

Clothing Choices During Emotional Stress

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I. INTRODUCTION

Clothing is a powerful medium of communication that shows an individual personality, identity, emotions, behaviour, character, psychological state. In these contemporary society, especially among young adults, fashion has become closely related with mental health and emotional well-being. (Johnson et al., 2014; Suganya et al., 2024).

Clothing has the ability to influence an individual's mood through underlying psychological mechanisms. Clothing that connects with mental processes and emotional experiences through the relationship between what people wear and how they feel is explained through theories. When individuals choose certain garments, that affects their outward appearance and also shapes their internal state of mind (Kang et al., 2013; Amekplenu 2024). During in these situations, clothing became more than a daily necessity when periods of high stress or the global pandemic Johnson, K. K. P., et al 2014; Wenderski et al., 2023).

1.1 Enclothed cognition

The theory of enclothed cognition explains a psychological concept describing how clothing influences the wearer's mental processes self-perception and behaviour (Adam & Galinsky, 2012).

It suggests that with specific garment it associated the meaning, along with the act of wearing them, it can influence psychological functioning. Research by Adam and Galinsky (2012) is explained that clothing is linked with particular roles and qualities that can improve mental performance In a similar way, slepian et al. (2015) found that people who think in more structured and abstract manner they choose to wearing formal attire, it can enhance their feelings of

confidence and authority, dignity. These findings indicate that clothing is not just a passive element it is not just covering the body but an active factor that plays a role in our mind and body that shapes both cognitive and emotional experience (Kodzoman et al., 2023).

1.2 Clothing and Mood Enhancement

Clothing is sometimes it can really affect how we feel. People always choose clothes that will help feel better, comfort. For example, kang, J.Y.M. et al found out in 2013 that people choose clothes on purpose to improve their mood. In the same direction, wenderski M. et al reported in 2003 that clothing helped people manage stress and anxiety during the epidemic. Amekpleni 2024 and Wenderski et al., 2023 and Singh, K.N. started in 2024 and 2025 that our mood and sense of self-assurance are greatly influenced by the clothes we can wear. When we wear clothes that we like or that are comfortable it can make us happier and less anxious. Clothing is really important, for our state.

1.3 Clothing, self - identity, and self - concept

Clothing plays a central role in identity formation. Fashion choices help individuals express personality and social identity and also highlight that clothing is closely linked to body image and self- perception. Johnson, K.K.P., et al (2014).

Smith, R., & Yates, J. (2018) Introduced the concept of 'Happy outfits', highlighting how individuals intentionally choose garments that align with their emotional state or desired identity. By wearing such outfits, Individuals create a sense of harmony between their internal emotions and external appearance, which contributes to improved emotional

well-being. By allowing individuals Own identity strengthens self-concept, and feel more authentic and comfortable. clothing functions as a mirror and also creator of self-identity, it not only influences how individual present themselves to world but it also experiences themselves how they understand internally Xavera, M., & Egunjobi, J. P. (2025).

1.4 Relationship between Mood and Dressing Behaviour

when feeling sad / Low: Loose, oversized clothes, soft cotton fabrics (cotton, fleece), dark or dull colours (black, Grey, navy), repeating same outfits.

When Feeling Anxious / stressed: Simple outfits, no heavy styling and makeup, Comfort and breathable clothes, neutral colours (beige, white, pastel), clothes that feel safe.

When Feeling Tired / Exhausted: Wrinkled or casual clothes, Minimal effort dressing

When Feeling Happy / Excited: Dark colours, trendy and stylish outfits, Accessories with makeup

When Feeling Frustrated / Angry: Bold or dark colours, strong structured outfits, sometimes tighter or more expressive clothing

When seeking comfort: Favourite clothes, old clothes with memories, hoodies, blankets, soft textures

When trying to Feel Better: Well - fitted, stylish outfits, power dressing, bright or confidence-boosting colors.

1.5 Colour Psychology

According to research. AndrewJ and Elliot and Markus Colours are not only visual components nut also psychological signals that can affect motivation, attention, and judgement. Additionally, Hempill 1996 noted that although these associations might vary based on personal experiences and societal factors, people often establish consistent associations between particular colours and emotional reactions. People frequently favour particular colours due to the emotions they evoke. Vein Ou et al 2004. all things considered these results imply that colour has a big impact on mood, feelings, and individual preferences. When it comes to clothes, colour selection plays a significant role in promoting emotional comfort and affecting how people view themselves and are regarded by others.

II. PAST (CLOTHING AND PSYCHOLOGY)

Previous studies focused on the Relationship between clothes and psychological factors like mood, emotions, and self-perception. For example, Fredrickson 2001, emphasized the significance of good emotions in enhancing general wellbeing, which might be indirectly impacted by attire choices. They introduced enclothed cognition; it demonstrates their thinking patterns and behaviour can influence by what individual can wear Adam and Galinsky (2012).

Relationship between mood, personality, and clothing preferences they suggest that the clothing is not only for a functional purpose but it also plays a significant role it can expressing emotions and also personal identity. Moody et al (2010) & Venkatesh et al (2012).

III. PRESENT (CLOTHING AS EMOTIONAL REGULATION, MENTAL HEALTH, IDENTITY)

Present studies have the scope by examining clothing as a tool for mental wellbeing and emotional regulation. They highlight the relationship between clothing, self-confidence, and psychological health. In this mostly the fashion clothing impact on mental health it is particularly among younger population Daizy et al (2025). It demonstrated how clothing has been influenced emotional expression and first impressions, it studied how stress effects dressing behaviour, leading individual prefer comfortable and familiar clothing (Hareli et al.,2025; Suganya et al., 2024).

IV. FUTURE SUGGESTIONS

In past and present studies, it has a meaningful connection between clothing and emotional states. Future studies should focus on understanding how clothing choices during emotional stress vary across different cultures, as clothing meaning and emotional expressions.

Another critical direction is the need for longitudinal investigations that track individual overtime. Understanding whether clothing choice merely reflect temporary emotions or actively contribute to long-

term psychological well-being it can provide the role of fashion in mental health.

The intersection of fashion and technology also presents a future exploration. Innovations such as smart textiles, wearable sensors, now a days mostly uses Smart textiles wearable sensors, and AI driven styling systems have the potential to detect emotional states and recommend clothing that enhances comfort and emotional balance. Such advancements could redefine clothing from a passive element into an interactive system that supports psychological wellbeing.

Finally, by considering diverse population across age, gender, occupational background there is a need to adopt a more inclusive research approach. For more comprehensive understanding there is a scope in this way to allow. Different emotional stress is responded by how different individuals' experiences and utilize clothing.

V. CONCLUSION

Clothing is not only a basic necessity but also a significant psychological and emotional tool that influences human behaviour and mental well-being. The review of literature clearly indicates that clothing choices are closely associated with emotional states such as stress, anxiety, happiness, and sadness. Psychological theories that can affect cognitive process such as enclothed cognition further supports the idea what individuals can wear, self-perception and emotional responses (Kang et al., 2013; Amekplenu, 2024).

The study also highlights that individuals often use clothing as a form of emotional regulations, based on their mood where comfortable, familiar or expressive garments are selected. Moreover, clothing plays a important role in shaping self-identity and self-confidence, allowing individuals to express their internal feelings through external appearance (Wenderski et al., 2023).

Overall, clothing is a powerful medium that can be connects psychology and fashion, it helps to individual who can wear clothing to manage their emotions and wellbeing. Therefore, understanding the emotional impact of clothing can be valuable for both fashion designers and psychologists in

developing clothing solutions that support mental health and improve quality of life (Johnson et al., 2024; Xavera & Egunjobi, 2025).

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