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TEXTILE CONSERVATION PRACTICES AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL BY WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract: *The findings from the survey underscore a strong commitment among working women to sustainable textile practices. A majority of the women surveyed actively participate in various conservation methods, with a particular emphasis on donating and repairing old textiles. This suggests a collective awareness and a proactive approach to reducing waste. However, the survey also reveals significant barriers, primarily a lack of time and skills, which hinder more effective conservation efforts. Quality is the most critical factor influencing purchasing decisions, pointing towards a preference for durable goods that promise longer usability. Sustainability claims also play a substantial role, indicating a conscious move towards eco-friendly consumer behavior. Yet, despite high levels of engagement with conservation practices, there is a notable demand for more knowledge and resources, as evidenced by the significant interest in learning more about textile conservation techniques. In terms of preservation techniques, naphthalene balls emerge as the most favored and effective method, demonstrating that practical, easy-to-use solutions are highly valued. The relatively high incidence of damage due to improper preservation highlights the need for better education on the proper use of these techniques. Overall, the responses reflect a community eager to enhance their textile conservation practices but constrained by practical limitations. This suggests an opportunity for targeted educational programs that could equip these working women with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively maintain and preserve their textiles.*

Key Words: *Conservation, textiles, sustainability, Practices, Textile preservation*

1. INTRODUCTION:

In an era where sustainability and environmental consciousness are paramount, understanding the habits and practices surrounding textile preservation is crucial. A survey was performed in Udaipur district, focusing on the textile conservation behaviors and practices of 40 working women aged between 35 and 60 years. The survey provides insights into how these women manage, preserve, and extend the lifespan of their textiles. These women, who come from various backgrounds and professions, provide a thorough examination of the practical aspects and difficulties encountered in the preservation of textiles on a daily basis.

The survey explored various aspects of textile usage and preservation, ranging from purchasing frequencies and influencing factors to the specific conservation methods employed. The aim was to uncover the underlying motivations driving these practices and identify any significant barriers that might hinder more effective conservation efforts. With textiles playing a significant role in both the economic and environmental sectors, the insights gleaned from these responses are invaluable. They not only reflect individual behaviors but also broader trends that could inform future initiatives aimed at promoting sustainability in textile consumption and maintenance.

Furthermore, this analysis serves as a foundation for developing targeted educational and community programs that can enhance the skills and knowledge necessary for effective textile conservation. By examining the interplay between lifestyle, economic factors, and conservation efforts, this report provides a detailed snapshot of the current state of textile preservation among working women, offering both a reflection of current practices and a roadmap for future improvement.

2. OBJECTIVE:

To assess the extent and variety of textile conservation practices employed by working women

3. SURVEY DESIGN:

The survey was structured as a questionnaire consisting of multiple-choice and open-ended questions designed to capture a wide range of information regarding textile purchasing habits, conservation practices, and preservation techniques. The questionnaire was developed to assess both the frequency and types of activities engaged in by the respondents, as well as their attitudes towards textile conservation.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION:

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method to ensure the survey included a diverse group of working women from various professions. The criteria for selection included being currently employed and having a role in managing textiles within their households. The sample size was set at 40 to manage data collection and analysis efficiently while ensuring enough data to draw meaningful conclusions.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS:

Data collection was conducted through an interview method. The questionnaire was distributed by researchers to groups likely to include potential respondents fitting the selection criteria. Participants were interviewed by the researcher for an in-depth understanding of the practices incorporated by women and given enough time to complete the survey.

4. DATA ANALYSIS:

Responses were collected directly from the door-to-door communication, which automatically compiled the data into a usable format for analysis. The data was then analyzed to calculate the percentages of respondents engaging in various textile conservation practices, their reasons for these practices, and the barriers they face. Closed-ended responses were categorized and analyzed qualitatively to provide fair insights into motivations and challenges.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

All participants were informed about the purpose of the survey, and consent was obtained electronically before participation. The survey was designed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, with no personally identifiable information collected.

5. RESULTS:

The purpose of this study was to investigate "textile conservation practices at household level by working women." The purpose of this section is to draw reasonable inferences from the present survey's data. The information has been sorted and evaluated so that the results can be shown in a logical and systematic sequence. Consequently, the subsequent sections will elaborate on the findings:

❖ **Conservation practices**

Engagement in Conservation Practices: (multiple responses allowed**)**

In terms of conservation methods, 82.5% of respondents donated textiles, 70% repaired textiles, 60% altered garments for conservation, and 50% reused textiles. Additionally, 40% of respondents engaged in recycling textiles.

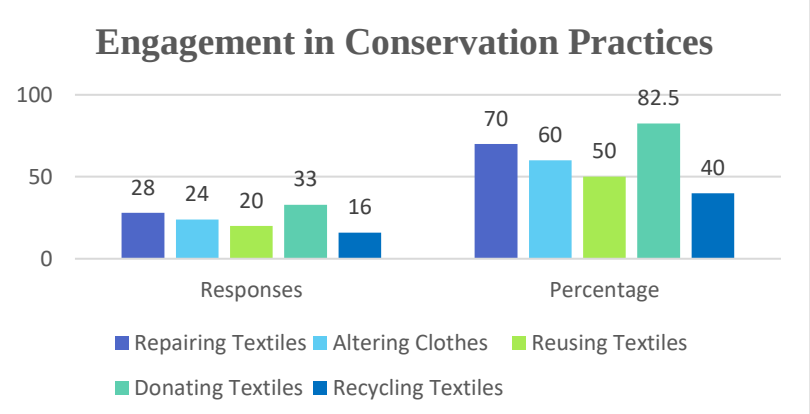

Fig-1.1 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Engagement in Conservation Practices

Frequency of Textile Repairs:
In terms of the frequency of textile repairing practices, 45% participated occasionally, 35% regularly, 15% rarely, and 5% never engaged in repairing textiles at home.

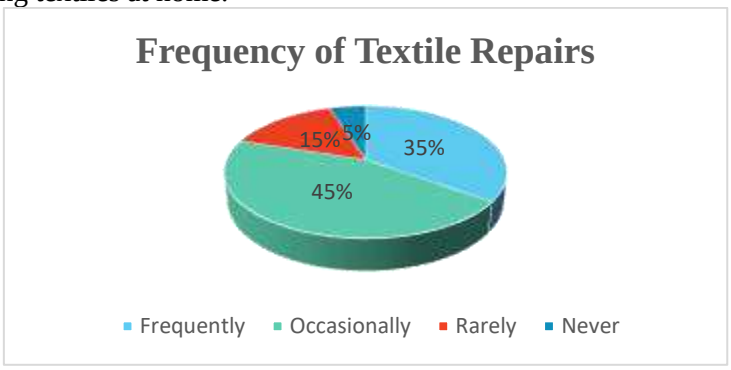

Fig-1.2 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Frequency of Textile Repairs

Familiarity with Repair Techniques: (multiple responses allowed**)**
Based on their experience with repair procedures, 75% of respondents stitch by hand, 65% use patches to mend, 55% use sewing machines, 40% use darning techniques, and 5% have not used any of these approaches to repair their textiles.

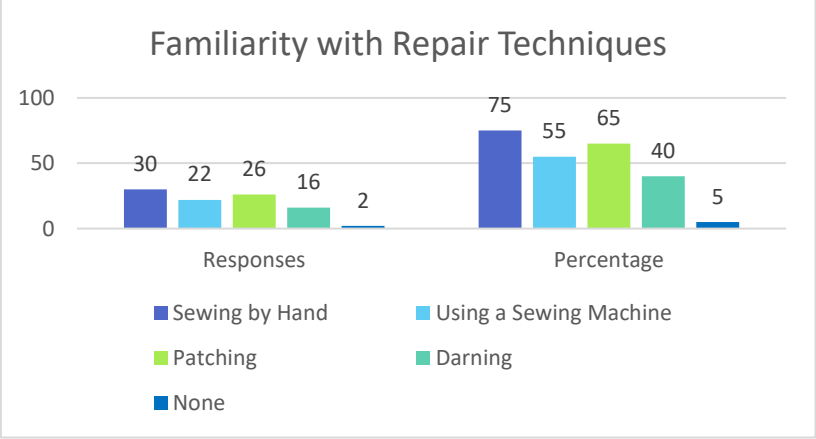

Fig-1.3 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Familiarity with Repair Techniques

❖ **Attitudes toward textile conservation**

Importance of Textile Conservation:
When queried about the significance of textile conservation, 52.5% of the participants expressed that it is highly important, 30% considered it to be moderately important, 10% had a neutral stance, 5% regarded it as not very important, and 2.5% showed no interest in understanding the relevance of textile conservation.

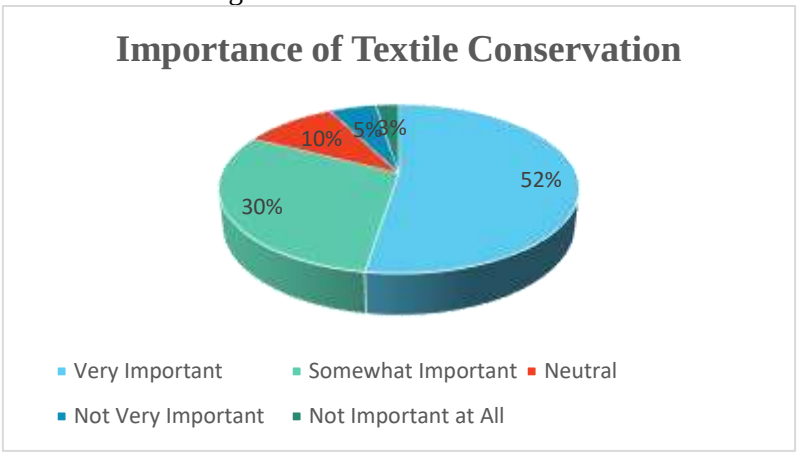

Fig-1.4 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Importance of Textile Conservation

Barriers to Conserving Textiles at Home: (multiple responses allowed**)**
In relation to the barriers encountered in implementing textile conservation measures at home, 45% of respondents mentioned a lack of time, 37.5% mentioned a lack of skills, 25% identified a lack of services, 22.5% reported no barriers, and 20% attributed the cost as a barrier to textile conservation.

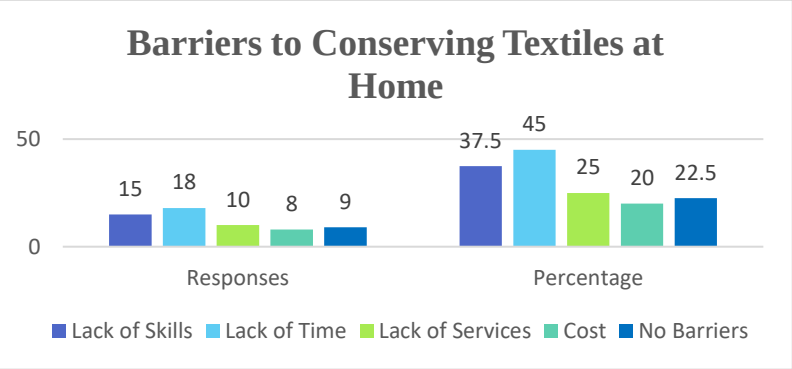

Fig-1.5 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Barriers to Conserving Textiles at Home

❖ **Preservation techniques used**

Items Used for Preservation: (multiple responses allowed**)**
Regarding preservation approaches, 50% of individuals use naphthalene balls, 45% use neem leaves for textile preservation, 30% use herbal sachets, 12.5% rely on cedar blocks, 7.5% do not use any preservation approach, and 5% use silica gel packets for textile conservation.

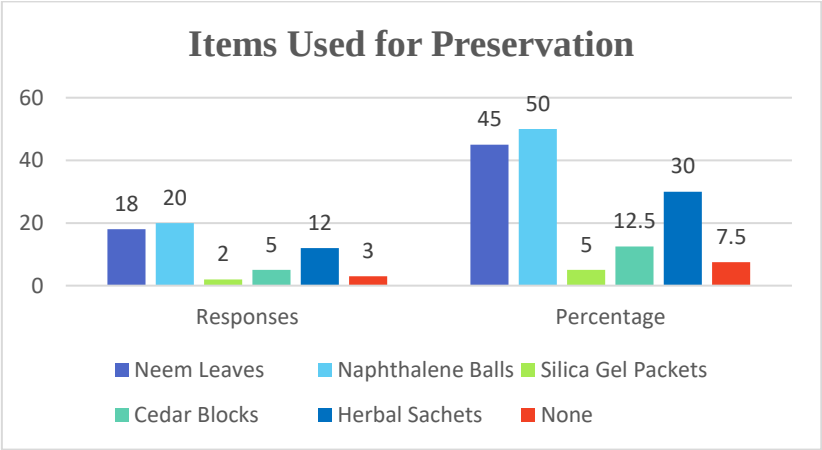

Fig-1.6 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Items Used for Preservation

Frequency and Application of Preservation Techniques:
When asked about the frequency and applications of preservation techniques, 45% respondents were engaged seasonally, 40% monthly, 10% rarely and remaining 5% never used any of these techniques to preserve textiles.

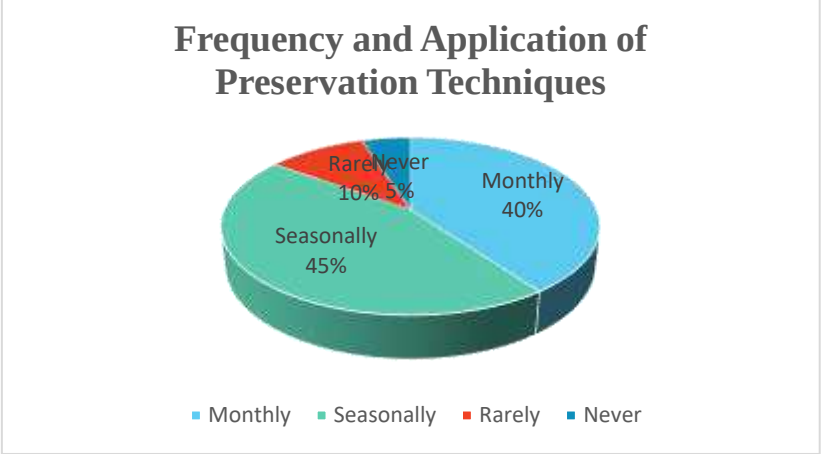

Fig-1.7 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Frequency and Application of Preservation Techniques

Application of selected preservation techniques: (multiple responses allowed**)**
Regarding the use of various methods for preserving textiles, 70% of individuals store their clothes in closets, 65% in luggage, 55% in storage boxes, and 40% utilize specialized products based on the fabric type.

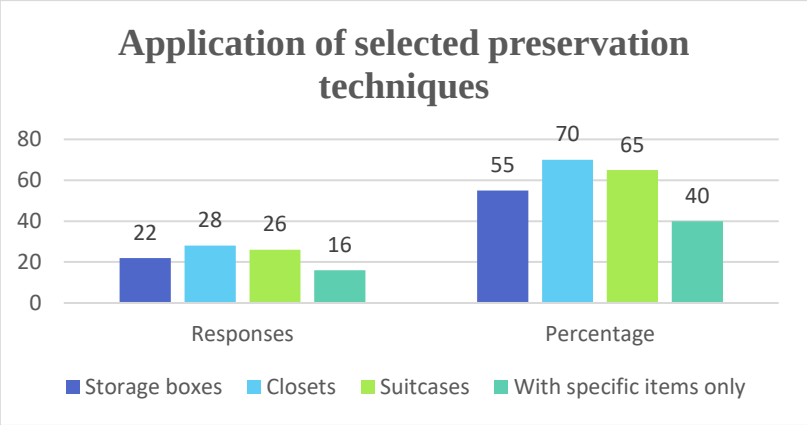

Fig-1.8 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Application of selected preservation techniques.

❖ **Effectiveness and preferences**

Damage Due to Improper Preservation:
When questioned about the harm that can result from using the wrong preservation methods, 75% of respondents agreed and 25% disagreed.

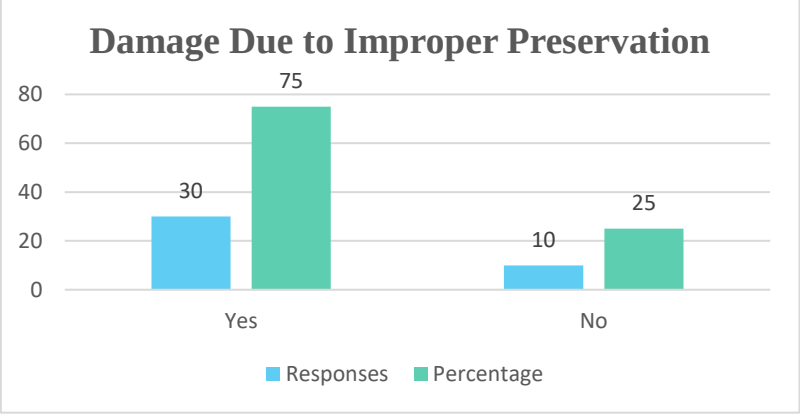

Fig-1.9 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Damage Due to Improper Preservation.

❖ **Awareness and learning**

Learning Sources: (multiple responses allowed**)**
Regarding how individuals acquired knowledge about certain conservation strategies, 75% obtained their knowledge from family or traditional means, 60% learned from friends, 55% gained knowledge from retailer recommendations, and 50% acquired knowledge from online sources.

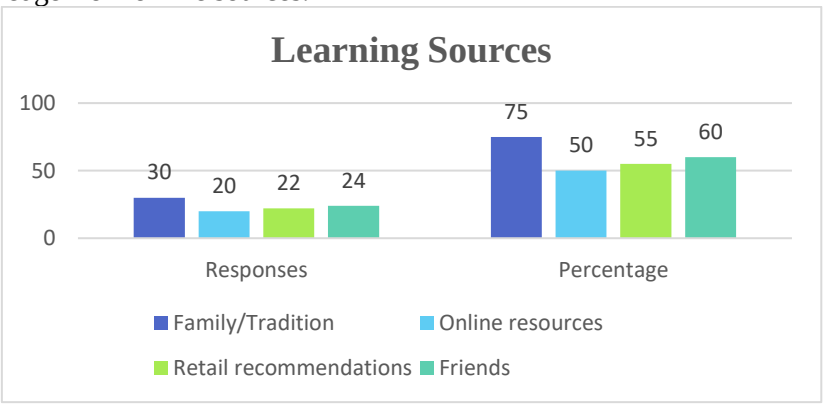

Fig-1.10 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Learning Sources

Interest in Further Education:
When questioned about their interest in acquiring additional understanding of conservation practices, 80% of the respondent expressed agreement with the statement, while 20% expressed disagreement.

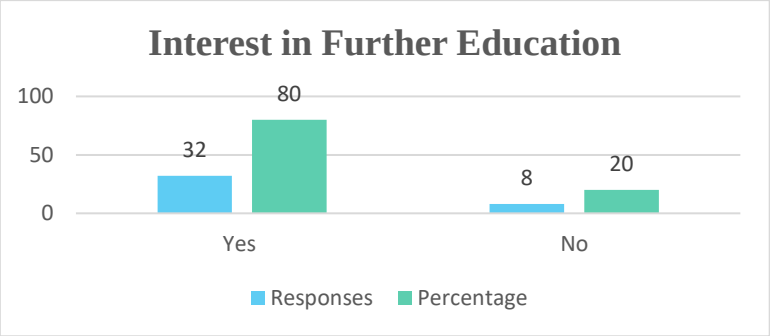

Fig-1.11 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Interest in Further Education.

Preferred mode of learning about textile conservation techniques: (multiple responses allowed**)**
When questioned about their preferred method of learning textile preservation techniques, 82.5% of respondents expressed interest in online tutorials, 70% preferred videos, 50% preferred books or manuals, and 30% were willing to learn through workshops.

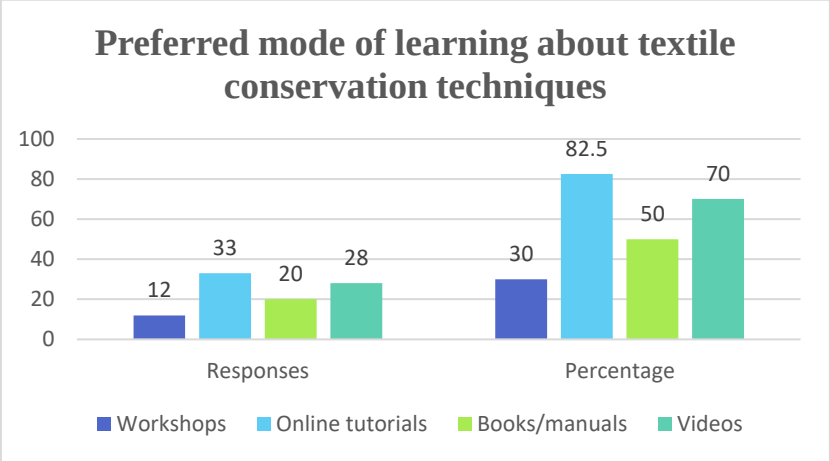

Fig-1.12 Percentage distribution of respondents based on Preferred mode of learning about textile conservation techniques

6. DISCUSSION:

Working women are actively participating in various conservation methods, particularly emphasizing donating and repairing old textiles as part of sustainable textile practices. This collective effort showcases a strong commitment to reducing waste and promoting sustainability within the textile industry [1].

The study highlights that consumers create value through the process of transforming depleted textiles into new meaningful ones, which includes social, aesthetic, emotional, and moral value dimensions [2]. Engaging in reuse, repair, donation, and resell practices not only reduces waste but also empowers consumers by transforming unused or depleted resources into new value [2].

Repairing textiles at home provides several benefits:

- It reduces waste by extending the lifespan of clothing and household textiles. Engaging in reuse, repair, donation, and resell practices empowers consumers to transform unused or depleted textiles into new value [2][3][4].
- Repairing creates value beyond just utilitarian aspects like economic or functional value [2]. It also generates social, aesthetic, emotional, and moral value dimensions that contribute to an overarching environmental value [2].
- Repairing textiles at home supports the transition toward a circular economy in the textile industry [3][4].
- Repairing enables consumers to build a meaningful relationship with their clothing and household textiles [2][4]. It counteracts the fast-paced waste stream of clothing design cycles and explores our limits toward brokenness and practices of care needed to stop the flow of textiles as waste [3].

Some common textile repairing practices include:

Mending holes or tears using patches, darning, or appliqué techniques [2][3], Replacing buttons, zippers, or other fasteners [2], Reinforcing worn areas with additional fabric or patches [2][3], Altering garments to fit better or change the style [2], Dyeing faded or discolored textiles to restore their original color [2], Removing stains through spot cleaning or laundering [2], Reshaping or pressing garments to remove wrinkles or restore their original form [2], Repairing seams that have come undone or are weakening [2][3], Replacing worn-out linings or interfacings in garments [2] and Mending holes in socks, sweaters, or other knitted items using darning or duplicate stitches [2][3].

These practices help extend the usable life of textiles and clothing by addressing common issues like wear, damage, or fit problems. Engaging in textile repair creates value beyond just utilitarian aspects and contributes to a more sustainable, circular economy in the fashion industry [2][3][5]. Stitching by hand is a common technique, as it allows individuals to upcycle textile they already own [6]. Patching is another effective method for mending holes or tears in textiles [6][7]. Using sewing machines is a practical approach for repairing textiles, especially when dealing with larger areas or more complex repairs [6][8]. Darning, on the other hand, is a technique that involves weaving thread into a fabric to repair holes or worn areas [6][7]. The survey results highlight the diverse range of repair methods employed by individuals with experience in textile maintenance and contribute to extending the lifespan of textiles and reducing waste [6][8].

The barriers to conserving textiles at home can be summarized as follows:

- **Lack of Time and Skills:** One of the significant barriers hindering effective conservation efforts in textile repair is the lack of time and skills. Consumers may find it challenging to allocate time for repairing textiles or lack the necessary skills to engage in repair practices, which can impede their participation in circular consumption systems [9].
- **Psychological Barriers:** Psychological barriers, such as resistance to behavioral change and denial mechanisms, can also hinder energy conservation behavior, reflecting individual efforts for sustainability. Young consumers, despite having pro-environmental attitudes, may be reluctant to reduce their energy consumption due to these psychological barriers [10].
- **Limited Knowledge:** In the context of textile conservation, limited knowledge about the significance of conservation practices and the environmental benefits of circular disposal options can act as a barrier. Increasing awareness and knowledge about the importance of textile conservation and the benefits of circular consumption systems can help overcome this barrier [9].
- **Inconvenience:** Consumers may perceive textile conservation practices as inconvenient, which can deter them from actively participating in circular product practices. Increasing the convenience of consumers' participation in circular consumption systems is recommended to encourage more individuals to engage in textile conservation efforts [9].

By addressing these barriers through education, awareness campaigns, skill-building initiatives, and making conservation practices more convenient and accessible, individuals can overcome challenges and actively contribute to the conservation of textiles at home.

In terms of preservation techniques, naphthalene balls emerge as the most favored and effective method, demonstrating that practical, easy-to-use solutions are highly valued. Some alternatives of using naphthalene balls for textile preservation include:

Natural Repellents

- **Neem leaves:** Neem leaves have natural insect-repelling properties and can be used to protect textiles from moth and insect damage [11].
- **Herbal sachets:** Sachets filled with a combination of herbs like lavender, mint, or cloves can help deter pests while providing a pleasant aroma [11].
- **Cedar blocks or chips:** The aromatic compounds in cedar wood act as a natural moth repellent. Cedar blocks or chips can be placed with textiles to protect them [11].

Proper Storage Techniques

- **Airtight containers:** Storing textiles in airtight containers, such as acid-free boxes or archival-quality plastic bins, can help prevent pest infestations and minimize exposure to environmental factors that can cause damage [3].
- **Acid-free tissue paper:** Wrapping textiles in acid-free tissue paper can provide a protective barrier and prevent direct contact with potentially harmful materials [3].
- **Controlled environment:** Maintaining a cool, dry, and dark storage environment can help slow down the deterioration of textiles and discourage pest activity [3].

Integrated Pest Management

- **Regular inspection:** Regularly inspecting stored textiles for signs of pest activity, such as webbing, droppings, or damage, can help identify and address infestations early on [6].
- **Freezing or heating:** Exposing textiles to extreme temperatures, either by freezing or heating, can effectively kill any existing pests and their eggs [6].
- **Pheromone traps:** Using pheromone traps can help monitor and control pest populations by attracting and capturing adult moths, preventing them from reproducing and damaging textiles [6].

When choosing a method for preserving textiles, several factors should be considered:

- **Fiber type:** Different textile fibers, such as natural fibers like wool and silk, have unique chemical and physical structural features that may require specific preservation methods [14].
- **Intended use:** If the textile is intended for display or regular use, the preservation method should prioritize maintaining the desired appearance and wearability [6].
- **Storage environment:** Factors like temperature, humidity, and light exposure in the storage environment can impact the effectiveness of preservation methods and the long-term condition of the textile [12][13].
- **Potential risks:** Some preservation methods, such as using naphthalene balls, may pose health risks or leave chemical residues on textiles [12]. Alternatives like natural repellents or proper storage techniques should be considered.
- **Reversibility:** Choosing a preservation method that allows for future interventions or reversibility is important, as it preserves the textile's integrity and allows for potential changes in conservation approaches over time [13].
- **Accessibility and cost:** Factors like the availability and cost of preservation materials and equipment should be taken into account when selecting a method [6].

By carefully considering these factors and consulting with textile conservation professionals, individuals can make informed decisions about the most appropriate preservation methods for their textiles, ensuring their long-term protection and preservation.

The relatively high incidence of damage due to improper preservation highlights the need for better education on the proper use of these techniques. Improper textile preservation methods can significantly impact the value of the fabric in various ways.

- **Deterioration and Damage:** Improper preservation methods can lead to the deterioration and damage of textiles over time, affecting their structural integrity, appearance, and overall condition [15][17].
- **Loss of Cultural Significance:** Textiles hold cultural significance, and improper preservation can result in the loss of historical and cultural value associated with the fabric. This can diminish the fabric's importance and significance in the context of heritage preservation [12][13].
- **Reduced Longevity:** Inadequate preservation methods may shorten the lifespan of textiles, leading to premature aging, fading, and degradation. This can impact the fabric's longevity and diminish its value as a historical or artistic artifact [16][17].
- **Decreased Aesthetic Appeal:** Improper preservation can affect the aesthetic appeal of textiles, causing discoloration, staining, or distortion of the fabric. This can diminish the visual appeal and beauty of the textile, reducing its value in terms of aesthetics [16][17].
- **Loss of Authenticity:** Improper preservation methods can compromise the authenticity of textiles, especially in the context of historical or cultural artifacts. Alterations or damage resulting from improper preservation can diminish the fabric's authenticity and historical integrity [13].

Improper textile preservation methods can lead to deterioration, loss of cultural significance, reduced longevity, decreased aesthetic appeal, and loss of authenticity, all of which can significantly impact the value of the fabric over time. It is crucial to employ appropriate preservation techniques to ensure the long-term conservation and value of textiles.

Traditional learning sources of acquiring knowledge about textile conservation strategies include:

- **Family Heritage:** Knowledge passed down through generations within families, where techniques and practices are shared and preserved over time [18].
- **Cultural Practices:** Traditional cultural practices and customs that involve textile conservation methods specific to a particular community or region [13].
- **Apprenticeship:** Learning from experienced practitioners or mentors in the field of textile conservation through hands-on training and observation [6].

- **Community Workshops:** Participation in community workshops or events focused on textile conservation, where individuals can learn from experts and practitioners in the field [6].
- **Historical Texts:** Studying historical texts, manuscripts, or documents that contain information about traditional textile conservation methods and practices [12].

These traditional means of acquiring knowledge about textile conservation strategies emphasize the importance of heritage, culture, hands-on learning, and community engagement in preserving and passing down valuable conservation techniques through generations.

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