of organizational change. Existing research, exemplified by Matsuda (2019), supports the idea that presenting a well-defined policy can effectively mitigate employee resistance during the promotion of new initiatives. Matsuda (2019) argues that prior explanation, clarification of vision, and information disclosure contribute to reducing resistance to change. Consequently, it can be affirmed that the presentation of policies plays a pivotal role in successfully promoting new initiatives.

In the realm of diversity, the implementation of LGBTQ-friendly policies in a company has been shown to reduce discrimination against LGBTQ (Ragin & Cornwell, 2001). Similarly, in the field of telework, explicitly stating and informing employees about the policy has been linked to increased system usage (Shirokura, 2018).

Applying these insights to the context of this paper, we hypothesize that companies with policies promoting freedom of dress are more likely to have employees dressing freely. Our preliminary survey also suggested that “employees' clothing choices are likely to change only when a liberalization policy is in place”⁵. Building on this rationale and the outcomes of our preliminary survey, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Individuals will choose to dress more liberally when there is a policy that encourages the liberalization of clothing.

3-1-2. Top Management

The pivotal role of top managers in driving organizational change has been emphasized by many scholars (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Heyden et al., 2017; Ely & Thomas, 1996). For instance, Heyden et al. (2017) discovered that when top management takes on the role of change executor, it positively influences employees' attitudes toward organizational change. Benjamin et al. (2018) also found that data from HR professionals in various industries and organizational levels revealed perceptions that 80% of successful change is due to top management involvement, and that the majority of HR management professionals believe that successful organizational change occurs primarily in a top-down, hierarchical manner.

In the realm of diversity, research suggests that increasing the representation of women in management positions can stimulate overall female advancement within the company (Terjensen et al., 2009). These researches imply that active engagement by management teams in driving change may catalyze broader organizational transformation.

Considering these findings in the context of this paper, it is hypothesized that the degree to which top management embraces a liberal dress code influences employees' willingness to dress liberally. Statements from our preliminary survey support this hypothesis, with participants noting instances such as, "Our managers wear Jinbei and move around the office, to create a supportive environment for dress liberalization."⁶ Additionally, comments such as, "If top management, including the CEO and factory manager, adopts a liberal dress code, there is a sense of encouragement for others to follow suit. Conversely, if top management does not embrace the liberalization of clothing, there is a perceived hesitation among employees to do so."⁷ Based on these insights and the voices in the preliminary survey, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: The more CEOs choose to dress liberally, the more individuals within the organization will choose to dress liberally.

3-3. Workplace-level part

Next, this paper focuses on the middle manager, the workplace supervisor. Garen & Schiemann (1978) showed that supervisors are the most influential in forming roles in an organization, and Derue & Ashford (2010) showed that for subordinates to form their roles and exist as followers, the presence of a supervisor is essential. Thus, the influence of supervisors on subordinates in an organization is significant. In particular, in terms of organizational change, McConville et al. (1999) demonstrated through a case study in Trust hospitals that middle managers have a greater influence on the organizational change process than other managers. Hyden et al. (2017) also found that middle managers play a more proactive role in organizational change than top managers. The influence of supervisors is also significant in terms of work style reform. Paola Spagnoli et al. (2021) pointed out the importance of the role of middle managers when remote working was promoted in response to COVID-19.

It is also said that psychological safety in the workplace is required for new behaviors. In driving organizational change, psychological safety is necessary because employees often try new things and go through trial and error (Amy et al. 2001). In the psychological safety in the workplace scale created by O'Donovan et al. (2020), 9 of the 19 items on the scale are related to supervisors, suggesting that one of the components of psychological safety is the supervisor and that supervisor attitudes influence whether or not an employee engages in new behaviors.

To put these in the context of this paper, if supervisors dress freely, their subordinates are also likely to dress freely. This is because it implies that the supervisors themselves, as middle managers, are participating in organizational change and providing psychological safety for their employees to dress freely. In fact, in our preliminary survey, there was a comment that "if top management does not embrace the liberalization of clothing, there is a perceived hesitation among employees to do so."⁸

Thus, our hypothesis is as follows

H3 : The more supervisors choose to dress liberally themselves, the more individuals within the organization will choose to dress liberally.

3-4. Individual part

Third, this paper focuses on personal autonomy as an individual variable. According to Edward & Richard (2000: 231), personal autonomy is defined as "the organismic desire to self-organize experience and behavior and to have activity be concordant with one's integrated sense of self (Angyal, 1965; deCharms, 1968; Deci, 1980; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999)."

We consider that personal autonomy is important in the context of the liberalization of clothing. This is because the expansion of the individual's right to dress freely can be discussed with personal autonomy. The freedom to dress, naturally, implies an increase in individual choice. Here, the increased opportunity for choices is an act of growing autonomy (Ryan &

Edward, 2017), and thus a correlation can be seen between personal discretion and personal autonomy. Therefore, this paper decided to focus on personal autonomy.

Assuming a relationship between the two, there is a positive correlation between personal autonomy and free choice of clothing. This is based on the following two lines of reasoning.

First, if personal autonomy is high, the person tends to challenge (This means "considering a life course as a way of experience gaining, readiness to act even without reliable guarantees for success, at own risk, belief that a desire for simple comfort and safety impoverishes life (Serdiuk et al. 2017: 89)"). In addition, Chirkov (2011: 611) notes that autonomous people have "the capacity of an individual to be aware of and reflect on different social and cultural constraints, pressures, and forces including, but not limited to, social roles and norms, cultural prescriptions, and the expectations of other people."

Thus, if personal autonomy is high, they may adapt to the new initiative of clothing liberalization in a challenging manner. In addition, in a preliminary interview, there is a person stated that the reason for the lack of progress in the liberalization of clothing is that "the stereotype that suits are the proper clothing has taken root in the world," and "there is a tendency for people to take it for granted that they wear suits"⁹. Therefore, it is thought that, conversely, those with low personal autonomy are more likely to have a stable mindset, choose the same clothing as before, and are not free to wear casual clothing, given that the liberalization of clothing is a trend that has started in recent years, and given that there is resistance to the liberalization of clothing among the public as mentioned above. Thus, the hypotheses are as follows:

H4: The higher the personal autonomy, the more freely the individual chooses to dress.

4.Method

4-1.Method

In October 2023, we conducted a questionnaire survey targeting employees in Japan. We conducted snowball sampling to collect responses, utilizing the networks of team members and associated individuals. While acknowledging that snowball sampling is not the ideal method, we collected the sample independently instead of using a research company due to the budget of this paper. Utilizing Google Forms, we crafted a questionnaire, the details of which are provided in the appendix, and sought responses. The outcome of this effort was the collection of 105 answers.

Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 present the survey respondents' industry, gender, company size, and age. Analysis reveals that the sample obtained is not biased towards any specific attribute. Rather, it represents a comprehensive cross-section. This result implies that the problem of sample bias stemming from snowball sampling may not be as significant as anticipated.

Table 1 Number of respondents by industry

Industry	Number	Percentage
Service	17	16.19%
Medical Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology	5	4.76%
Machinery & Electronics	6	5.71%
Finance	13	12.38%
Construction & Real estate	4	3.81%
Public Organization	10	9.52%
Natural Resources & Energy	2	1.90%
Trading & Wholesale	6	5.71%
Information & Communications & Advertising	13	12.38%
Foods	6	5.71%
Living	1	0.95%
Materials	3	2.86%
Logistics & Transportation	4	3.81%
Transportation	2	1.90%
Others	13	12.38%
Total	105	100.00%

Table 2 Number of respondents by gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	51	48.57%
Female	54	51.43%
Total	105	100.00%

Table 3 Number of respondents by company size

Company Size	Number	Percentage
Large enterprise	60	57.14%
Small-medium enterprise	45	42.86%
Total	105	100.00%

Table 4 Number of respondents by age

Age	Number	Percentage
~30	26	24.76%
31~40	22	20.95%
41~50	28	26.67%
51~	29	27.62%
Total	105	100.00%

4-2. Dependent variable: Casual clothing rate

In this paper, we gathered data on the frequency of employees wearing casual clothing during workdays in the office, excluding remote work days. Following the dressing definitions outlined in the hypotheses development section, we categorized clothing into four distinct types: uniform, formal, semi-formal, and casual. Respondents were then queried about the frequency of dressing in each category over a 10-day work period. We then calculated the ratio of days dressed casually to the total number of workdays (Casual Cloth Ratio) within the 10-day timeframe. We utilized this ratio as the dependent variable in our analysis.

4-3.Independent variables

Free dress code policy

This section asks whether a free dress code policy has been issued by the management, human resources, or general affairs department. If the answer is "YES," we marked 1.

Casual cloth ratio of CEO

In this part, we utilized the same calculation method as the individual casual cloth ratio for the casual cloth ratio of the CEO.

Casual cloth ratio of supervisor

In this part, we utilized the same calculation method as the individual casual cloth ratio for the casual cloth ratio of the supervisors.

Autonomy

According to previous research, autonomy is considered to consist of three subscales (Bekker and Van, 2006). These are "Sensitivity to others," "Capacity for managing new situations," and "Self-awareness. awareness. We defined these terms as follows. "Sensitivity to others" is "sensitivity to the opinions, wishes, and needs of others, empathy, and the capacity and need for intimacy and detachment." "Capacity for managing new situations" is "feelings in new situations, flexibility, exploratory tendencies, and reliance on familiar structures." "Self-awareness" is "the ability to be aware of one's own opinions, wishes, and needs and the ability to express them in social interactions" respectively. Therefore, we introduced three variables respectively into models¹⁰.

For "sensitivity to others," we asked 17 questions, including "I often go deeply into other people's feelings. The results showed that Cronbach's alpha was 0.808.

For "Capacity for managing new situations," we asked 6 questions, including "I quickly feel at ease in new situations. The results showed that Cronbach's alpha was 0.830.

For "Self-awareness," we asked 7 questions, including "I quickly feel at ease in new situations. The results showed that Cronbach's alpha was 0.810.

4-4. Control Variables

This paper incorporated organization-wide, workplace, and individual-level variables as control variables.

At the organization level, we controlled for company size and industry. We referred to 1 as firms with 1,000 or more employees for company size and as firms in the manufacturing industry.

For workplace-level variables, we controlled for department function and the percentage of women, representing a diversity variable. Employees in the sales and marketing department, the most common department among the respondents, were coded as 1, along with a sales dummy. Regarding the ratio of women in the workplace, we collected data on the percentage of female employees.

At the individual level, control variables included demographic and work-related factors. For gender, we used a dummy variable, referring to males as 1. For age, we categorized the respondents into four groups: 1 for individuals in their 20s, 2 for those in their 30s, 3 for those in their 40s, and 4 for individuals in their 50s or older. To control for an individual's work characteristics, we inquired about their involvement in management and physical labor, drawing from the framework proposed (Autor & Handel, 2013).

Table 1 provides a summary of the aforementioned variables.

5.Results

The descriptive statistics for the current dataset are outlined in Table 6, while the correlation table is provided in Table 7. The results of the analysis are detailed in Table 8. In this context, variables are incrementally introduced for each hypothesis, commencing with Model 1 which encompasses only control variables and concluding with the presentation of the model with all variables. Throughout the analysis, the Variance Inflation Factor remained below 5, signifying the absence of multicollinearity.

The subsequent sections sequentially assess the hypotheses. Firstly, H1 is examined using Model 2 and Model 8, wherein the free dress code policy shows a positive correlation with the dependent variable at a 0.1% significance level. However, as this correlation is not consistently observed in Model 8, H1 is partially supported. H2 is supported by Model 3, with the "Casual Cloth Ratio of CEO" positively correlated with the dependent variable at a 0.1% significance level. Nevertheless, since this correlation is not uniformly evident in Model 8, partial support for Hypothesis 2 is acknowledged. Regarding workplace-level variables, H3 is assessed across both Model 3 and Model 8. In both models, the "Casual Cloth Ratio of Supervisor" displays a positive correlation with the dependent variable at a 0.1% significance level.

Finally, individual-level variables are examined about H4, spanning Models 4 to 8. The findings reveal that among the autonomy variables, only "Sensitivity to Others" consistently exhibits a negative correlation. Consequently, H4 is only partially supported.

Table 5 Variable description

Variable	Operationalization
Dependent Variable	
Casual cloth ratio	Number of days per 10 face-to-face work days wearing casual clothing/ Number of days per 10 face-to-face work days wearing work clothes
Independent Variable	
Corporate-level	
Free dress code policy	Dummy variable = 1 if free dress code policy exists
Casual cloth ratio of CEO	Number of days per 10 face-to-face work days CEO wearing casual clothing/ Number of days per 10 face-to-face work days CEO wearing work clothes
Workplace-level	
Casual cloth ratio of supervisor	Number of days per 10 face-to-face work days supervisor wearing casual clothing/ Number of days per 10 face-to-face work days supervisor wearing work clothes
Individual-level	
Sensitivity to others	17 questions according to Bekker and Van Assen (2006)
Capacity for managing new situation	6 questions according to Bekker and Van Assen (2006)
Self-awareness	7 questions according to Bekker and Van Assen (2006)
Control Variables	
Corporate-level variables	
Company size	Dummy variable = 1 if working at large enterprises
Manufacturing dummy	Dummy variable = 1 if working at manufacturing industry
Workplace-level variables	
Sales dummy	Dummy variable = 1 if working as a sales person
Woman ratio	Number of female workers at workplace / Number of workers at workplace (%)
Individual-level variables	
Age	Qualitative variable = 1 if age under 30, 2 if age between 31 to 40, 3 if age between 41 to 50, 4 if over 51
Gender	Dummy variable = 1 if man
Management task ratio	Working hours of management tasks / Working hours (%)
Physical labor ratio	Physical working hours / working hours (%)

Table 6 Descriptive statistics

#	Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
1	Casual cloth ratio	0.262	0.376	0.000	1.000
2	Company size	0.571	0.497	0.000	1.000
3	Manufacturing dummy	0.276	0.449	0.000	1.000
4	Sales dummy	0.171	0.379	0.000	1.000
5	Woman ratio	41.500	24.200	0.000	100.000
6	Age	2.570	1.140	1.000	4.000
7	Gender	0.486	0.502	0.000	1.000
8	Management task ratio	30.200	31.300	0.000	100.000
9	Physical labor ratio	11.700	21.100	0.000	100.000
10	Free dress code policy	0.667	0.474	0.000	1.000
11	Casual cloth ratio of CEO	0.130	0.271	0.000	1.000
12	Casual cloth ratio of supervisor	0.223	0.343	0.000	1.000
13	Sensitivity to others	3.500	0.570	2.000	4.880
14	Capacity for managing new situation	3.070	0.866	1.330	5.000
15	Self-awareness	2.760	0.739	1.140	4.860

Table 7 Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Casual cloth ratio	1.000													
2 Company size	-0.168 †	1.000												
3 Manufacturing dummy	-0.240 *	0.320 **	1.000											
4 Sales dummy	-0.110	-0.117	0.115	1.000										
5 Woman ratio	0.159	-0.233 *	-0.181 †	0.013	1.000									
6 Age	-0.081	-0.174 †	-0.067	-0.006	0.250 *	1.000								
7 Gender	-0.218 *	0.149	0.167 †	0.114	-0.299 **	0.065	1.000							
8 Management task ratio	0.078	0.049	0.082	0.034	-0.005	0.448 ***	0.239 *	1.000						
9 Physical labor ratio	0.014	-0.239 *	-0.098	0.071	0.442 ***	0.103	-0.181 †	0.095	1.000					
10 Free dress code policy	0.334 ***	0.122	-0.015	0.054	-0.048	0.018	-0.121	0.095	-0.363 ***	1.000				
11 Casual cloth ratio of CEO	0.452 ***	-0.365 ***	-0.093	-0.023	-0.041	0.022	-0.081	0.154	0.000	0.123	1.000			
12 Casual cloth ratio of supervisor	0.739 ***	-0.134	-0.216 *	-0.060	0.052	-0.171 †	-0.120	0.151	-0.069	0.362 ***	0.562 ***	1.000		
13 Sensitivity to others	-0.190 †	0.093	0.036	0.079	0.049	-0.129	-0.212 *	-0.207 *	0.077	0.048	-0.184 *	-0.090	1.000	
14 Capacity for managing new situation	0.217 *	-0.016	-0.075	-0.039	-0.061	-0.315 **	-0.051	-0.139	-0.150	0.096	0.285 **	0.287 **	-0.177 †	1.000
15 Self-awareness	-0.163 †	-0.131	-0.080	-0.011	-0.040	-0.008	0.102	-0.239 *	0.102	-0.043	-0.198 *	-0.055	0.234 *	-0.336 ***

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, † $p < 0.1$

Table 8 Results

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	Coef. Std. Err.	Coef. Std. Err.	Coef. Std. Err.	Coef. Std. Err.	Coef. Std. Err.	Coef. Std. Err.	Coef. Std. Err.	Coef. Std. Err.
Company size	-0.102 0.078	-0.112 0.074 †	0.039 0.078	-0.023 0.057	-0.080 0.078	-0.092 0.078	-0.112 0.078	-0.033 0.062
Manufacturing dummy	-0.146 0.084 †	-0.151 0.079	-0.152 0.076 *	-0.031 0.061	-0.142 0.083 †	-0.136 0.083	-0.151 0.084 †	-0.039 0.060
Sales dummy	-0.092 0.095	-0.096 0.090	-0.062 0.087	-0.056 0.068	-0.068 0.094	-0.087 0.094	-0.096 0.095	-0.063 0.068
Woman ratio	0.002 0.002	0.002 0.002	0.003 0.002 †	0.001 0.001	0.002 0.002	0.002 0.002	0.002 0.002	0.001 0.001
Age	-0.080 0.036 *	-0.075 0.034 *	-0.062 0.033 †	0.008 0.028	-0.082 0.036 *	-0.062 0.037	-0.075 0.036 *	-0.003 0.028
Gender	-0.128 0.076 †	-0.111 0.073	-0.094 0.070	-0.068 0.055	-0.159 0.076 *	-0.126 0.076 †	-0.111 0.077	-0.054 0.057
Management task ratio	0.003 0.001 *	0.002 0.001 *	0.002 0.001	0.000 0.001	0.003 0.001 †	0.003 0.001 *	0.002 0.001 †	-0.001 0.001
Physical labor ratio	-0.001 0.002	-0.001 0.002	-0.001 0.002	0.000 0.001	-0.001 0.002	-0.001 0.002	-0.001 0.002	0.001 0.001
Free dress code policy (H1)		-0.064 0.077 ***						0.104 0.063 †
Casual cloth ratio of CEO (H2)			0.602 0.132 ***					0.023 0.127
Casual cloth ratio of supervisor (H3)				0.783 0.082 ***				0.726 0.104 ***
Sensitivity to others (H4)					-0.144 0.068 *			-0.101 0.051 *
Capacity for managing new situations (H4)						0.073 0.043 †		-0.031 0.034
Self-awareness (H4)							-0.064 0.050	-0.066 0.040
Adjusted R square	0.103	0.214	0.257	0.538	0.134	0.120	0.108	0.565
F	2.488*	4.144***	4.996***	14.430***	2.789**	2.573*	2.402*	10.630***

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, † $p < 0.1$

6. Discussion

Focusing on the liberalization of clothing, a diversity-related phenomenon, this paper examined factors related to whether employees choose to dress freely (dress casually) when at work, based on company-level, workplace-level, and individual-level variables. Specifically, we found correlations between the presence or absence of policy and the casualness of the CEO's clothing at the company-wide level, the casualness of the supervisor's clothing at the workplace level, and sensitivity to others at the individual level.

The first thing to note in these results is the correlation between the supervisor's clothing and the employee's clothing. The relationship between the two was stronger than the presence or absence of a policy that encouraged the liberalization of dress, or the casualness of the CEO's clothing. This indicates that whether or not an individual chooses to dress freely can be influenced not by policy or top management, but by someone close to the individual, the supervisor in the workplace. This result is consistent with research indicating that middle managers are highly important in the acceptance of organizational change by employees (Heyden et al., 2017). In particular, working clothing may be highly influenced by other people in the workplace, as it is most visible to those who work in the same workplace. That is probably why supervisors in the workplace had the most significant impact on whether people choose to dress freely.

Second, among autonomy at the individual level, sensitivity to others was negatively correlated with the casualness of employees' clothing. In Kim et al.'s (2023) study, it is stated that conformity in dress has a strong social dimension centered on interaction with others, and the more frequently one interacts with others, the higher the conformity of clothing. If we consider "conformity" here to be the choice of conventional formal clothing, the above study shows a consistency with the results of this paper, which showed that the higher the sensitivity to others, the lower the conformity, the more liberal the choice of clothing becomes. From this, it

is clear that some people do not prefer to dress more freely depending on their personal characteristics.

Finally, we would like to emphasize the possibility that the above two results are subject to the Japanese cultural background. The fact that supervisors' clothing and sensitivity to others are related to an individual's clothing means that they determine their own behavior based on their consideration of their surroundings. These tendencies are likely to be more significant in a country like Japan, where Collectivism is strong (Hofstede, 1991). Thus, it is suggested that this paper may have been influenced by the context of Japan as a country.

6-1. Implications for scholars and practitioners

This paper has generated a variety of academic and practical implications. First, academically, the following two points can be raised.

The first one is that it brings a new perspective to the discussion related to diversity, which has been paid much attention to in recent years. Companies are implementing the liberalization of clothing as an activity to increase diversity. By identifying the factors associated with whether employees choose to dress freely or not, this paper identifies factors that influence whether individuals take new actions for diversity. Therefore, this paper can serve as an offshoot of future discussions to identify factors that increase diversity in organizations.

Second, this paper identified factors that influence the transformation of individual behavior in the discussion of organizational change. This paper was able to identify the importance of supervisors and individuals' personalities in the normative context of the liberalization of clothing. It also revealed the possibility that workplace-level relationships may be important in response to the liberalization of clothing, behavioral changes that affect the

workplace level. By dealing with a new and different subject, this paper contributes to the theory of organizational change.

As for practical implications, the following two points were made for companies that wish to promote the liberalization of clothing and furthermore, the movement to increase diversity within their organizations. The first is the magnitude of the influence of the supervisor on the behavior of each employee. Given that the correlation between the clothing of the supervisor in the workplace and the clothing of each employee was the largest, the most effective way to promote the liberalization of clothing within a company is, first and foremost, for the supervisor to dress more casually. To put it another way, practitioners must understand that when employees take new actions that increase diversity, their supervisors in the workplace can be the key players.

Second, there is a need to consider individual personalities when trying to get employees to adopt new diversity-based behaviors. If an employee is concerned about his or her surroundings, he or she may not be able to take the new action. Especially in the case of something that has an obvious impact on the surroundings, such as the liberalization of clothing, the influence of the individual's personality may be significant. Therefore, when introducing a new initiative, it would be desirable to understand the personality of the individual and make special recommendations to the employees who are the bottleneck.

Finally, two contributions in the area of international business are presented below. The first is that we have added a new perspective to the current global discussion on diversity from the perspective of the liberalization of clothing. Diversity is essential for globally active companies and is also required for Japanese companies. By finding differences between employees who engage in the diversity-based behavior of the liberalization of clothing and those who do not, this paper made implications for when employees engage in diversity-increasing activities. Therefore, the results of this paper have implications for companies seeking to increase diversity in the context of globalization.

Second, the results of this paper indicate the possibility that Japan's unique organizational culture has an impact on the results of this paper. The supervisor's influence and the argument of sensitivity to others presented in this paper may be unique to Japan. The second implication of this paper for the IB field is that by showing the possibility of Japan-specific factors in the behavioral change of individuals based on the diversity argument, it suggests the possibility of developing into an international comparative discussion in the future.

6-2. Limitation

This paper explores the relatively understudied phenomenon of free dress codes, aiming to investigate factors influencing employees' decisions to adopt or reject this practice. The significance of this paper lies in bridging existing research gaps and addressing practical needs. However, several research limitations need acknowledgment.

Firstly, establishing absolute causality from the correlations between various factors and employee clothing is challenging. While personal characteristics such as policy orientation, perceptions of CEO or supervisor clothing, and sensitivity to others likely precede individual dressing decisions, it does not imply a definitive causal relationship. Future research should consider experimental verification to enhance the robustness of this paper. For instance, exploring the employees' reactions in two distinct workplaces—one with a supervisor consistently semi-formally dressed and another with a supervisor adopting a casual style—would be intriguing.

Secondly, a limitation is associated with sampling. While the questionnaire survey achieved gender, industry, and age balance, the snowball sampling method limits the generalizability of results. Resource constraints prevented a large-scale survey using a specialized firm, necessitating the recommendation for future extensive surveys.

Thirdly, this paper did not explore the effects of promoting the liberalization of clothing comprehensively. Although the free dress code policy was interpreted favorably in the context of diversity, the actual effects on individuals who dress freely remain unclear. In fact, individuals had different opinions on this point in preliminary interviews¹¹. Future research should focus on the relationship between dressing freely and performance, among other aspects.

Lastly, this paper lacks international comparisons. While the findings may reflect aspects of Japanese organizational culture, they only represent a possibility. Conducting surveys in other countries to explore whether similar or contrasting results emerge and drawing implications from such comparisons would be a valuable avenue for future research.

Despite these limitations, the analysis results in this paper offer insights into contemporary diversity efforts of companies. We hope this paper sparks subsequent research in this evolving era of diversity management.

7. Conclusion

While liberalization of clothing is often encouraged in Japanese companies these days as a way to increase diversity, the reality is that many people are still wearing formal clothing to work. In light of this trend, this study explored the factors that influence individuals' choice of clothing when a new initiative of liberalization of clothing exists in companies. The results of the questionnaire survey revealed that four factors influence whether individuals choose to dress freely: the existence of a dress policy, the CEO's clothing, the supervisor's clothing, and sensitivity to others. Of these factors, we also found that supervisor's clothing had the greatest impact on the free choice of clothing of individuals. These results provide important factors to facilitate the implementation of organizational change to increase diversity. We hope that this study will contribute to the development of diversity management in companies, including the

liberalization of clothing, as well as to the discussion on organizational change and the study of organizational culture in Japan.

8. Footnote

1 Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry "The companies selected for the "100 New Diversity Management Companies" and "100 Prime" in 2020" (viewed 11/16/2023)

2 Asahi Shimbun Digital, "Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation to allow employees to dress freely throughout the year, renewing its staid image" (viewed 11/16/2023)

3 Shinko Shoji's website, "Creating a Vital Organization, Eliminating Stiffness, and Revitalizing Communication through a Dress Code-Free Workplace" (viewed 11/16/2023)

4 Panasonic and ITOCHU are both wearing jeans to work. Asahi Shimbun, 06/06/2018, Morning Edition, p29, Asahi Shimbun Cross Research, <https://xsearch-asahi-com.utokyo.idm.oclc.org/kiji/detail/?1700197898713> (viewed 16/11/2023)

5 From an interview with Mr. A, manufacturing company (October 24, 2023)

6 From an interview with Mr. B, IT company (October 19, 2023)

7 From an interview with Mr. A, manufacturing company (October 24, 2023)

8 From an interview with Mr. A, manufacturing company (October 24, 2023)

9 From interview with Mr. M, bank (October 19, 2023)

10 The questions are attached at the end of this paper.

11 From interviews with Bank M (October 19, 2023) and Manufacturing Company A (October 24, 2023)

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10. Attached file

The following questions were adapted from Bekker and Van(2006) and were used in our questionnaire survey.

Factor Loadings on Sensitivity to Others (Factor 1), Capacity for Managing New Situations (Factor 2), and Self-Awareness (Factor 3) After Oblique (Direct Oblimin) Rotation, and the Corrected Item-Total Correlation of the Item With Its Own Scale

<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Factor 3</i>	<i>Corr. Item-Total R</i>
I often go deeply into other people's feelings	.67	.13	-.13	.47
I am seldom occupied with the feelings and experiences of others [-]	.63	.15	-.08	.44
I am rarely occupied with other people's view of me [-]	.62	-.06	.10	.56
I often wonder what other people think of me	.55	-.13	.17	.53
I easily put aside other people's comments [-]	.55	-.13	.08	.52
I can hardly bear it when other people are angry with me	.54	-.13	.13	.53
I hate detachment	.51	.18	-.07	.33
When I take important decisions about my life, I leave other people's wishes and opinions out of consideration [-]	.50	.10	.08	.39
I feel a strong need for other people's advice and guidance	.50	.01	.30	.48
If I do something that bothers other people, I can easily dismiss that from my mind [-]	.50	-.21	.11	.51
I am seldom inclined to ask other people's advice [-]	.49	.23	-.07	.29
I can easily back out of things that people who are important to me want me to do [-]	.46	-.11	-.01	.41
I often long for love and warmth	.42	-.10	-.04	.35
Usually I can dismiss another person's misery from my mind [-]	.39	-.31	-.05	.40
If I imagine myself having to say goodbye to a beloved person, I feel broken-hearted in advance	.38	-.23	-.10	.36
If I have things my own way against the will of others, I usually get very restless	.37	-.09	.27	.40
Somebody else's experiences leave a strong mark on my own moods	.35	-.22	.05	.37
I quickly feel at ease in new situations	.01	.90	-.05	.68
I easily come to grips with a new problem on my own	.02	.73	-.12	.67
I need a lot of time to get accustomed to a new environment [-]	-.04	.73	-.01	.60
I am a very adventurous person	.10	.63	-.02	.48
If it were up to me, I would spend most of my time in familiar surroundings [-]	-.14	.62	.12	.47
I find it hard to start new activities on my own [-]	-.03	.62	-.26	.63
I often don't know what my opinion is	-.02	.05	.81	.67
I have outspoken opinions on most subjects [-]	.00	.01	.71	.57
I often find it difficult to determine what I really want	.01	-.06	.67	.56
Usually it is very clear to me what I like most [-]	-.08	-.02	.66	.53
If I disagree with others, I make that very plain [-]	-.07	-.11	.64	.52
If I am asked what I want, I mostly know the answer immediately [-]	.03	-.08	.63	.55
Hearing the opinions of other people often makes me change my mind	.14	.17	.60	.42

Note. $N=591$. [-] = item recoded. ©Marrie H. J. Bekker, 2005. All rights preserved. No part of the ACS-30 may be reprinted or reproduced without permission in writing from the author.