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WORLD CONFERENCE ON RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCES
SOCIALSCIENCESCONF

21 - 23 November 2025 Copenhagen , Denmark

Tattoos, Gaze, and Resilience: an Analysis of the Tattooed Individual

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Abstract

Although tattoos have been associated with deviance in history, the acceptance of tattoo culture is higher in contemporary society. This research examines how tattooed individuals experience social stigma from the gaze and how these interactions influence their psychological resilience because of their tattoos with Goffman's stigma theory. Quantitative research methods were used, and valid responses were collected from 237 tattooed individuals in Hong Kong. The online self-administered questionnaire included the Brief Resilience Scale developed by Fung (2020) and the structural model of stigma victimisation (Dickson et al., 2014). The Resilience Scale developed by Fung (2020) (?=.862) and the structural model of stigma victimisation by Dickson et al. (2014) (CFI: 0.972) fit into this study. The findings indicate that higher commitment to tattoos correlated with greater resilience, while concealment behaviours were associated with both higher resilience scores and lower stigma experiences. Although the significant relationship between perceived societal stigma and resilience is also predicted, the willingness to show tattoos to friends can enhance resilience. This shows that concealment can be a strategic form of identity negotiation. Tattooed individuals can choose when and where to show their tattoos, depending on the context and flexibility. For the age and gender aspect, the younger participants and females reported lower resilience than the older groups and males.

Keywords: Subculture, Concealment Behaviours, Societal Stigma, Identity Negotiation, Empowerment