

## **Fashion Therapy: Treating Fashion as a Psychological Weapon for Mental Health and Human Well-being**

Ms Anju Bhardwaj

Assistant Professor, Department of Fashion and Apparel Engineering, The Technological Institute of Textile and Science, Bhiwani

### **Abstract**

“Fashion Therapy” is a process where an individual can discover self-acceptance and a pristine sense of empowerment by using fashion tools for self-identity and healing. The concept of Fashion therapy embraces the idea that clothing can have a weighty impact on our mood, confidence and self-esteem. The selection of outfits by any individual is not only about physical appearance but also reflects a sense of identity, style preferences, body image concerns and emotional needs.

The Present study emphasises the use of fashion tools as healing Therapy. It introduces the relationship between Fashion and Mental health awareness, the psychological benefits of Fashion on human behaviour, mental health, and societally correlated issues, and how fashion clothing can be used as a weapon to evoke positive emotions, boost self-confidence, and poignantly heal.

**Keywords:** *Fashion, Mental health, Psychological, Clothing, Stress Management, Therapy*

### **Concept of Mental Health**

Mental Health is a state of mental well-being that enables a person to the way of thinking, feeling and behaviour. Through mental health, a person can cope with stress in their routine life, associations and physical healthiness. It includes our emotional, psychological and social welfare. It helps an individual to enable decision-making, build relationships, and make their own identity in our society. A person must build a delicate community and socio-economic development. Considering mental health, the plough own behaviour and social behaviour is a myth. It is more than the absence of a mental disorder. It is very important to take care of our mental well-being at every stage of life, from childhood to adulthood and parenthood to old age. Mental Disorder can transpire at any stage of life due to abundant reasons. Over the years, mental health problems like a way of thinking, mood, and behaviour can be affected.

### **Mental Health Condition**

Mental illness can range from mild to severe and can badly affect a person's mood, behaviour and thinking abilities. A person with a mental disorder can be suffering from depression, anxiety and physical addictions. Some of these factors can contribute to mental health:

- **Biological factors:** Biological factors are mainly related to the brain or genes. Because of this, such issues transfer from generation to generation.
- **Previous Trauma:** It is related to previous life experiences such as someone's awful behaviour, Unforgettable trauma or physical abuse.
- **Family history:** It includes the same kind of mental disorders in the current or previous generation.
- **Insecurity or inferiority complex:** It occurs when someone feels confident for many reasons, such as physical appearance, height, weight, or something they don't like.

### **Therapeutical needs for mental health**

Mental health in India is an imperative issue; a significant population is suffering from mental health issues like stress-related, depression and anxiety. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated mental health issues due to increased job losses, a jump in divorce rate and staying home for a long time, which has worsened, so many people of different ages experience the generic nature. Development disabilities, anxious behaviour, and mental disorders are even noticed in Children. In such a scenario, to find a therapeutic solution, fashion

can be considered a secret weapon for mental health-related concerns.

### **Relationship between Fashion and Mental Health**

Fashion has always encompassed much more than just apparel. It is the most philosophical way of self-expression and conveys an individual's personality in terms of feelings, expressions and behaviour. Fashion plays a significant role in mental health management. Choosing a dress sense, colour, design, and style are all related to mental health and a person's life concept. It is closely associated with encloded cognition, meaning our clothes influence our mental state, emotions and performance. This shows our perspective on life and how we perceive ourselves and our abilities. Do we look forward to opportunities, or are we lost in our failures?

### **Fashion Psychology**

Fashion psychology is the way of perceiving and amplification the connection between fashion and human behaviour. Fashion psychology examines the fashion choices made by a person and the factors that influence fashion choices, such as cultural, social, or individual beliefs and values. The fashion Cognition process can affect the way people think about their behaviour. fashion psychology is the phenomenon that works ahead of the appeal and aesthetics of clothing while considering self-esteem, societal behaviour and mental state.

### **Psychological Impact of Colour in Fashion**

This can't be a myth saying, "What you are is what you wear". Professional dressing is one of the biggest examples of increased abstract thinking. Colour has a significant impact on the wearer's mood and specific emotions. Bright Colours like Red, Yellow, and Blue can boost one's energy, and dark colours like black and grey tend to create a low-stress and dull feel. Cheerful colours like yellow and blue tend to furnish the feeling of happiness, while white, green and soothing colours are associated with peacefulness. Certain colours are proven to aid mental health; for example, green is proven to reduce anxiety, and blue is also called an anti-

depression colour. The concept of warm and cool colours also comes under the psychological impact of colour in fashion. Colour enables individuals to make premeditated choices to support mental well-being.

### **Fashion as Therapeutic weapon in mental health**

Fashion sense is nonverbal communication and a very well-built way for every individual to express their identity, self-expression, and social perspectives. The concept of fashion therapy combines the transformative power of fashion with the remedial properties of therapy. The choices of clothing, style, and colours impact the perception of individuals and also influence how others understand them.

Fashion is an optimistic universal art that addresses mental health, and style contributes to a very expressive self-concept, heightens the sense of worth and boosts overall mental health. Beauty standards in the fashion industry significantly influence an individual's body image, body language, and personality, contributing to others' minds making a particular image about that person. Fashion therapy embraces the idea that clothing is not just about physical appearance but also about emotional healing, up-levelling self-confidence and raising self-acceptance.

Through the process of fashion therapy, fashion specialists help their clients discover a sense of self-love and acceptance by using the right tools of fashion and styles for their inner growth and emotional healing. They help people choose wardrobes that are authentic to themselves and create a positive connection between them and their belongings.

Fashion is often overlooked way to improve mental health, and look forward to every day and helps combat depression. The most common symptoms of depression include losing self-care, not showing interest in common things, not getting dressed, overthinking, etc. Getting dressed every day with a positive aspect is a key tool for getting rid of depression and, in turn, mindful practice.

Even though there are so many tangible benefits of fashion, lots of research still needs to be done in terms of the psychological and mental health benefits in this area. Wear what truly makes you feel like yourself in the interim.

### **Benefits of Fashion Therapy**

The whole fashion therapy system analyses the behaviour and impression of someone and analyses its applicability in terms of fashion therapy. Fashion therapy uses all fashion items and tools to overcome stress and fear, manage pain better, and have positivity about self-worth, self-existence, and social, psychological, emotional, and behavioural changes. Fashion Specialists heighten positive appearance and fashion change by using the Right Colour of choice, design pattern, makeup, fashion style, fashion accessories, fashion coordination and hairstyles. Using these tools can result in numerous benefits, such as improving mental health. Some of them are listed below.

#### ***Developing a realistic appearance of the body***

Fashion therapy allows people to look at them more positively and pragmatically than they ever had before. People feel that it is more important to feel good the way you are rather than what others judge after seeing you. This type of perception comes under cognitive changes after fashion therapy. Through this, people accept their realistic body shape, which was previously based on idealised standards. The overall process is to learn to love your body by experiencing an increased feeling of acceptance and satisfaction about your appearance, which can continue to grow through increased awareness of fashion, clothes and overall makeovers.

#### ***Boosting self-confidence***

The most favourable judgment of human life is about complimenting their looks. It is about how good, pleasant, and graceful a person looks in terms of personality, choice of clothes and overall well-being. A judgment about someone's appearance by fashion consultants and by people of your surroundings influences the person's confidence. It boosts confidence in Individuals when they get unrelenting positive feedback in their interpersonal relationships and are

encouraged by people who appreciate them about their appearance. So, positive comments and continual appraisal are the keys to boosting self-confidence in individuals, which will be reflected in their presentation skills, talking behaviour, and enjoyment of their daily lives.

#### ***Focused self-expression***

People who value and focus on their opinions rather than others' opinions make them more confident and self-expressed. These Attitudinal changes can be achieved by fashion therapy to satisfy their need for beauty and self-expression. Making judgments by you about your looks is more meaningful and realistic than judgments made by others. Self-love, obsession and self-respect are the key points through which people can value themselves. So, getting ready and dressed up for yourself will be more satisfying and significant than getting dressed to show off in front of others. Fashion has become a more meaningful conduit for articulating and conversing on various aspects of self-interpreting the fashion therapy practice.

#### ***Increased body satisfaction***

The overall motive of making changes in appeal and appearance is to amplify one's body satisfaction, which further leads to many psychological benefits. People with internal body satisfaction have a more pleasant look and are more attractive and focused in life. Satisfying the desire for beauty and appeal also uplifts the mood. Different styles, designs and colours are important in giving the opposite gaze to various body shapes. For example, dark colours give the appearance of compactness, while light colours give the appeal of fullness. Vertical pattern lines create the illusion of tall height, and horizontal lines create a fantasy of balanced height. In this way, different illusions can be made by choosing the right colour, pattern and style according to different body shapes to achieve body satisfaction.

#### ***Emotional healing***

Fashion therapists or fashion consultants commonly take this approach of emotional healing by fashion elements to help people with

emotional suffering and navigate personal style tools such as self-discovery, empowerment, and curing. Fast growth in fashion therapy is evidence of potential in healing therapy through fashion channels. Acknowledging changes through clothing, dressing up, and makeup takes a lot of work to observe behavioural changes. Emotional healing, self-esteem, and emotional strength can be followed by continuing fashion therapy and observation. Time taken can vary from person to person as the emotional connection of every person is different with different things like relationships, pets, social image, etc.

### Conclusion

Fashion psychology sheds light on the complex relationship between attire and mental health. Fashion psychology also focuses on the insightful impact of selecting wearable items such as clothes, jewellery, and make-up, which enhances self-reliance and self-worth. Fashion therapy significantly impacts the efficiency of cognitive experiences, behaviour changes, and satisfaction with self-acceptance. This process is closely related to clothing-related appearance-management behaviours. People, with the help of Fashion Therapy, can deal with multiple

measures of their target complaints like negative body image, lower self-esteem, and body dissatisfaction, which further result in depression and mental health issues. Fashion Therapy is important and can be utilised to compensate for an individual's superficial body image distress. The fashion Psychology dimension of fashion has the power of clothing design, style and Colour impact to develop positive and empowering relationships between fashion and mental well-being.

### Limitation and Future Scope

Acknowledging changes through clothing, dressing up, and make-up is very challenging as no numerical data can be interpreted after every visit, but slowly, behavioural changes can be observed with time. That change in behaviour and the time taken for that change is also different in different age groups, genders and classes of society. This study can be divided and classified into various groups. Each group should be observed and taken under observation so that some data can be collected to help further mentally stressed people about their body shape, appearance and self-esteem.

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