

# THE CULTURE OF EXCHANGING CHILDREN'S CLOTHES BETWEEN PARENTS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO SUSTAINABILITY IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Aroub Abdullah Qasti

King Abdulaziz University  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Jeddah  
E-mail: [Aqusti0002@stu.kau.edu.sa](mailto:Aqusti0002@stu.kau.edu.sa)

Prof. Maha Al-Dabbagh

Associate Professor, King Abdulaziz University  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Jeddah  
E-mail: [mdabbaghs@gmail.com](mailto:mdabbaghs@gmail.com)

Received: 2023-08-06

Accepted: 2023-09-05

Published online: 2023-09-09

---

## Abstract

This study explores the emerging trend of exchanging children's clothes as a sustainable practice and analyzes mothers' acceptance of this phenomenon. Using a descriptive analytical approach, the research surveyed mothers' attitudes towards this practice through a questionnaire. The found that a large majority (88.3%) of the mothers surveyed are aware of the practice of exchanging children's clothes, indicating that this concept is widely known among the participants. Moreover, the majority of mothers surveyed (83%) have engaged in the exchange of children's clothes with family or friends. This high level of participation suggests that this form of exchange is a common practice. The study underscores the need to boost awareness about the environmental benefits of such exchanges, given the typically brief usage span of children's clothes due to their rapid growth. It also proposes innovative strategies to enhance clothing exchange gatherings and advocates for instilling the principles of exchange and giving in the younger generation to reinforce the concept of sustainability in clothing.

**Keywords:** Exchange of clothes, Sustainability, Preserving the environment.

---

## INTRODUCTION

Ever since the creation of Adam and Eve, clothing has been a fundamental human necessity, playing a pivotal role in human life and serving as a significant cultural and societal marker (Marwa and Shaimaa, 2022). Particularly remarkable is the childhood stage, a period marked by rapid growth and change, necessitating continual purchases of clothing, which often become quickly outgrown or inadequate. These frequent purchases can impose a substantial burden on a family's budget.

Purchasing behaviors are influenced by multiple factors and vary among families based on their financial status, social standing, and other factors (Olfat, Fatima, 2021). Al-Awda (2013) underscores the importance of examining mothers' consumption behavior, given their central role in meeting family needs, fostering economic efficiency, and promoting familial harmony.

Nevertheless, mothers often grapple with the challenge of disposing of surplus used clothes. Typical disposal methods include recycling, donating to charities, or gifting to friends and family (Joung, 2013). Several charitable organizations have emerged to utilize surplus clothes, including the 'Clothing' project, which endeavors to ensure safe disposal of surplus clothes and has recycled over 4,241,012 pieces.

Moreover, the Association for the Preservation of Blessings, founded in 1434 AH, aims to transform societal views on wastage and extravagance and has recently begun collecting surplus clothes. Similarly, Mrs. Aisha's clothing endowment provides Eid clothing for those less fortunate. These initiatives validate the rising trend towards sustainable and mindful practices in clothing consumption and disposal.

However, clothing waste poses a significant environmental threat, causing severe damage to water bodies and generating substantial waste. The Environmental Protection Agency reported in 2015 that 11.9 million tons of clothes and shoes were disposed of, with 8.2 million tons ending up in landfills (Salamah, 2021), underscoring the urgent need to address this issue.

A relatively recent and environmentally friendly method for clothing disposal is clothing swaps, a phenomenon that has gained popularity in recent times (Mary Long, 2015). Clothing swaps serve as an example of a circular solution that hinders the speed of production and purchasing processes. By encouraging the exchange of clothes, the demand for new products can be reduced (Camacho-Otero & others, 2020).

The Fashion Authority hosted the Swap Shop event, with one of its primary objectives being to promote clothing swaps in support of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 and its emphasis on sustainability, sustainable consumption, and environmental preservation. The initiative was well-received and garnered significant engagement (Fashion Authority, 2023).

The Kingdom's Vision 2030 also aims to create a sustainable future, striving for a balance between economic development and environmental preservation. This vision underscores the priority to safeguard the future of the Kingdom, the region, and the world at large. The ultimate goal of sustainability is to ensure a balanced life across environmental, social, and economic systems for future generations (Ahmed Abdel Hafeez and others, 2020).

Through preliminary observation studies regarding the acceptance of children's clothing exchanges among family and friends, it has become apparent that there is a lack of research in this particular area within Arab societies, especially within Saudi Arabia. Most existing studies and references on clothing exchange focus on economic, behavioral, and intention aspects, leaving a notable research gap in the cultural acceptance of such practices. Hence, the research problem identified for this study is articulated in the following question:

**To what extent do mothers accept the culture of exchanging children's clothes between friends and family?**

Search goal:

1 - To identify the extent to which mothers accept the culture of exchanging children's clothes through the survey.

**RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE**

This research bears substantial significance due to the following reasons:

1. It fosters the promotion of a culture of clothing exchange, thereby bolstering social solidarity. Through sharing resources, communities can build stronger bonds and support each other.

2. It contributes to sustainability and environmental preservation efforts. Clothing exchange reduces demand for new clothing production, subsequently reducing environmental degradation resulting from the production process.

3. It encourages the notion of clothing exchange among mothers. By promoting this eco-friendly practice amongst mothers, a substantial impact can be made due to their central role in family consumption behaviors.

4. It cultivates the culture of clothing exchange from an early age through social upbringing. By instilling these values in children, the future generation can carry forward these sustainable practices, potentially leading to a widespread, long-term positive environmental impact.

**Previous Studies**

The researcher reviewed numerous studies addressing topics related to clothing exchange and the motivations that drive consumer acceptance of clothing exchange and attendance at organized swap events. These studies also explored consumer exchange behaviors and the extent to which swap culture is influenced by socialization. Below is a summary of one such study:

One such study, conducted by Delisia Matthews in 2016, explored the benefits of clothing swap parties and online clothing swap websites. The study found that clothing swaps extended the traditional consumption cycle and were heavily influenced by socialization.

Another study by Chunmin Lang in 2019 aimed to identify the motivations and barriers for Chinese consumers engaged in clothing swaps, exploring whether influencing factors differed for attending swap events versus exchanging clothes with familiar family members and friends. The study found that social shopping and perceived pleasure had a positive influence on Chinese consumers' intention to exchange clothes with family members or friends and to attend clothing exchange events.

A third study by Camacho-Otero et al. in 2020 explored clothing swaps in middle-income economies from a social practice perspective. The study employed the theory of social practice and found that one of the primary objectives of clothing swap initiatives was to promote sustainability and social solidarity.

Together, these studies suggest that clothing swaps can extend the traditional consumption cycle, are heavily influenced by socialization, can have positive impacts on sustainability and social solidarity, and are influenced by factors such as social shopping, perceived pleasure, performance risks, and social risks.

## **Research Terms**

### *Exchange of Clothes*

Exchange, in the context of this research, is defined as the process of swapping items, such as clothing, between two or more individuals. This exchange typically does not involve monetary transactions (Albinson & Pereira, 2012; Matthew Z & Hodges, 2016).

### *Sustainability*

Sustainability refers to the practice of using resources in a manner that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It encompasses three main pillars: economic, environmental, and social, also known informally as profits, planet, and people. In the context of clothing, sustainability could involve practices such as recycling or reusing garments to reduce waste and minimize environmental impact.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research adopted a descriptive-analytical methodology. This approach focuses on studying a phenomenon or reality and aims to accurately describe it, expressing it in either a qualitative or quantitative manner (Adas, 2005).

The **descriptive approach** involves the systematic, objective, and detailed description of the phenomenon under study. It does not interfere with variables or conditions. Instead, it observes them as they are. This methodology is often used when researchers want to gain a better understanding of a topic.

The **analytical component** of this methodology seeks to interpret the data collected, providing an in-depth and detailed exploration of the phenomenon. This could involve looking for patterns in the data, identifying trends, and making inferences.

Together, the descriptive-analytical approach offers a comprehensive view of the phenomenon under study. It not only details what is happening but also provides insights into why it is happening.

## **RESEARCH SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

The scope of this study is defined by the following limitations:

### **Spatial**

The study is geographically limited to Saudi Arabia. This means the research focuses on the practices, perceptions, and attitudes of individuals within this specific location, and the findings may not necessarily be applicable or generalizable to other geographical contexts.

### **Thematic**

The thematic focus of this study is on the exchange of children's clothes. While clothing exchange can encompass a wide range of items, this research specifically investigates practices, motivations, and barriers related to swapping children's garments.

### **Temporal**

The study covers a specific time period from 1444 to 2023 (the third semester). This temporal boundary indicates that the study considers changes and trends within

this timeframe, and events or data outside of this period are not directly considered in the research.

### **Research Sample**

The research sample for this study consisted of 138 respondents who were mothers from various regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The sample was randomly selected, which means that every mother within the population had an equal chance of being included in the study. Random sampling is a method that helps ensure the research findings are representative of the population as a whole. However, it's important to note that while random sampling can improve the generalizability of the findings, it does not completely eliminate the possibility of sampling error or bias (Bryman, A. (2016)).

### **Research Tools**

The primary research tool used in this study was a **questionnaire**. The objective of this questionnaire was to gauge the extent to which mothers are receptive to the idea of exchanging children's clothes.

The questionnaire was designed and then presented to a group of specialists from the faculty members for their feedback.

### **Applied Research Study**

#### *Research Tool Setup*

The research tool used in this study was a questionnaire, designed to assess the extent of mothers' knowledge and acceptance of the culture of exchanging children's clothes. The questionnaire also aimed to gauge the mothers' awareness of the importance of such practices towards sustainability and environmental preservation. The questionnaire consisted of seven questions, covering the following areas:

1. Awareness and understanding of the concept of exchanging children's clothes.
2. Acceptance and willingness to engage in the practice of exchanging children's clothes.
3. Perceived benefits and challenges of exchanging children's clothes.
4. Awareness of the relationship between clothing exchange and sustainability.
5. Understanding of the impact of clothing exchange on environmental preservation.

This questionnaire was administered electronically to a group of mothers in different regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

## **Validity of the Questionnaire**

### *Logical Validity*

Logical validity refers to the ability of a questionnaire to accurately measure what it is intended to measure. It's an essential aspect of research design that helps ensure the results obtained are indeed a reflection of the variables or concepts under study.

To ascertain the logical validity of this questionnaire, the initial draft was presented to two specialized professors in the field of clothing and textiles for evaluation. These experts were asked to assess whether the questionnaire's items (questions) effectively align with the research objectives.

The feedback from these experts was then used to refine the questionnaire, ensuring that each question contributes towards achieving the research goals and accurately captures the respondents' knowledge, attitudes, and practices relating to the exchange of children's clothes, and their understanding of its impact on sustainability and environmental preservation.

## **Modifications and Validation of the Research Tool**

### *Modifications Based on Expert Feedback*

As per the feedback from the experts consulted, a definition of the concept of sustainability was added to the questionnaire to ensure clarity for the respondents. This would help in getting more accurate responses, especially for questions related to the sustainability aspect of exchanging children's clothes.

### *Validation of the Questionnaire*

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were assessed based on the following parameters:

- Wording and clarity of statements
- Sequence and organization
- Number of statements
- Coverage of study objectives

Table 1

*The Results from this Assessment*

Parameter	Appropriate (Count)	Appropriate (%)	Somewhat Appropriate (Count)	Somewhat Appropriate (%)	Not Appropriate (Count)	Not Appropriate (%)
Wording and clarity of statements	5	85.6	1	13.4	0	0
Sequence and organization	5	85.6	1	13.4	0	0
Number of statements	5	85.6	1	13.4	0	0
Coverage of study objectives	5	85.6	1	13.4	0	0

As per the above table, all statements in the questionnaire received high agreement rates from the experts, indicating the validity of the evaluation questionnaire for use in this research.

**Reliability of the Questionnaire**

The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, a measure of internal consistency. The results are as follows:

Table 2

*Reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient*

Parameter	Cronbach's Alpha
Wording and clarity of phrases	0.99
Sequence and organization	0.98
Number of phrases	0.97
Coverage of study objectives	0.99

The high Cronbach's alpha values suggest that the questionnaire has high reliability.

### **Research Results and Discussion**

The results of the research are based on the responses obtained from the surveyed mothers. Here's a summary of the respondent demographics:

#### *Age of Respondents*

Table 3

*Presents the Age Distribution of the Respondents*

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>
41-50	37%
31-40	41.3%
25-30	21.7%

The majority of respondents fall within the age group of 31-40, followed by the 41-50 age group.

#### *Education Level*

Table 4

Shows the Education Level of the Respondents

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>
High School or Less	22.5%
Bachelor's Degree	65.9%
Master's Degree and Above	11.6%

The majority of respondents hold a Bachelor's degree.

*Income Level*

Table 5

*The Income Levels of the Respondents*

<b>Income Level (in Saudi Riyals)</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>
20,000 and More	21.7%
10,000 - 15,000	42%
5,000 and Less	36.2%

The majority of respondents have an income level between 10,000 and 15,000 Riyals.

These demographic details provide essential context to the research, allowing for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the questionnaire responses. Subsequent analysis and discussions should consider these demographic factors, as they could influence the attitudes and practices related to the exchange of children's clothes.

**Results and Discussion**

Based on the data, the following observations can be made:

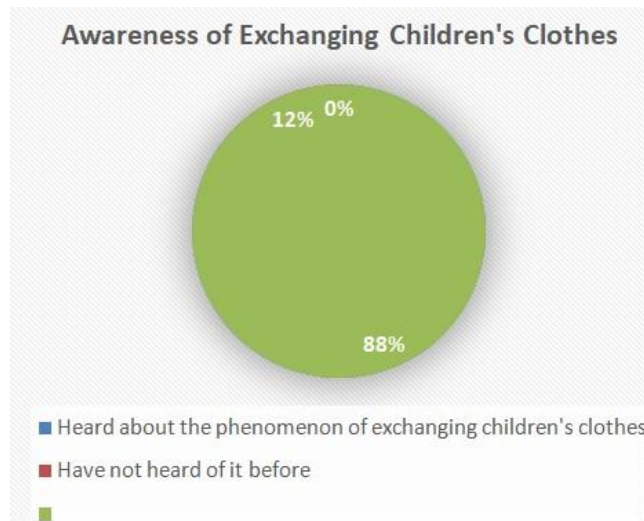


Fig (1) Awareness of Exchanging Children's Clothes

88.3% of the mothers have heard about the phenomenon of exchanging children's clothes, and 11% of the mothers have not heard of it before.

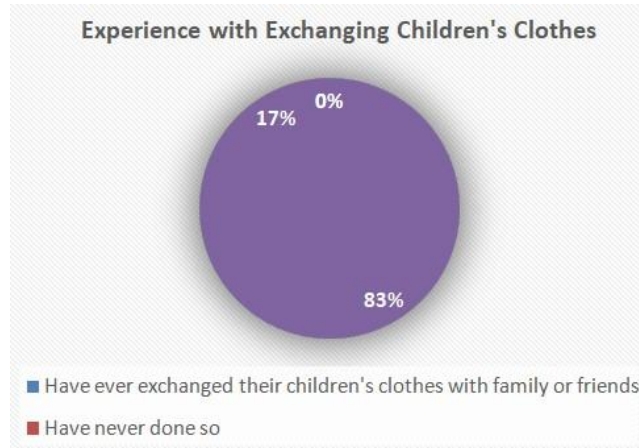


Fig (2) Experience with Exchanging Children's Clothes

83% of mothers have ever exchanged their children's clothes with family or friends, while 17% have never done so.



Fig (3) Frequency of Exchanging Children's Clothes

76% of the mothers have exchanged their children's clothes with friends or family more than once, 6% have exchanged clothes only once, and 18% of the mothers have never exchanged their children's clothes with friends or family.

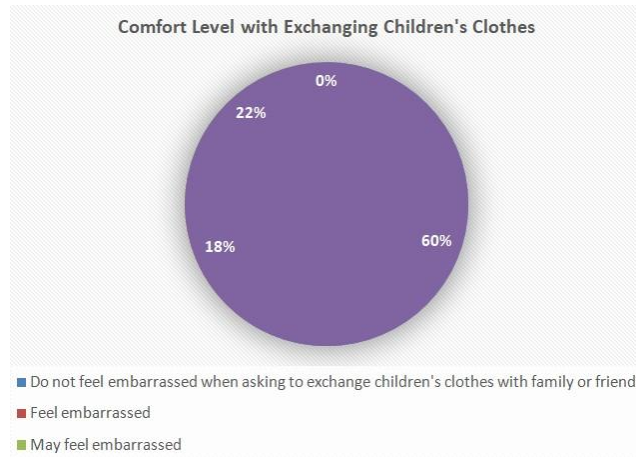


Fig (4) Comfort Level with Exchanging Children's Clothes

60.1% of mothers do not feel embarrassed when asking to exchange children's clothes with family or friends, 18% of mothers feel embarrassed, and 22% of mothers may feel embarrassed.

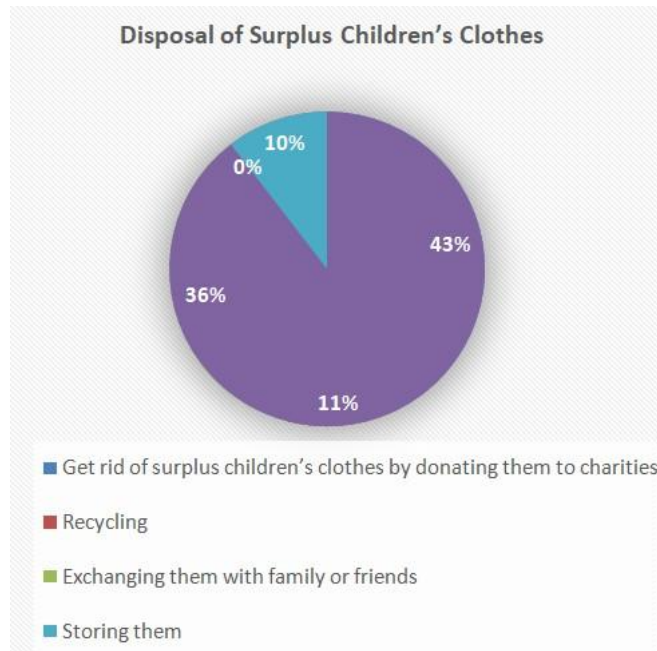


Fig (5) Disposal of Surplus Children's Clothes

Mothers get rid of surplus children's clothes by donating them to charities (43%), recycling (11%), exchanging them with family or friends (36%), and storing them (10%).

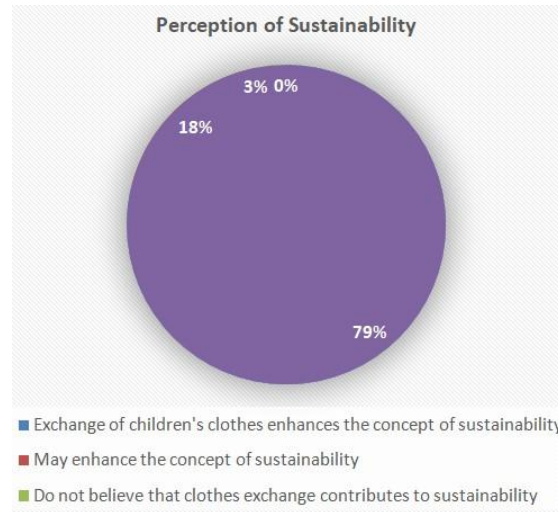


Fig (6) Perception of Sustainability

79% of the mothers stated that the exchange of children's clothes enhances the concept of sustainability, 18% think that it may enhance the concept of sustainability, while 3% do not believe that clothes exchange contributes to sustainability.

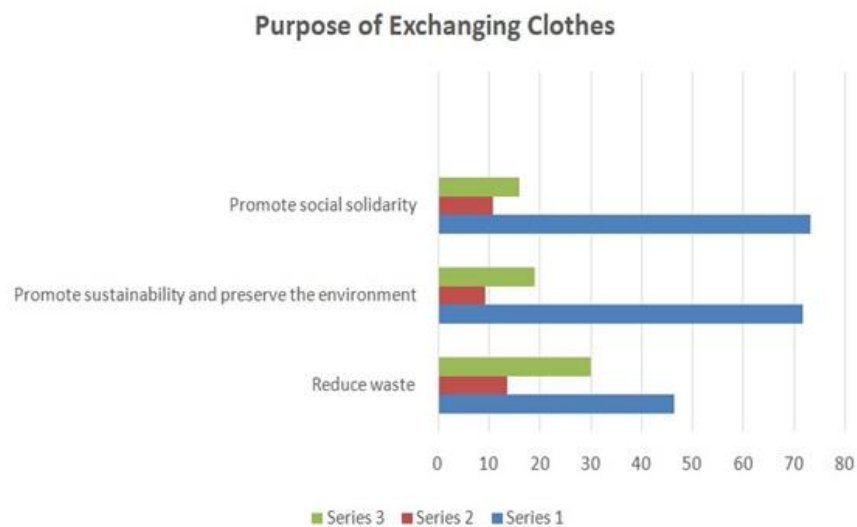


Fig (7) Purpose of Exchanging Clothes

Mothers believe that the purpose of exchanging clothes is to reduce waste (46.4%), promote sustainability and preserve the environment (71.7%), and to promote social solidarity (73.2%).

The survey results provide a comprehensive view on the awareness, attitudes, and behaviors of mothers concerning the exchange of children's clothes. Here's a summary and discussion on the findings:

**1. Awareness:** A large majority (88.3%) of the mothers surveyed are aware of the practice of exchanging children's clothes, indicating that this concept is widely known among the participants.

**2. Participation:** The majority of mothers surveyed (83%) have engaged in the exchange of children's clothes with family or friends. This high level of participation suggests that this form of exchange is a common practice.

**3. Frequency:** Among the mothers who have engaged in the exchange, most (76%) have done it more than once. This suggests that once mothers begin participating in this practice, they are likely to continue, indicating a positive experience or perceived benefits from the exchange.

**4. Comfort Level:** More than half of the mothers (60.1%) do not feel embarrassed to propose such an exchange, which is a positive sign for the continuation and potential growth of this practice. However, a combined 40% of mothers do feel or may feel embarrassed, indicating that there are social and emotional barriers that could potentially hinder wider adoption of this practice.

**5. Disposal of Surplus Clothes:** Donating to charities is the most common method (43%) of getting rid of surplus children's clothes, but exchanging with family or friends is also a popular method (36%). This shows that while traditional methods of dealing with surplus clothes are still prevalent, clothes exchange is a significant part of the disposal behavior.

**6. Sustainability:** An overwhelming majority of mothers (79%) believe that the exchange of children's clothes enhances sustainability, with a significant portion (18%) thinking that it may contribute. This finding suggests a strong perceived link between the practice of clothes exchange and sustainability, which could be leveraged to promote environmentally friendly behaviors.

**7. Purpose:** The mothers perceive multiple benefits from exchanging clothes, including waste reduction (46.4%), promotion of sustainability and environmental preservation (71.7%), and fostering social solidarity (73.2%). This indicates that the practice is associated with both environmental and social benefits.

Overall, these results suggest that the exchange of children's clothes is a widely accepted and practiced behavior among mothers, who recognize its potential in promoting sustainability, reducing waste, and fostering social solidarity. However, emotional barriers, such as feelings of embarrassment, need to be addressed to encourage wider adoption of this practice. Future efforts could focus on enhancing the social acceptability of clothes exchange and further emphasizing its environmental and social benefits.

## **Results Summary**

The research points to the existence of a culture of exchanging children's clothes in the society. However, this practice could be further promoted to emphasize its importance for sustainability, environmental preservation, and social solidarity. The practice of exchanging clothes fosters a sense of giving and generosity among children from a young age. As one respondent noted, "Exchange is not unilateral, meaning I give and accept that it is a second person who gives me so that it does not become charity (it must be a culture within the large family) or society, regardless of whether you are poor or rich."

Another respondent highlighted the practicality of the practice, particularly considering the growth stages of children: "I encourage the exchange of children's clothes especially that they are in a stage of growth, and I hope that this culture will spread among the new generation at the present time."

However, some mothers reported feeling shy or embarrassed when asking for an exchange. This suggests that while there is widespread awareness and acceptance of the practice, there may also be social and emotional barriers to its full adoption.

From an environmental and sustainability perspective, exchanging children's clothes is an environmentally-friendly solution that contributes to a sustainable future, an educated generation, and a balanced ecosystem. The practice not only reduces waste and promotes sustainability but also promotes social solidarity and a culture of giving. Based on the research findings, the following recommendations can be made:

## **Recommendations**

**1. Raise Awareness:** Increase efforts to promote awareness about the importance of exchanging children's clothes, especially among mothers. This practice plays a significant role in promoting sustainability and should be more widely recognized and encouraged.

**2. Engage Charities:** Encourage charities to establish initiatives around clothing exchange. These organizations often have extensive networks and resources that can be utilized to promote and facilitate the exchange of children's clothes.

**3. Innovate Exchange Events:** Introduce innovative approaches and activities in clothing exchange gatherings to further consolidate the concept of sustainability. This could include presentations on the environmental impact of clothing production, workshops on mending and altering clothes, or fashion shows featuring exchanged clothes.

**4. Educate Children:** Instill the principles and concepts of exchange and giving in children from a young age. This will help to normalize the practice as they grow up and ensure that future generations do not feel embarrassment associated with clothes exchange. This can be done through family practices, school programs, and community events.

### **Future Research Recommendations**

Based on the findings and insights from this study, several areas of future research can be suggested:

**1. Exploring the Barriers:** A deeper exploration of the social and emotional barriers to the adoption of children's clothes exchange. This could include research on the feelings of embarrassment reported by some mothers and the development of strategies to overcome these barriers.

**2. Effects on Children:** Research on the impact of the practice on children's understanding of sustainability, sharing, and generosity. This could involve longitudinal studies that track children's attitudes and behaviors over time.

**3. Role of Fathers and Other Caregivers:** While this study focused on mothers, future research could investigate the perspectives and practices of other caregivers, such as fathers, grandparents, or other relatives.

**4. Influence of Culture and Social Norms:** Examination of how cultural norms and social class affect the practice of exchanging children's clothes. This could provide insights into how to promote the practice in different cultural or social contexts.

**5. Development of Exchange Platforms:** Research on the development and effectiveness of formal platforms or events for clothes exchange, such as online platforms or community swap meets. This could provide insights into how to make the process more accessible and efficient.

### **References**

- Abdel Hafeez, A., Madi, M., Abdel Fattah, & Abdel Wahhab, A. (2020). An exploratory study of the reality of sustainability in garment factories in the Arab Republic of Egypt. *Journal of Specific Education and Technology Scientific and Applied Research*, 16(7), 11-38.
- Ahthreeb, S., & Marwa, S. (2022). *Definitions and expressions of dress in the eye dictionary* (parts three and four) - a descriptive study.
- Albinsson, P. A., & Perera, B. Y. (2012). Alternative marketplaces in the 21st century: Building community through sharing events. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 11(4), 303-315. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1389>

- Bint Abd al-Rahman al-Awda, & Wejdan. (2013). The consumer behavior of the head of the household and its relationship to family harmony. *Journal of Specific Education Research*, 32, 99-143.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Camacho-Otero, J., Pettersen, I. N., & Boks, C. (2019). Consumer engagement in the circular economy: Exploring clothes swapping in emerging economies from a social practice perspective. *Sustainable Development*, 28(1), 279–293. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2002>
- Hethorn, J., & Ulasewicz, C. (2008). *Sustainable Fashion Why Now?* Fairchild Books, INC.
- Joung, H. (2013). Materialism and clothing post-purchase behaviors. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 30(6), 530–537. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jcm-08-2013-0666>
- Joyce, M., & Others. (2007). *Oxford al-Muhit Dictionary* (English-Arabic). Academia Publisher.
- Lang, C., & Zhang, R. (2019). Second-hand clothing acquisition: The motivations and barriers to clothing swaps for Chinese consumers. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 18, 156–164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2019.02.002>
- Long, M. M., & Fain, D. (2015). The clothing swap: Social, sustainable, and sacred. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 30(6), 530-537.
- Mansour, S.M., & Al-Osaimi, O.E.M. (2021). Creating design solutions to increase the useful life of children's clothing using machine embroidery technology.
- Matthews, D., & Hodges, N. (2016). Clothing Swaps: An exploration of consumer clothing exchange behaviors. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 45(1), 91–103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fcsr.12182>
- Salama, A. R., & Ali, A. (2021). The effectiveness of an awareness program in assessing the attitudes of university students to refrain from fast fashion to promote sustainability. *Journal of Research in the Fields of Specific Education*, 7(33), 1751-1787.