

**THE USE OF FASHION AS A MOOD ENHANCER AND ITS EFFECT ON MENTAL
HEALTH IN EMERGING ADULTS IN CANADA DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC**

MALGOSIA WENDERSKI
Bachelor of Science, University of Toronto, 2017

A thesis submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

Faculty of Education
University of Lethbridge
LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA, CANADA

©Malgosia Wenderski, 2023

The Use Of Fashion As A Mood Enhancer And Its Effect On Mental Health In Emerging Adults
In Canada During A Global Pandemic

MALGOSIA WENDERSKI

Date of Defence: August 7th, 2023

Mrs. J. Wasilewski Thesis Supervisor	Assistant Professor	MFA
Dr. J. Jung Thesis Supervisor	Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. T. Gunn Thesis Examination Committee Member	Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. S. Dixon Thesis Examination Committee Member	Associate Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. K. Ito External Examiner University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta	Assistant Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. J. MacCormack Chair, Thesis Examination Committee	Associate Professor	Ph.D.

DEDICATION

To all those who think they cannot, you can. To all those who find clothing empowering and helpful, you are onto something, trust your instincts. To my future self, this is proof that we can do anything we put our hearts and minds to. Dare to dream, proceed, and persist!

ABSTRACT

Literature demonstrates that clothing has a positive influence on aspects of mental health, and this study frames the use of clothing to enhance one's wellbeing as a coping mechanism. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted lifestyles as individuals were isolated in their homes in accordance with lockdown restrictions. There were global reports of isolation and diminished mental health (Rajkumar, 2020). It was unknown if emerging adults continued their high engagement with clothing during the peaks of the pandemic. The relationship between clothing, mood, and mental health is also unknown. This thesis surveyed 574 emerging adults (individuals 18 to 29) in Canada to investigate how the peaks of the pandemic had affected both clothing engagement and the use of clothing as a mood enhancer, and how this relationship impacted mental health. The mixed methods study found that participants either increased or decreased their engagement with clothing. Greater fear of COVID-19 predicted and positively correlated with fashion involvement and mood enhancement through clothing. Emerging adults reported multiple motivations to enhance mood through clothing, including bolstering the self-concept, self-esteem, and comfort. While there was no relationship between mood enhancement and mental health, the thematic analysis revealed reports of both positive and negative effects of clothing on mental health. The study found that emerging adults used clothing as a coping mechanism to support their wellbeing. Furthermore, engagement with clothing, or a lack thereof had consequences to their experience. Participants shared that clothing enhanced their self-esteem, mood, self-empowerment, self-congruency, and self-efficacy. Emerging adults who did not sustain high engagement with clothing reported negative impacts to self-esteem, self-efficacy, connection with self, and mood. Future research is encouraged to further explore and clarify the relationship between clothing, mood, and mental health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without my supervisors and defense committee, this thesis would not exist. I am so grateful for their encouragement, support, time, and kindness. Julia and Jaehee, thank you for your dedication, support, and believing in me. I would like to express gratitude for those souls that revitalized my spirit and strength, including my extraordinary niece Aurora, my dear friends, and my cat Loki. Thank you, God, for looking after me. Lastly, I would like to thank myself for persevering and giving my all to this opportunity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
Glossary	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	5
Chapter 3: Methods.....	34
Chapter 4: Results	48
Chapter 5: Discussion	138
Conclusion	158
References.....	160
Appendix A: Views of Clothing Survey Implied Consent	183
Appendix B: Demographics.....	187
Appendix C: Fear of COVID-19 Scale.....	190
Appendix D: Fashion Involvement Scale	192
Appendix E: Women’s Use of Clothing in Mood Enhancement Scale	195
Appendix F: Proximity of Clothing to Self Scale	197

Appendix G: Scale of Mental Health Continuum- Short Form	200
Appendix I: Debriefing Page	203
Appendix J: Sample Demographic Characteristics Table	204
Appendix K: Histograms and QQ plots	206
Appendix L: Tests of Normality and Correlational Matrixes	212
Appendix M: Permission for Use of Fashion Involvement Scale.....	214
Appendix N: Permission for Women’s Use of Clothing in Mood Enhancement Scale	215
Appendix O: Permission for Use of Fear of COVID-19 Scale.....	216
Appendix P: Permission for Use of Proximity of Clothing to Self Scale	217
Appendix Q: Permission Sought for MHC Scale	218
Appendix R: Ethics Approval of Study	219

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for All Study Variables.....	58
Table 2: Pearson Correlations for Study Variables.....	66
Table 3: Summary of Linear Regression Analyses.....	66
Table 4: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for PCS on Mood Enhancement.....	68
Table 5: Themes Identified from Changes in Clothing Use.....	71
Table 6: Themes Identified from Changes to the Importance of Clothing.....	83
Table 7: Themes Identified from Motivations for Clothing Use.....	103
Table 8: Themes Identified on the Impacts of Clothing on Mental Health.....	120

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Frequency of Monthly Fashion Purchases Bar Chart.....	61
Figure 2: Amount of Monthly Fashion Purchases Bar Chart.....	61
Figure 3: Percentage of Preferred Items to Purchase Bar Chart.....	62
Figure 4: Percentage of Preferred Items Worn Bar Chart.....	62
Figure 5: Percentage of Preferred Styles.....	63
Figure 6: Degree of Exhibiting Style(s) at Home Bar Chart.....	64
Figure 7: Personal Meaning(s) of Clothing Bar Chart.....	64
Figure 8: Degree of Mood Enhancement Bar Chart.....	65
Figure 9: Changes in Importance of Clothing Bar Chart.....	67
Figure 10: Reported Mental Health Bar Chart.....	70
Figure 11: Impact of Clothing on Mental Health Bar Chart.....	70

Glossary

Term	Definition
Clothing	Used synonymously with garment, dress, attire, or apparel.
COVID-19	A respiratory disease that is infectious, caused by the coronavirus (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
Emerging adults	Individuals aged 18 to 29 (Arnett, 2004). Used interchangeable with young adults.
Fashion	Contemporary clothing used to enhance one's image.
Mental Health	Characterized by feelings of contentment, positive behavioural functioning including the ability to have positive relationships and cope with life stressors effectively (American Psychology Association [APA], n.d.-d; Westerhof & Keyes, 2010). A synonym used in this paper is mental wellbeing.

Chapter 1: Introduction

For many, clothing and fashion are considered frivolous (BoF/McKinsey, 2016; Frith & Gleeson, 2004). This is also evident in scholarship as the topic is dismissed and disregarded by researchers (Korica & Bazin, 2019). The devaluation of fashion research has been attributed to various reasons, including its association with women, its focus on outward appearance, and it being a form of capitalist exploitation (Crane & Bovone, 2006; Kawamura, 2005). Caring for one's clothing and appearance is sometimes construed as vanity (Workman & Lee, 2011). Appearance concerns have been linked to negative behaviors including self-objectification and body dissatisfaction (Barron et al., 2021; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Tiggeman & Rachel, 2012). Therefore, appearance management is frowned upon. However, research demonstrates that clothing has a positive and multi-faceted contribution to people's experience. Dressing favourably connects an individual to their ideal self-concept, enhances self-confidence, and helps them achieve consistency between identity and their attire (Casidy et al., 2015; Dubler & Gurel, 1984; Vigolo & Ugolini, 2016). Studies have highlighted clothing's armor-like function, camouflaging one's insecurities, mitigating self-consciousness and reducing one's social anxiety (Kang et al., 2013; Kwon & Shim, 1999; Price & Pettijohn, 2006; Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). Individuals have reported feeling empowered by their dress due to controlling one's environment by managing external feelings and impressions of oneself (Raunio, 1982). Clothing, therefore, can be used as a coping mechanism to enhance one's mood or reach a desired mood (Kallstrom, 2009; Kang et al., 2013; Kwon 1994; Kwon & Shim, 1999; Kwon & Parham, 1994; Moody et al., 2010). It can help individuals navigate day to day life and support one's mental health. With clothing consumption on the rise (Preuit & Yan, 2016), dressing oneself can be a major area of significance in life, especially for those that intentionally dress for their mental health. Studies

have shown that *emerging adults* - representing individuals between ages 18 – 29 (Arnett, 2004) - engage in styling and care more about their fashion than other age milestones (Abacus Data, 2016; Dharmesti et al., 2021; Ladhari et al., 2019; Smith, 2011; Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017). A disruption to dressing habits by personal or global issues may therefore impact using fashion as a mood enhancer and subsequently one's mental health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated societies and daily living. Psychological wellbeing and mental health have been found to worsen across the globe during the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2020; Vindegaard & Benros, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that mental health issues increased, and individuals diagnosed with mental disorders had a higher risk of severe illness and mortality from COVID-19 (WHO, 2022). Statistics Canada (2020) stated that emerging adults did not report good mental health among other age groups and indicated a need for mental health care more than other age groups. Relationships with clothing during the pandemic have also been affected due to decreased consumption (Arora et al., 2020; Knowles et al., 2020) and the preference for comfort over fashion (Liu

et al., 2021). Given the global changes in psychological wellbeing and fashion consumption, it is unclear how or if emerging adults use clothing to regulate their mood during the pandemic. It is also unknown if there are subsequent impacts on mental health.

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the use of fashion as a mood enhancer, if and how relationships with clothing affected mental health, and determining what are the implications for emerging adults. The study's results will be used to better understand the relationship between clothing and mental health in the context of clothing

use among emerging adults in Canada during a global pandemic. Four main inquiries will be explored:

1. How has the pandemic impacted fashion involvement?
2. How has the pandemic impacted the use of fashion as a mood enhancer?
3. What are the motivations for using fashion as a mood enhancer during the pandemic?
4. How has the use of fashion as a mood enhancer impacted mental health during the pandemic?

This topic is novel as there is no published research that investigates the direct link between relationships with clothing, mood, and impacts to mental health. This thesis is the first study to address this significant gap in literature. By exploring emerging adult's use of clothing as a tool for managing mood, this study forges a new area of research on wellbeing and fashion. The study informs future research in this area and serves as preliminary research in establishing new counselling interventions that involve clothing. In addition, the study takes a snapshot of emerging adult's experience and relationship with clothing during a historical and global pandemic. As clothing is interrelated to functioning, one's relationship with self and others, and mental health, the thesis investigates the direct and indirect influences of this historical event on emerging adults and their clothing. It can also serve as a timestamp for further research examining how relationships with clothing have changed post pandemic.

Overview

This thesis aims to explore how emerging adults engage in clothing during the pandemic and how clothing as a tool for mood enhancement has been affected. It also investigates the relationship between fashion involvement and mental health. Exploration into this topic begins with an overview of literature in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, the researcher outlines the

methodology of this study. The results are presented in relation to the four research questions in Chapter 4. The final chapter explores a discussion of the findings and its implications.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter begins with an overview of the theoretical framework to bridge the use of clothing and mental wellbeing. Next, several concepts on fashion consumption are introduced to provide an understanding on how individuals engage with their clothing. Factors influencing dressing and consumption habits are explored, and literature on Canadian fashion consumers is covered. Research on the effects of fashion on psychological processes are reviewed. Finally, the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on fashion involvement are uncovered. Consequences of this global pandemic will highlight the missing piece of research on the link between clothing and mental health, and how it can be explored in this study.

Due to the dearth of research on fashion in the field of psychology, the researcher leans into sociological, historical, marketing, and anthropological research to inform the literature review. This interdisciplinary approach will illuminate the potential relationships between clothing and mental health and highlight the gaps that this study sets out to fill.

Coping with Fashion through Mood Enhancement: Conceptual Framework

To understand the relationship between fashion and mental health, a framework is proposed to interconnect mood, fashion involvement and mental wellbeing. Clothing has been proven to have an empowering and multi-faceted contribution to people's lives, such as expressing and bolstering one's identity (McNeill & Venter, 2019; Rocamora, 2017; Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017), providing comfort and safety (Kang et al., 2013; Kwon & Shim, 1999; Rahman et al., 2021), and being a tool that can enhance mood (Kang et al., 2013; Koksai, 2014; Moody et al., 2010). Therefore, clothing influences psychological processes, and Adam and Galinsky (2012) defined this process as enclothed cognition. This effect occurs through the embodiment of the symbolic meanings associated with attire (Adam & Galinsky, 2012). My

thesis applies enclothed cognition and fashion as a mood enhancer to examine whether clothing has served to enhance the mood and mental health of the sample during the peak of the global pandemic. A way to conceptualize this effect is to view the use of clothing as a coping mechanism by means of mood regulation, and the Mood Management Theory and Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) coping theory is implemented to frame this idea.

Mood management theory (MMT) states that individuals have two goals, to sustain a positive mood or to halt a negative mood. Moods are emotional states that are either "short-lived" or lasting "for hours, days, or even weeks" (APA, n.d.-e). Positive moods can be characterized by feelings of happiness, enjoyment, and enthusiasm, whereas negative moods can be distinguished by feelings of apathy, frustration, or helplessness. Research demonstrates that clothing has been used to manage one's mood (Kang et al., 2013; Kwon, 1991; Kwon & Shim, 1999; Moody et al., 2010; Tiggemann & Andrew, 2012), suggesting that dressing oneself can accomplish both goals of MMT, as well as facilitate a positive mood with outfits. Therefore, mood enhancement is achieved by dressing oneself or engaging with clothing, and this study proposes this activity is an emotion-focused coping mechanism (EFC). Coping can be defined as a process responding to an internal or external stressor that is taxing for an individual. EFC involves regulating one's emotions to manage emotional distress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). People engage in EFC predominantly when the stressor is perceived as outside of one's control and must be endured (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Literature demonstrates that mood and EFC are crucial for wellbeing (Gross et al., 2019). Positive moods can assist in developing personal resources (cognitively and behaviorally) and increase emotional stability by mediating the effect of psychological resilience (Han & Wang, 2022). Mood and affect are also important for self-regulation, psychological functioning, and expression (Larsen, 2000). During the pandemic,

individuals were required to stay at home which caused a significant amount of stress and a lack of perceived autonomy. As emerging adults navigated this time, their passion with clothing could have been used to cope by mediating stress and achieving homeostasis (Gloria & Steinhardt, 2014). In this thesis, the use of clothing is presented as a strategy for EFC to manage moods during the peaks of the pandemic and ultimately bolster one's mental health. A potential critique to this framework is the distinction between mood enhancement and EFC (Larsen, 2000). Coping includes responding to an event or a stressor, while mood states emerge ambiguously, and regulating mood does not involve responding to a particular event but rather evoking a positive affect state (Larsen, 2000). In this framework however, it is argued that emerging adults coped with stressors or challenging events with clothing through affect regulation, as well as used clothing to facilitate positive moods throughout the pandemic.

Fashion and Clothing

The subject of fashion entered the world of scholars in the late 1800's. Fashion has taken on various meanings in the fields of psychology and sociology due to its multi-dimensional nature (Paulicelli et al., 2021). At times the definition of fashion is simplified and used interchangeably with clothing. For instance, Hollander (1994) referred to fashion as clothing individuals dress themselves in for the day ahead. However, fashion also encompasses "accessories, body manipulation and modification, makeup, ornaments, lifestyles and behaviour" (Paulicelli et al., 2021, p.1). To demonstrate how comprehensive and complex the term fashion can be is a quote from the APA:

The styles of artistic and cultural expression, garments, manners, and customs prevalent in a particular time and place. These definitions are more complex and extends to phenomena other than clothes, including other material possessions, and ways of being.

Fashion may be transient and irrational but often reflects the Zeitgeist or mood of society (APA, n.d. -a).

As seen in the quote, fashion refer to phenomena beyond material possessions that we dress in and style our bodies with. This study focuses on how individuals consume and dress with clothing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, fashion is defined as contemporary clothing used to enhance one's image.

Fashion Involvement and Fashion Consciousness

Fashion involvement is the extent to which clothing is viewed as a central part to one's life, and how meaningful dressing is perceived as (O'Cass, 2004). Fashion involvement can vary between people and is influenced by multiple factors, such as clothing practices, social location, psychological processes, and consumerism. The following sections briefly summarize what may influence fashion involvement.

Daily Clothing Practices

Daily clothing practices can be a determinant for one's level of fashion involvement. Everyday clothing practices, or dress, is a process where individuals attempt to meet their needs in the moment or for the day. In addition to addressing the multi-layered needs we have, we consult with our senses in the process including sight, touch, hearing, and smell (Eicher, 2014; Horn & Gurel, 1981). Individuals select a function(s) they want their attire to meet, which can include camouflage, comfort, assurance, fashion, and individuality (Kwon & Parham, 1994). There are also preferences to certain physical features of clothing (colours, materials, texture, patterns) (Kallstrom, 2009). Preferred clothing entails three factors, including perception of one's appearance, its physical features (visual features, skin response, clothing size, fit, thermal comfort, revealing levels), and the motivations and memories tethered to the clothing (Raunio,

1982). Kwon (1987, 1988) speculates that mood, personality, and orientation to clothing are factors influencing daily outfit selection. Moody et al (2009) asserts that emotions, mood and personality were significant in dressing practices. In a study by Lee and Choo (2015), Korean participants have reported that their outfit satisfaction depended on positive feedback from others, and self-evaluation of the outfit's appropriateness for the day.

Fast Fashion

The rise of fast fashion has fueled clothing overconsumption (Preuit & Yan, 2016). Fast fashion refers to the “rapid product cycles from retailers and impulse buying by consumers” (Becker-Leifhold & Heuer, 2018, p. i). Rapid product cycles entail using marketing data to rapidly manufacture and sell inventory that reflects the latest fashion trends. Consequently, individuals are consuming and disposing clothing at a faster rate (Becker-Leifhold & Heuer, 2018; Laitala, 2014). According to Fashion Takes Action (n.d.) - a Canadian non-profit organization aimed at making fashion sustainable and ethical – individuals purchase 60% more fashion than 20 years ago. Blau (2020) states that 92 million tonnes of waste have been consumed by the global textiles and clothing industry in 2015 and in 2030 this amount of waste can be doubled. Alexandera (2014) argues that a rise in clothing consumption has resulted in heightened fashion involvement.

Fashion Involvement and Gender

What has been investigated so far on gender and fashion involvement is summarized in this section. In this study gender refers to a claimed identity that may or may not be contingent on assigned sex at birth. Studies in the field of fashion are saturated with a focus on women (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Strubel & Goswami, 2022), while others evaluate gender differences. Gender differences beyond the gender identities of men and women are not explored equally in

the literature. This was evident when searching for articles on fashion involvement among populations that identify as transgender, queer, and non-binary. This implies: (1) a subscription to a very dual model of gender, and (2) an effect of the cultural expectation and assumption that women are more involved in their clothing.

In studies that evaluate gender differences, women have always reported a higher level of interest (Meenakshi & Aprita, 2011; Strubel & Goswami, 2022; Workman & Studak, 2006). Qualitative studies that analyze men's perceptions of clothing often find themes of low interest and beliefs that men should not care about their fashion (Anić & Mihić, 2015; Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Gould & Stern 1989; Parker et al., 2014; Workman & Freeburg, 2009; Workman, 2010; Workman & Lee, 2011). Studies that compare transgender and cisgender demographics observe that women view clothing as more important (Strubel & Goswami, 2022).

Research prominently discusses the differences of cis-gender men and women. One difference is the motivation to purchase attire as men primarily shop for what they need whereas women focus on what they want (Workman & Studak, 2006). There are exceptions to this. There are men who have high levels of fashion involvement and are fashion change agents; a type of fashion consumer that will be addressed under the heading fashion consumers. There are also differences in the perception of clothing functions. Studies have found that men prioritized practicality and comfort (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Workman & Studak, 2006). Women value clothing for individuality, aesthetics, appearance enhancement, and bolstering self-feelings (Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). Men dress to emphasize their physical body and strength (Eicher, 2014), valuing the cultural ideal to be muscular, tall, and slim (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). Male fashion consumers have been found to bridge self-identity and internalized maleness with their clothing (Gould & Stern, 1989). Studies have demonstrated that women like to dress with

flattering colors and in silhouettes (Eicher, 2014). Another dimension for dressing oneself is to subscribe to gender membership (Eicher, 2014; Workman & Studak, 2006). However, not all literature demonstrates vast differences between men and women.

Literature demonstrates several similarities across women and men in clothing use and fashion involvement. A study on American emerging adults has found that women and men equally enjoy shopping (Weiss, 2003). Research highlights that both demographics try to fit the cultural ideals of their time (Eicher, 2014). Body dissatisfaction is not exclusive to female presenting individuals. For instance, when individuals experience body dissatisfaction, both men and women conceal body parts to manage their appearance and avoid a tight fit (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Sung & Yan, 2020; Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). Furthermore, when individuals encounter difficulties in finding desired attire, less enjoyment for clothes shopping has been reported (Barry, 2015; Sung & Yan, 2020; Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). Furthermore, people are challenging traditional clothing norms through androgyny (the blurring of masculine and feminine clothing in outfits) (Barry & Martin, 2015; Reilly & Barry, 2020). Canadian emerging adult men have expressed an interest in experimenting with their fashion and display their identity in their clothing, while navigating the boundaries of societal norms and traditional masculinity (Barry & Martin, 2015).

Studies that explore the relationship between clothing and transgender, non-binary, or queer individuals explore themes of gender affirmation, self-construction, self-expression, gender subversion, and activism. Clothing can be gender affirming. In a case study exploring “trans males’ influencers’ narratives on YouTube and Instagram” Jones and Lim (2021) highlight how fashion is used to camouflage undesired body parts before one’s transition, and is a tool to highlight constructed male parts after transition (p.1035). Therefore, clothing is a

doorway to self-construction and self-expression through gender expression, creating and presenting an identity that best represents oneself (Barry & Martin, 2015; Jones & Lim, 2021; Reddy-best & Pedersen, 2014; Reilly & Barry, 2020). Outward gender expression facilitates self-comfort and confidence (Barry & Martin, 2015; Reddy-best & Pedersen, 2014).

Literature has also captured how gender expression can be challenging. In a study on queer women, participants explain how dressing up can be distressing due to having to “balance appearing ‘too queer’ and ‘not queer enough’” (Reddy-best & Pedersen, 2014, p. 61). Another study implies that clothing may not be as significant for this demographic as research has inferred. Recent findings from 406 American testimonials have disproven that clothing would be more important to transgender individuals among cisgender individuals (Strübel & Goswami, 2022). Strübel & Goswami (2022) posited that transgender individuals may not have the need to communicate identity due to satisfaction with one’s identity, as well as subscribing to the rising fashion trend of subverting gender.

Gender subversion is the intentional disruption of traditional dressing norms for gender expression (Reilly & Barry, 2020). This strategy is explored in Barry and Reilly’s (2020) book *Crossing Gender Boundaries* with examples of the cute (kawaii) aesthetic for men and the popularization of androgyny in fashion. It is also becoming more common to disrupt gender norms and express gender fluidity through the concept of “gendermore” where individuals blend masculine and feminine clothing in their outfits (Reilly & Barry, 2020). For instance, men in the LGBTQ+ community have shared enjoyment in wearing high heels to explore their gender while “unlearning shame about femininity” (Allaire, 2021, p.61). A case study on men has examined different motivations behind gendermore. Common themes have included subverting gender

norms, avoiding being labelled as one gender, expressing one's true self, and embracing the feminine (Reilly & Barry, 2020).

A final major theme in research is solidarity, whereby individuals from the LGBTQ+ community use their clothing to connect and support one another (Reddy-best & Pedersen, 2014), subvert gender norms (Barry & Martin, 2015; Reilly & Barry, 2020), and engage in political (fashion) activism. An example of this activism has been demonstrated in Blake's (2018) paper on "BlaQueer Style," in which Black queer women use fashion activism to defeat marginalization/oppression, expose and subvert oppressing messages, and affirm intersectional identities.

Fashion Involvement and Age

Interest in fashion is observed across the spectrum of age (Cohen, 2023; Nam et al., 2007). However, populations that report to have high rates of fashion purchases include young adults and Generation Y, or Millennials (age 27 – 42) (Abacus Data, 2016; Bakewell & Vincent-Wayne, 2003; Dharmesti et al., 2021; Ladhari et al., 2019; Smith, 2011; Williams & Page, 2011; Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017). Millennials engage in styling and care more about their fashion than other age milestones (Abacus Data, 2016; Dharmesti et al., 2021; Ladhari et al., 2019; Smith, 2011; Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017).

Research has explored the various reasons why this generation is more concerned about their clothing. Simmers et al. (2015) has found that Generation Y are more comfortable in spending. Millennials in the US have reported highest levels of shopping enjoyment among older generations (Moore & Carpenter, 2008; Williams & Page, 2011). This may be due to the socialization of shopping as a recreational activity and a form of entertainment which could also be applied to young adults (Bakewell & Vincent-Wayne, 2003).

Technological savviness has been identified as a reason of increased shopping behaviours among Millennials and Generation X (11-26) (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022; Manley et al., 2023). Both generations have grown with rapid technological advancement and the popularization of the internet. They have been exposed to and influenced by fashion marketing, making them more comfortable with online shopping (Dharmesti et al., 2021; Loureiro & Breazeale, 2016). High engagement in social media and exposure to products/influencers has led to increased online shopping (Smith, 2011). Generation Y is known to endorse and remain loyal to their favorite brands on social media (Samala and Singh, 2019).

Literature demonstrates that the increased use of technology can increase clothing engagement and fashion involvement. The mediatization of fashion has led to increased social media engagement, and the desire to create and present an identity through fashion for others online (Barry & Martin, 2015; Rocamora, 2017). Therefore, young adults have the need to present their identity in the real world and the online realm and display their fashion. Another study found a link between excessive use of social networking sites and stronger urges for compulsive buying in young Malaysian adults (Saeed & Yeoh, 2018). As Generation X is known for technological dependence, the link between excessive social media use and compulsive buying may be present.

Fashion Involvement and Culture

Culture in research on clothing practices refers to a system of customs, norms, values, and rituals that ultimately shape how clothing is used as a tool in life. There are many cultural intersections that influence one's relationship with clothing. According to Eicher (2014), since we live in a global commercial system, daily dress is influenced by many types of dress: world dress, and world fashion. Before defining these concepts, it is important to note Eicher's (2014)

definition of dress involves both the process of dressing and products/modifications used on the body. However, as this thesis focuses on clothing, the mention of types of dress only refers to clothing. World dress can entail clothing which is worn globally, popularized attire from different cultures, and may have variations in different societies (i.e. European men shirts). World fashion represents clothing worn in the same style and time globally (designer collections or major sport events). Therefore, there are many global influences on people's wardrobe and clothing has become homogenous across cultures due to globalization. However, cultural nuances must be considered.

One's residing country or ethnic identity attributes to the variation of daily dress. National dress represents the clothing popularized from one's residing country, while ethnic dress entails cultural clothing that demonstrate one's ethnic identity (Eicher, 2014). Dressing can be influenced by the cultural definitions of what is appropriate and popular at the time (Eicher, 2014). Countries with "extreme climates, limited natural resources and insufficient technology" influences clothing production and can limit clothing styles (Eicher, 2014, p.42). A country may have many cultural pasts that have shaped present wear, as well as different subcultures that influence wear (Eicher, 2014). Leaning into the sociological lens further, clothing varies as we navigate different social roles in the day to day (Eicher, 2014). Attire "announces our affiliations as we fulfill our many roles in life and move through several cultural milieus" (Eicher, 2014, p.49). Therefore, clothing can signify many layers of culture and identity. Another cultural facet to consider is politics.

Clothing can be political (Allaire, 2018; Bari, 2020). Individuals have used attire to participate in political and cultural disputes (Allaire, 2018; Bari, 2020; Roces, 2022). Roces (2022) reviews the intricate ways in which clothing was imperative to political movements for

women. Clothing has been used to challenge cultural norms, such as the inclusion of Islamic coverings in Europe and the discussion of clothing in sexual assault cases (Bari, 2020). Fashion activism (Semaan, 2019) has been coined to represent fashion designed to pursue social and political change. A historical example of fashion activism is “soul style”, which embodies African-inspired fashion in the 70s to advocate for visibility and rights whilst reclaiming identity (Ford, 2015). Fashion activism persists to this day as marginalized communities use fashion for visibility, such as public displays of queerness, or the expansion of modest fashion for Muslim women (Allaire, 2021). Another facet to culture and fashion is honoring one’s cultural background. Allaire (2021) has presented how young adults from different cultural backgrounds have combined modern and traditional clothing to express themselves, honor roots, and embody tradition.

Fashion and Religion

Religious individuals have navigated, honoured, and respected their spirituality through clothing. Clothing is used to convey a religious identity and one’s commitment to their faith (Almila, 2016). Veiling practices are encouraged in multiple faiths for men and women to honour their religion, with various meaning and functions (Almila & Inglis, 2018). Veiling has grown into a movement of fashionable modest wear for Muslim women globally (CBC, 2017). Some religions have a designated costume for worship. Church dress is a type of ethnic dress only worn for religious events and special events. African church dress honours African heritage as well as one’s religious beliefs (Gatterson, 2016). Another facet of fashion and religion is the creation of garments as part of worship. Members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in India engages in reverence through dressmaking, embroidery, and self-adornment with clothing and accessories (Mohan, 2018). This devotional practice invokes

feelings of intimacy and protection (Mohan, 2018). Mohan (2018) has called this complex process efficacious intimacy which offers the wearer healing and a transcendental experiences through connecting with deities (Mohan, 2018).

Religiosity can negatively impact fashion involvement. A study on Muslim Millennials found that participants reported negative beliefs towards fashion advertisements when they violated religious values (Salam et al., 2019). Negative attitudes can emerge towards fashion, meaning religiosity can lead to anti-fashion and anti-consumption sentiments due to the prioritization of spirituality over appearance enhancement (Almila, 2016).

Fashion Consumers

To consolidate the overview of fashion involvement and its determinants, the different types of fashion consumers in a marketing lens are reviewed here. Consumer classification is situated in the theory of diffusion, which entails adopting and spreading fashion innovations in society. Fashion consumers have been categorized into four groups: *innovators*, *opinion leaders*, *innovative communicators*, and *fashion followers* (Hirschman & Adcock, 1978). The first three fashion consumer groups are called *fashion change agents* due to their pivotal role in fashion diffusion (Hirschman & Adcock, 1978). Identifying a consumer group depends on the degree to which a consumer wears new fashions (fashion innovators) and is influential in their opinion of fashion that prompts others to change their fashion (fashion opinion leaders) (Hirschman & Adcock, 1978). Fashion consumers that are both innovators and opinion leaders are called innovative communicators (Hirschman & Adcock, 1978). Fashion followers is the fourth classification representing the public who follow trends based on the influence of fashion change agents (Hirschman & Adcock, 1978).

Research on the differences between consumer groups give more context to causes of fashion involvement. Fashion followers are reported to follow trends due to peer influences and wanting to establish group identity (Workman & Studak, 2006), while fashion change agents are trendsetters and aim to establish individual identity (Workman & Studak, 2006) and have a need to be unique (Workman & Kidd, 2000). Another difference is that fashion change agents have a psychological approach to purchasing fashion (want-based) while fashion followers are utilitarian and make purchase based on their wardrobe needs (Workman & Studak, 2006).

Fashion Involvement in Canada

There is a gap in research on how Canadians consume and engage with clothing. A recent study by Abacus Data (Monopoli, 2022) has conducted a survey with 1,500 Canadians. The survey determined that 76% of Canadians prefer comfort over fashion, 80% prefer affordable brands over luxury, 64% prefer baggy attire and 49% tend to wear casual clothing (Monopoli, 2022). Among the 24% who prioritize aesthetics, there were many different style preferences including streetwear (22%), vintage (11%), classic (5%), boho (4%), preppy (3%), and gothic (2%) (Monopoli, 2022).

Eighty per cent of Canadians engage in online shopping (Canada Post, 2017). A great portion of online consumers are Canadian Millennials who account for 33% of online purchases (Canada Post, 2017). Furthermore 35% of hyper shoppers are Millennials. Hyper shoppers are individuals that make minimum 25 purchases a year (Canada Post, 2017). A study that explored 538 Canadian Millennials found four specific approaches to online shopping (Ladhari et al., 2019). Women reported enjoyment in viewing products without purchase intentions (pleasure shopping), trend shopping, price shopping, and brand shopping (Ladhari et al., 2019). The study also identified six shopper profiles that entailed (1) bargain shoppers (price shoppers), (2)

fashion shoppers (fashionistas), (3) women that are brand-oriented and value quality over price (shopping fans), (4) explorers for deals, new brands and innovative products (discovery shoppers), (5) individuals looking for products that they emotionally connect with (emotional shoppers) and (6) those that purchase budgeted fashion (strategic shoppers) (Ladhari et al., 2019).

Sustainable clothing is increasingly a matter of concern globally, and for Canadians. A survey with 1,362 Canadians has found that over half (58%) identify as ethical consumers, and 29% would spend more than \$15 on a \$100 product if it was ethically manufactured (Abacus Data, 2010). However, another study has revealed that 321 Canadians were more conscious on the look and functionality of clothing over sustainability and extrinsic cues (price, brand, country of origin) (Rahman et al., 2021).

Fashion Psychology

Studies have claimed that clothing can affect psychological processes, and this section will review findings on the relationship between clothing and behaviour, self-consciousness, self-concept, mental health, and mood. Although there is no official definition of fashion psychology, the researcher provides this definition: fashion psychology is the branch of psychology that explores the effects of actual or imagined clothing on thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Central to understanding this psychological effect is understanding the symbolic meanings people make of fashion and clothing (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004; Solomon, 1983; Wright & Sirgy, 1992). Meaning making can be derived from schemas, which are knowledge networks that store learned information about objects, concepts, or events (Piaget, 1952). One's interpretation and symbolic meaning of clothing influences the perceptions of self, others, and the embodiment of clothing. The embodiment of clothing represents behavioural adjustments to

achieve congruency with the meaning of clothing worn. Hajo and Galinsky (2012) defines the effect clothing has on a wearer's psychological processes as enclothed cognition. This process is triggered by both the physical and symbolic experience of dressing. This concept is captured in their study that required subjects to wear a doctor's coat, lab coat or painter's coat while completing cognitive tasks (Hajo & Galinsky, 2012). Among all participants, those in doctor's coats had the highest scores, meaning they were more attentive in their interactions with others and had higher sustained attention because of embodying the symbolism of being a doctor (Hajo & Galinsky, 2012). Wang et al. (2021) has also captured this psychological effect in their experiment. Participants that wore formal clothing selected healthier food choices than individuals who were casually dressed (Wang et al., 2021). The authors theorized that this effect occurred because participants believed healthier foods were more appropriate when wearing formal clothing and there was a desire for clothes-food congruence (Wang et al., 2021). But does clothing's influence on psychological processes ever go beyond momentary embodiment?

Fashion Consciousness

Fashion consciousness demonstrates that effects of clothing are not always fleeting. Fashion consciousness is an intersection of body image and clothing. Gould and Stern (1989) defines *fashion consciousness* as self-consciousness and concern for one's fashion. This concept is an application of self-consciousness which can be defined as awareness of the self, including thoughts, moods, feelings, and body (Fenigstein et al., 1975). Research explores two streams of fashion consciousness, exploring consumer experiences in private and public spaces. A study at an American university found that women with high public self-consciousness used fashion to mitigate their social anxiety and enhance their mood (Kwon & Shim, 1999). This demonstrates how one's self-consciousness and body image influence the extent and nature to which

individuals engage in clothing. While self-expression is important and can be achieved through fashion, negative self-attitudes and heightened consciousness can decrease engagement (Mair, 2018). Although private fashion self-consciousness has not been extensively studied, what is known is that individuals with high private self-consciousness were also likely to use clothing to enhance mood (Kwon, 1991, 1992; Kwon & Shim, 1999). In addition to developing unique relationships with fashion in the public and private realm, fashion can also impact the self-concept.

Self-Concept

The self-concept entails perceptions and evaluations of the self (Darity, 2008). Literature demonstrates that clothing and one's self-concept develop a complex and two-sided relationship overtime. One aspect of this relationship is that clothing can influence one's self-concept. Perceptions of clothing can affect one's self-evaluations and adjectives used to describe oneself (Hannover & Kuhnen, 2002; Kellerman & Laird, 1982; Kwon, 1994; Peluchette & Karl, 2007). A study in Berlin has asked students to wear formal or casual clothing (Hannover & Kuhnen, 2002). Formal attire led subjects to describe themselves with formal adjectives (cultivated and accurate), while casually dressed subjects used casual adjectives to describe themselves (easygoing and clumsy) (Hannover & Kuhnen, 2002). It has been theorized that possessions become an extension of ourselves (James, 1890), and therefore clothing is immersed into our self-concept and is a reflection of who we are. A study on young fashion consumers has found that identity is a major motivation in their habits of consumption (McNeill & Venter, 2019; Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017) and owned clothing becomes a part of one's identity (Solomon, 1983). Sontag (1979) explores this with a construct called proximity of clothing to self (PCS), which measures how close an individual attributed clothing to their self-concept (Sontag, 1979).

In a study including middle-aged participants from Michigan, both women and men with a high PCS have reported feeling more accomplished and have evaluated their quality of life more positively than those with lower ratings of PCS (Sontag, 1979).

Another aspect to this relationship is that the self-concept can influence our clothing engagement. Traits, status, lifestyle, identity, and social location are communicated with clothing that affirm one's self-concept (Eicher, 2014; James, 1890). For instance, women with high PCS were found to use clothing to facilitate their self-perceptions of fun, beauty, and creativity (Sontag, 1979). Men with high PCS used clothing to signify a thrilling and independent life (Sontag, 1979). In another study, participants that exhibit traits of perfectionism used clothing to portray a perfect and faultless appearance (Kang et al., 2013).

When people seek out and wear clothing to reflect their self-concept, they are trying to achieve what is called *fashion self-congruity* (Casidy et al., 2015; Sontag & Lee, 2004; Sirgy, 1982). There is evidence that fashion self-congruity is more influenced by the ideal self-image than one's actual self-image (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Kaur & Anand, 2021; O'Cass & Julian, 2001; Vigolo & Ugolini, 2016). The ideal self represents their best self and their preferred image (Klabi, 2020). The actual self represents one's truest and authentic self (Klabi, 2020; Schlegel et al., 2009). Individuals are motivated to select fashion that enhances their self-concept and affirms their ideal self. This motivation stems from the self-esteem motive whereby people seek out experiences that bolster one's self-esteem and self-concept (Sirgy, 1982). For example, a study on women who identified as queer used clothing for gender expression and sexual identity, resulting in an increased sense of empowerment, confidence and comfort with one-self (Reddy-Best & Pedersen, 2014). Because clothing can develop, express, and communicate the self-concept, individuals can form strong emotional attachments to clothing (Belk, 1988) and have a

higher willingness to spend more money on clothing (Wan et al., 2001). Ideal fashion self-congruity also predicted positive attitudes for luxury fashion brands (Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2016; Leung et al., 2015). It is evident that wearing apparel influences one's behaviour, self-concept and self-consciousness. It is important to evaluate what research has found on the relationship between clothing and mental health, especially for this study that wishes to examine this relationship further in emerging adults.

Mental Health

There is a dearth of research on the relationship between clothing and mental wellbeing. However, the analysis of literature on clothing point in the direction that clothing can be utilized to support mental wellbeing. Mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing (Keyes, 2009). Horn & Gurel (1981) has contended that clothing can address “social, emotional, and psychological needs” (p.1). Research substantiates this claim by means of emotional regulation, mood enhancement, bolstering self-esteem, and even achieving self-actualization (Mair, 2018). Raunio (1982) has found that clothing produced positive emotional responses due to satisfaction with one's preferred or favourite clothing. Women demonstrating high PCS have reported that fashion addresses emotional needs (Sontag & Lee, 2004). Young adult women in New Zealand report that consuming and exchanging fashion with peers led to increases in self-expression, positive emotions, creativity, individuality, and self-esteem (McNeill & Venter, 2019; Moore, 2018). Wearing formal business clothes led to self-perceptions of being competent, authoritative, and trustworthy (Peluchette & Karl, 2007). Shaughnessey's (2017) study on breast cancer survivors has demonstrated how clothing facilitated emotional and psychological wellbeing. Clothing was a tool for survivors to improve mood, enhance

appearance satisfaction, and achieve post-traumatic growth as participants coped with their illness while creating a new sense of self (Shaughnessey, 2017).

Literature suggests that one's apparel can provide comfort. Comfort can be defined by "the immediate state of being strengthened by having the needs for relief, ease, and transcendence addressed in the four contexts of holistic human experience: physical, psychospiritual, sociocultural, and environmental" (Kolcaba, 2003, p.251). Clothing serves many functions that can comfort individuals in social situations. For instance, clothing has been found to mediate social appearance anxiety, which is defined as "anxiety about being negatively evaluated by others because of one's overall appearance" (Hart et al., 2008, p. 48) (Kang et al., 2013) through comfort, assurance, and camouflaging parts of the body. As mentioned previously, individuals that reported body dissatisfaction and possessed social appearance anxiety were likely to use clothing to camouflage their bodies (Kwon & Parham, 1994; Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). Increased comfort through certain attires is possible due to the reduction of self-consciousness (Kwon & Shim, 1999) by controlling external impressions about oneself through more flattering attire that can elicit positive evaluations (Raunio, 1982). In addition to managing impressions in the environment, people navigate their self-objectification tendencies through their clothing. Self-objectification is when someone is highly self-conscious about their body (Fredrickson et al., 1998). This limits mental resources for other activities as an individual is focusing on their appearance and self-evaluations (Fredrickson et al., 1998). One study found that dancers that wore looser outfits had positive self-perceptions (about their body, self-concept, dance performance) compared to dancers wearing a tight-fitting outfit (Price & Pettijohn, 2006). Therefore, clothing can comfort oneself in social situations, and improve both confidence and perceptions of self when they approved and had agency over their outfit.

In addition to comfort, social wellbeing can be achieved through clothing (Mair, 2018; Raunio, 1982). One aspect is belonging. Eicher (2014) has discussed how clothing assists in addressing social and cultural expectations. Horn and Gurel's (1981) have argued clothing meets our need of conforming by conveying and enhancing ourselves. Another aspect to consider is the social identity theory, and how clothing can aid appearance that represents one's group, and discriminate against outsiders (Tajfel, 2010). Another aspect is connection. Clothing has been found to facilitate connections and relationships due to shared interests or shared experiences conveyed through one's garments (Shaughnessey, 2017). Therefore, our attire becomes a signifier of our identity, and a tool to associate ourselves with certain groups (Eicher, 2014).

To conclude the theory that clothing can meet different needs and facets of mental wellbeing, the researcher features an important psychological model that highlights this ability. In an application of the Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), clothing has been posited as a tool that can satisfy each need:

The lowest physiological and safety needs of the hierarchy can be met by clothing as it comforts and protects the wearer. The next layers of the hierarchy – love, belonging and self-esteem – can be satisfied when we use our clothing to enhance or enact our social identity, and while some researchers claim that self-actualisation can be achieved through individualistic or creative dress that does not harm the environment, this might be an exaggeration of the power of fashion (Mair, 2018, p.57).

An additional layer of the hierarchy of needs is transcendence, in which individuals feel connected to humanity and a higher power. Mair (2018) stated that research has not demonstrated how clothing can facilitate transcendence. However, this study has reviewed literature (see fashion and religion) on fashion as a tool for connection, devotion, and reverence.

With this perspective, evidence suggests that clothing can meet all stages of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. However further research is necessary to confirm this. Based on these findings, clothing and fashion establish its unique ability to meet a diversity of needs that are imperative to mental health.

Mood Enhancement

Mood enhancement is another facet to mental health in which clothing can be utilized for EFC. Mood enhancement is defined as the enrichment of an individual's state of mind. Fashion can evoke positive emotions and improve one's mood. Research has illustrated different reasons to how fashion can facilitate mood enhancement. Apparel can help individuals cope with daily life through improving their mood and boosting morale (Dubler & Gurel, 1984; Kwon, 1988; Raunio, 1982). Clothing's different functions and physical features can help enhance one's mood (Kang et al., 2013; Kallstrom, 2009; Kwon & Parham, 1994). In Moody et al.'s (2010) study, participants reported feeling inspired and empowered when they were well-dressed, resulting in a positive mood. Casual clothing was associated with activity and freedom (Moody et al., 2010). Clothing allows individuals to bolster self-confidence and consequently enhance their mood (Kang et al., 2013). Situational conformity (between clothing and setting) and positive feedback about one's appearance also elicited positive moods (Lee & Choo, 2015).

Furthermore, activities that allowed individuals to engage in clothing recreationally were found to enhance mood as well. According to Hoyer et al. (2021) engaging in an activity that was considered meaningful or pleasant, such as performing a fashion show at home, is directly associated to a higher mood and may assist in reducing mood problems. Shopping is a mood enhancing experience due to experiencing hedonistic emotions when owning a desired product (McNeill & Venter, 2019). Purchasing items that helped individuals achieve fashion self-

congruity also enhanced mood (Latter et al., 2010). Moody et al. (2010) found that positive and negative moods had important relationships with clothing preferences, with positive moods being more predictive of clothing preferences than negative moods. Possessing a positive mood decreases the chance of behaviors that lead to negative outcomes (Gardener, 1985; Kwon, 1988), motivating the use of clothing as mood enhancement.

There is no consistency in literature about how negative mood impacts the use of clothing as a mood enhancer. Past studies have uncovered that negative moods are mitigated with fashion involvement (Dubler & Gurel, 1984; Fisher, 1973; Kallstrom, 2009; Moody et al., 2010; Raunio, 1982; Ruppert-Stroescu et al., 2015). Kwon (1988) found that negative moods in men led to the selection of comfortable and ordinary clothing, while women used fashion to reduce a negative mood by wearing their favourite clothing first, and comfortable clothes second. Excessive shopping for attire has been found as a coping mechanism to relieve negative moods, fear, and stress among Brazilian participants (Liu et al., 2021). However, Lee and Choo (2015) observed an opposite pattern in which individuals who were overwhelmed with a negative mood were less likely to use clothing as a mood enhancer. Another study with female undergraduate students found that low mood (such as feelings of jitteriness, nervousness, shame, guilt) when wearing an outfit predicted lower preference ratings for one's outfit (Moody & Sinha, 2010). Studies on American college students found that social anxiety, public consciousness, and private consciousness impacted mood enhancement practices (Kwon, 1991, 1992). There is no consistency in literature about how negative mood impacts the use of clothing as a mood enhancer. Furthermore, disruptions to the use of clothing for mood enhancement has not been explored in research. This study aims to address this gap by understanding the relationship between poor wellbeing and using clothing as a mood enhancer. Understanding this relationship

will illuminate how individuals navigate using fashion as a mood enhancer when their psychological wellbeing is impacted, and the consequences to their mental health.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The emergence of a novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) took place in 2019. Escalations of this disease led to the announcement of a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 was a catalyst for nation-wide lockdowns, restrictions on traveling, quarantines, working remotely, and other public health measures that aimed to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19. Humanity had faced public health crises, serious shocks in the economy, and consistent disruptions to daily life. The WHO reported that a total of 6,347,816 individuals who contracted COVID-19 died as of July 26, 2022 (WHO, 2022). Individuals have been navigating disease outbreaks, media reporting, quarantines, anger over officials, feelings of hopelessness, a loss of control (Rubin & Wessely, 2020) and difficulties to care for family (Angus Reid Institute & CBC, 2022). The pandemic had sparked fear for many, including fear of infection, long-term health effects, deterioration of health in loved ones, social isolation, and financial issues (Statistics Canada, 2020). In addition to navigating the waves of COVID-19, people have also endured waves of adversity in terms of social and environmental issues. Between March of 2020 and today, Canadians have witnessed severe floods, wildfires, and watched travesties that fueled the Black Lives Matter and Every Child Matters movements. Studies in Canada reported that individuals have felt that the pandemic has severely derailed their life (Angus Reid Institute & CBC, 2022). Consequently, the mental health of societies has been dwindling collectively.

Mental Health and the Pandemic in Canada

The COVID-19 pandemic has had severe consequences to mental health and has led to subsyndromal mental health problems (Rajkumar, 2020). During lockdowns, individuals were socially isolating for extended periods of time. Low social attachments are associated with poor emotional, physical, and mental health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Some individuals have struggled to tolerate distress and anxiety (Rubin & Wessely, 2020). The general public was found to have lower levels of psychological wellbeing (Sonderskov et al., 2020; Vindegaard & Benros, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2021). Women were at a higher risk of psychiatric symptoms and poorer mental health (Malhi & Mann, 2018; Vindegaard & Benros, 2020). Healthcare workers, and individuals with poor self-rated health were linked with higher risk of psychiatric symptoms and low psychological wellbeing (Vindegaard & Benros, 2020). Individuals that contracted COVID-19 were linked to high posttraumatic stress symptoms (Sonderskov et al., 2020; Vindegaard & Benros, 2020), including strong negative emotions (fear or anger), physiological reactions (trouble breathing), and unpleasant thoughts or dreams (Statistics Canada, 2021). Higher levels of depressive symptoms were reported among individuals that had COVID-19, such as feelings of sadness, low mood, and hopelessness (Sonderskov et al., 2020; Vindegaard & Benros, 2020). Furthermore, individuals reported a loss of interest in doing things they once enjoyed (Sonderskov et al., 2020; Statistics Canada, 2021; Vindegaard & Benros, 2020).

The effects of crises on lifestyle and mental health can illuminate how experiencing a global pandemic has led to poor wellbeing. A crisis can be defined by challenges that require problem solving without an immediate solution available (Caplan, 1964, 1974). Caplan (1964) reviewed how individuals respond to crises first by tension and disturbance, followed by problem-solving. Individuals consequently adapt to the crisis and achieve equilibrium, which can

improve or worsen their condition (Caplan, 1964). What is crucial for establishing equilibrium or homeostasis is implementing coping mechanisms, resources, and social supports. The effectiveness of using coping mechanisms ultimately decides if the crisis ends or persists (Caplan, 1964). If coping is unsuccessful, the prolonged tension or stress can negatively impact one's mental health and functioning (Caplan, 1964).

Canadians reported that their mental health worsened during the lockdowns of the pandemic, which may indicate that individuals struggled to cope (Angus Reid Institute & CBC, 2022). As some Canadians expressed gratitude for residing in Canada, other experienced “a darker mood” (Angus Reid Institute & CBC, 2022, p.1). Many Canadians perceived that their mental health has declined, especially for women (Statistics Canada, 2021). Poorer wellbeing was associated with higher stress levels, at least one symptom of anxiety (like nervousness, irritability, and troubles relaxing), and feelings of grief, depression, and panic (Statistics Canada, 2021). Another factor that increased likelihood of psychological distress during the pandemic was age.

Literature has consistently found that the mental health of emerging adults was substantially affected during the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2020, 2021). Canadians younger than 35 years of age were more likely to report that their life was significantly disrupted by the pandemic (Angus Reid Institute & CBC, 2022), and less likely to report a good or excellent mental health (Statistics Canada, 2021). Emerging adults expressed a need for mental health care (like counselling, information, medication) more than other age groups (Statistics Canada, 2020). A study on Canadian men found that being younger and having a greater fear of COVID-19 were related to increased psychological distress (Simpson et al., 2022). Changes in lifestyle and mental health during the pandemic had resulted in a shift in consumer behaviours.

Fashion and the Pandemic

There was a reduction in purchasing clothing during the pandemic (Arora et al., 2020; Knowles et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021). As of 2019, the average annual household's spending on clothing and accessories in Canada had been \$3340, the lowest amount since 2010 (Shahbandeh, 2021). Clothing consumption declined over 50% in the United States (Jones, 2020). A study investigated the reasons why fashion consumers reduced consumption over the pandemic through tweets. Some individuals believed clothing consumption was irrational due to the limitation of resources as a result of the pandemic (Liu et al., 2021). Others ceased in purchasing clothing due to fears of COVID-19 transmission from trying on clothing in stores or having clothing shipped to one's home (Liu et al., 2021). In contrast to lower consumption, a study on Brazilian participants demonstrated that individuals leaned on excessive buying in order cope with the stress from the pandemic (Liu et al., 2021). In addition to modified spending, dressing habits have changed due to the need to quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic.

People may use fashion to address their specific needs or cope with daily life. Another component to engagement with apparel is self-styling. *Self-styling* represents the process of dressing for the social world. The requirements of quarantining and working remotely possibly had led to a reduction in self-styling. Liu et al. (2021) found that many individuals opted out of their typical style to adopt a comfortable stay-at-home style during the COVID-19 pandemic, recycling existing clothing and cutting down on shopping. The "slob chic" style was popularized, which entailed pairing fashionable tops and pyjama bottoms, as only one's "tophalf" was seen in the digital world (Marx, 2020). Kang et al. (2013) argued that individuals that use clothing for comfort were unlikely to dress fashionably. It is known that the COVID-19 pandemic had shifted

dressing habits. However, it is unknown how fashion consumers, particularly emerging adults, have dressed during nation-wide lockdowns.

Missing Piece of the Puzzle: Research Questions

Studies have demonstrated the multifaceted benefits of clothing that support how it can enhance mood, facilitate EFC, and benefit mental health. This may be a contributing factor to high fashion involvement amongst emerging adults before the pandemic. As the pandemic has greatly impacted both clothing consumption and mental health, it is unknown how the pandemic has affected emerging adult's relationships with clothing (Angus Reid Institute & CBC, 2022; Liu et al., 2021; Statistics Canada, 2020, 2021). How has this change influenced individuals that use clothing for their mood and mental health? Liu et al. (2021) has posited that changes to clothing consumption may represent stress and a disruption to one's lifestyle, resulting in a change in thoughts and behaviours in order to cope. It is clear that the pandemic was a major disruptor to emerging adults as it affected their daily living and mental health. However, the extent emerging adults have used fashion as a mood enhancer during a global crisis and how this affected their mental health is unknown.

To address these significant gaps, this thesis has four foci. This study will assess the level of fashion involvement in emerging adults during the pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on the use of clothing as a mood enhancer will be examined to understand its impact on mental health. Furthermore, the study will explore the motivations to engage with clothing during the pandemic. Four research questions were posed:

1. How has the pandemic impacted fashion involvement?
2. How has the pandemic impacted the use of fashion as a mood enhancer?
3. What were the motivations for using clothing as a mood enhancer during the pandemic?

4. How has the use of fashion as a mood enhancer impacted mental health during the pandemic?

Chapter 3: Methods

This chapter outlines the methodology of the study that is both quantitative and qualitative. Topics that are reviewed are in the following order: participants, instruments, procedures, and analyses undertaken.

Participants

As the study's purpose is to understand how emerging adult's engagement with clothing have been impacted by the pandemic, the recruited participants comprised of emerging adults in Canada. In this study, emerging adulthood refers to individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 years old and is informed by Arnett's (2004) work on emerging adulthood.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Recruitment followed two inclusion criteria: (1) participants needed to live in Canada, and (2), they were required to fall within the age range of 18 to 29. There is a dearth of literature on the extent of fashion involvement in Canada's population. This study will provide a foundation for future studies on Canadians and clothing. The researcher also wanted to be inclusive of all residents of Canada. This inclusivity will provide a rich sample of sociodemographic characteristics and the opportunity to investigate the cultural variation of fashion involvement in Canada. It was also very important for the researcher to avoid exclusion of individuals related to citizenship and immigrant status.

This study recruited emerging adults which refers to individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 years old and is informed by Arnett's (2004) work on emerging adulthood. This age cohort was selected due to the research findings that this age cohort highly engages with fashion (see subheading fashion involvement and age). Furthermore, literature has demonstrated that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted this age group in Canada (Angus Reid Institute &

CBC, 2022; Statistics Canada, 2020, 2021), affecting prospects for stability, growth, independence, and mental health. This fact made the researcher curious as to how the pandemic impacted their fashion involvement and what were the effects, if any, on mental health. Arnett (2016) provided a second age range that he calls “the heart of emerging adulthood” from 18 to 25 (p. 229). However, individuals between the ages of 25 and 29 should still be considered emerging adulthood as individuals experience “identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibilities/optimism” (p. 228). Furthermore, the pandemic has caused life disruptions that indirectly made individuals 25 to 29 remain in this life stage. Therefore, they were included in the study.

All gender identities were invited to participate. Studies on the consumption of clothing primarily concentrated on individuals that identify as women and did not equally explore populations of other genders. This is based on the belief that other identities have lower involvement than women (Anić & Mihić, 2015; Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Gould & Stern 1989; Parker et al., 2014; Workman & Freeburg, 2009; Workman, 2010; Workman & Lee, 2011). This is being challenged by research. Studies have pointed out the diversity of fashion-conscious consumers, and their relationships and needs from clothing should be explored (Apeagyei, 2011; Barry & Martin, 2015; Koksall, 2014; Parker et al., 2014; Reilly et al., 2019; Ross, 2011; Seo, 2009; Sindicich and Black, 2011; Tuncay, 2006). Based upon the unequal representation of gender in past literature, there is a call to action for fashion studies to be more inclusive. This study recognizes this gap, and it was imperative for the study to include all genders to participate.

Recruitment

The sample was recruited in three ways: (1) internet convenience sampling, (2) snowball sampling, and the (3) University of Lethbridge's Sona-system (psychleth.sona-systems.com). Internet convenience sampling included advertising the study on a variety of social media platforms such as Facebook (facebook.com), Instagram ([Instagram.com](https://instagram.com)), and Reddit (reddit.com) with a link to the online survey. Snowball Sampling was achieved by inviting participants to share the survey link with their peers to increase participant numbers. In addition, the researcher connected with the faculty of education to have the survey sent out to students of the bachelor and master-level programs. The final recruitment step was gaining approval and participating as a study in the University of Lethbridge's Sona-system. The Sona-system provides psychology students credit for participation in studies. This site is accessible by the university's students in the undergraduate psychology program. Students who have completed the survey were provided a course credit that went toward their grade in a psychology course.

Instruments

Online Survey

The online survey included a combination of multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions to address the study's research questions, totaling to 72 items (see Appendix A through I). The instruments in the survey comprised of open-ended questions developed by the researcher, and scales developed by other authors. All items can be found in the appendices. The survey was delivered in English using Qualtrics (qualtrics.com). The researcher estimated that it would take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete the survey.

As mentioned, scales created by other authors were implemented in the survey to investigate the relationship between fashion involvement, using clothing as a mood enhancer, fear of COVID-19, and mental health. For consistency among scale items, the term fashion in the

Fashion Involvement scale was replaced with clothing (O’Cass, 2000). In the Fear of COVID-19 scale, the term coronavirus-19 was replaced with COVID-19 (Ahorsu et al., 2020).

The survey entailed a total of six sections which will be reviewed in the subsequent headings. The researcher noticed that some participants did not complete all items. As a result, a Qualtrics feature was enabled that required total completion of each section to continue to the next page of the survey.

Demographic Information

The demographic section entailed three sections including: (1) eligibility criteria, (2) participant information, and (3) fashion purchases and preferences.

The survey began with eligibility screening where participants confirmed their age and country of residence. These options were necessary to have for participants who did not meet the exclusion criteria. They were directed to the end of the survey and were informed that they could not participate. For example, individuals that selected an age range outside of 18 to 29 were directed to the end of the survey. Participants that lived outside of Canada were directed to the end of the survey. Individuals that met the eligibility criteria moved onto the section with questions about demographics (see Appendix B).

Before demographic questions were viewed, participants were given a definition for the *peaks of the pandemic* created by the researcher to reflect on appropriate and relevant experiences when completing the survey. The peaks of the pandemic was defined as experiences of isolation, struggles adapting to the pandemic, and the multiple COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns with restrictions including stay-at-home orders, curfews, and quarantining.

The second portion of the demographics section inquired about the participant’s gender, ethnicity, employment status, highest level of education, and living situation (city population and

province). The third section asked participants to indicate what their average spending on clothing was during the peaks of the pandemic, and the nature and frequency of their purchases. Afterwards, they were asked to specify the types of clothing they preferred to wear, and their preferred styles. Participants were then asked to indicate how often they exhibited their preferred style(s) at home on a five-point Likert scale which ranged from one (*never*) to five (*always*). The final item explored what clothing represents to participants with a multiple-choice question including options: adventure, coping, creativity, expression, fun, identity, and other.

Fear of COVID-19

The second section explored fears of COVID-19 (see Appendix C). The COVID-19 pandemic has led to fear from infection, mortality, and the health of family members. In turn, fear can worsen the impact of COVID-19 on individuals (Ahorsu et al., 2020) and affect daily functioning. There are a total of seven questions in this section derived from the validated Fear of COVID-19 scale (Ahorsu et al., 2020) which will measure the level of fear individuals experienced during the pandemic on a Likert scale (1 = *strongly agree* to 5 = *strongly disagree*). Statements include “I am most afraid of COVID-19” and “I cannot sleep because I’m worrying about getting COVID-19.” The total score of the items ranged from seven to 35 and indicates the participant’s fear score. Higher scores signify higher levels of fear. The scale demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = .82$), and concurrent validity was supported (Ahorsu et al., 2020). This was also seen in studies on the Canadian population (Attieh et al., 2022; Simpson et al., 2022). The section ended with an open-ended question asking the participants how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their use of clothing.

Fashion Involvement

The third section asked participants to report perceptions of the significance and centrality of fashion in their life, also known as fashion involvement (see Appendix D). This was measured by O’Cass’s (2000) standardized Fashion Involvement scale which includes 10 items. Scale items include “clothing means a lot to me” and “I think about clothing a lot”. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale from one (*strongly disagree*) to five (*strongly agree*). To determine the participant’s scores, responses to scale items were summated. Scores signified the degree in which a participant finds their clothing significant and ranged from 10 to 50. A higher score signified higher fashion involvement. Studies have demonstrated this measure has high reliability ($\alpha = 0.72$ to 0.98) (Bhaduri & Stanforth, 2017; Madinga et al., 2020; Frasset-Deltoro et al., 2019).

At the end of this section, participants were asked to identify their motivations to wear clothing during the peaks of the pandemic. The question’s response options were informed by Kwon and Parham’s (1994) proposed functions of clothing, including self-comfort, fashion, camouflage, security and self-confidence (self-assurance), and individuality. Participants were asked to elaborate on their selection(s).

The last item in this section included an open-ended question that asked participants: has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the importance of clothing for you? Participants selected a response on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*). This question was accompanied with a text field for participants to elaborate their answer.

Mood Enhancement

In this section participants reflected on their use of clothing to enhance their mood (see Appendix E). The questions used to measure the degree that individuals use clothing for mood enhancement were derived from the standardized Women’s Use of Clothing in Mood

Enhancement scale with seven items (Kwon, 1992). Questions included “usually the way I dress reflects my mood” and “the right kinds of clothing often lift up my mood.” Responses fell on a five-point Likert scale (one = *never* to five = *always*). The total score corresponds with the sum of the participants responses that ranged from seven to 35, where higher scores indicate increased use of clothing as a mood enhancer. The scale’s Cronbach’s alpha has been found to be 0.87 (Koksal, 2014) with a construct reliability of 0.85 (Kwon & Shim, 1999).

Proximity of Clothing to Self

To investigate motivations behind using fashion, Sontag and Lee’s (2004) PCS scale was utilized. Two of six dimensions are included in the survey. Participants indicated their answer on a five-point Likert scale for both dimensions from one (*strongly disagree*) to five (*strongly agree*). Dimension one of the scale is called self as a structure. This scale measured the degree in which clothing is perceived as significant to and unified with one’s self-concept, including a total of six questions (e.g., “what I wear is consistent with who I am,” and “the clothes I wear help me to be who I am”). Scores of participant’s are sums of their responses that ranged from six to 30. The participant’s dimension four is titled clothing in relation to self-esteem – evaluative process, which examined how clothing evokes positive feelings about oneself with eight questions (e.g., “the clothes I like to wear help me feel self-assured,” and “my self-confidence increases when I dress appropriately”). The scores are sums of participant’s responses that range from eight to 40. Higher scores represent greater proximity of clothing to self. Studies have demonstrated that the reliability for the dimensions were 0.89 (α) (Chen, 2020) and 0.86 (construct reliability) (Sontag & Lee, 2004).

Mental Health Continuum

Keyes's (2009) Mental Health Continuum short-form scale was utilized to measure the participant's emotional, psychological and social wellbeing during the pandemic. The short version was used to accommodate the constraints on survey length (see Appendix G). The 14-item scale captured symptoms of positive mental health related to emotional wellbeing (e.g., "satisfied with life"), psychological wellbeing (e.g., "that your life has a sense of direction of meaning to it", and social wellbeing (e.g., "that you had warm and trusting relationships with others"). Participants selected their responses to items on a five-point Likert scale asking participants about the frequency they experience symptoms during the peaks of the pandemic (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*). This response format of a five and not six-point Likert scale was modeled after a study by Petrillo et al., (2014) which better met the research objective to understand the mental health of participants during the pandemic, departing from the scale's measurement of symptoms within the past month.

Determining participant's scores were completed through summation of their responses which can range from 14 to 70. Scores were categorized in three levels of mental health based on the instructions provided by the author, including languishing, moderate mental health, and flourishing. Languishing represents poor mental health, which is diagnosed if the participant had a low score (selected "never" or "sometimes") on a minimum of one measure of hedonic well-being and a low score on a minimum of six measures of positive functioning. Flourishing represents mental health, which is determined when participants had a high score (selected "most of the time" or "always") on a minimum of one of the three signs of hedonic well-being and a minimum of the eleven signs of positive functioning. Participants fall into the moderate category if their scores could not be categorized into flourishing nor languishing. The scale has

demonstrated good internal consistency in previous studies with a Canadian population, with Cronbach's α value ranging from 0.77 to 0.90 (Dore et al., 2017; Orpana et al., 2017).

The section ended with a question for participants to determine the perceived effect clothing had on one's mental health: how has clothing affected your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic? Responses included the degree to which clothing affected mental health on a five-point Likert (1 = *very negative* to 5 = *very positive*), with a text field for participants to elaborate on their answer.

Procedures

This section will summarize several procedures of the study. The following will be reviewed: ethical considerations, ethics approval, informal pilot study, survey completion, and data storage.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher took several precautionary steps to prevent and minimize harm. It was recognized that the survey had the potential to cause uncomfortable feelings as participants had to reflect on their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Negative experiences that may be associated with the survey can include frustration with clothing, oneself, or isolation during the pandemic. To minimize harm, subjects were informed (when pre-screening) that their participation is voluntary and that they are allowed to withdraw anytime during the survey. They were given instructions on how to withdraw (by closing the browser) and were also made aware that their responses are not received once they withdraw. Individuals were also informed that questions or concerns related to the research can be directed to the primary investigator and her supervisors. Furthermore, resources were provided to the participants on the debriefing page in case participants were upset and needed to access mental health resources. These resources

comprised a link to the website find a helpline (Through Line Limited, 2022) with a list of local helplines and a website of local mental health services provided by the Government of Canada (2022).

Ethics Approval

The study was approved on November 29, 2022, by the University of Alberta research ethics board in partnership with the University of Lethbridge (see Appendix R). The study identification number provided is Pro00125715. The organizations ensured the study aligned with the guidelines for human research ethics.

Pilot Study

The survey was piloted before it was officially published for data collection. This procedure was undertaken to gain feedback on readability, feedback, and completion times. A group of five emerging adults were recruited to participate in the informal pilot test of the survey instrument. The data from this pilot study was discarded and not utilized for data analysis.

Survey Completion

Self-selected participants completed the self-administered online survey by following a link to the survey. Participants first observed a consent page with details of the study, including: (a) investigators, (b) benefits/risks of taking the survey, (c) how the researcher will analyze the data, and (d) how the data will be kept confidential (see Appendix A). Participants were informed that continuing on will mean they understand to the conditions and consent to the survey. Those that did not want to start or complete the survey were asked to close their browsers.

Once the participant reached the end of the study, they saw a debriefing page including (a) the purpose of the study; (b) the contact information to an ethics officer if they feel their

participant rights were not met; and (c) mental health resources if they experience emotional upset during the survey. The survey was active for approximately three months and then deactivated.

Data Storage

After deactivation, the data was exported from Qualtrics to the researcher's computer that is password protected. All information and data collected was safely kept under encrypted folders that are only accessible to the primary investigator. There was no identifying information of the participants in the raw data. The researcher also shared the data with their supervisors.

The data was subsequently exported to IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27) (SPSS) for statistical analysis, while qualitative data was exported to excel for qualitative analysis. The researcher also used the software JASP (0.17.3) for statistical analysis when SPSS was not accessible. Once the thesis has been completed, it will be moved to an external hard drive and the data will be stored for seven years safely until the file will be destroyed.

Methods of Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

The standardized instruments introduced previously measure variables necessary to address the four research questions of the study. The data was analyzed by quantitative analyses including Pearson correlations and linear regressions. The Pearson correlation test is a parametric test used to determine any statistically significant correlations for paired data between an independent and dependent variable (Pearson r test using SPSS statistics). Linear regressions illuminate the extent to which the independent variable predicts the dependent variable. Descriptive statistics were also completed to identify collective properties of the data using means, standard deviation, and frequency.

Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analyses of four open-ended questions were conducted consecutively to contextualize and contribute to the interpretations of the data analysis. The approach to qualitative analysis was informed by multiple resources on the topic of conducting qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2017; Dey, 1993; Gall et al., 2007; Strauss, 1987). These resources guided the procedures of thematic analysis which entailed six phases.

The first phase entailed familiarization with the responses of each open-ended question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the survey was self-administered, responses were typed by participants and submitted independently. After the responses were exported into a excel spreadsheet, they were read and reviewed line by line (Strauss, 1987). This detailed review increased the researcher's understanding of the participants experiences and relationships with clothing at a first look. Details and observations of the data were written down. Responses that were not relevant (i.e., "not sure" or "no") to the research question or inappropriate were not considered in the analysis. The review was the beginning of searching for repeated phrases and words in the text, which informed phase two, generating of codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The codes represented recurring terms or concepts from the responses and were highlighted. Phase three entailed searching for themes based on the codes and patterns observed in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dey, 1993). Codes were sorted and collated to form potential overarching themes. Subthemes emerged as themes were found within a theme. Some codes formed subthemes, while others were combined into the theme. The building of subthemes were not dependent on the appearance and frequency of codes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). However, the prevalence of themes were noted to rank and compare their significance. Frequency represented the number of different participants who articulated the

theme, and often responses included multiple themes. Phase four led to thoroughly reviewing codes under each theme to ensure that they have a coherent pattern. The themes were reviewed to ensure they captured the meanings and patterns in the data and codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase five, defining and naming themes, included giving a name and definition to each theme. The last phase included producing a report of the findings of the analysis. This can be found in the results section.

Research Questions and Respective Analyses

Research question one investigates how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted fashion involvement. A Pearson correlation and linear regression was conducted for the independent variable fear of COVID-19 and the dependent variable fashion involvement. A thematic analysis was completed to analyze the responses of this open-ended question, how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your use of clothing?

Research question two explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the use of fashion as a mood enhancer. To investigate this relationship, a Pearson correlation and linear regression was employed for fear of COVID-19 as the independent variable and mood enhancement as the dependent variable. A thematic analysis was employed to analyze the responses of the open-ended question, how has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the importance of clothing for you?

The third research question examines the motivations for using clothing as a mood enhancer. For the quantitative analysis, a Pearson correlation and multiple regression was computed for two dimensions of the PCS as the independent variables, and the dependent variable being fashion as mood enhancement. The open-ended question that accompanied this

section included: what are your motivations to wear clothing during the peaks of the pandemic?

A thematic analyses was conducted to explore themes.

The final and fourth research question explores the relationship between fashion as a mood enhancer and mental health A Pearson correlation and linear regression analysis was conducted with mood enhancement as the independent variable and mental health as the dependent variable. In addition, a thematic analysis was completed for responses to the open-ended question: how has clothing impacted your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Chapter 4: Results

Data

A total of 1250 participants completed the survey. The data was exported from Qualtrics to SPSS statistics and evaluated to ensure it was entered correctly. Individuals who did not complete the entire survey in its entirety were eliminated from the data set. Therefore, 676 participant responses were deleted from the dataset. The sample size of the study is 574.

Distribution

To assess the normality of the data, several approaches were taken. Values of skewness and kurtosis were evaluated. Due to the absolute values of skewness falling under two and kurtosis values under seven, the distributions of each variable can be called approximately normal (see Table 1) (Kim, 2013). Histograms and qq plots were also observed (see Appendix K). Almost all variables had a bell-shaped curve according to the histogram outputs which demonstrate normal distributions, with the exception of variables fear of COVID-19 and self-esteem that appear skewed. The majority of the sample's data falls roughly on the line for qq plots, with fear of COVID-19 and self-esteem demonstrating "fat tails" with data moving away from the line.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for All Study Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
FearCovid	573	7.00	35.00	15.37	6.075	0.689	-0.012
FashInvolve	574	10.00	50.00	32.65	10.002	-0.295	-0.524
MoodEnhance	576	7.00	35.00	22.76	6.566	-0.231	-0.595
PCS_SelfasStructure	575	6.00	30.00	20.55	5.378	-0.494	-0.037
PCS_SelfEsteem	574	8.00	40.00	31.44	7.057	-1.222	1.513
MHC_ShorForm	573	14.00	70.00	38.07	10.172	0.323	-0.208
Valid N (listwise)	566						

A Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted for assessment of normality in the distribution of all study variables (Table 11). The p-values signify if data is normally distributed or not. It is assumed that a p value greater than .05 demonstrates that data is normally distributed. The results from the Shapiro-Wilk test showed a deviation from normality among all variables: COVID-19 $W = 0.94, p = < .001$; fashion involvement $W = 0.97, p = < .001$; mood enhancement $W = 0.98, p = < .001$; self as structure $W = 0.97, p = < .001$; self-esteem $W = 0.89, p = < .001$; MHC $W = 0.98, p = < .001$.

Due to the sensitivity of the p-value for the Shapiro-Wilk test for samples greater than 50 (Mishra et al., 2019), a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was also conducted to assess for normality of the study variables (Table 10). The p value for all variables were statistically significant ($p < .001$) meaning they do not follow a normal distribution in the population.

The central limit theorem states distributions involving samples greater than 30 tend towards normality. Ghasemi and Zahediasl (2012) stated “violation of the normality is not a major issue” in samples greater than 100 normal and should not warrant major issues (p. 70). This argument is also supported by other scholars (Altman & Bland, 1995; Mishra et al., 2019). As parametric tests can be conducted when there is a deviation from normality (Elliott & Woodward, 2007), parametric tests were pursued for quantitative analyses including Pearson correlations and regression analyses. Supplementary analyses (Spearman correlations) were generated and validate the statistical significances found in the parametric analyses (see Appendix L).

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were tabulated for all variables, observable in Table 1. Demographic information was compiled to understand the sample’s characteristics and can be

viewed in Appendix J. The majority of the sample comprised of individuals 19 to 21 age cohort (307, 53.3%), followed by the 22 to 25 age cohort (175, 30.4%), and the 26 to 29 age cohort (94, 16.3%). A large portion of participants identified as cis-female (392, 68.1%), followed by participants that identified as cis-male (126, 21.9%), transwoman (20, 3.5%), transman (17, 3%), and non-binary (9, 1.6%). The sample was representative of many ethnicities. The highest participation demographic included White subjects (351, 60.9%), followed by South Asian participants (50, 8.7%), and Black participants (33, 5.7%).

Descriptive questions also assessed for various aspects of level of clothing consumption, preferences, and meaning. According to the data, the majority of the sample were conservative in fashion consumption during the pandemic. Over 400 subjects reported one to two purchases a month amounting to less than \$100 (Figure 1 and 2). Feedback given by a few participants on Reddit.com communicated the inability to select zero monthly purchases, implying that a facet of the sample shopped less than one to two times a month. Consciousness of sustainability is a noticeable theme as 55% of the sample preferred purchasing thrifted and sustainable fashion (Figure 3). Sportswear was another popular style of clothing (23%), followed by luxury (13.4%), fast fashion (4.4%), and casual clothing (4.1%). The preferred type of clothing worn during the pandemic included casual wear (55.8%), followed by semi-formal attire (35.7%), and formal clothing (8.5%) (Figure 4).

Figure 1

Frequency of Monthly Fashion Purchases Bar Chart

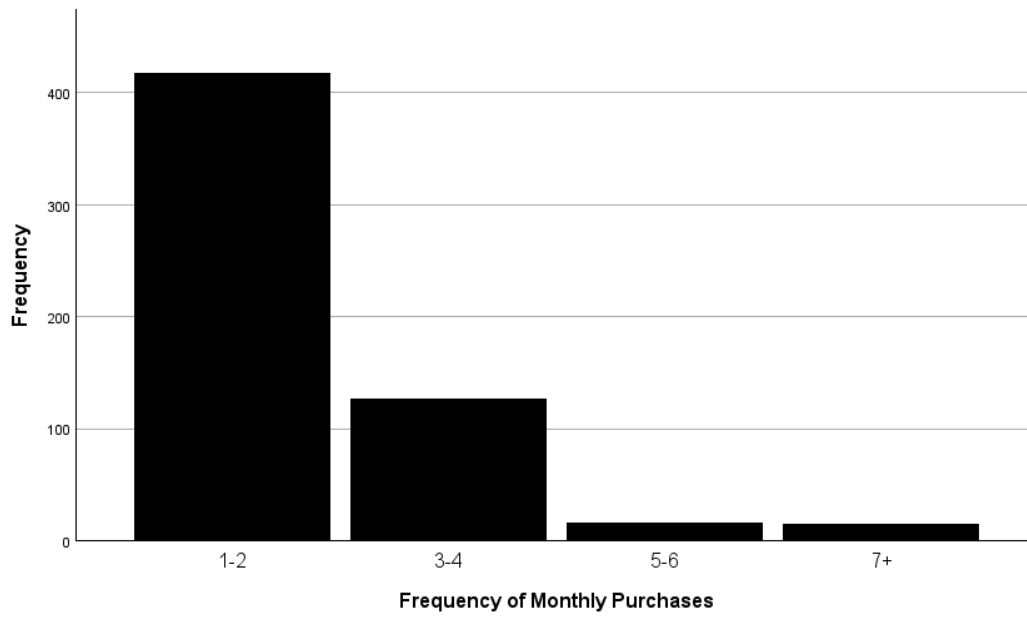


Figure 2

Amount of Monthly Fashion Purchases Bar Chart

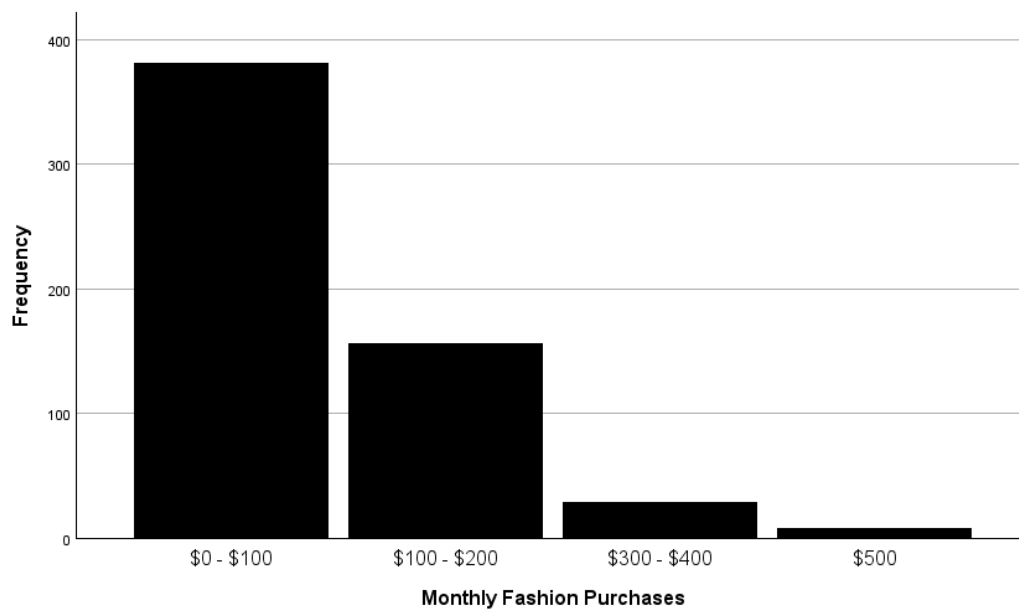


Figure 3

Percentage of Preferred Items to Purchase Bar Chart

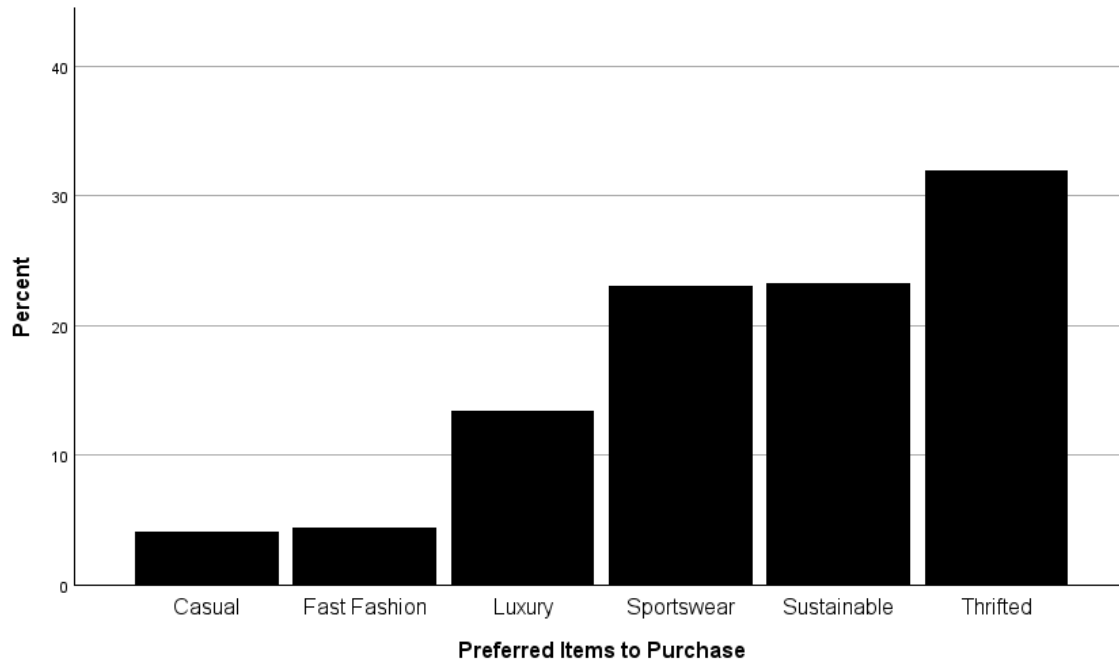
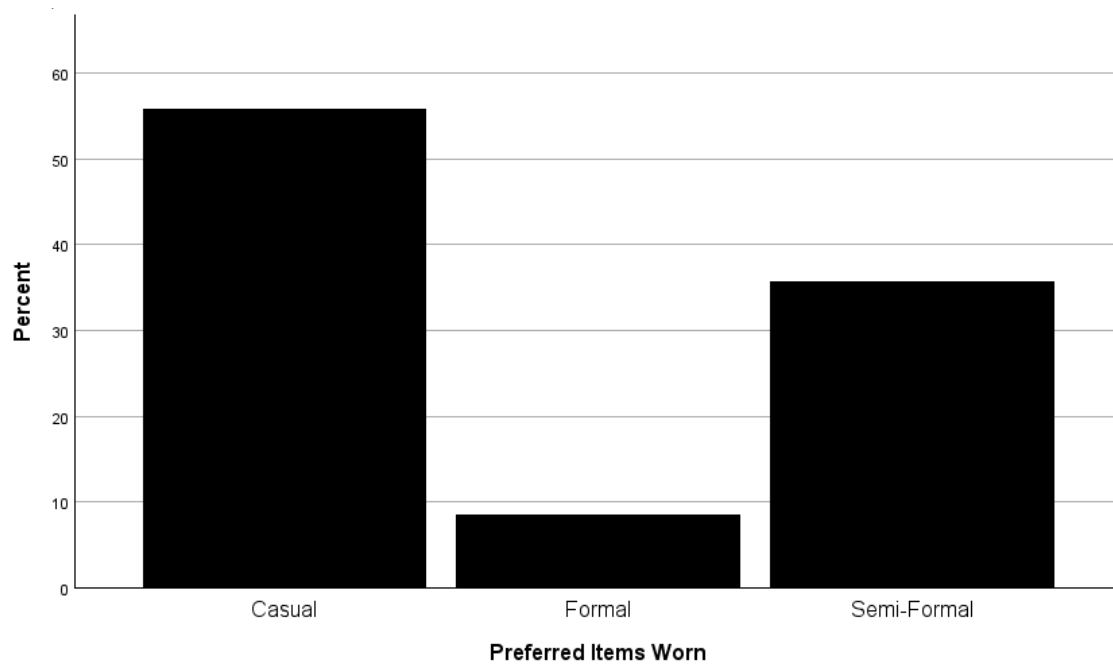


Figure 4

Percentage of Preferred Items Worn Bar Chart



The preferred styles of the participants were eclectic as individuals selected multiple options. Streetwear, classic fashion, and preppy were the top three styles reported (see Figure 5). The degree to which participants exhibited their styles at home varied (see Figure 6). Clothing represented different meanings to the sample. The top four meanings included expression, identity, fun, and creativity (highest frequency to least) (see Figure 7). There was overall agreement among the sample that wearing clothing that reflected their identity improved their mood (see Figure 8).

Figure 5

Percentage of Preferred Styles

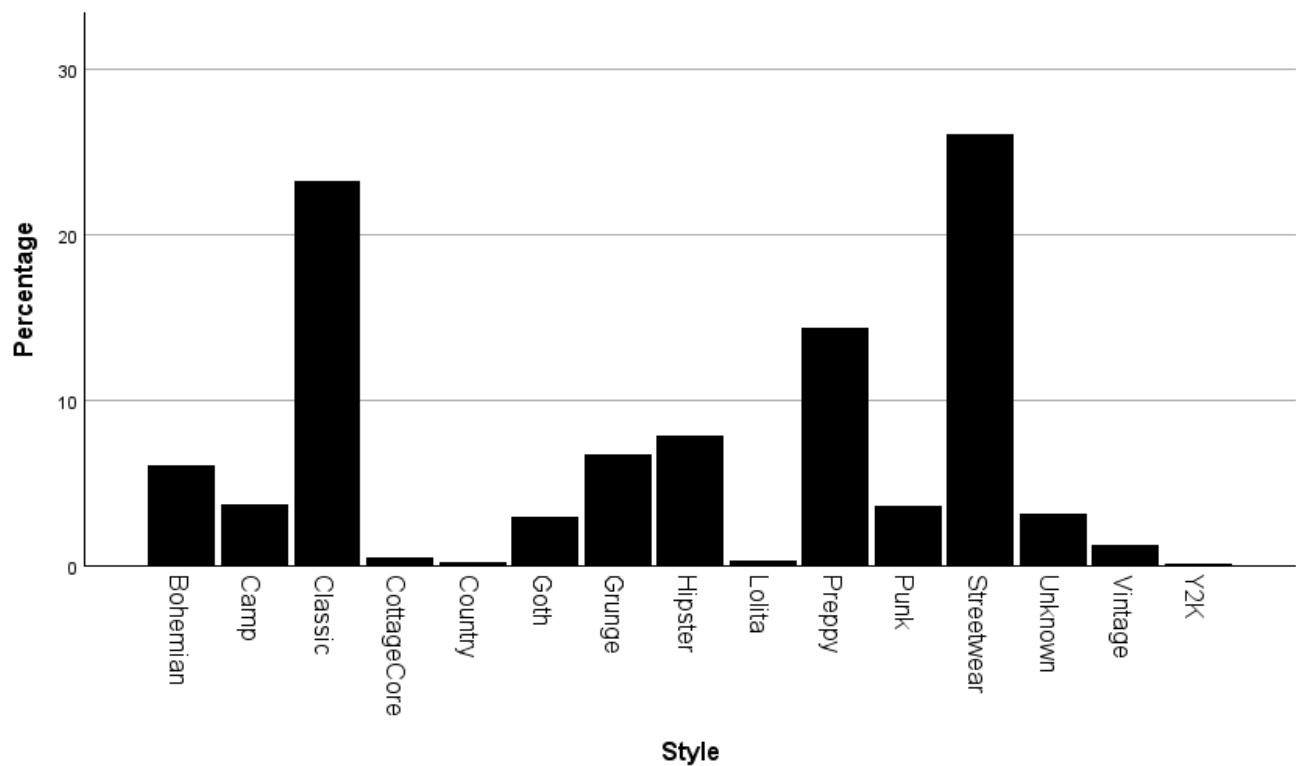


Figure 6

Degree of Exhibiting Style(s) at Home Bar Chart

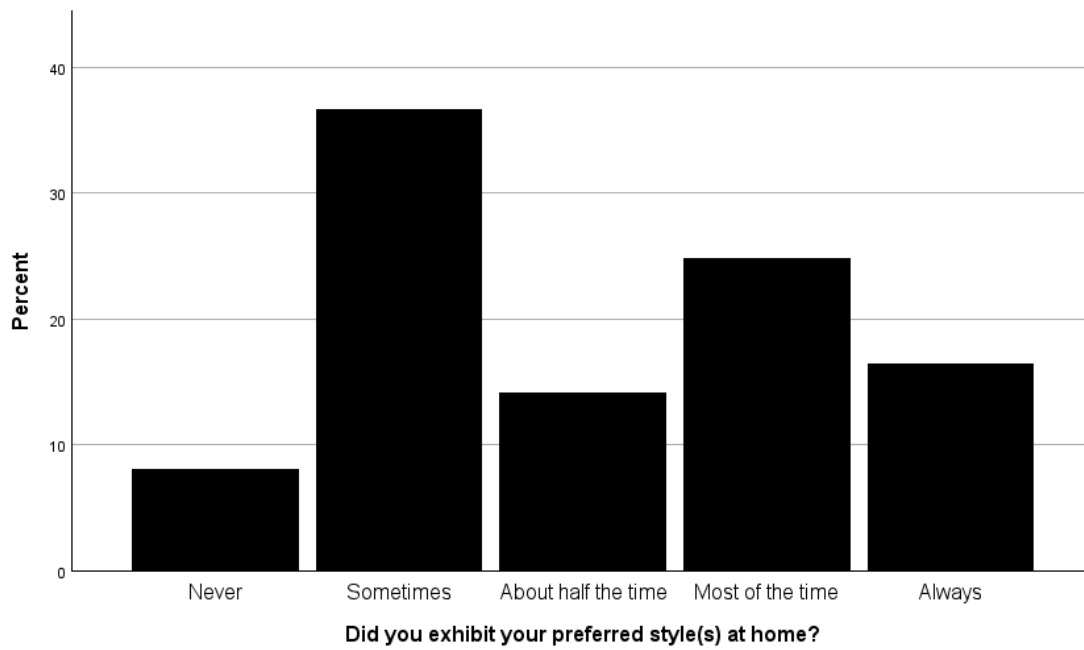


Figure 7

Personal Meaning(s) of Clothing Bar Chart

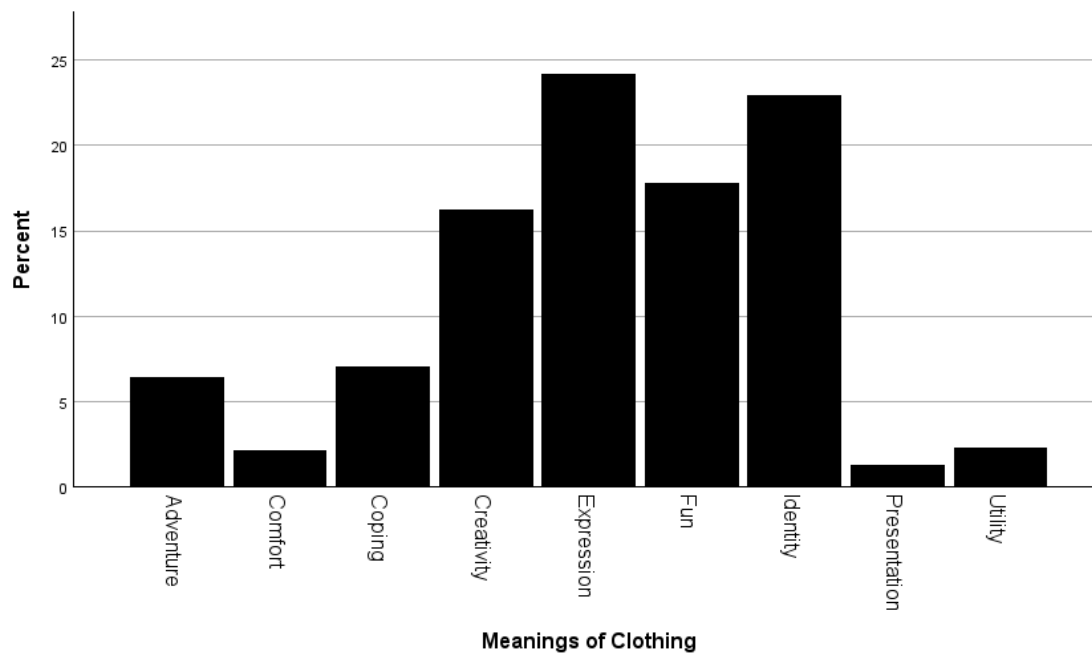
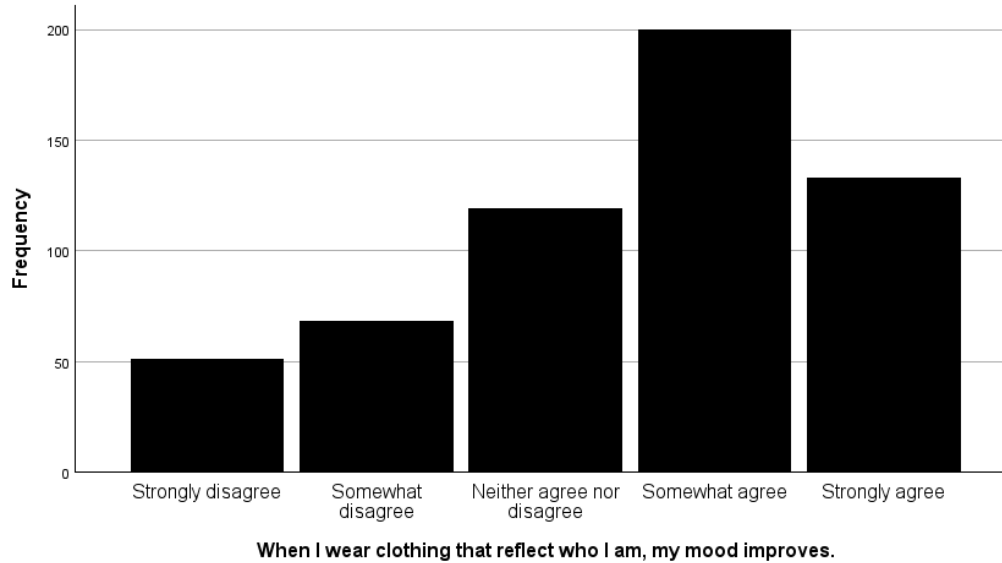


Figure 8

Degree of Mood Enhancement Bar Chart



Research Question One

To examine the relationship between COVID-19 (independent variable) and fashion involvement as the dependent variable, a Pearson correlation was conducted. The test revealed a low positive and statistically significant relationship between fear of COVID-19 and fashion involvement was found, $r = .123, p < .005$ (Table 2). All Pearson calculations can be found in Table 2. To determine if fear of COVID-19 predicted fashion involvement in emerging adults, a linear regression was conducted (see Table 3). The regression analysis revealed that fear of COVID-19 only predicted 1.5% of fashion involvement $R^2 = .015, F(1, 570) = 8.721, p < .05, \beta = .123, t = 2.953, p = .003$.

Table 2*Pearson Correlations for Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. FearCovid	—				
2. FashInvolve	0.123*	—			
3. MoodEnhance	0.232**	0.715**	—		
4. SelfasStructure	0.125*	0.714**	0.740**	—	
5. Self Esteem	0.210**	0.630**	0.736**	0.694**	—
6. MHC	-0.224**	0.039	0.006	0.057	-0.039

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$ **Table 3***Summary of Linear Regression Analyses*

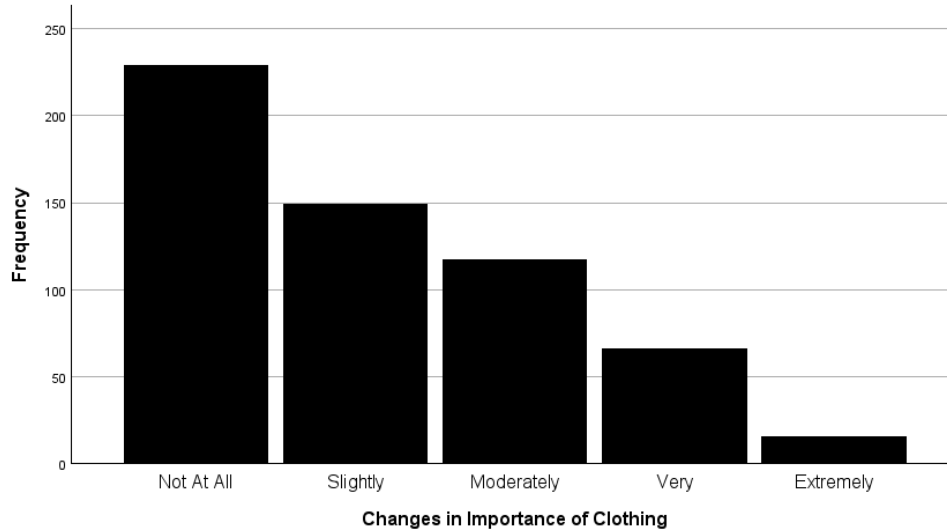
Variable	Fashion Involvement			Mood Enhancement		
	<i>B</i>	β	SE	<i>B</i>	β	SE
Fear of COVID-19	.202*	.123	.068	.251*	.232	.044

* $p < .001$

Frequency of a 5-point Likert scale question that asked participants how the pandemic might have changed the importance of clothing was also examined. The inquiry rendered varied responses, with no changes accounting for 40% of participants, while 60.3% of participants indicated that there was a slight to extreme change in clothing significance (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

Changes in Importance of Clothing Bar Chart



Research Question Two

To investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the use of fashion as a mood enhancer, a Pearson correlation was conducted to determine the strength of the relationship (Table 2). A Pearson correlation determined that there is a low positive and statistically significant relationship between fear of COVID-19 and fashion as a mood enhancer, $r = .23$, $p < .001$. A linear regression was also conducted to determine if fear is a predictor for fashion as a mood enhancer (see Table 3). Results indicated that fear of COVID-19 was a predictor of the use of fashion as a mood enhancer $F(1, 571) = 32.336$, $p < .001$. However, Fear of COVID-19 only predicted 5.4% of fashion involvement $R^2 = .054$, $\beta = .232$, $t = 5.686$, $p < .001$.

Research Question Three

To examine the third research question, what are the motivations for using clothing as a mood enhancer, a Pearson correlation test was conducted (Table 2). The test demonstrated that

mood enhancement has a strong positive and statistically significant relationship with self as structure, $r = .74, p < .001$ and self-esteem, $r = .73, p < .001$. A multiple regression was conducted between two dimensions of the proximity of clothing to self-scale as predictor variables, and the use of fashion as a mood enhancer as the dependent variable (see Table 4). The combination of self-esteem and self as structure variables explained 64.3% of the variance in emerging adult's use of fashion as a mood enhancement, $R^2 = .643, F(2,570) = 514.320, p < .001$. Of the predictor variables, self as structure ($\beta = .443, t = 12.746, p < .001$) had a moderately larger effect than self-esteem ($\beta = .429, t = 12.360, p < .001$).

Table 4

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for PCS on Mood Enhancement

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	β	<i>p</i>
Self as Structure	.541	.042	.443	<.001
Self-Esteem	.398	.032	.429	<.001

Frequencies of a question on the motivations of wearing clothing during the peaks of the pandemic were analyzed. It is important to note that participants selected multiple motivations. Eighty-three point two per cent of participants selected increase comfort, while 51.6% of participants had motivations to enhance feelings of security and self-confidence. Next, 27.6% selected they were motivated to express their individuality and 26.6% had motivations to be fashionable. Lastly, 19.6% of the sample selected motivation to camouflage parts of their body.

Research Question Four

To examine the fourth research question and determine how the use of fashion as a mood enhancer impacted mental health, a Pearson correlation (see Table 2) and linear regression was conducted with mood enhancer as the independent variable, and mental health as the dependent

variable. The relationship was not statistically significant ($r(572) = .006, p < .001$). $R^2 = .000$
 $F(1, 571) = .024, p > .05$.

In addition to the regression, a frequency table was created for the question “how has clothing impacted your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic?” Participants were categorized into languishing (poor mental health), moderate mental health, and flourishing (mental health) based on their scores in accordance to the diagnostic criteria created by Keyes (2009) (see Figure 10). A bar chart was created to illustrate the mental health of the participants based on their responses. Forty-one per cent of participants indicated clothing had a positive effect on their mental health, while 47% selected no effect, and 12% selected a negative affect (see Figure 11).

Figure 10

Reported Mental Health Bar Chart

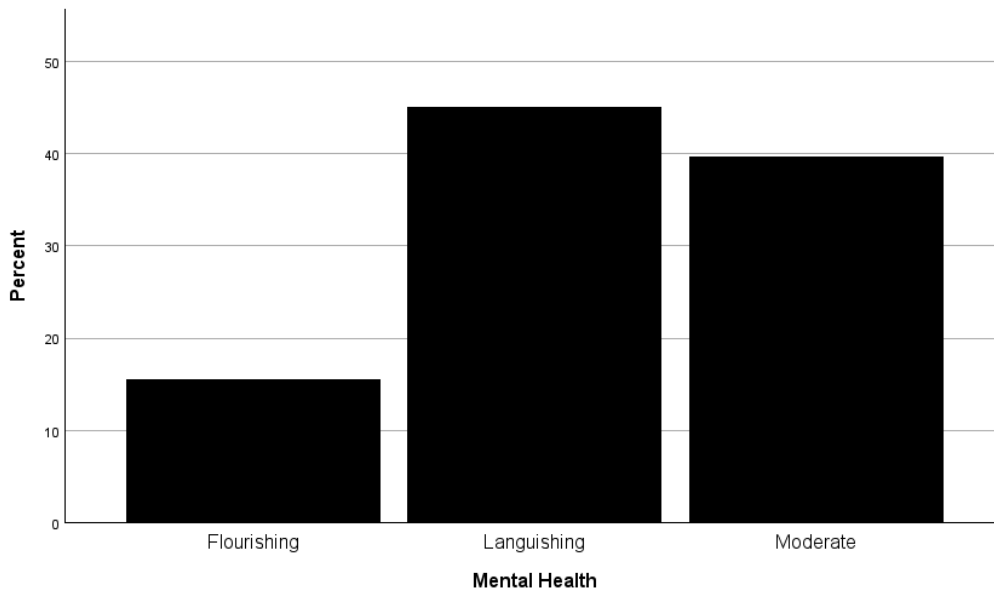
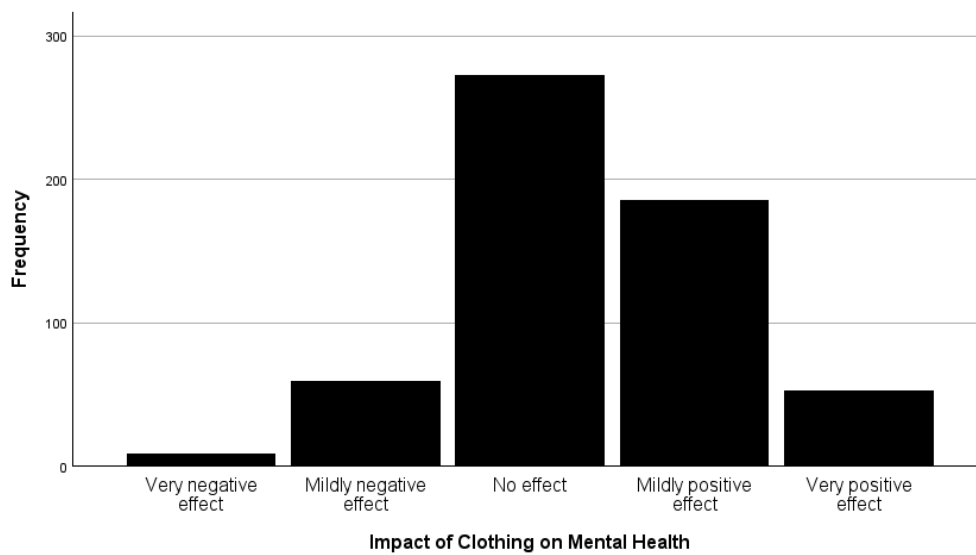


Figure 11

Impact of Clothing on Mental Health Bar Chart



Thematic Analysis

Thematic analyses were completed for four-open ended questions to guide the interpretation of quantitative data for the four research questions. This section will explore the findings of the analyses, including prevalent themes and subthemes.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected use of clothing?

This thematic analysis addressed the first research question, how the pandemic affected clothing engagement in emerging adults. The survey asked participants, “how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your use of clothing?” The analysis of 486 responses revealed four themes. The themes are ranked as follows: reduced effort, exploration, dressing for comfort, and COVID-19 (see Table 5).

Table 5

Themes Identified from Changes in Clothing Use

Theme (frequency)	Subtheme
Reduced Effort (205)	Preference for casual Reduced care Reduced planning
Exploration (142)	Dressing for the self Refining style Style exploration Sustainability Fashion design Capsule wardrobe
Comfort (94)	Comfort oriented Confidence
COVID-19 (32)	Masks and matching Protective dressing Fear

Reduced Effort.

Reduced effort emerged as the top theme which encapsulated how emerging adults decreased their effort in dressing themselves during the pandemic. Three distinctive subthemes were found that elaborated how reduced effort impacted dressing habits: preference for casual apparel, reduced planning, and reduced care.

The subtheme preference for casual apparel was formed based on the narrative of participants who often wore casual clothing and seldom used formal or semi-formal pieces during the lockdowns. One participant explained, “[I] stopped dressing up and putting effort into my outfits because I got used to wearing only casual wear during online school.” Therefore, casual wear became a deviation from the norm of “dressing up” for the day. A participant also observed a shift in dressing habits outside of their home. They noted, “I feel more comfortable not dressing up to go out now. Sweats are fine just about anywhere.” This demonstrates the reduced need to dress more formally when going into the community during the lockdown. Casual clothing was described by loungewear, sweatsuits, and oversized wear. Responses seemed to indicate that favoured clothing had flexibility and elasticity. One participant mentioned, “(I’m) definitely not dressing up in my nicer clothes as much, elastic waists are everything now.” Based on the responses, there were several explanations for the preference for casual attire. Individuals noted it was difficult to achieve comfort with semi-formal clothing. Casual clothes appeared to be more appropriate for remaining at home during the lockdown. A participant shared, “sitting in my apartment and its cold so i [sic] wear clothing and im [sic] not a psycho so i [sic] dont wear jeans and a blazer when im [sic] lounging in bed.” Others indicated that they were not interacting with individuals in their community therefore they exclusively wore casual attire. As one stated, “I wear sloppier/more informal clothing because I don't have to

go out as much.” Another described that a lack of motivation to dress up led to preferring non-formal clothing, “I did not dress up as much because I worked from home. Not as much motivation to put effort into my clothing.” A consequence to exclusively wearing casual clothing was that participants did not exhibit their style nor utilized their favourite clothing. A participant wrote, “I found that I wasn't able to express myself through clothing as well while staying at home during the covid-19 pandemic, and I also wasn't able to shop for anything new other than by purchasing it online.”

The subtheme reduced planning highlighted emerging adult's descriptions of selecting their daily clothing and how they have simplified this task during the pandemic. Participants mentioned they would wear less clothing from their closets. One individual wrote, “I wasn't cycling through different types or varieties of clothing as before.” Others expressed how they would repeat outfits throughout the week. This participant shared, “I wear clothes several more times than before, before doing laundry.” Reduced planning seemed to have made the routine of dressing easier and simpler, which may indicate that dressing up might have been overwhelming for emerging adults. This is denoted in what some participants shared, “there was no planning, no look coordination, no variety. Trying to keep something consistent in my life. Something I didn't have to stress about.” Therefore, repeating outfits led to decreased cognitive and physical effort. Many participants stated they favoured sleep wear significantly more, and that they “pretty much live in sleep wear.” Another identified they “did not wear 'outside' clothes, stuck to the same rotation of pyjamas.” These expressions suggest that individuals did not have the motivation or desire to change out of sleepwear for the day. Another possibility is that sleepwear was deemed a substitute for having to create an outfit with casual clothing.

A lack of care became a subtheme representing emerging adults who shared a loss of concern for their appearance. One participant described this as, “I have stopped caring about how I look/dress. I'm much more comfortable now with leaving the house in loungewear.” Others also shared that this affected their purchasing habits as they purchased less clothing. An emerging adult noted, “since the pandemic I actually spend a lot less money on shopping, before I used to go to stores more frequently but this habit dropped.” Appearance enhancement was no longer a priority to many. Some participants were exceptions to this as they did not care for their appearance until they went out into the community. An example of apathy can be seen in this expression:

Stopped trying for a while, like two straight years of pyjamas interspersed with 'dressing up' at every given opportunity to get out of the house. I mostly wore house clothes, didn't bother to dress like normal (if I were going out to work/school/etc).

A lack of motivation to manage one's appearance was described by some participants. This may be due to the decreased need to be presentable in front of others. This participant shared, “during the peak of covid i [sic] was no longer dressing for or to impress others because I was never leaving my house.” Others expressed that they no longer possessed enthusiasm for the clothing and the process of getting dressed. One participant acknowledged this as, “yes, i [sic] no longer put effort into my outfits or enjoy making them, instead I mostly wear loungewear or even stay in my pajamas.”

Exploration.

Another facet of emerging adults shared how increased personal time during the lockdown was used as an opportunity to engage with fashion and one's style on a deeper and more meaningful level, forming the theme exploration. Six subthemes were created from this

discourse that elaborated on the ways participants explored fashion. This included: dressing for the self, refining style, style-exploration, capsule wardrobe, sustainability, and fashion design.

The subtheme dressing for the self represented participant's efforts to explore and accommodate one's clothing preferences. One emerging adult explained, "due to the pandemic, I was able to actually take time to myself and think about how I want to present myself without other people around to judge me." Many participants echoed this sentiment that their journey of exploring fashion actively excluded trends and external standards. As mentioned here, "I became less willing to participate in microtrends and chose more personal styles." Others shared this exploration was possible due to the pandemic by not perceiving judgements from others. One emerging adult said:

Staying at home and not choosing to go anywhere let me branch out of what I would typically wear and go out of my comfort zone without having to go in public. Staying inside away from judgement at the time was a way for me to figure out my own identity and how I expressed myself through clothing.

Some participants expressed how they explored clothing and began to favour garments that reflected their identity. One participant commented, "it has made my fashion sense correlate more to my personality as I had more time to understand what fits my body and personal style through social media." Another emerging adult described how this exploration also led to incorporating values into their attire, "it allowed me to assoicate [*sic*] my intersets [*sic*] and values with what I wear." Therefore, exploring clothing led to perceptions of cohesiveness and unity between the self and one's outfit.

The subtheme refining style appeared from emerging adult's narrative on refining, expanding, or re-inventing their style over the lockdowns. One participant asserted, "I used the

COVID pandemic as an opportunity to completely change my style. During the quarantine period, I redefined my style and amassed a large collection of new clothes to fit my style.”

Participants explained that they had incorporated different colours, styles, fabrics, or accessories. This emerging adult observed the following, “during COVID-19 my taste in clothing and what I chose to wear greatly changed. I became a lot more expressive and colourful with my clothes. I started wearing more jewelry, fun makeup and adding offbeat accessories.” Some participants shared how they combined their new preferences of casual and comfortable clothing with their personal style:

I wear more streetwear/lounge style outfits like big sweaters and sweat pants, but I will always search for and purchase unusual and colourful versions of these items to satisfy my camp-y tastes. There continues to be almost no shades or neutral tones in my wardrobe.

Participants engaged in style-exploration in which they explored the world of fashion and expanded their knowledge of trends to reimagine their style. Individuals detailed their exploration of fashion trends and sub-cultures that were previously unknown to them. One emerging adults described this as:

There was an explosion of different 'styles' (like ballerina core and other titles like that) during the pandemic so it was kinda cool to see where my style fit in and what styles I would like to have in my closet.

Exploration took place in a multitude of ways. Shopping was an avenue to discovering different styles for emerging adults. Many participants expressed that social media was their main source of exploration:

By spending more time inside on the internet, I was able to discover different styles that I otherwise would not have tried. It was enjoyable to try different things on and think about where I could wear them once the lockdown was over.

The capsule wardrobe is a subtheme that summarized emerging adult's discourse around decluttering, rebuilding, or adding to their wardrobe. Participants had varying reasons why they worked on their closets. The abundance of time over the lockdowns provided a great opportunity to pass time in an enjoyable way. One individual explained, "the pandemic really made me pare down on my wardrobe (because what else was there to do) and consider what I wanted to wear." Many emerging adults described this activity as personal and significant. One participant stated:

In the first few months of lockdown I became much more invested in my personal style and I gradually transformed my wardrobe. It brought me a sense of purpose and excitement each morning to wear something nice even if I wasn't going to leave the house. I think the pandemic has encouraged me to pay closer attention to what I wear.

Therefore, curating one's closet became a meaningful and fulfilling activity. The quote indicates that organizing clothing provided benefits overtime as they were able to view and seek out nicer clothing for their day at home. As personal style had changed for many participants, individuals sought to fill identified gaps in their closet. Some participants indicated their goal of achieving a capsule wardrobe. This entailed collecting attire that were versatile and essential, and curating unique garments that can be used overtime to create combinations of outfits. Some emerging adults pursued a capsule wardrobe as a result of life changes from COVID-19:

Came home from university in March 2020 for what was supposed to just be a few weeks, ended up staying months because of interprovincial travel restrictions. Had

literally no summer clothes and had to build a capsule wardrobe. Also had to adjust my wardrobe to new weight gain.

Emerging adults discussed their knowledge and efforts to reduce the environmental harms of fast fashion through their interactions with clothing, forming the subtheme sustainability. One participant exemplified their dedication to learning more about sustainability during the pandemic:

Covid started my education of overconsumption, and sustainable fashion. While in the height of the pandemic I wasn't always aware of that, by the end of the pandemic i [sic] had started practicing much better and more sustainable actions regarding fashion.

Emerging adults shared the sustainable actions they took. For instance, individuals described their efforts for sustainable shopping including thrifting and supporting local businesses.

However, the travel restrictions were major obstacles, “thrifting has been hard because all the thrifting stores got shut down.” Participants also expressed how their habits changed when they utilized their clothing. One participant elaborated on managing their apparel efficiently to reduce consumption. They noted, “my behaviour has changed. I've now relied more on what is already in my closet and mixing and matching instead of buying additional clothing.” Another shared how they are more delicate with their clothing to ensure the garment has a longer duration for usage. As stated here, “I got far more into fashion and began actually dressing how I wanted to dress and buying items more carefully and caring for them more carefully as well.”

With efforts to be more creative and sustainable, some participants discussed designing and creating apparel. This is seen in the following expression, “I've started to make some of my clothing through reusing old clothes.” This discourse was categorized in the final subtheme

fashion design. Emerging adults detailed that they were introduced to sewing their own clothing for the first time.

Comfort.

The next prevalent theme was the increased significance of comfort for emerging adults during the pandemic. The findings indicate that since individuals were staying at home during lockdown restrictions, they swapped uncomfortable formal clothing for comfortable apparel. This participant emphasized, “clothing I wore was mostly comfortable or not fashionable/matching. I wasn't concerned about looking my best at that time.” This informed the subtheme comfort-oriented, representing participants that prioritized comfort in daily wear to improve their experiences at home. One emerging adult reported “no more purchasing formal wear. Always seeking comfort first.” Another participant wrote, “I stay home more, so I'm more likely to wear clothing centered around comfort.” The sensorial aspect of clothing became very significant. As shared here, “more likely to wear comfortable clothes and focus on fabrics i [sic] like the texture of.” Participants identified comfortable clothing as sweatpants, sweaters, sleepwear, over-sized garments, and attire that was for lounging (loungewear).

The second subtheme confidence captured emerging adult's discussion on gaining self-confidence to wear comfortable clothing. As the new norm became wearing comfortable attire, participants described a shift in their self-beliefs. One participant expressed, “I am more confident when wearing clothes that make me feel comfortable.” Another wrote the following, “less anxiety in choosing to wear comfortable clothes.” Comfortable attire had previously made individuals uncomfortable and unsatisfied with their appearance. However, the increased use of comfortable clothing had led to enhanced confidence in self. This confidence extended outside their home as participants shared leaving the house often in comfortable clothing. As stated here,

“it encouraged me to continue wearing less formal, more casual comfortable clothing outside as that's how I dress when at home.” There was less pressure to manage one’s appearance and look their best. One participant pointed out, “I have stopped caring about how I look/dress. I'm much more comfortable now with leaving the house in loungewear.”

COVID-19.

The final theme reflected the accommodation of COVID-19 public health measures in emerging adult’s clothing engagement. Three distinctive subthemes were found as part of the findings that illustrated how the pandemic affected dressing habits, including protective dressing, masks and matching, and lastly fear.

The first subtheme protective dressing encapsulated the increased importance of protective wear for participants to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. Many emerging adults detailed how they attempted to remain safe during the lockdowns. Participants protected themselves “by switching to more covered clothing rather than (wearing) more exposed” attire. Another participant elaborated on protective dress, “I wear more covering cloths (gloves, masks) on a daily and rarely change it up.” Therefore, it was very important to shield oneself from COVID-19 by covering skin and wearing masks. Such changes made participants more conscious of their risks to health. One participant emphasized, “it make [*sic*] me wear more long sleeve or clothing items that cover me more than I would have done prior to the pandemic.” Emerging adults changed out of their clothes when arriving home. As seen here, “when i [*sic*] get home from going out i [*sic*] immediately change clothes because i [*sic*] dont want outdoor getms [*sic*] on my belongings.” A participant shared feeling at risk of infection if they wore outdoor clothing for extended periods. They stated, “(the pandemic) made me change clothes for new ones when ever l (I) [*sic*] go to public places to prevent getting infected.” Individuals also

mentioned frequently washing their clothing. One reported, “washing clothes that I have worn out of the house only one time, even if they aren't dirty.” Therefore, emerging adults engaged in different habits with their clothing to reduce their risk of transmitting COVID-19 and this aided in their perceptions of feeling safe.

The second subtheme was generated from emerging adult’s creative response to masking protocols by matching their masks to their outfits. A participant shared “I need to match my clothing and mask.” This was accomplished by matching colours or patterns of the mask to one’s clothes. Participants expressed their excitement as they viewed masks as an accessory to their outfit. As stated here, “I got to buy cool face masks which people often compliment [*sic*]. Covid added a new accessory slot that wasn't there before since we didn't do much face masking in the west prior.” Some emerging adults were intentionally matching their masks to their clothing, while other participants made their mask a central feature of their ensemble. One shared “during the peak of the pandemic I built my outfit around my mask and tried to still dress up in accordance to the mask mandate.” As indicated in the responses, there was enthusiasm about the accommodation of masks into their closet, “yes, face masks are fashionable and socially acceptable now baby!!” However, other participants shared a dislike for masks. One participant stated, “I've got a bunch of facemasks i'll never wear again, due to govt mandate.” This quote exemplifies that masks were perceived as futile for some. Mentioning the government mandate may imply that this participant possessed disdain for their experience and for the COVID-19 policy. Another individual stated, “using face masks sometimes brings discomfort.” This discomfort might have been another reason why certain emerging adults disliked masking protocol.

A select few emerging adults shared their fears during the pandemic and how this shaped their relationship with apparel at the time. This narrative led to the subtheme fear. Participants shared their fear of COVID-19 itself which made them very hesitant to go out into the community. This impacted the clothing they wore. One noted, “I can't show off my clothes because I couldn't go out with everything closed and afraid of getting Covid.” A participant also shared that they were “afraid to go shopping for new clothes.” Another facet of this subtheme was fear of discrimination. One participant expressed feeling a lack of safety when wearing types of expressive clothing that clashed with the political views of others. They stated the following, “the political climate very sharply turned right which makes me feel less safe expressing myself. I dress much more subdued now even though I was very invested in fashion beforehand.” Another participant shared how racism in their community led to not wearing their religious clothing:

I stopped wearing my niqab so that I could fit a mask. I also felt unsafe dressing in religious garb because islamophobic hate crimes had risen at the beginning of the pandemic. Many people blamed muslims [*sic*] for the spread of the virus.

It is evident that some emerging adults encountered or witnessed discrimination during the lockdowns and were fearful. The responses illustrate how participants attempted to prevent public confrontations by changing their attire, granting them a sense of protection.

In summary, the thematic analysis has found that the pandemic affected emerging adult's engagement with clothing in multiple ways. Emerging adults cited how COVID-19 has made participants more aware of the protective functions of clothing and how they dressed intentionally to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus. Being confined to one's home has led to the prioritization and preference for comfortable and casual clothing. Participants shared a lack

of motivation and concern for their appearance, resulting in reduced efforts to dress up at home and in their community. Some emerging adults mentioned how COVID-19 was an obstacle for dressing up and made them fearful. Others used this time to explore style, fashion, and sustainability.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the importance of clothing?

This thematic analysis explores the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the importance of clothing for emerging adults. The findings contribute to the second research question. The analysis was conducted on 441 responses that answered the following research question: “how has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the importance of clothing for you?” Six themes emerged: style, decreased importance, clothing as a coping tool, increased importance, comfort, and increased concern for sustainability (see Table 6).

Table 6

Themes Identified from Changes to the Importance of Clothing

Theme (frequency)	Subtheme
Style (93)	Connection Exploring fashion Portrayal of self Self-empowerment
Decreased Importance (72)	Decreased value Decreased pressure Decreased consumption New priorities
Coping Tool (71)	Body Image Motivation Confidence Self-expression Self-esteem
Increased Importance (64)	Recompense for lockdown Following trends Enjoyment Presentability Abundance of time
Comfort (21)	Prioritizing comfort

	Comfort with fashion
Sustainability (18)	Concern for environment Reusing wardrobe Sustainable purchases

Style.

Honouring style was the most popular theme in which emerging adults found style to have greater personal significance during the pandemic. A facet of participants expressed their commitment to work on their style. Four subthemes were developed based on this narrative around style: connection, exploring fashion, portrayal of self, and self-empowerment.

The subtheme connection captured the increased significance of style as it related to perceptions of feeling connected to others. This participant shared, “the pandemic changed a lot about how I connect to/with the world and to myself. clothing [*sic*] became one of these conduits.” Emerging adults described how clothing aided in gaining meaningful relationships. This individual explained: “[I] dont have a lot of friends, partly as a result of the pandemic. when i [*sic*] wear clothes that express my individuality, i [*sic*] feel like im [*sic*] more likely to draw in the right people (potential friends).” It was also perceived that clothing facilitated comfort in others within their environment. One participant commented, “yes, I feel like I have to express myself through my clothes more often because of Covid people are more apprehensive before approaching you so in a sense clothing breaks barriers.” Fashion was also a means to celebrate with others. A participant described their “excitement of finding a nice article of clothing to show off to friends/peers or even kind strangers.” As indicated by the data, participants learned how style was an important tool to gain or enhance their connections with others. This phenomenon might have captured emerging adult’s lesson that making efforts in one’s style

helped to reduce isolation. This realization may be a reason for the increased importance of clothing to participants.

Exploring fashion was a subtheme that reappeared in the participant's responses. Emerging adults reported that their experience of the lockdowns increased the importance of fashion. Individuals noted their newfound passion and dedication to fashion. One participant shared "I prefer to explore fashion more now." There was increased openness to "exploring new ideas and thoughts" in the realm of fashion. This exploration is demonstrated here, "it gave me time to expand my style and explore what i [*sic*] liked in my free time." Individuals expressed a major positive difference in their fashion. One participant described experiencing a glow up due to fashion, which characterizes a positive transformation in one's appearance. They stated, "Covid-19 allowed me to have a clothing glow up in private." Such experiences have led to participants adoring fashion. This emerging adult explained: "during COVID, I found new styles and how to pair certain clothing articles with others. I fell in love with the whole aspect of it and became experimenting with each style to find 'my colours'." Therefore, the pandemic had enhanced the importance of clothing to emerging adults through their personal experiences and transformations. Multiple participants emphasized that they purchased more clothing than usual during the lockdowns. The following participant stated: "I became for [*sic*] aware of it through social media platforms and now buy more clothes than before and use them to feel my best." As many clothing sales were offered during the pandemic, emerging adults seized this opportunity to expand their style with new fashion. An emerging adult recounted "I just spent a lot on clothing during covid ... a lot of brands were on sale all the time."

Participants also shared how the portrayal of self in their style made clothing more significant. Emerging adults discussed how clothing became a means to navigate, find, and

express their self-concept. One observed, “it led to me being more expressive of myself in my outfit choices, and I moved towards certain styles.” According to participants, self-reflection facilitated this process. Participants worked towards enhancing their understanding of their core self and were able to align this knowledge to certain styles. This emerging adult explained, “it was a time of growing up and finding who I want to be.” Self-exploration through clothing facilitated self-acceptance. One participant explained: “it has allowed me to embrace my identity and allow me to find a way to express it through things other than words.” Individuals also reflected on the ideal self in relation to clothing. This participant described this experience, “having the additional time to self-reflect has helped me decide what type of person I want to be or portray, which involves clothing, therefore has increased the importance of clothing slightly.” Emerging adults focused on improving and achieving their best version of self through their attire. This propelled their transformation in style and seemingly created a closer relationship with clothing. This experience is described in the following recollection:

I think the social isolation brought on by the covid-19 pandemic permitted a lot of time for introspection, which helped me evaluate and understand the importance and the desire to express myself through peices [sic] of clothing that hold a lot of value to me. It has helped me detach from the outside world, to see what is true to me, what is special to me and what I value dearly in clothing and expression of self.

The final subtheme indicated how emerging adults felt self-empowered by their style and grew closer to their clothing. The pandemic was an opportunity to refine and embrace style. Participants reported honouring their preferences and how this was empowering. One participant stated, “I dress more for me than for others now.” This shift led to discarding other perspectives, potentially eliminating the voice of judgement that represented societal expectations. As stated

here, “the pandemic kind of made me realize how much I shouldn't care about other people judging me, so I'll wear whatever makes me most comfortable and whatever pieces I think go best together.” Since emerging adults liberated their dressing habits from outer perspectives, they also liberated themselves. One participant shared “it has taught me that clothing is meant for you to express your style and not to reflect others. Also, by wearing what you want it makes you feel more at peace and confident in your own skin.” Self-empowerment achieved a sense of peace with oneself, self-acceptance, and confidence. Participants also shared that their new style facilitated greater self-confidence. As mentioned here, “the pandemic was an opportunity to completely redo my style and begin to practice self expression [*sic*] and getting comfortable in my own skin.” Another participant stated, “if i [*sic*] hadn't been able to explore my sense of style without the perception of others, i [*sic*] may not have been confident enough to wear more unique clothes out in public.” Therefore, emerging adults embraced their style and preferences which increased their personal significance of clothing. Their transformation in self-empowerment was a silver lining of the pandemic.

Decreased Importance.

Emerging adults shared that the pandemic had changed their perceived importance of clothing. Findings observed a split where a facet of participants perceived clothing to be more important while others shared its importance decreased. Discourse around clothing being less significant formed four subthemes: decreased value, new priorities, decreased pressures, and decreased consumption.

The experience of the pandemic made certain participants argue that clothing diminished in personal value and significance. One participant explained, “clothing has gone down on my list of things that bring value to my life.” In this subtheme, the phrase “I care less” appeared

repeatedly in the responses. The pandemic had rendered emerging adults apathetic towards their clothing. Reduced value is evident in the following response:

I used to care a lot [*sic*] about the clothes I wore. I would wear dresses, and spend more time choosing and putting together outfits that suited my identity. After the pandemic and during, I just choose what is easiest.

Being restricted to one's household was a cause for the lack of concern on appearance management. For instance, one individual expressed "I was stuck at home for 2 years, so I don't really care about clothing as much anymore." Another described the following, "spending more time inside has changed what i [*sic*] usually wear. I dont put as much effort in if im [*sic*] just going to be sitting around all day." Individuals encountered a change in with they no longer found amusement in dressing up. This emerging adult noted, "I wear clothes now just to wear them, not to enjoy them." Clothing therefore had become mundane to a portion of emerging adults. One participant observed, "I have started discarding the importance of clothing to an extent that it seems like a task now." As clothing inherited new perceptions of being futile, uninteresting, and lacking value, emerging adults had decreased concerns in their apparel. Another explanation was asserted by emerging adults in which reduced care was linked to social isolation, which will be discussed later under the subtheme reduced pressure.

A facet of emerging adults explained that other matters took precedence over clothing making their attire less significant. These responses were categorized in the subtheme new priorities. As seen in the data, the pandemic led to a decreased concern for appearance and care for clothing. This may be connected to the opportunity for participants to reflect and recognize how other aspects of life outweighed fashion. One participant referred to this in their statement: "I don't think that being in a pandemic gave me a deeper appreciation for clothing ... it allowed

me to see how little importance your outfit has when stepping out in certain settings.” Therefore, emerging adults had a shift in concern from one’s appearance to other areas of life. This may also indicate that clothing decreased in its benefits to the participant’s life or experience. Safety became extremely important as participants felt vulnerable with the spread of COVID-19. Participants shared their apprehension of purchasing clothing. One individual stated, “the pandemic took away [*sic*] almost all my zeal for clothing because I was totally afraid of getting it.” Another example can be seen in what this participant had to say, “I have realized that clothing and fashion is not as important as society makes it out to be,, [*sic*] as there are much more crucial parts to life like health and safety.” Evidently fear of COVID-19 led to the concern and prioritization of health. In addition to health, other aspects of the self were considered. As stated here, “I care more about how I feel vs how I look now.” Functionality and comfort took greater precedence as observed in previously explored themes. The following participant described this shift, “I used to spend a lot of time dressing up for school, now I’m more laid back and focused on function/comfort.” Emerging adults pursued leisure in other avenues as opposed to focusing on fashion. One participant expressed, “I used to be very into how I present myself, but not seeing anyone and finding a new hobby took my focus away.”

In the subtheme reduced pressure, participants shared that they had “not as much pressure to dress up” during the pandemic. This narrative indicates that emerging adults previously had pressure to be presentable, and this diminished over time due to several reasons. As the data has previously found, the advent of the lockdown led to preferences of seeking comfort and casual clothing over formal wear. Emerging adults also reported using their clothing less, opting for repeated outfits or sleepwear. Therefore, habits of dressing adjusted. This is denoted in the following quote, “less effort put into dressing up after COVID because used to being

comfortable and not having to plan outfits for two years.” This lack of planning resulted in decreased preoccupation with one’s clothing. A participant shared, “COVID-19 allowed me to think less about what I should wear.” Responses also indicate that there was less pressure to look one’s best going out into the community:

I have noticed I am not as ashamed to wear a hoodie and sweatpants to run errands as I was before the pandemic. I don't like to look sloppy but I feel like ever since the pandemic hit, hoodies and leggings/sweatpants/joggers are exceptable [*sic*] (acceptable).

As seen in this quote, not only has casual wear become preferred, but it’s acceptance in the community led to the normalization of wearing sweatsuits in public. This demonstrates that a facet of emerging adults no longer felt subjected to the norms of dressing up when going into the community or following fashion trends. Therefore, reduced pressure to dress was validated and encouraged by the culture of the time. In addition to the new norm, engagement with people outside of one’s household was nonexistent which led to less pressure for presentation. The following participant described this:

In covid peak ... no one saw me I didn,t [*sic*] care what I looked like. I even slacked on washing clothes. Once we were allowed back in person i [*sic*] value my clothes so much more because i [*sic*] get the opportunity to make an outfit i [*sic*] know people will see and hopefully appreciate.

This participant indicated that dressing up is only valuable when being seen and appreciated. Due to a subsided need to dress favorably for others, emerging adults engaged in less effort and thought went into dressing during the lockdowns.

As a result of decreased importance of clothing, some emerging adults recounted a major difference in their shopping habits over the pandemic. This formed the subtheme decreased

consumption. Individuals shared that they purchased less attire. One wrote, “during the pandemic I bought less than normal.” Another participant blamed reduced consumption on the pandemic itself. They stated, “it has definitely stopped me from buying more clothes.” The data here highlights that the motivation to purchase clothing decreased. An individual shared, “(the pandemic) made it less important to me because i [sic] wasn't buying new clothes i [sic] just wanted to be comfortable.” This perspective indicates that as participants were spending less attention on clothing purchases, apparel became less significant in general. The data indicates that alternative priorities, or reduced care and pressure to dress oneself led to decreased consumption.

Increased Importance.

In contrast to decreased significance of clothing, others shared how they attributed greater importance to their outfits during the pandemic. This discourse was analyzed and organized into the theme increased importance. One emerging adult shared, “it (the pandemic) has made it (clothing) even more important to me- I used to not care as much but after being forced inside it spiked my care for clothes.” Responses that justified this phenomenon shaped the five subthemes: abundance of time, presentability, enjoyment, following trends, and recompense for lockdown.

Due to the abundance of personal time, emerging adults reported that clothing became a major focus during the pandemic. One participant explained, “[clothing] gave me something to focus on.” The shift in focus to clothing implies it was an effective way to overlook the pandemic. Emerging adults expressed how they engaged with clothing on a deeper level. One participant stated: “I’ve always been extremely into fashion and clothing, covid just gave me the time to really dig deeper into it.” This might have included researching fashion online. As one

stated “I used to not care much about fashion but now i [*sic*] find myself scrolling through pinterest or online clothing stores for hours just looking at clothes.” Participants described their thoughts during the lockdowns. One participant reported “Covid gave me more time to think about clothing.” Some concentrated on their style. This emerging adult described this experience: “I had time and space from others to reevaluate my style.” Alternatively, individuals focused on their wardrobe and fit of clothing. As described here, “I was always concerned with and fascinated by clothing, now I have more time to examine clothing and my body type.” The abundance of time led to changes in emerging adult’s dressing habits. This included selecting outfits intentionally. One participant explained, “because of the pandemic I would only go outside a limited amount of times, so this led to more time for picking which clothes to wear.” Others described refining their style and purchasing clothing after their contemplation on clothing. This participant stated, “it allowed me to spend more time shopping and changing my look.” As emerging adults put greater thought into clothing, the data highlights that many increased their efforts into looking presentable.

Presentability as a subtheme captured emerging adult’s discourse on increased time and effort into grooming and dressing up. One person wrote, “I put more effort into looking presentable and wearing nice clothes.” Other participants described greater preoccupation with one’s image and the impressions they make on others. This emerging adult observed, “I’m am [*sic*] more focused on what I wear and how I present myself in public.” These participants shared greater concerns about appearance. Some claimed this was a result of the pandemic. As detailed here, “with covid and isolation restrictions that followed I wasn’t able to express myself as much through fashion due to always being at home. but [*sic*] this change caused me to be even more determined about looking put together.” In this quote, restrictions were interpreted as an obstacle

to wear fashion, which made the incentive for dressing up greater. Some participants reported that they were previously interested in clothing, however the importance of being presentable amplified over the lockdowns. This participant expressed, “I’ve always liked dressing up and looking nice, COVID just changed the degree to which I do so, which greatly increased.” The data demonstrates that one’s appearance increased in importance, leading to higher efforts in presentability.

Emerging adults expressed how clothing provided joy, forming the subtheme enjoyment. “Joy”, “fun”, “enjoyment”, “excitement”, and appreciation were repeated terms observed in the responses. This participant exemplifies this in their statement, “I ... have found more enjoyment in choosing my clothes.” This enjoyment was novel for some individuals over the pandemic. One participant shared “I [*sic*] never cared too much about dressing for comfort before the pandemic. now, [*sic*] dressing up is more fun for me.” Participants described gratitude for their enjoyment of clothing. One person stated, “taking for granted the process and excitement.” Another individual shared, “I appreciate the opportunity to dress up more now.” Clothing was reported to be an enjoyable recreational activity. A participant expressed this here, “fashion is a hobby for me.” An example of this recreation was researching niche fashion styles. One stated, “I found a lot of historical fashion youtubers during the pandemic lockdown. I don't use this historical fashion in day-to-day life, but it has increased my interest with this specific niche hobby.” Design and sewing clothing were also mentioned in responses. This participant shared “I began sewing my own clothes during the pandemic.” This newfound joy in clothing indicates that clothing facilitated positive emotions and therefore enhanced emerging adult’s experiences during the lockdowns. As a result, apparel became more significant.

Despite the global lockdown, fast fashion continued to produce and cycle through different trending clothing. According to some emerging adults, trends were being observed and followed at home, having greater significance than before. This narrative formed its own subtheme. One participant reported, “peak pandemic fast fashion and online shopping took off, i [sic] was very absorbed by that.” Participants described researching these movements and being able to participate in them during the lockdowns through shopping. According to this emerging adult, “during quarantine, I had a lot more time to research trends and ‘cool’ clothing. There were [sic] also the raise [sic] of fast fashion that made ‘cool’ clothes affordable. That made this fashion more accessible for people like me.” Therefore, these individuals were not limited by the pandemic and continued to join in trends. One participant expressed feeling pressured:

With the increase in fast fashion and the increased rate of turn-over, I find myself to be more aware of clothing and how I dress. This has not made me buy more clothes, but has made me anxious when putting an outfit together and changed how I put outfits together (e.g., jeans instead of leggings/sweats, adding jewelry [sic] or accessories).

The data highlights that for some emerging adults, trends became increasingly important. However, as seen in the quote, it had a negative impact on the participant due to the anxiety of aligning with trends.

For some emerging adults, clothing compensated for missed opportunities during the pandemic. Participants described how they continued to dress up despite the lockdown restrictions, forming the subtheme recompense for lockdown. Going out into the community was a special occasion and participants were eager to dress in garments other than their comfortable wear. This participant described this, “I find I get more excited when I get to go out and dress up since I spent so much time wearing comfy clothes during Covid.” What seems central to this

narrative was the incentive to display one's apparel to others. They stated, "I think that dressing up has become a more exciting experience because I might not get to show the clothing I like the next day." This quote indicates how clothing became rewarding and was central to their experience of getting out into the community during the pandemic. Also, due to the instability of the pandemic, participants were frightened that their enjoyment of going out may be taken away. Another participant used their time during the pandemic to plan future outfits:

I love clothes but with covid I didn't dress up at all. I didn't care much but still wanted to buy clothing I liked because I would try to think about how I would show it off once covid was over.

This quote exemplifies an interesting dichotomy. This participant reported not caring for their appearance during the pandemic. However, they perceived their appearance to be significant in post-pandemic times due to the return to socialization. The dichotomy highlights how emerging adults were preparing for life after the pandemic and viewed clothing as a significant factor to their interaction and relations with other individuals. This will be explored more in the subtheme connection.

Coping Tool.

Many emerging adults highlighted improvements to their wellbeing due to their engagement with apparel, shaping the theme coping tool. This perceived effect increased the importance of clothing for a portion of the sample. Participants stated that clothing became a tool to cope with stressors during the pandemic and this facilitated resilience. Five subthemes were formed from the discourse: body image, motivation, confidence, self-expression, and self-esteem.

Emerging adults discussed how increasing their efforts with clothing helped in promoting a positive body image. This narrative is captured in the subtheme body image. An example is found in the following quote, “it made me realize how important it was to put effort into my appearance so that I liked what I saw in the mirror. Also when I put effort into my appearance my dysphoria goes down bc (because) I am able to better express myself thought [*sic*] my clothing.” This narrative indicates how clothing facilitated acceptance with one’s appearance, as well as appreciation. According to this participant, self-expression through clothing also aided in decreasing their dysphoria. Dysphoria, or gender dysphoria, is a mental health condition whereby an individual experiences an incongruence between “experienced gender versus one’s assigned gender” (APA, n.d.-c). Due to this participant’s reports of improved body image and a reduction in gender dysphoria, this example may indicate the effectiveness of clothing to cope with one’s body. Emerging adults discussed how body changes such as weight gain had affected style choices. Therefore, to remain comfortable with oneself and one’s style, participants had to be more creative with their clothing to cope with body image and accommodate changes in their body. One individual shared, “(I) want(ed) to remain comfortable in times of certainty and with weight fluctuations baggy clothes were more likely to make me feel better both comfortably and emotionally.”

The subtheme motivation represented emerging adults who recognized clothing as a successful tool in enhancing their motivation. As stated here, “I realized that in changing what I wear from what I slept in gave me some sort of motivation to be more productive.” This experience was deemed valuable and shaped participants to be intentional with what they wear. A participant explained: “I feel it is important to get up everyday and put in something that is not

pajamas to increase ... productivity.” One participant described the increased importance of motivation during their experience of the pandemic:

It changed from being something passive because I had to get out of the house to something that helped me mentally prepare to have a productive day. Dressing even more ‘put together’ than I had while I was physically going to university made clothing/dressing a crucial part of my overall wellbeing.

Clothing helped to calibrate their responsibilities and expectations for the day. Therefore, apparel assisted in organization and productivity. The data highlights that motivation and task completion helped them cope with challenges they endured through the pandemic. Another possibility is that clothing facilitated motivation in a time where they had a deficit in motivation. Therefore, they were able to cope with low motivation during the pandemic.

Emerging adults also coped through enhancing their self-confidence with clothing, explaining its increased significance to participants. This narrative is highlighted in the subtheme confidence. One participant wrote “I realize now how much wearing something I like affects my ... confidence levels.” After this realization, individuals changed their dressing habits over the pandemic to wear clothes that bolster their confidence. This is denoted in what some participants shared:

Pre-covid, it was jeans and a t-shirt, and makeup was only for special occasions. Now I find myself actively making cute outfits to wear on a mostly daily basis because Covid taught me how looking nice could raise my self-confidence.

During the pandemic, I realized that clothing meant a bit more to me than I thought it would. I’ve never been super into fashion, but I realized that I liked being able to ... feel confident in my clothing choices, especially around my friends.

The ability to bolster confidence through clothing led to increased self-styling to cope with views of the self and low confidence levels. As observed in the quotes, leaning into fashion or wearing clothing that was deemed “nice” or “cute” seemed to have driven this change.

Self-expression became a subtheme representing discourse on the increased importance to express one’s creativity, emotions, and style. Emerging adults reported that self-expression became a coping mechanism during the pandemic. One participant explained “masking allows another avenue of self-expression and viewing it as such was a helpful coping mechanism during the mask mandates.” As seen in this quote, perceiving masks as a symbol of self-expression and not a limitation helped this participant through the lockdowns. Another individual shared how clothing aided in their mental health through expression. According to this participant, “I had a mental breakdown indirectly caused by covid and since then I’ve been much more expressive with my clothes.” The contrast between expression and breakdown purports that expressing thoughts, feelings, and emotions through attire was instrumental to maintaining their wellbeing. Another individual stated, “I became more insecure due to covid, but eventually had a turning point ... I express myself much more than before.” In this context, expression enhanced self-security. One participant remarked, “after losing my sense of expression, clothing has become more important as I can now appreciate how it feels to lack a sense of expression.” Therefore, emerging adults found how impactful self-expression was during the pandemic, and leaned on it to cope.

The final subtheme reflected emerging adult’s discourse on coping through enhancing their self-esteem. As described here, “because i [*sic*] was also a developmental teenager through the pandemic, i [*sic*] know i [*sic*] was already maturing my style. But covid really locked it in and helped me feel really good about myself in my clothes.” This expression implies that

establishing one's style aided in having a positive self-regard. Another participant stated, "I wore clothes in COVID ... to feel good about myself." One participant emphasized, "clothes help boost my self-esteem during those boring and scary days." The quotes highlight that participants navigated their self-esteem during the pandemic and used clothing to facilitate positive self-beliefs by managing their appearance and looking "good".

Comfort.

The theme comfort appeared again in the responses. This finding solidified that comfort was very significant during the pandemic, and the function of comfort made apparel more important to emerging adults. Two subthemes emerged that highlighted clothing's increased importance: prioritizing comfort and comfort with fashion.

Participants shared about their priority of comfort in their daily life throughout the lockdowns. This is seen in the following example, "I think I care less about what I wear and focus more on comfy since it was so important during Covid to feel comfy when you were stuck at home all day." Achieving comfort gave a new meaning to clothing for participants. Aesthetics were no longer central to clothing, and comfort became more significant. One shared, "(I) realize(d the) unimportance of fashion in my life. Would rather be comfortable and feel good in my clothing." Another explained:

I stopped caring as much about my looks or my choice of clothing after Covid-19. I stopped wearing makeup everyday as well. Before I always wanted to be fashionable. But now it's more important for me to be comfortable. And I think sometimes that it doesn't matter what I wear.

A balance of both style and comfort was important to some emerging adults. This formed the subtheme comfort with fashion. Participants expressed how they wanted to achieve comfort

while remaining true to their style and fashionable. One described, “it (the pandemic) has changed the importance of comfortable clothing for me - though I still love dressy fashion, I go for comfy, loose dress pants and cozy sweaters.” Another participant stated, “my choice is simple, casual yet fashionable and shows off my beautiful body features.” It is evident that the balance of comfort and fashion allowed individuals to feel comfortable and appreciate their appearance. As seen in this account, “Covid 19 makes me realize how important it is to be able to look great but also being comfortable.”

Sustainability.

Emerging adults described the increased importance of sustainability in their engagement and use of clothing, forming the theme sustainability. Three subthemes came from this topic, including: concern for environment, reusing wardrobe, and sustainable purchases.

The first subtheme was apparent in the responses as participants explained their concerns for fast fashion’s environmental issues. Participants shared how their awareness on fast fashion has mounted these concerns. This individual stated, “(I) had more time to research the importance of sustainable fashion and now am concerned with where my clothing comes from.” Knowledge gained during the pandemic led to the awareness of unethical production and promoted the need to vet brands and their efforts to sustainability. Another participant shared, “I work for a big fashion retailer, and prior to covid I was always on trends ... Now, I’m no longer into that. I always dislike fast fashion jewelry because they cause environmental problems in waste sites.” Another emerging adult shared, “clothing to me is a necessity. I try to minimize my impact on the environment.” Therefore, participants aimed to minimize and prevent environmental degradation.

Due to these concerns, emerging adults found it significant to be a part of the movement of sustainability. They worked towards sustainable efforts which included utilizing clothing in their wardrobe efficiently as opposed to purchasing more. This discourse shaped the subtheme reusing wardrobe. One participant remarked “I ... would just stick to what i [*sic*] already got and rotate among them.” Another participant garnered a new perspective on their clothes. In this participant’s view, “(the pandemic) made me think more about the versatility of clothing, and not necessarily [*sic*] having staying in and going out clothes separate.” Participants expressed increased gratitude for their clothing. This is apparent here: “clothing was almost important to me ... I still very much value what I have & I’m grateful.” One participant summarized the pandemic’s impact on their relationship with clothing and sustainability:

covid totally shifted the things that i [*sic*] have found important about clothes. i [*sic*] gained my own sense of style through the pandemic, started focusing on my consumption, ... taking more sustainable practices into my fashion(such as sewing and reusing or restyling pieces of my relatives).

As the pandemic had made sustainability more significant, clothing habits shifted in which participants discussed turning to slow and ethical fashion. This is captured in the third subtheme sustainable purchases. Instead of shopping new fashion, participants shared their endeavors in thrifting during the pandemic. One participant shared “(I) would rather thrift or buy sustainable.” For others that were interested in shopping new attire, it was important that the brand had sustainable means to production and distribution. As expressed here, “it changed my approach to clothes. I also began to seek out more sustainable brands.” Another sustainable practice included purchasing quality clothing for long-term use. A participant described this as:

“I have moved towards buying clothing that lasts longer, doesn't follow as many trends and more for comfort.”

Several important findings emerged on the personal significance of clothing for emerging adults and perceived changes of importance as a result of the pandemic. To some participants, their attire became less significant and their engagement with clothing decreased. To others, the importance of clothing intensified. Some sought comfort in their clothing, while others prioritized fashion and style. Clothing became a tool to cope with external and internal stressors for emerging adults. Clothing improved aspects of one's mental health, such as self-esteem, motivation, body image, and self-concept. Participants also learned about the issues of fast fashion and became dedicated to sustainability practises.

What are the motivations for using fashion as a mood enhancer during the pandemic?

This thematic analysis explored motivations behind clothing use during the peaks of the pandemic. This informs the investigation behind the third research question. A total of 478 responses were reviewed in response to the survey question: “what are your motivations to wear clothing during the peaks of the pandemic?” Several themes and subthemes emerged from the thematic analysis (see Table 7). The top three motivations behind clothing selection included seeking comfort, individuality, and facilitating security and self-confidence. The remainder of the themes included fashion, motivation, camouflage, normalcy, and career.

Table 7*Themes Identified from Motivations for Clothing Use*

Theme (frequency)	Subtheme
Comfort (179)	Warmth Convenience Safety
Security and self-confidence (119)	Promote confidence Enhance self-esteem Style and comfort Positive emotions
Individuality (101)	Expressing and navigating self-concept Ideal self Self-expression Uniqueness
Fashion (98)	Connectedness Exploration Presentability Expressing and refining style
Motivation (49)	Lack of motivation Productivity
Camouflage (37)	Concealing parts Body image
Normalcy (25)	Control Purpose
Career (11)	Professionalism

Comfort.

Comfort resurfaces as a major theme. Almost half of emerging adults cited their motivation to prioritize their comfort during the pandemic. Participants emphasized that due to the restrictions of staying in their homes, they sought out comfortable attire exclusively. One individual noted, “being at home more often, I wanted to be in comfier clothes because I wouldn't be leaving the house and feeling like I should look a certain way.” Many participants did not elaborate on the significance of comfort. One stated their intentions “to be comfy to get through the day.” This expression indicated how comfort helped emerging adults cope with their day. Another individual shared, “I was at home for 4 months straight and saw my backyard and

the grocery store as my outside experience, I would rather be comfortable in my isolation than be fashionable [*sic*] to no-one.” This participant perceived fashion as futile when comfort was necessary. Those that did specify their motivations for favoring comfortable clothing ultimately shaped the three subthemes, which included warmth, convenience, and safety.

Warmth as a subtheme captured responses that emphasized the need and desire to be warm. One individual wrote, “I want to dress warm most of the time.” Warmth was important to participants as working or schooling from home led to extended periods of inactivity and feel cold. This emerging adult shared their experience:

I was a very stressed university student who spent roughly 6 hours on some sort of screen (TV, computer, Tablet) doing homework, zoom calls, endless assignments. Clothing that maximized comfort as I was in one area/position for most of the day was welcome. I also wasn't very activate so I wore a lot of warmer, bulkier clothing as I was cold often.

Emerging adults explained how comfortable attire provided ease and simplified the routine of dressing, forming the subtheme convenience. One individual commented, “I just wanted to wear stuff that was comfortably [*sic*] and easy to access (didn't [*sic*] have to be ironed etc).” This signaled that comfortable clothing did not require additional maintenance. This suggested that comfort lightened the burden of caring for one's clothing. Participants claimed that comfortable clothing also reduced stress. One noted, “comfort was key for peaks of covid because why dress up when you can be comfy and not have to deal with the stress of choosing an outfit.” Individuals also emphasized how comfortable clothing provided the aspect of utility when they were home. This participant wrote, “I worked from home and wanted comfortable clothes to wear and be able to do chores in.”

Safety became the third subtheme, representing how comfort provided a sense of safety to emerging adults. One participant wrote, “the pandemic has caused very high anxiety for me so I wore clothes that made me feel comfortable and safe.” Another reported “putting on a hoodie make [sic] me feel like there is some sense of security.” These statements indicate that emerging adults experienced stress, insecurity, and anxiety during the pandemic. This vulnerability could have facilitated the need for comfort to reduce these experiences. This effect seemed to make participant feel safe within their environments. The concept of comfort translating to safety or security indicated that prioritizing comfort was a result of deeper motivations for emerging adults going beyond convenience and warmth. A few emerging adults cited their motivation “to feel like ... wearing a blanket all the time.” Participants did not elaborate on the meaning of this sensation. Based on the findings, this motivation may be a combination of seeking warmth and safety.

Individuality.

Individuality was the second popular theme in the analysis in which emerging adults shared their motivations to represent parts of their self through clothing. An example is denoted here, “I simply enjoy clothing and most of the time have the intent to represent or express myself the way I want through it.” The participant’s discourse elaborated on ways they felt connected to themselves, and how they achieved a sense of individuality through clothing. This formed the following subthemes: expressing and navigating self-concept, self-expression, aligning with the ideal self, and uniqueness.

Emerging adults expressed motivation to explore, express, and enhance their self-concept. This narrative formed the subtheme expressing and navigating the self-concept. An example is seen in the following quote:

If I'm not leaving the house I dress comfortably, when I leave the house I like to dress in a way that I think is fashionable. So during the pandemic when I wasn't leaving the house I just dressed comfortably but like I was still dressed like me, like it was still pieces that represent me.

This quote indicates how comfort was significant to emerging adults, but dressing was intentional to represent their self-concept. The expression also might have indicated that the participant felt connected to themselves. Representing the self with clothing facilitated cohesiveness. One participant stated the following, “it made me feel better and more cohesively express and understand myself.” This quote highlights the participant’s perceptions of oneness between attire and the self. It also demonstrates how attire became a means to explore the self and comprehend it during the lockdowns.

Self-expression formed as a subtheme based on the motivations emerging adults expressed to communicate an aspect of the self through their attire. Expression encompassed mood. A participant described this as “I use clothes to express myself and my moods.” Participants also shared how emotions were important to communicate. One individual stated, “to outwardly express what I cannot inwardly feel.” This statement purports that this emerging adult struggled to be in touch with their emotions and utilized their clothing to express feelings. One participant described how clothing became an “expression of my internal well-being. Colours are huge. Baggy vs tight clothing. Jewlewry [*sic*].” Therefore, this participant’s perceptions of their mental health was reflected in their attire and affected their dressing choices. This concept was echoed in the responses. As stated here, “my outfits reflected my mental health.” Emerging adults also cited creativity as another aspect of the self they enjoyed expressing. One noted, “clothing was a way to express myself creatively without having to create

things.” Self-expression during the pandemic was therefore an act of bringing out and expressing the internal self.

The Ideal self subtheme represented discourse on clothing as a way for emerging adults to align with their ideal self. A small facet of participants shared their motivations to be the best versions of themselves during the pandemic. This was accomplished reportedly by incorporating clothing to present what they perceive to be their ideal self. One participant expressed “I wanted to become who ive [*sic*] wanted to be.” The lockdown was an opportunity to take ownership of their self and transform into the ideal self. Many repeated the phrase of striving to look “put-together,” which may represent being organized, stylish, competent, and accomplished. The following participant mentioned this motivation, “I usually used clothing to project a put-together image of myself.” Another participant described, “to look my best self. To look ‘put together’ not sloppy.” According to one participant, their image was also a way to exhibit their “personality of excellence.” This facet of the sample increased their appearance management to dress as the ideal self. This implies that achieving the image of the ideal required departing from wearing casual or comfortable clothing as many of their counterparts preferred. As one described avoiding “sloppiness”, the requirement of looking “put together” might have also indicated that a lack of presentation led to feeling inferior.

The final subtheme uniqueness represented participant’s motivation to display the self as unique and distinguishable from others during the pandemic. This was achieved by departing from current trends and embracing one’s style. One emerging adult noted, “I feel like I don’t dress similar to most trendy styles so I use clothing to practice and affirm my individuality.” In this way, participants were honouring their preferences more and emphasizing their sense of self. Participant reported feeling compelled to dress uniquely due to masking protocols. This

emerging adult stated, “I was more motivated to dress well because with masks we all looked the same.” Another emerging adult shared, “since you can’t see faces with masks on, clothing became my best way to show personality.” The data highlights that masking limited self-expression and hid one’s identity. Therefore, emerging adults were motivated to display their unique personas through clothing.

Self-security and self-confidence.

The third popular theme captured the motivation emerging adults expressed to engender self-acceptance, self-assurance, and self-confidence through clothing. The following quote is an example of this motive, “when being isolated at home I still wanted to feel comfortable and confident. Throughout covid I used clothing to make me feel secure, confident, and comfortable.” Subthemes emerged in relation to how clothing enhanced positive perceptions of self, including confidence, self-esteem, style and comfort, and positive emotions.

Promoting confidence through apparel was highly referenced by emerging adults. Individuals shared wanting to feel confident about oneself, as well as have confidence with one’s appearance. One participant expressed, “to be comfortable, in a way that makes me feel good and secure but also to ... make me feel proud and confident about my appearance.” Emerging adults noted the positive effect confidence provided with the right clothing. One shared, “if I am wearing clothes that I feel confident in [*sic*] that will change how I act and feel.” The pandemic had negatively impacted emerging adult’s confidence, explaining why participants were greatly motivated to bolster their confidence. One participant described this as “during the pandemic I went through a period of insecurity as the pandemic impacted my mental health. Fashion helps me regain confidence as it allows me to highlight my best parts.” Another participant echoed this: “to protect myself and boost my weakened self-confidence.” Others emphasized that

confidence was sought for through clothing when going out into the community. A participant wrote, “my motivations are to be comfortable and confident when I leave the house.” The data highlights that emerging adult experienced a weakened confidence during the pandemic and attained a need to enhance it through their attire.

Self-esteem became a subtheme to capture motivations to increase positive perceptions of oneself through clothing. Individuals asserted that clothing enhanced a positive self-regard. One participant wrote, “it made me feel better about myself” and another stated, “I wanted to feel good about myself when the world was so sad.” These expressions imply that participants struggled with their self-esteem during the pandemic. Another emerging adult acknowledged how their attire increased a sense of self-worth. As stated here, “i [*sic*] wanted to feel like i mattered.” Clothing influenced positive perceptions of self and symbolized that their life was significant. The techniques in which emerging adults enhanced their self-esteem through clothing were not divulged. One participant provided a hint, “without others' input or judgement, I needed to be more comfortable with myself. Wearing nice clothes makes that easier.” Nice clothes may signify formal wear, or attire that is deemed beautiful based on the wearer’s perceptions.

Many emerging adults shared their goal to amalgamate style and comfort together. Based on the responses, this was done to enhance their appearance and confidence as well as address the need to be comfortable. This formed its own subtheme. This was communicated in phrases like the following, “I wanted to be comfortable but fashionable” and “to be comfortable yet stylish.” One participant elaborated, “I wore clothing that made me feel or [*sic*] good in terms of style and comfort.” Appearance satisfaction seemed to be important for these participants, as well as demonstrating one’s style. One participant described this as:

I don't think dressing for comfort takes away from looking good. Yes, I dressed mostly for comfort, but I still think I looked presentable. I still wore items that I loved and were my style. However, I love my sweatpants, but I wouldn't feel right going to work in them. Prioritizing comfort and style might have been a medium that allowed emerging adults to achieve multiple motivations, such as remaining comfortable, presentable, gaining confidence, and expressing oneself.

The final subtheme encapsulated the motivation to enhance confidence through positive emotions. Emerging adults reported that positive affect improved their experience during the pandemic. One participant demonstrated this relationship in their statement, “it was a way to [sic] improve my mental health, because when I looked good I felt better.” A popular phrase entered as a response was “look good feel good”, which demonstrates how appearance satisfaction facilitated positive emotions about oneself. In addition to feeling good, other emotions were commonly cited. One participant expressed feeling happiness when combining comfort with their style, “I prefer to be comfortable, but I still want to feel happy in what I'm wearing, hence comfortable yet camp-y casual wear.” Another individual shared, “look good, feel good, have fun dressing up.” Fun may represent multiple types of positive affect that depend on the participant's personal definition, entailing joy, interest, or playfulness (Reis et al., 2017). Therefore, satisfaction with appearance helped participants gain confidence and feel positive emotions.

Fashion.

Fashion was the fourth theme representing emerging adults who reported motivation to wear fashionable clothing during the pandemic. The benefits described by the participants

contributed to the creation of subthemes including connectedness, exploration, presentability, and expressing and refining style.

Emerging adults shared how they sought connection during the pandemic. One participant stated, “in order to escape loneliness and boredom, I [*sic*] wear my clothes and take pictures and videos for social media fun.” Therefore, displaying one’s apparel facilitated online engagement and reduced perceptions of isolation. Individuals also found connection out in the community when wearing fashion. This participant explained “feeling fashionable gave me a way to connect with others. When I wear a trend or fashion style I see online I feel like I am connecting with others in public even if I can't interact with them directly.” A participant discussed their efforts to dress in a way that would facilitate positive reactions from others. One participant shared: “I think to be noticed and complemented on interesting pieces.” Fashion was also acknowledged to be important for group belonging. As expressed here, “I was motivated to use clothing as a form of identity ... to identity with a group.” Emerging adults recognized their limitations in socialization but found fashion as a bridge to connect with others.

The subtheme exploration reappeared as emerging adults shared their motivation to immerse themselves in the world of fashion during the pandemic. Fashion’s element of art was mentioned by a participant, suggesting that clothing was a way to create and be art itself. A participant claimed, “I like the art of clothing and showing that art.” Emerging adults shared experimenting with clothing and styles that were in fashion at the time. One participant explained “I feel like covid 19 gave me a lot of spare time to explore different fashion trends online and while at home doing online classes I [*sic*] was able to experiment with my look more.” As some individuals were simply passing time researching fashion, others challenged their level of comfort with fashion. This is acknowledged by the following participant, “I use

clothes as a medium of expression and to force myself into trying out new things.” As a result of exploring fashion, knowledge of fashion and new styles emerged. This participant emphasized feeling inspired, “trying new things by researching online is so inspiring.”

Despite being confined to their homes during the lockdowns, emerging adults discussed their efforts and eagerness to be fashionable. Participants shared leaving their homes in outfits that departed from comfort and casual wear, representing the subtheme presentability. A participant described this as “the few times I would go out I wanted to dress in what I would consider my most fashionable pieces because it was rare to have an opportunity to go out and it's nicer to wear comfortable clothes around the house.” Leaving the house became a significant occasion for emerging adults and participants expressed wanting to look their best. As stated here, “since I got to go out a lot less, I thought that my appearances should be nicer and more memorable.” One participant argued that being presentable helped them reconnect with the past and feel like their former self. They described, “we were at home all the time - when I did get the chance to go out even to the supermarket, I wanted to feel like before, fashionable, etc.” Therefore, looking one's best was not only exhibiting one's appreciation for fashion, but also connecting to a time before the pandemic where participants were not subject to restrictions. This indicates how clothing was both comforting and nostalgic.

Expressing and refining style was a major motivation during the pandemic for emerging adults, which formed the last subtheme. Participants expressed their dedication to modifying and conveying their style within or outside their homes. Some emerging adults relayed that style had extreme importance to them. This participant asserted, “despite everything i [*sic*] didn't want to lose the part of myself that I was proud of and that to me was my style.” This quote implied that it was necessary for style to be preserved, as it was at risk of being forgotten or lost. In this

context, style was considered a key aspect of self that was a source of pride. The expression also indicates that the pandemic resulted in many losses. Therefore, they needed to protect their style. Participants shared how lockdowns provided multiple advantages to their style development. Social distancing allowed people to refine their style without being noticed or judged. This participant noted, “I wore more boho, eccentric clothing during the pandemic because I knew that less people would see me and I didn't have to worry about how I looked.” Other emerging adults expressed how they adapted their dressing habits to the lockdowns and incorporated their style. One participant shared, “I wanted unique or distinct cuts and patterns that fit with my style that I could wear on walks or at home.”

Camouflage.

There was a facet of emerging adults who expressed their motivation to use clothing for its camouflaging features at home. This discourse shaped the theme camouflage, including subthemes concealing parts, and body image. In the subtheme concealing parts, participants discussed concealing their body or certain parts of their figure. There were multiple explanations as to why emerging adults felt compelled to conceal their bodies. Weight gain was commonly cited among the sample. Participants reported their desire to hide their weight gain from themselves through clothing. One participant explained their motivation: “to wear clothing that suits my current body as my weight fluctuated a lot during the pandemic. My motivations of camouflaging my stomach, yet following the current fashion style became important to me.” Emerging adults reported feeling anxious, insecure, and stressed with their bodies. Camouflaging allowed participants to feel comfortable with themselves, while managing these feelings. This participant shared, “I like to feel comfortable. I'm insecure and want to cover my body.” One participant explained, “by hiding the parts I didn't like and remaining comfortable it helped

decrease the anxiety around me.” Another participant asserted, “I wore clothing during the pandemic as a way to shield parts of myself I did not like, especially because I was anxious about the pandemic and did not need any extra stressors.” Therefore, camouflage prevented further anxiety and reduced the response of stressing about one’s bodily changes.

The second subtheme body image was formed by emerging adult’s discourse on their own bodies. Responses indicated that emerging adults were self-conscious about their body and appearance during the lockdowns. Participants had navigated self-consciousness through camouflaging or dressing in a way that was flattering. One participant expressed, “i [*sic*] was feeling very self conscious in my body so at times it felt nice to buy clothes that suited my body and figure.” Emerging adults shared how their body image affected their desire to dress up. This participant described this effect, “I wear clothes for practicality now, after gaining weight I don’t feel pretty enough to dress nice.” In this context, body image was tied to one’s self-worth and the individual did not feel worthy of wearing “nice” garments. Participants shared negative thoughts and feelings about their figure, which indicated that individuals struggled with their body image. A participant explained, “my mental health was on the decline and my dysphoria was really bad so I didn’t [*sic*] want to look at myself very much.” Both gender dysphoria (appeared six times) and body dysmorphia (appeared twice) were reported among participants. Body dysmorphia is a disorder related to excessive concern and preoccupation of the body (APA, n.d.-a). The responses indicate how emerging adults encountered body consciousness and negative body image during the lockdowns. While it is unknown whether these participants had a low body image previously, one exclaimed that the lockdowns exacerbated their body image indirectly. As mentioned here, “during the pandemic I went through a period of insecurity as the pandemic

impacted my mental health.” This may indicate that poorer mental health resulted in a poorer body image and heightened consciousness.

Most responses reflected negative body image. A few among the emerging adults reported a positive body image as a result of their engagement with clothing. One participant expressed the self-empowering aspect of camouflage:

Clothing and fashion had given me the opportunity to hide what I didn't like about myself physically and to embrace what I liked about myself physically in a way that made me feel comfortable in my own body... Being able to express who I was and feel good about it has greatly impacted my self-confidence.

This quote indicates that clothing assisted this individual in navigating insecurities and improving their body image. Clothing was also reported to provide a sense of safety within one's own body. This is seen in the following expression, “I want to feel safe and comfortable in my own body.” Therefore, camouflaging was necessary for emerging adults who felt unsafe in their bodies. This expression might have represented the experience of individuals with gender dysphoria. The data demonstrates how emerging adults were motivated to use clothing to strengthen their body image.

Normalcy.

Another theme on the motivation to wear clothing during the pandemic was normalcy. Emerging adults reported how attire helped them achieve a sense of normalcy. Normalcy was cited in responses like the following, “I found comfort in getting dressed up in my preferred clothing as it provided a sense of normality during times of distress, when the days felt like they blended together.” This expression indicated how participants felt the pandemic was an unusual and discomfoting time. Clothing provided a semblance of normality in their life. Two

subthemes emerged that were avenues for participants to achieve normality in their lives: control and purpose.

Control as a subtheme represented participants motivations to gain control of their day through their engagement of apparel. Control helped participants instill routines and activities that facilitated perceptions of a normal life. One participant stated how dressing up was a means to prepare for the day ahead. They shared, “getting myself ready and putting on clothes I love makes me feel ready for the day. It also makes me feel more confident.” Preparedness gave emerging adults a sense of control of their mornings and day. It also instilled a routine from pre-pandemic times that enabled normality. Normality is acknowledged by this participant, “it was a form of self-care, normality. Something exciting to do. Fashion is a hobby for me, not just a necessity.” As this individual maintained their self-care rituals in the pandemic, they were able to establish normality and maintain control of beneficial activities. Some participants argued how their attire affected their emotions. One participant noted, “staying in pajamas and loungewear all day when I couldn't leave the house made me feel sluggish and down, so dressing myself up a little bit each day lessened the pandemic blues.” In this context, apparel aided in controlling their levels of “pandemic blues” and buffered the impact of stressors of pandemic. These accounts demonstrate that clothing was effective in gaining control for emerging adults. Participants regained a lifestyle that felt normal and was not entirely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Emerging adults shared how clothing provided a purpose in the days of the lockdown that assisted in facilitating normalcy, which formed the subtheme purpose. According to the responses, the pandemic led to a loss of purpose and clothing was a means to regain it. One participant shared how their attire fulfilled various aspirations. They stated:

I wanted to feel good about myself when the world was so sad. I wanted to feel like my clothes still had purpose and it gave my day a purpose if I could get dressed and the clothes I was wearing made me happy.

In this instance, the participant wanted to utilize their wardrobe effectively to fulfill their clothes' function to be worn. In addition, clothes had also enabled them to set a positive intention for the day and provide a sense of meaning. Furthermore, their attire enhanced their experience as they felt their days were purposeful, facilitating satisfaction. Another form of purpose participants mentioned about their clothing was refining their style. One participant shared "the pandemic was an opportunity to completely redo my style." This expression indicates that emerging adults devoted their time to enhancing their style. This provided participants a direction to during the pandemic. This participant emphasized, "creating a fashion sense to me created a sense of purpose and creativity." Through modifying one's style, individuals felt motivated and dedicated to this task as they might have felt prior to the pandemic. In this way, normalcy was achieved.

Motivation.

Emerging adults reported how clothing effected their motivation during the pandemic. This narrative formed the theme motivation. Two subthemes were created that represented participant's level of motivation: productivity and lack of motivation.

Productivity encapsulated emerging adult's use of apparel to enhance motivation for accomplishing desired goals during the lockdowns. This emerging adult explained this habit, "I liked to dress up and wear nice outfits to feel more like myself and to feel motivated to get work done." Participants ascribed productivity to "nicer" clothing. Dressing up also implied that individuals were not wearing casual or comfortable outfits. Instead, they might have preferred formal clothing to enhance their perceptions of productivity. Emerging adults shared how

imperative dressing up in the morning was. One shared “by getting ready [for the day] I could better accomplish daily tasks and goals.” This morning routine indicated that it would prime the participants to be goal oriented. This orientation is acknowledged in the following quote, “how I present myself, from the way I dress to the way it makes me feels allows me to become motivated throughout the day.” Based on the responses, it was evident that participants found productivity to be very important during the pandemic. This might have demonstrated that emerging adults had many responsibilities to accomplish and that they struggled with motivation, requiring a tool such as clothing. Challenges with motivation is observed in the second subtheme.

Many participants shared feeling little motivation to dress up, which shaped the second subtheme. A facet of emerging adults explained staying at home led to a lack of care for appearance. This is denoted here, “as I was just at home, there was no motivation to dress up and look nice except for when I had online classes that required a camera.” Others emphasized that social distancing and isolation justified the lack of appearance management. One participant shared, “if no one is going to see me, why would I care what I look like? If I go out wearing a mask, no one can tell who I am, so I don't really care what I look like.” Another participant noticed a parallel between their dressing habits and productivity. They stated, “I didn't want to make choices (hence the reduction in clothing) and I was sleeping if not studying anyway. Before I realized it, my clothing just fit my mental image of being stagnant.” Due to associations between productivity and formal clothing, a lack of motivation to dress might have resulted in decreased productivity.

Career.

The final motivation emerging adults reported was related to their careers. During the pandemic, a facet of emerging adults worked remotely needed to dress for work. One participant described, “I worked throughout the whole pandemic as well so often times I was either in work clothes or lounge clothes.” Participants cited wanting to be and look professional, which led to the subtheme professionalism. One individual shared, “I was employed the entire pandemic, so i [sic] had to wear clothing and look professional, but on my days off at home it was less fashion and more comfort.”

In conclusion, emerging adults had several motivations behind their engagement with clothing during the pandemic. The responses provided direction for the research question evaluating what the motivations were for participants using fashion as a mood enhancer. Clothing provided a source of comfort that meant safety, warmth, and security. Participants shared how they utilized attire to enhance their self-concept and bolster confidence. Camouflage was another important function of their garment that enabled people to feel comfortable with their bodies and mitigate insecurities. People shared how their apparel motivated them to be productive. Others expressed how clothing gave them a sense of normalcy and control during the challenging times of the pandemic. Fashion was important to a facet of emerging adults and people remained dedicated to being fashionable within and outside their homes.

How has clothing use impacted mental health during the pandemic?

This thematic analysis explored the effects clothing had on mental health of emerging adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis was conducted on entries to the survey question, “how has clothing impacted your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic?” Several themes were gathered from 369 responses including positive and negative subthemes (see Table 8). Emerging adults conveyed that self-esteem, mood enhancement, and distraction

were the top three positive effects of clothing engagement during the pandemic. The three compelling negative effects clothing had on participants were reportedly self-esteem, self-efficacy, and mood enhancement. The most cited themes entailed self-esteem, mood enhancement, and self-efficacy. Other themes self-congruency, self-empowerment, and hope.

Table 8

Themes Identified on the Impacts of Clothing on Mental Health

Theme (positive theme frequency: negative theme frequency)	Subtheme for Positive Impact	Subtheme for Negative Impact
Self-esteem (80:35)	Self-appreciation Confidence Self-acceptance	Insecurity Lack of choices Weight gain Self-criticism
Mood enhancement (75:11)	Comfort Appearance satisfaction Anticipating purchases Positive affect	Low mood
Self-efficacy (35:22)	Productivity Motivation Competency	Laziness Lack of motivation
Distraction (49:6)	Refocusing Retail therapy Leaving the household	Reminders of the pandemic
Self-congruency (47:8)	Learning about self Cohesion Liberation Individuality	Concealing the self Disconnection
Self-empowerment (23)	Control Enacting change Purpose Routinization	
Hope (12:3)	Shopping Exploring the community Optimism	Lost opportunities Hopelessness

Positive Impacts to Self-Esteem.

Emerging adults expressed that certain clothing had a positive effect on their self-esteem which consequently improved their mental health. As indicated in the responses, clothing gave an opportunity to reflect and embrace oneself. This experience facilitated three positive subthemes: self-acceptance, self-confidence, and/or self-appreciation.

The first subtheme represented participants who gained self-acceptance around their style and dressing preferences. This is apparent in this quote: “I guess I became more comfortable not caring about what others think about my clothing.” Honouring these unique preferences had facilitated an approval of self. A participant described this as “being able to dress how I want has drastically improved my life. My style has helped me ... better accept my identity.” One participant shared how clothing nurtured a sense of belonging:

When I was younger and my family couldn't afford all the clothing that I have now, I used to get my clothing from discount stores. ... now I wear "acceptable" clothing in order to fit in and engage with people. Social interaction hasn't always been great for me since I am an immigrant (it was difficult to adjust to a completely different country) and clothing was/still is a way for me to connect with the culture here and feel like I belong. In this context, the participant changed their clothes to adjust to a new culture. Despite encountering a major change and a new environment, clothing aided in accepting one's differences, while feeling self-acceptance and belonging amongst others.

According to emerging adults, clothing assisted in bolstering self-confidence during the pandemic. This shaped the second subtheme self-confidence. One participant acknowledged, “it is true ... (that) people act more confidently when they are wearing clothes that make the(m) feel confident.” Participants shared having greater self-confidence when they enjoyed their

appearance. One individual noted, “when I finally could go outside, I always tried to dress up ... it felt nice to have some change in my daily life & it helped me be more confident.” Another individual stated, “sometimes wearing clothes at night time that i [sic] liked made me feel confident especially when i [sic] went all out and did my make up.” Attire that facilitated confidence varied and relied on the wearer’s perceptions. One participant defined it as formal wear, “being able to wear non casual items increased confidence.” Another individual expressed that freedom in dressing facilitated confidence. This is emphasized here: “being able to dress how I want has drastically improved my life...” Cute clothing was also cited, “dress cute, look cute, actually feel cute = confidence boost.” As a result of gaining confidence, emerging adults had greater self-assurance. This participant acknowledged, “I learned ... to be confident in what I wear even if it may look weird.” Participants also shared their newfound confidence in trying fashion styles. For instance, “clothing was always something that positively effected my mental health cause [sic] it would make me feel confident I finally gained the confidence to decide i [sic] can be fashionable.” Therefore, emerging adults were able to enhance their confidence through apparel and this bolstered mental health.

The subtheme self-appreciation encapsulated emerging adults who found clothing to facilitate gratitude for one’s appearance. A common sentiment observed in the responses included feeling better or good about oneself as a result of one’s attire. One participant explained, “clothing helped me feel control over my life, it also helped me to feel better about my life and self.” Another noted, “(the) better I dress the better I feel about myself.” This quote highlighted that self-appreciation was contingent on dressing up. Clothing was cited generally, while one participant spoke on style. They stated, “being able to create and master my style

meant ... appreciating my appearance.” Therefore, clothing and style led to self-appreciation and improved wellbeing in emerging adults.

Negative Impacts to Self-Esteem.

In contrast, other emerging adults shared that their self-esteem diminished due to clothing. This will be expanded with four negative subthemes: weight gain, lack of choices, insecurity, and self-criticism. Participants reported “weight gain and it was very hard to accept.” This led to having clothes that no longer flattered or accommodated their shape. As a result, participants indicated feeling disappointed about themselves. One wrote, “I [*sic*] gained a bit of weight in the pandemic and clothes that made me feel big made me unsatisfied with myself.” Another shared, “I feel like i [*sic*] gained a bit weight so trying to fit into clothes without feeling bad about my body.” Weight gain made individuals feel guilty and displeased with their bodies. As a result, body image and self-esteem were impacted. In addition to weight gain, participants expressed dissatisfaction with their clothing.

The next subtheme, lack of choices, captured responses on how emerging adults did not have access to favourable clothing. This affected the participant’s self-esteem negatively. One participant shared difficulties finding plus-sized clothing. The inability to wear clothing that aligned with their style and flattered their figure contributed to low self-esteem. They detailed their experience as follows:

Aside from no longer wearing my religious garb, I also gained weight during the pandemic and outgrew all my clothes. Plus-sized clothing options are extremely restricted and I can no longer find the clothing that fits my tastes. I now dress in whatever fits regardless of how it makes me feel which has hampered my self-esteem.

Another individual shared financial limitations to accessing clothes. As participant shared:

Realized I was trans, and felt deeply uncomfortable wearing most of the clothing (largely feminine) that I owned. I've tried to get clothes I'd be more comfortable in, but I don't have the money to buy everything I'd like to.

The quotes demonstrate the obstacles emerging adults encountered to owning preferred attire. Despite their desire to dress up, they were unable to and had to settle for clothing they owned. This made them feel uncomfortable and insecure. This is also evident in the following quote, “(I) struggle(d) to find clothes that help me feel physically and mentally good.” The data indicates that clothing indirectly effected body image and mental health.

Emerging adults reported losing confidence and self-assurance over the lockdown due to a dissatisfaction with their clothing which formed the subtheme insecurity. Participants shared that the lockdowns were another obstacle in dressing better. This limitation led to greater insecurity in oneself. One individual described this as “I feel better when I get ready (dress up, makeup, hair, etc.) and during Covid I could not do that which negatively impacted my confidence and overall mental health.” Another stated, “I didn't feel attractive since I wasn't able to dress up and look good. Being home most of the time made me sad and less confident.” Participants also noted that the fit of clothing was a factor to this relationship. One participant explained, “I had to go out and shop so that I had loose fitting clothing. Previous clothing became snug or tight and it made me feel insecure.” Participants reported feeling especially self-conscious of their ensemble during the pandemic. One remarked “I was more aware of my clothing choices and critiqued how I looked in them excessively.” Another participant described their experience:

As I am already unstable, clothing had more of a negative effect on my mental health big [sic] I was already in a bad space. E.g., if I felt bad about myself, I may perceive clothing as making me seem more unflattering than usual.

This expression highlights how poor mental health might have exacerbated their self-consciousness and made them more susceptible to insecurity.

Emerging adults also reported that their discontentment with clothing led to self-criticisms, the final subtheme. Participants reported that wearing casual and comfortable apparel increased self-criticisms. Laziness and sloppiness were repeated terms in the responses. One person detailed, “I felt like not needing to get dressed caused me to feel sloppy and lazy. If I didn't go anywhere it would make me feel bad never getting out of pj's after about a month or so.” Another participant shared, “not dressing well made me feel like a slob.” The data indicates that attire was linked to one's value and worth. As explained by this participant, “I mostly wore comfortable clothes longer than normal, and so it would make me feel extremely useless some days. But other times I felt okay.” In this context, comfortable clothing led to criticisms and perceptions of little worth. The following participant suggested that their self-esteem impacted their dressing habits:

I was unconcerned with my clothing since I shut myself off. I didn't make a conscious choice/thought to dress that way (e.g. I didn't think, "I'm going to wear grey and live in t shirt and sweat pants because I don't deserve anything"), it just happened. Clothing didn't add anything to my life, but it certainly settled me into the home that I've dug for myself.

This quote underlines the complex relationship between clothing and self-esteem. The participant's clothing seemed to mirror the thought “I don't deserve” to wear “nicer” clothing. Therefore, their thoughts of unworthiness led to decreased appearance management. This may

indicate that participants who rarely dressed up during the pandemic might have been affected by their self-esteem and possessed similar thoughts of unworthiness. In conclusion, participants linked greater self-criticisms because of their apparel, negatively affecting their mental health.

Positive Impacts to Mood Enhancement.

Emerging adults commonly described how clothing enhanced their mood effectively. Various reasons were shared on how clothing achieved improved moods, this formed the following subthemes: comfort, appearance satisfaction, anticipating purchases, and positive affect.

Emerging adults reported how comfort enhance their mood. One individual wrote: “I would be comforted by my cloths [*sic*] choice as I would be at home more so comfort was key to my good mental health.” Another instance of comfort’s positive impact is shared here: “(clothing) just helped me feel comfortable when stuck at home, and comfort helped improve my mood at times.” A participant claimed that seeking comfort was a coping mechanism during their experience. They said, “I would wear more comfortable clothes as a coping mechanism, or put on something special to feel good.” Emerging adults did not elaborate on the significance of comfort with exception to one participant. This individual explained, “wearing my cozy and familiar clothes can provide [*sic*] a grounding effect facing the anxieties of life. It's not so much about the look of the clothes as their feel and familiarity.” Therefore, comfortable clothing was a grounding tool to enhance mood and wellbeing.

Individuals shared how satisfaction with one’s clothing and appearance also aided in lifting mood. This shaped the second subtheme. Despite the challenges of the lockdown, participants noted how fashionable outfits elicited a positive mood. One shared, “I didn't think much about my clothes. I am not super attached to them, but I do love the way I feel when I am

wearing an outfit that is stylish.” Participants did not elaborate on the specific styles of clothing that enhanced their mood. One participant expressed, “the right clothing can make me feel good, so I pursued better clothing to achieve that feeling.” The description “better clothing” suggests that the garments needed to be formal, or fashionable. Another emerging adult asserted, “for me feeling good and looking good correlate, so if I could make myself look nice I had a happier mind.” This quote demonstrates the requirement of “looking nice” to bolster their mood, insinuating that their appearance had to be improved by their apparel. As indicated by the data, emerging adults evaluated their attire carefully and dressed intentionally to achieve a better mood. It remained unknown exactly how much effort was needed in dressing to achieve an effect on mood. Based on the responses, the process of enhancing mood through clothing is entirely personal. One participant reported “I feel better when I get ready (dress up, makeup, hair, etc.).” Another stated, “if I did put any effort into what I was wearing it improved my mood.” These quotes confirm how clothing’s effect on mood varied. For some emerging adults, the slightest effort in dressing was impactful. Others required additional grooming such as makeup and hairstyling. In conclusion, clothing affected mood and improved the perception of wellbeing among participants during the pandemic.

Individuals also reported feeling positive emotions when shopping for clothing online and waiting for the product to be shipped to their home. This phenomenon formed the subtheme anticipating purchases. Excitement and happiness were common feelings cited. One participant stated, “I don’t think clothing was the source of any mental health changes. Except for the excitement of a new package arriving!” It was shared that “new clothes can help uplift mood, give you something to look forward to, etc.” It is evident that positive moods improved emerging adult’s experiences during the pandemic. However, participants reported that the boost from

receiving new clothing was not a lasting effect on mood. A participant explained, “online shopping made me happy, receiving the clothing was a serotonin boost, have no where [sic] to wear it dampe(ne)d my mood.” Another stated, “it made me feel happy recieving [sic] a package and havkgn [sic] a package to look forward to, but that lasted like 30 seconds before i [sic] was lonely and depressed again.” Positive moods were seemingly affected by reminders of living in a pandemic. This topic is elaborated on as a subtheme under the theme negative impacts of distraction.

For others, clothing was a source of enjoyment that facilitated mental health through positive emotions and mood. This was achieved by the simple engagement/dressing of garments. Repeated terms in this narrative included happiness and fun. One participant reported that self-styling and planning outfits elicited positive affect. They wrote, “during the pandemic there were days when I'd just do dress up or outfit planning and that was a source of joy for me and positivity impacted my mental health.” Another participant shared their excitement of searching for clothing. They stated, “finding clothes that I like and fit me well makes me happy.” Viewing clothing online was reported to have a positive effect. One individual noted, “there were often times where I face turbulence in life, and I do find myself much more at peace when I scroll and browse on clothing sites it uplifts my mood and helps me feel at ease.” Therefore, emerging adults engaged with clothing strategically to enhance their mood and facilitate positive emotions. This improved their experience during the pandemic as well as benefitted their mental health.

Negative Impacts to Mood Enhancement.

Participants reported that certain types of clothing became a source of low mood that negatively impacted their mental health. Despite comfortable clothing being a mood enhancer to others, prolonged wear of comfortable wear and sleepwear had negative consequences. A

participant described this effect in the following quote, “I found that the way I dressed throughout isolation would affect my mood. If I didn't put a lot of effort into how I looked I would feel like garbage.” Another emerging adult reported “I was not getting out of pajamas/comfy clothing and struggled with mental health. I felt as though those clothes had a part in it.” These participants shared how clothing felt linked to their negative mood and mental health. One individual shared, “the clothes I wore were out of necessity, and I felt that they brought my mood significantly down and I felt worse.” Although it is unclear what the participant deemed as necessary, it is possible they referred to comfortable clothing as the data indicated many emerging adults preferred this type of clothing and viewed it as a necessary to cope with the pandemic. As a result of prioritizing comfort, it appears that emerging adults sacrificed their mood and mental health.

Positive Impacts from Distraction.

Emerging adults reported the stressors of the pandemic and how clothing offered a distraction. Many expressed that distraction supported their mental wellbeing. The following quote illustrates this:

The lockdowns made me hate the outside world. Social media was my main source of information and the world seemed so bleak and dark. Clothing became a way for me to distract myself into changing a small part of my life for the better.

Several subthemes were formed to depict reported techniques of distraction: refocusing, retail therapy, and leaving the household.

Refocusing represents how emerging adults shifted their attention from the pandemic to one's clothes. One participant described this as “(clothing) helped me keep busy and think about things other than covid.” Participants kept their mind occupied on their attire which provided

great benefits. One participant shared, “I think continuing to pay attention to my clothing helped me remain comfortable and feel like some things were still normal.” Another reported, “paying attention to clothing and ... choices was a way to escape the stress of the pandemic.” Distraction facilitated normalcy for some, and escape for others. Both diverted emerging adults away from thinking about their stressors. Distraction also enhanced mood. One reported, “I was able to keep myself occupied, as well as making [*sic*] myself feel better through my clothing.” The need to divert attention away from the pandemic suggests that life during the lockdowns were a stressful event for emerging adults. It also indicates that participants felt overwhelmed and needed to separate from their stressful thoughts. According to the responses, refocusing greatly benefitted the participant’s mental health. As stated here, “I found clothing improved my mental health, as it gave me an escape from the mundane day to day during covid lockdown.”

According to emerging adults, “shopping gave ... a distraction” from the pandemic. These responses formed the subtheme retail therapy. A participant described how shopping was helpful. They shared, “it gave me something to focus on. Its [*sic*] rewarding collecting certain clothing, espically [*sic*] in such a small community as the ouji/lolita fashion community.” Participants with a specific fashion style seemingly utilized the pandemic to gain specific ensembles and participate in their communities. Not only was this process enjoyable, it diverted them away from thinking about the pandemic. Another participant described, “[clothing] made me excited and gave me something to look forward to (waiting for clothes to come in the mail, learning to make my own clothes).” Therefore, the experience of waiting for their purchases prolonged this distraction and benefited their wellbeing.

Participants also reported that dressing up and departing one's residence helped to divert their attention away from the pandemic. This informed the final subtheme leaving the household.

An example is provided here:

During the height of the pandemic when you couldn't do much it was fun to dress up a bit even when going for a simple walk or grab a coffee to go. Made it feel more special, like some sort of outing or activity.

This participant demonstrated how the activity of leaving the house in formal clothing became a meaningful event. It allowed emerging adults to feel a sense of normalcy despite all the restrictions they were still subjected to. This is seen in the following quote:

During online school / working from home phases, when i [*sic*] did actually get to leave the house, it always felt nice dressing up, matching mask to outfit, being able to still feel like a functioning human being during tough times.

This quote captures how clothing facilitated the sense of being a “functioning human being” by leaving the house in formal clothing. This implies that as dressing habits changed during the lockdowns, emerging adults felt their functioning capacity declined which made them feel not human. In addition, clothing aided in distracting participants from these thoughts, and facilitated the experience of being human again. The final example demonstrates how the distraction of outings decreased perceptions of stress and positively impacted mental health:

The pandemic was stressful for me just like everyone. I don't think my style or clothings [*sic*] changed because of it, but it was nice when we got to go out of our residence after a long time. And, [*sic*] it was a realization that clothings [*sic*] can effect [*sic*] our mental state.

Negative Impacts from Distraction.

Distraction supported a facet of emerging adults in coping with the pandemic. However, other participants reported instances where clothing recentered attention to the pandemic. This narrative shaped the subtheme reminders of the pandemic. Some participants shared no interest in shopping as they felt it was futile to own clothes they could not wear. One explained, “I also felt lackluster even online shopping for clothing because it was pointless to buy more clothes when I was just sitting at home wearing t-shirts [*sic*] and sweatpants everyday.” Those that purchased clothing were reminded that the lockdown provided no opportunity to display this attire. A participant noted, “online shopping made me happy, receiving the clothing was a serotonin boost, have no where [*sic*] to wear it dampe(ne)d [*sic*] my mood.” Not having the ability to display one’s clothing hampered the mood enhancing effect of clothing. One participant described, “by dressing nicely, my mood improves slightly, but not as much because there wasn't much opportunity to express oneself during the lockdown.” As seen in the responses, clothing reminded emerging adults about the COVID-19 pandemic and their lack of control. This negatively impacted participant’s mental health as it affected their ability to cope with clothing and gain the positive benefits of dressing up. One participant stated: “I liked when I could go out wearing something I liked, even if just for a walk. But dressing up nicely to just stay inside made me even more depressed about not being able to go out.” Therefore, clothing had the opposite effect which negatively effected mental health.

Positive Impacts to Self-Congruency.

The theme self-congruency encapsulates the efforts emerging adults underwent to align their self-concept, values, and personality with clothing. This was reported to be very beneficial to mental wellbeing. The process of self-congruency and its positive effects found in the

responses formulated the following subthemes: learning about the self, cohesion, individuality, and liberation.

Participants shared that they engaged in self-reflection while utilizing their clothing. This discussion led to the subtheme learning about the self. An individual described this as follows, “it (clothing) helped to give me something to focus on and learn about myself.” Another participant commented “I was able to explore who i [*sic*] was.” Clothing therefore became more than an object, but an extension of self, and a means to study oneself. According to the following participant, this experience was brought on by greater self-expression through attire. As stated here, “(I) expressed myself in solitude and found out more of my personality.” As a result, participants reported a change. One participant noted “(I) start(ed) [*sic*] feeling more myself.” Another emerging adult echoed this feeling: “it just made me feel all put together, like I found myself.” This expression of finding oneself is a powerful one as it represents self-discovery. But also, there is an element of coming into being, materializing or awakening the self through clothing.

Exploration and self-understanding led to the subtheme cohesion. Cohesion represented emerging adults who experimented with style to amplify their self-concept. One participant shared, “being able to create and master my style meant that I could express myself at the same time appreciating [*sic*] my appearance.” Individuals reported achieving a unity between one’s apparel and self. One wrote, “my clothing became apart [*sic*] of who I was and what I wanted to represent.” Cohesion impacted mood. A participant explained, “my mood was improved when I [*sic*] wore clothing that expressed my identity around the house rather than what was most comfortable.” This quote indicates that emerging adults might have experienced poor moods when their identity was not reflected in their clothing. This will be elaborated on under the

heading negative impacts from a lack of self-congruency. The data so far indicates how emerging adults worked towards congruity between clothing and the self which benefitted mental health. One participant shared their experience in creating an identity as opposed to aligning their current identity with their ensemble:

Clothing was huge during my identity crisis lol in 2021! It was a time where I would shop multiple times a week to try to create the identity i've [*sic*] always dreamed of expressing through my clothing. Feeling like i [*sic*] belong in my clothing and as if it is an expression of self effects [*sic*] my mental health in the best way as it helps me feel as I belong and I am true to self.

In this context, clothing assisted greatly in mending the participant's identity crisis. This individual worked towards a version of self that they "dreamed of", which can be referred to as the ideal self. This further confirms the previously mentioned finding that clothing aided emerging adults in representing the best version of self.

Emerging adults also spoke on the importance of demonstrating a "sense of individuality" in their style. Participants in this subtheme shared the desired to demonstrate their identity and display their uniqueness. The advent of the pandemic required protective dressing and masking that covered faces (and identities). This motivated participants to display their self. One individual explained, "since you can't see faces with masks on, clothing became my best way to show personality." Since a facet of participants leaned toward comfort which covered bodies and exhibited less of an individual's identity, this also might have driven participants to value and exhibit their identity more. Seeking individuality is seen in this participant's account:

Covid brought a lot of confusion, division, and craziness among people politically, racially, and based around gay and transgender rights. Media was volatile and social

media was a mess, there was a lot of race bashing due to major events. Due to all the prejudices I witnessed through media I felt a push to make myself individual and not just be lumped into any given group.

This emerging adult aimed in demonstrating aspects of their identity through clothing to stand in solidarity with others, and express opposition to movements of prejudice. The experience of cultural upheaval motivated this, which may indicate that individuality honoured parts of the self, such as their values of justice and compassion.

The subtheme liberation captured emerging adult's narrative that expressing one's style and self engendered a sense of freedom. Some participants emphasized that they were liberated from dressing norms and judgement to explore styles. With greater privacy from the pandemic, participants reported feeling less intimidated by engaging with fashion. One individual explained, "more comfortable branching out into different types of clothing as there was no one to judge." Another participant described, "I started to feel more free when it came to clothings [sic] and dressing up." Emerging adults gained confidence after achieving cohesion and were less concerned about the opinions of others. One account stated, "I [sic] now dress how i [sic] want to dress, without worrying as much as how other people perceive me for wearing clothes that weren't as widely perceived as being socially acceptable (sweatpants and crocs for example)." Liberation from clothing benefitted mental health:

Before the pandemic, not knowing who I was and not knowing how to express myself, I found myself in a depressive state more often. Once I started to experiment with clothes and figure out what I liked it had brought me out of a depressive state more than other activities would which had positively [sic] impacted my mental health.

Negative Impacts to Self-Congruency.

A facet of participants shared how their clothing promoted incongruency with their self-concept and this negatively affected mental health. This discourse informed two negative subthemes: concealing the self and disconnection.

The subtheme concealing the self represented the negative impact emerging adults reported after covering their body and not expressing their style. This was a contributing factor to incongruency between clothing and the self. The following participant shared their struggles to wear preferred styles due to their mental state and a lack of confidence. After repeatedly wearing attire that did not represent the self, they reported a major impact to their mental health:

I dress very sloppily because I feel depressed, but if I try to wear the style of clothing I like I feel awkward and embarrassed. In the end i [sic] feel more depressed and dress in clothes that are oversized and cover me, especially clothes that hide my form so that you can't tell my gender. Covid-19 continued this habit but to an even worse extent because I didn't go outside, which meant I didn't have to try and look presentable at all.

In this context, being unable to express one's style and gender worsened their experience. This account also suggests that when emerging adults did not dress in their style, concealed their bodies, and limited self-expression, their mental health was affected. This relationship is also seen in the following quote:

Since I wasn't able to wear clothes that I felt most comfortable in, clothing had a mildly negative effect on my mental health because I was being put down because of what I wore, and only wearing more comfortable, bigger clothing.

This participant further supports the consequences of lacking clothing-self congruency. It also depicts the consequences of emerging adults who lived in critical environments that limited their journey of exploring styles and expressing the self.

Covering, or not having access to clothing that aligned with their self-concept had consequences. Emerging adults reported general discomfort and a disconnection with the self. One individual noted, “not being able to afford the clothing you truly want makes me feel like I can't be myself.” The participant’s experience illustrates how the wrong style of clothing can become a major obstacle to self-congruency. Another participant presented this experience, “as my body changed the clothes I had didn't reflect who I was anymore creating a negative relationship.” A misalignment between clothing and self-concept led to a loss of identity for one participant. They wrote, “I felt that I lost my sense of identity briefly during the lockdown.” These quotes demonstrate the negative consequences of lacking clothing that effectively represented the self. The inability to connect with oneself led to negative relationships with clothing and the self. Such experiences can bring on crises with identity and negatively impact mental health.

Positive Impacts to Self-Efficacy.

Emerging adults shared how their apparel had a positive influence on their self-beliefs and goal achievement. These participants discussed their dedication to dress in a manner that made them feel capable and constructive during the pandemic. This discourse formed the theme of self-efficacy. The subthemes included productivity, motivation, and competency.

Emerging adults shared how their clothing increased their productivity and this benefited their wellbeing. One participant shared their routine of dressing up daily. They noted, “it was an integral part of getting ready for the day. ... Getting dressed helped me to avoid unnecessary stress from being unproductive.” This quote implies that unproductivity was a stressor for emerging adults. Clothing thereby helped participants avoid stress and increased their confidence to be productive. Another participant explained, “deciding to wear normal or even semi-formal

clothing to zoom meetings helped me to feel better about myself and more productive.” Other responses indicated that formal clothing took away from productivity. As described here, “wearing comfortable clothes with no care of how they looked allowed me to allocate energy to tasks that needed it, rather than going throughout my day being uncomfortable and distracted because of how my clothes felt.” Therefore, emerging adults had different preferences in apparel and dressed accordingly in order to have greater self-efficacy during the pandemic.

Emerging adults shared how dressing up provided them motivation to be productive. This discourse shaped the second subtheme motivation. Clothing facilitated interest and motivation in the tasks participants had to complete. One participant expressed, “I worked from home during the pandemic, but I always tried to dress in a business casual way to make myself feel motivated about the work I was doing.” This participant inputted extra effort in dressing to bolster their motivation. This routine may indicate that the pandemic negatively influenced their motivation, burdening emerging adults and their mental health. Clothing assisted in engendering interest and perhaps inspiration to their work that improved their experience. This is further supported in the following quote, “I believe it had a mild effect because getting ready for the day ensured that I started out the day strong when I did not get ready it resulted in a lesser quality of a day.” In this context, motivation is demonstrated to have a lasting and positive effect when the participant dressed up in the morning. It also improved the general experience of the day. The data highlights that emerging adults gained motivation from their attire that enhanced their self-efficacy and mental health.

The final subtheme competency represented emerging adult’s reports that clothing bolstered their perceptions of self-competency. A participant stated, “I was dealing with severe depressive episodes. Dressing up would get my mind off of it and help me feel more competent.”

This quote indicates that completing the task of creating an outfit provided a semblance of achievement. This helped the participant cope with their depression by gaining a sense of competency. Dressing was recognized to be an achievement by multiple participants. One individual shared, “at the height of Covid, I was leaving the house maybe once every two weeks, with a mask on. The only control I had was my clothes and I could feel like I accomplished something.” Clothing facilitated a belief of self-competency that in turn facilitated motivation and productivity. One participant explained “it (clothing) made me feel like I could do the tasks in a day. That putting myself together could trick my mind into positive things like goals and productivity.” The data indicates that clothing was used to enhance self-efficacy, positively impacting self-beliefs and their mental health.

Negative Impacts to Self-Efficacy.

A facet of participants encountered a negative impact to their self-efficacy based on their clothing choices which negatively affected their mental health. These responses shaped the two subthemes: lack of motivation and laziness.

Emerging adults who were predominantly wearing casual and comfortable attire fell into these subthemes. As a result, participants shared feeling unmotivated during the pandemic. This individual observed, “if clothing fit or if it was all baggy hoodies and stuff (I) felt more tired and done with the day.” This participant expressed feeling “done with the day”, which can mean they were frustrated and overwhelmed sooner in the day. It may also indicate they refused to continue engaging or attempting to completing tasks. Another participant mentioned tiredness. As stated here, “maybe it just made me feel more lazy, tired [*sic*] and less motivated.” One participant reported their clothing made them feel apathetic. They mentioned, “when I didn't dress in something professional, I often felt unmotivated and apathetic.” As a result, these emerging

adults reported feeling less productive and fatigued. Participants suggested that a lack of motivation from clothing led to feeling incapable of completing goals. One individual wrote, “when i [sic] dress in only comfy clothes such as sweats and a hoodie i [sic] dont [sic] feel as confident or productive.” Another participant observed an opposite effect in which their motivation altered their dressing habits. They noted, “struggling to get dressed everyday [sic] during the pandemic to do nothing affected me a bit negatively.” The participant’s clothing negatively affected their self-efficacy through low motivation during the lockdowns. Reports of feeling tired, overwhelmed, and unmotivated also demonstrate how clothing affected their mental health.

Emerging adults used the term lazy commonly to express the effects of their clothing. Laziness became a subtheme due to this repetition. Participants detailed the types of clothing and habits that led to describing oneself as lazy. One participant explained, “because I was not changing clothes or wearing anything that wasn't loungewear, it didn't make me feel like my life was very put together and I felt like I was just lazy because of it to a certain extent.” Another individual shared, “I chose to wear pajamas a lot so I felt lazier.” This data indicates that wearing informal clothing and repeating outfits led to this self-criticism. One individual emphasized how this effect worsened mental health. They stated, “I dressed lazy during COVID, which made me feel lazy when the world was in a hard place, which made my mental health become negatively affected.” Therefore, emerging adults felt lazy as a result of their simplified dressing habits and comfortable clothing. This lowered their self-efficacy and mental health.

Self-Empowerment.

Emerging adults reported how clothing engagement was an avenue in executing personal responsibility in their life. This facilitated self-empowerment and participants shared how it

positively impacted their mental health. Several subthemes were created based on techniques participants shared to empower themselves: control, enacting change, and purpose.

Clothing became a tool to maintain control over one's life and environment, and this discourse formed the subtheme control. One participant explained, "the clothing I bought or wore had a positive impact on me every day. It gave me a sense of control and a creative outlet."

A participant described why this control was necessary:

It made me feel like i [*sic*] was in control of something, during the pandemic a lot of things were out of anyone's control and we were all being told what to do but with my clothing i [*sic*] at least had that.

The areas of life that participants used clothing to gain control over varied. One participant shared, "the pandemic made me more aware than ever of the internal unrest I have inside, but fashion helped me to exercise a sense of control and expression in my life." In this context, internal unrest may represent discomfort, restlessness, unhappiness, and being activated or triggered. Thus, clothing aided in managing this participant's unrest. Another participant shared, "clothing / picking out clothes gave me something to do and the fact that I can control this aspect of my life gave me something to look forward to." This emerging adults used clothing to create routine and offer a source of recreation. A participant also shared how maintaining their daily routine to dress up helped control their life and schedule. They noted, "during the pandemic, the habit of dressing myself for the day helped me maintain grounding rituals (maintain control) in a lifestyle that was completely altered from my usual and felt out of my hands." Evidently, the pandemic was a tumultuous time where emerging adults felt little to no control of their lives. Self-empowerment through clothing aided their perceptions of control in their life and improved their mental health.

Participants shared that through changing their style, outfit, or clothes, they gained the ability to modify their environments or selves. This narrative is captured in the subtheme enacting change. The following participant exemplified this ability:

The lockdowns made me hate the outside world. Social media was my main source of information and the world seemed so bleak and dark. Clothing became a way for me to distract myself into changing a small part of my life for the better.

To improve their experience, this emerging adult utilized their attire to achieve change in life when their control was very limited. Participants detailed how they met specific personal needs through change. One participant shared, “I challenged myself to draw attention to myself in order to combat social anxiety, and I did so by dressing how I wanted. Now I'm much more comfortable around people.” In this instance, clothing was used to decrease social anxiety and gain confidence in self. Another stated, “getting dressed instead of staying in PJs all day made me feel less bad.” This quote represents participants who used clothing to improve their emotions and mood, which are recognized subthemes. The data highlights how emerging adults felt empowered by clothing and used clothing as a tool for self-empowerment. Empowerment led to enacting change to facilitate self-growth or to improve their experiences during the pandemic. Both outcomes benefitted their mental health.

The subtheme purpose represented emerging adults who found that clothing provided them purpose, facilitating self-empowerment. This is acknowledged in the following quote, “clothing gave me more purpose and control during a time that felt like I had none.” Participants made meaning of their attire that gave them a direction in their daily life. One individual shared:

Dressing in new and fun ways was one of the only things that kept me going. Same with my various creative outlets. My mental health was terrible during the pandemic, but those things helped me feel some sense of purpose and normalcy.

The participant reported that their mental health was suffering, implying that the pandemic had a significant negative impact on them. The quote also indicates that they felt life was purposeless. However, clothing offered a purpose of supporting oneself and finding joy in their daily life through their outfits. This provided them power over their feelings and experience. Another emerging adult acknowledged this experience, “clothing has always improved my mental health and dressing up during lockdown gave me purpose.” The data illustrates how clothing provided emerging adults purpose during the pandemic and this improved their mental health.

Positive Impacts from Hope.

Emerging adults described how clothing symbolized better experiences to come. This positive orientation during a challenging pandemic enhanced their mental health. These responses generated the theme hope. Several subthemes emerged that helped to facilitate hope, including optimism, shopping, and exploring the community.

A few participants shared how clothing provided a source of optimism for the future. One participant expressed, “I felt that clothing was a way for me to think past the current situation and about the future instead.” Another wrote, “it gave me something to look forward to- even if I was alone.” These statements highlight that clothing gave hope and confidence that life will improve. An individual shared why optimism was impactful. They observed, “optimism during hard times made me stronger.” The data indicates that emerging adults perceived attire as a symbol of hope, as well as utilized attire to maintain optimism for the future.

Shopping was also reported to increase hope. One emerging adult wrote, “the clothes I bought online increased my dopamine and gave me something to look forward to when I could not attend school or see my friends.” The quote demonstrates how hope overshadowed the lockdown restrictions and the inability to engage with peers. Individuals also discussed purchasing and collecting nice outfits in anticipation to wear them when lockdowns were lifted. A participant acknowledged, “I never stopped shopping for clothes during Covid and I became excited for restrictions to lift so I could wear the new clothes I bought.” New apparel gave hope for enjoyable future experiences. Shopping also engendered hope that restrictions will eventually lift, and the pandemic will cease. These accounts underline that clothing provided hope for emerging adults that assisted them during stressful times of the pandemic.

A facet of participants dressed up exclusively when going out into the community to look presentable. This activity was a form of recreation and a source of hope. This narrative shaped the subtheme exploring the community. Fashion became linked to leaving the house. One participant stated, “going out is a more special occasion, so I dress up more now to leave the house.” Another participant shared, “at home: keep warm, cosy [*sic*] and comfy. When going out: look good, feel good, have fun dressing up.” Clothing provided hope during the pandemic as participants looked forward to dressing up and leaving their homes despite the lockdown restrictions. This account mentioned this, “wearing nice clothes meant that I would be going outside and doing something instead of being stuck at home.” As the durations of lockdowns were unknown at the time, exploring the community gave a semblance of normality and separation from one’s home. Being fashionable in the community may have also been rewarding and a source of hope as it was a reminder that the lockdowns are temporary. Through hope, it is evident that clothing bolstered mental health.

Negative Impacts from Hope.

According to other emerging adults, clothing was also a source of sadness. Individuals who were highly involved with their clothing were saddened that they could not display their style. They had lost hope on the betterment of the pandemic and felt discouraged. Two negative subthemes were created to capture this sentiment, including hopelessness and lost opportunities.

Emerging adults expressed feeling hopeless when engaging with clothing as well as many other complex reactions. One participant stated, “it had its positives and negatives. ... Sad to not think about. Hopeless, in a sense. ... Triggering at others.” Another participant shared:

Clothing felt negative to me because I had nowhere to wear my clothes to. I felt very apathetic about clothing during the pandemic. Like there was no point to looking nice or bothering to take care of my appearance. I also felt lackluster even online shopping for clothing because it was pointless to buy more clothes when I was just sitting at home wearing t-shirts [*sic*] and sweatpants everyday.

This account indicates that appearance management was futile for the participant during the lockdowns, and that their interest in clothing was lost. They felt hopelessness and saw no benefit to dressing up or shopping for new clothing. As a result, clothing had not provided a positive effect causing them to feel exhausted, frustrated, and hopeless. This phenomenon may represent emerging adults that were unable to cope with crises and the pandemic. These participants might have felt trapped in the lockdowns with no hope in sight.

Lost opportunities is a subtheme representing emerging adults who felt the lockdown had taken away valuable experiences where they could have worn their formal clothing. In contrast to participants who were excited to exhibit their clothes at any opportunity, these individuals were too upset to pursue this. The following participant describes this:

It had a mildly [*sic*] negative effect because I wanted to wear my clothes and show them off but I couldn't [*sic*] and it was honestly upsetting. Plans for outfits I had spent months preparing for were cancelled over night when covid hit. I feel like everything was taken from me. Lost opportunity.

This participant described the pandemic as an obstacle to wear their fashion, using words like “couldn’t” and “cancelled” to emphasize this. This may indicate that the individual felt trapped and stripped of their freedom. They also insinuated that they lost more than just an opportunity to wear their clothes, as they stated, “everything was taken from me.” This phrase illuminates how devastating the pandemic was for certain individuals who exhibit high fashion involvement. It also indicates that clothing was attached to many important things that were central to their life. Not being able to wear fashion devastated their experiences and negatively impacted their mental health.

In conclusion, the thematic analysis found several findings related to how clothing affected mental health in emerging adults. It is evident that the perceptions participants had on their clothing bolstered or weakened their mental health. Several themes emerged with positive and negative subthemes. Participants shared that clothing enhanced their self-esteem and perceptions of self-competency, while others reported their outfits had the opposite effect. Emerging adults commonly reported that clothing enhanced their mood, while others stated it had a negative effect. Individuals reported feeling self-empowered through their apparel. Emerging adults expressed how they were able to connect with their selves and achieve self-congruency. Some participants lacked the resources or garments to express their self-concept in their outfits, which led to a disconnection with the self. Attire provided hope for a better future and a distraction from the times of the pandemic. For other participants, clothing reminded them

of their lack of control of their life, and some felt hopeless. Comfortable and casual clothing led to a lack of motivation, confidence, and productivity. These narratives indicate the direct and indirect influences clothing and the COVID-19 pandemic had on mental health.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The present study was successful in investigating how the pandemic has impacted fashion as a mood enhancer and its implications on mental health. This chapter offer a discussion and interpretation of findings with the incorporation of literature to contextualize study conclusions. The study's strengths and limitations are also explored. Future research studies that can build upon this study's findings are considered. Discussion concludes with implications for general engagement with clothing and for professionals in the field of mental health.

Canadian Consumers

Dress preferences in the sample indicated that over half of emerging adults preferred comfort over fashion (formal and semi-formal wear) during the pandemic which is consistent with previous studies (Liu et al., 2021; Monopoli, 2022). Contrastingly, 45% of emerging adults shared that they wore semi-formal and formal clothing which may be due to presentability for one's career or a desire to dress differently. Thrifted, sustainable and sportswear were the top three preferred items to purchase. Styles preferred in the sample were also similar to Monopoli's (2022) findings. Twenty-five per cent of the sample selected streetwear compared to Monopoli's (2022) sample (22%). Six point one per cent were in favor of bohemian (4%), and 3% liked gothic style (2%). In contrast to the findings, 1.3% liked vintage (11%), 23.2% selected chic (5%), and 14% selected preppy (3%). There were also other identified styles that resonated with the sample, including camp at 3%, hipster at 8%, and grunge at 7%. 42 participants stated they did not know what their style is, indicating that the majority of the sample had an established style.

Research Question One

The first research question investigated how the COVID-19 pandemic affected fashion involvement. Quantitative analysis demonstrated that fashion involvement had a low positive correlation to fear of the pandemic, which can mean that clothing became more significant and meaningful for individuals who were more fearful of COVID-19. However, since the relationship was not strong, other explanations must be taken into consideration. As the sample exhibited low levels of fear, it is possible that the analysis was unable to capture the effect fear had on fashion involvement. Alternatively, the weak positive correlation may indicate that emerging adults did not greatly fear COVID-19. Therefore, fear was not a major contributor to fashion involvement. Figure 12 illustrates that many emerging adults exhibited moderate to high levels of fashion involvement. Therefore, clothing was viewed as significant and central to many during the peaks of the pandemic. The thematic analysis provides more insight into how the pandemic affected clothing engagement and fashion involvement.

The thematic analysis demonstrated that relationships with clothing had split into lower or higher levels of engagement for emerging adults. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis demonstrated a decrease in clothing consumption. Over 400 participants limited purchases to twice a month. Individuals had also commented on the inability to select zero purchases, demonstrating that many participants stopped purchasing apparel altogether. This finding validates the reduction of fashion purchases during the lockdowns (Arora et al., 2020; Knowles et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021). This is a drastic decrease to the documented shopping habits of emerging adults, who are known to be over consumers and hyper shoppers (Canada Post, 2017; Moore & Carpenter, 2008; Simmers et al., 2015; Williams & Page, 2011). According to Canada Post (2017), hyper shoppers make a minimum of two purchases a month. The reduction of clothing purchases was the result of decreased enjoyment in clothing and dissatisfaction with

online shopping (Barry, 2015; Sung & Yan, 2020; Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). Furthermore, stress and lifestyle disruptions resulted in reduced consumption (Liu et al., 2021).

According to the responses, a greater portion of emerging adults reported decreased engagement and involvement with clothing. The theme reduced effort illustrated a preference for casual wear and decreased appearance management (Liu et al., 2021). Comfortable clothing was also prioritized during the pandemic (Liu et al., 2021). Emerging adults also shared that they were repeating outfits for convenience and weight gain rendered some apparel unwearable (Liu et al., 2021). The shift to comfortable and casual wear may reflect perceptions that comfortable clothing is more appropriate within the home. Lee and Choo (2015) found that outfit repetition is dependent on perceived appropriateness and conformity between one's clothing and environment. In addition to preferring comfort, decreased efforts in dressing were attributed to a lack of care for fashion, diminished interest, low mood, and low motivation as a result of the pandemic. Individuals also stated that they reduced their cognitive efforts in dressing, which included outfit planning, attention on clothing, and self-evaluations. Appearance management has been shown to limit mental resources (Fredrickson et al., 1998) and therefore emerging adults might have felt the need to preserve their mental resources for other important matters. These findings support that clothing and fashion became less significant for a facet of emerging adults, demonstrating the effect of the pandemic on fashion involvement. Emerging adults also cited that the COVID-19 pandemic was a time of isolation and limited social contact, which led to decreased appearance management. This indicates that emerging adults perceived their attire as a tool for connection and a means of communication (Anić & Mihić, 2015; Entwistle, 2000; Horn & Gurel, 1981; McNeill & Venter, 2019). As a consequence to limited socialization, there is a decreased effort to demonstrate identity and be "presentable" for the social world. The

findings indicate how disruptions to lifestyle such as a global pandemic can affect dressing habits (Liu et al., 2021).

Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis also indicate that a smaller portion of emerging adults increased their engagement with clothing. Over 150 participants indicated that they made three or more clothing purchases a month. This group represents that hyper shoppers of the group who enjoyed shopping during the lockdowns (Canada Post, 2017). In the qualitative analyses, emerging adults reported increased time to research fashion, increased enjoyment in clothing, and increased spending. Research found that shopping increases hedonistic emotions and enhances mood (McNeill & Venter, 2019). It is plausible that emerging adults were aware of this effect and used it to cope with low mood or negative emotions during the pandemic. Increased shopping aligns with findings that individuals had “pent-up demands” and eagerness to purchase more clothing during the lockdown (Liu et al., 2021). There were several shopper profiles that aligned with Ladhari et al.’s (2019) findings, including participants that engaged in shopping to meet emotional needs (emotional shoppers), shopping for fashion and trends (fashionistas), looking for deals (bargain shoppers), and searching for innovative fashion (discovery shoppers). Emerging adults discussed how browsing and receiving packages facilitated positive emotions and was a mood enhancing activity, representing the emotional shoppers of the demographic (Ladhari et al.’s, 2019; Liu et al., 2021; McNeill & Venter, 2019). Emerging adults also shared that they engaged in retail therapy to distract from stressors of the pandemic. This findings indicate that shopping was a form of EFC which helped emerging adults buffer the impact of stress of their mental health.

The thematic analyses found several findings that emerging adults sustained or increased their high fashion involvement during the pandemic. These individuals viewed clothing to be

significant in their life and wore fashion at home. They also explored fashion on a deeper level in their spare time. Such emerging adults represent devoted fashion consumers that modified their style (Liu et al., 2021), followed trends, and consumed fashion media. Others used the pandemic as an opportunity to learn more about themselves, gain confidence in their style, and become liberated from fashion norms. Emerging adults expressed enjoyment with fashion as an activity, pursuing design, playing dress-up, or sewing. This is consistent with Hoyer et al.'s (2021) findings that engaging with fashion as a hobby or project is gratifying and mood enhancing. Individuals also expressed how fashion facilitated a perception of connection with others interested in fashion and this decreased isolation (Anić & Mihić, 2015; Entwistle, 2000; Horn & Gurel, 1981; McNeill & Venter, 2019). This could be a factor that sustained fashion involvement among emerging adults.

The COVID-19 virus greatly shifted dressing habits as a result of the pandemic. Many reported being extremely conscious of their attire and prioritized protective clothing to reduce the risk of transmitting the COVID-19 virus. Emerging adults frequently changed their outdoor clothing and sanitized their clothing more often. These findings are also seen in Liu et al.'s (2021) study. The shift to protective dressing suggests that emerging adults were fearful of COVID-19. Dressing in protective clothing was a coping mechanism to avoid infection, as well as develop a sense of safety and control over COVID-19. This coping mechanism has allowed emerging adults to manage their stress and fears of the disease (Caplan, 1964).

Research Question Two

The second research question examined how the pandemic impacted the use of fashion as a mood enhancer. The quantitative results found a low positive relationship between fear of COVID-19 and fashion as a mood enhancer. A positive relationship implies that greater fear led

to increased use of clothing to enhance mood. The weak relationship indicates that emerging adults did not have high levels of fear of COVID-19, and that fear was not a major contributor to mood enhancement. Perhaps if the participants had greater fear of COVID-19, we would have seen a stronger relationship. The results demonstrate that emerging adults exhibited high levels of mood enhancement (see Figure 14). Therefore, they were engaging with clothing to enhance their mood during the peaks of the pandemic. This implies that mood enhancement was a coping tool, and a mechanism of EFC. Emerging adults implemented this coping strategy as a result of experiencing low mood, fear, and multiple crises during the pandemic (Caplan, 1964). To buffer these negative outcomes on mental health, it was required to regulate emotion and mood. This finding is consistent with research that clothing and fashion is used as a tool to manage affect and mood (Dubler & Gurel, 1984; Kwon, 1988, 1991, 1992; Kwon & Shim, 1999; Latter et al., 2010; Moody et al., 2010; McNeill & Venter, 2019; Raunio, 1982). This relationship implies that engagements with attire helped emerging adults meet emotional and psychological needs during the pandemic that bolstered the continual use of clothing as a mood enhancer (Horn & Gurel, 1981). This study is the first to find a relationship between stress, mood enhancement through attire, and coping.

Findings from the thematic analyses demonstrate that emerging adults found clothing to be either increasingly significant or less significant during the pandemic. Increased significance of clothing may have bolstered the use of clothing as a mood enhancer. While the next section (results of research question 3) will explore motivations of using clothing to regulate mood, several explanations emerged from participant responses to the increased significance of fashion as a mood enhancer. Firstly, these individuals may represent emerging adults with greater fashion involvement who enjoy fashion and are committed to using clothing to cope with the

pandemic. As found in the data, emerging adults were influenced by online fashion media and fast fashion. Through style, emerging adults maintained their online presence and engaged in the mediatization of the self by expressing one's identity through social media (Barry & Martin, 2015; Rocamora, 2017). Therefore, engagement with media might have bolstered mood enhancement with fashion. Greater leisure time was a subtheme that led to the increased importance of clothing. Time might have welcomed introspection on the self and clothing. This could have led to the discovery of clothing's positive effects, including the ability to regulate mood. Participants also alluded to the pandemic as a time of liberation as they gained confidence to embrace their styles, no matter how unconventional. This subtheme implies that emerging adults were honouring their preferences and needs through clothing choices more. Therefore, greater enjoyment and alignment with one's preferences might have facilitated mood enhancement. This extends Raunio's (1982) finding in which wearing preferred or favourite clothing increases positive affect. Another contributing factor may be personality (Kwon, 1987, 1988; Moody et al., 2009; Raunio, 1982). Participants might have had the desire to "match and compensate their personality with clothing choices" which aided the use of clothing to enhance mood (Moody et al., 2009, p.9). Another theme from the analysis, presentability, showcased how emerging adults found clothing to have greater importance due to the need to look presentable at home and during community outings. This new habit might have bolstered the use of clothing to enhance mood. This result supports Moody et al.'s (2009) findings that social opportunities motivate the presentation of one's attire. In conclusion, emerging adults had multiple influences that facilitated the use of clothing as a mood enhancer.

Several themes emerged from the thematic analyses that suggested emerging adults decreased their engagement with clothing as a mood enhancer. Reduced effort and importance of

clothing highlighted that emerging adults engaged in less appearance management and no longer were concerned for their appearance and attire. Participants also shared having little to no motivation to dress up. These themes indicate that clothing was no longer enjoyable and did not benefit mood. Previous studies on the COVID-19 pandemic also found that participants reported a loss of enjoyment as a result of the pandemic (Sonderskov et al., 2020; Statistics Canada, 2021; Vindegaard & Benros, 2020). This finding implies that during adverse experiences such as a global pandemic, people may forget or lose interest in practicing coping mechanisms. Another possibility is that emerging adults were overloaded with stress (de-stabilization) to the point that their functioning decreased (Caplan, 1964). This led to reduced implementation of coping mechanisms and reduced activities that were once gratifying decreased in enjoyment. Decreased mood enhancement may be related to the prioritization of solving life-related crises (Caplan, 1964) during the pandemic, and engaging with other more effective coping mechanisms. A reduced effort in regulating mood through clothing could also be related to little enjoyment in wearing previously owned clothing which has been put forward by Moody et al.'s (2009) study. People experience joy in anticipating new clothing, possess the desire to continue self-development with novel wear, and are motivated by social opportunities to wear novel attire (Moody et al., 2009). As some emerging adults were not purchasing new clothing as there were no opportunities to display them, it is possible that they did not enjoy or perceive wearing previously owned clothing as mood enhancing. Therefore, they had little incentive to engage in this coping mechanism. Reduced use of clothing as a mood enhancer could also be attributed to the low mood of emerging adults during the pandemic. Previous research suggests that individuals with negative moods are less likely to use clothing as a mood enhancer (Lee & Choo, 2015), and clothing choices are matched to one's mood (Moody et al., 2009). It may be likely

that reduced effort and importance in clothing are linked to negative moods, and due to the “darker moods” that were a result of the pandemic (Angus Reid Institute & CBC, 2022) emerging adults matched their mood with casual clothing.

Research Question Three

The third research question investigated the motivations for using fashion as a mood enhancer during the pandemic. The top motivators found among the quantitative and qualitative analyses were self as structure, self-esteem, and comfort. Self as structure and self-esteem had a significant positive relationship with mood enhancement in the quantitative analysis, indicating that they were important motivators. This finding is echoed in the thematic analyses as these concepts appeared as themes and subthemes (see Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8). During the pandemic many roles and routines that were a part of their identity shifted. Furthermore, individuals no longer had the process of dressing themselves to communicate their identity to others. This might have resulted in a psychological need to seek out clothing that reflected their self-concept, express identity, and achieve fashion self-congruity (Casidy et al., 2015; Sontag & Lee, 2004; Sirgy, 1982). The significance of the dimension self as a structure suggests that emerging adults felt disconnected with their selves. Meaning, emerging adults might have felt lost and confused about their identity as their clothing became incongruent with their image of self. Therefore, they were motivated to express their self-concept and maintain that connection. The ideal self subtheme found that emerging adults were dressing to represent their best self. Therefore, clothing was also a tool to be in connection with one’s ideal self. These findings support previous research that clothing helps individuals express and align with their self-concept (Casidy et al., 2015; Klabi, 2020; McNeill & Venter, 2019; Rocamora, 2017; Solomon, 1983; Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017; Vigolo & Ugolini, 2016).

The second significant motivator implies that individuals used formal clothing and fashion to bolster their self-esteem and enhance their mood (Sontag & Lee, 2004). Past research has demonstrated that clothing is used to combat insecurity (Dubler & Gurel, 1984; Kwon & Parham, 1994). This aligned with the thematic analysis as emerging adults discussed how clothing empowered them during the pandemic and made them feel confident. Emerging adults shared that comfortable and casual clothing increased self-criticisms. Individuals also reported experiencing body dysmorphia, gender dysphoria, body consciousness, and poor body image. This finding indicates that emerging adults experienced private self-consciousness at home during the pandemic. This led to wearing camouflaging attire to conceal parts of the body that adults were unsatisfied with (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Sung & Yan, 2020; Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). Emerging adults utilized clothing as a tool to mitigate negative self-evaluations and self-objectification (Kang et al., 2013; Kwon, 1991, 1992; Kwon & Shim, 1999; Price & Pettijohn, 2006; Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). According to some participants, this was achieved by prioritizing clothing items that were personally preferred, defying fashion norms that were present at the time. This finding supports Raunio's (1982) theory that satisfaction with clothing leads to positive emotional responses.

Other emerging adults cited that wearing formal and fashionable clothes had many positive benefits. Emerging adults dressed up to cope with low motivation, mood, and self-criticisms. Such types of clothing had enhanced perceptions of competence and increased motivation to complete goals during the pandemic (Peluchette & Karl, 2007). Therefore, emerging adults preferred this apparel when they wanted to enhance their self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-concept. This supports Sirgy's finding (1982) in which individuals are motivated to enhance their self-esteem and self-concept. Emerging adults also reported a shift in

behaviour when they wore formal clothing. The subtheme control is an example of clothing used as a tool to influence the self. Emerging adults used clothing to gain a semblance of control in their life. They reported that they were more likely to engage in routines, plan, self-care, enhance their mood and emotions, and organize themselves to achieve their goals. Emerging adults were selecting behaviours that were more congruent with their self-image at the times of wearing formal wear or fashion (Hajo & Galinsky, 2012; Wang et al., 2021). This congruence supports the theory of enclothed cognition in which the perceptions of formal clothing influenced the behaviour of emerging adults (Hajo & Galinsky, 2012). Emerging adults also expressed wanting to be the best version of themselves. Clothing was used to put forward an image of their ideal self that enhanced their mood and self-esteem. Therefore, using clothing as a coping tool to enact change also facilitated self-growth. Emerging adults wanted to improve their behaviour, environment, and their experience during the pandemic. Feeling powerless during the pandemic, they strived to gain control in certain aspects and take personal responsibility for their life. Another significant example of self-growth is the use of clothing for self-expression. Some emerging adults employed clothing to “to outwardly express what I cannot inwardly feel.” Their self-expression assisted the acknowledgement and expression of emotions when they recognized suppressing their feelings were maladaptive. These instances of self-growth may represent emerging adults that were flourishing in the pandemic. They demonstrated post-traumatic growth and self-actualization as they strived to be the best version of their selves and implemented strategies for self-empowerment when they needed a boost for morale and wellbeing (Maslow, 1943; Shaughnessey, 2017).

Comfort was a significant theme and the third motivator to emerge for using clothing as a mood enhancer. The thematic analysis demonstrated that emerging adults found comfort to be

very significant during the pandemic (Liu et al., 2021). It is also important to note that comfort was cited in response to every open-ended question. While gender differences were not evaluated, the results imply that comfort was an important motivator across all genders. This contrasts with Kwon's (1988) study which found that men use comfort during negative moods, while women chose favourite clothing first, and comfortable clothing second. Some participants in the study expressed how comfort promoted perceptions of warmth, security, self-acceptance, protection, safety, and relaxation. This supports Horn and Gurel's (1981) theory that clothing can meet emotional and psychological needs. Another important finding is that emerging adults blended comfort and fashion to experience advantages of both functions, achieving what can be called *comfy chic*. As seen in the data, the function of fashion might have met emotional and psychological needs that related to self-esteem and self-concept. This contrasts the findings that individuals who utilize the function of comfort are unlikely to also use the function of fashion (Kang et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2021). The concept of *comfy chic* also conflicts with Liu et al.'s (2021) findings that people strictly prioritized comfort over fashion during the pandemic. Marx's (2020) concept *slob chic* was supported as participants shared wearing a comfortable bottom with a fashionable top for online meetings.

Many participants did not have an explanation as to why comfort was significant for them. They might have favoured sensorial features of comfort such as comfortable fabric, flexibility (high bend and low stiffness), and warmth (Hes et al., 2021). Through a somatic lens, emerging adults might have pursued comfort to regulate the nervous system and avoid or cope with hyperarousal or hypoarousal. Alternatively, seeking comfort might have been a subconscious motivation to meet emotional and psychological needs. Kolcaba (2003) posited that comfort can achieve relief and ease in the psychospiritual sense. This may suggest that

emerging adults had an implicit instinct to pursue comfort in order to cope with stressors.

According to research on coping, the unconscious and unintentional response of seeking comfort in clothing would be deemed as a defense mechanism rather than a coping mechanism (Costa et al., 1991, as cited in Cummings et al., 1991; Cramer, 2008). The findings of various motivations demonstrate emerging adults were creative in utilizing multiple functions of their apparel to enhance their mood and improve their experience during the pandemic.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question explored how the use of fashion as a mood enhancer impacted positive mental health during the pandemic. There was no correlation between mental health and altering mood through clothing in the quantitative analysis. Three explanations are presented to reason why a relationship was not found. One possibility is that mood is a temporary state, and enhancing mood through clothing was difficult to sustain for emerging adults to positively impact mental health. Another potential reason is that the instruments were incompatible. Mental health captures many dimensions related to emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. Mood enhancement only relates to emotional and psychological wellbeing. Therefore, the mental health variable may not be the appropriate measurement to capture this effect as it is too broad. Another explanation is that clothing as a coping tool can bolster mental health but require consistency for an effect. If emerging adults were not continuously engaging in this coping mechanism, no effect would be observed. However, 41% of emerging adults reported clothing had a positive affect mental health while 12% reported a negative effect. The thematic analysis also reflected this finding.

Emerging adults reported clothing had many positive effects on their mental health, including self-esteem, mood enhancement, self-empowerment, distraction, and self-congruency.

Self-esteem was the top theme, signifying how emerging adults worked to bolster this aspect of mental health. It may also indicate that emerging adults struggled with low self-esteem at the time and used their apparel to cope. Clothing helped emerging adults increase their self-esteem, which included self-acceptance, self-confidence, and self-appreciation. These findings are consistent with studies that purport clothing can positively influence perceptions of self, leading to more favourable attitudes of oneself (Hannover & Kuhnen, 2002; Kellerman & Laird, 1982; Kwon, 1994; Peluchette & Karl, 2007). This demonstrates that emerging adult's self-concepts are flexible and sensitive to the influences of clothing (Hannover & Kuhnen, 2002). This influence provides further evidence on the process of enclothed cognition in which participants attributed positive meanings to formal clothing which shifted their self-perceptions and behaviour (Hajo & Galinsky, 2012). Mood enhancement was the second-most cited theme, demonstrating that clothing or fashion supported the management of mood and improved perceptions of mental health among emerging adults during the peaks of the pandemic. Self-empowerment was another positive effect on wellbeing as a result of using clothing as a coping mechanism. Emerging adults reported that clothing gave a sense of purpose, control, and a distraction during the lockdowns. This was achieved by curating outfits, editing one's closet, making a fashionable appearance in the community, shopping, exploring fashion, and refining one's style. This reflects that participants were driven to improve their experiences during the lockdown: through clothing they combatted stressors, low motivation, and thoughts of powerlessness. Therefore, clothing was a distraction, an area of control, and a coping mechanism. This is a novel finding that could not be aligned with previous research. Emerging adults refined their style to align with their self-concept which improved their wellbeing. Individuals stated they increased their self-expression through clothing, while others utilized

attire to present an image that is representative of their best self. This supports the significance of fashion self-congruity for emerging adults as they found aligning with their self-concept to be very beneficial to their wellbeing (Casidy et al., 2015; Sontag & Lee, 2004; Sirgy, 1982). For a facet of this population, there was a greater need to present as the ideal self and not one's true self which supports past research that the ideal self is a greater motivator behind dressing habits (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Kaur & Anand, 2021; O'Cass & Julian, 2001; Vigolo & Ugolini, 2016).

The negative effects of clothing on mental health were a result of a poorer self-esteem, a decrease in self-efficacy, low mood, and an incongruence with the self-concept. Emerging adults reported that wearing comfortable and informal clothing for prolonged periods of time led to self-criticisms, insecurity, and a poor mood. These trends may be due to symbolic associations of laziness or incompetency with an unmanaged appearance that ultimately influenced emerging adult's self-esteem, mood, and self-efficacy (Hannover & Kuhnen, 2002; Peluchette & Karl, 2007; Sontag & Lee, 2004). Weight gain was another factor that led to dissatisfaction with clothing and self (Liu et al., 2021). Participants cited that a lack of preferred clothing and financial limitations formed a barrier for expressing the self which caused discomfort and dissatisfaction with self. Emerging adults also referenced the socio-political atmosphere during the pandemic as a barrier to self-expression. Consequently, they were not able to express their faith, personal values, or beliefs. Emerging adults reported experiencing body dysmorphia and gender dysphoria because they could not access apparel that affirmed their self-concept and desired identity. This demonstrates the importance of self-expression, gender expression, and how limitations can negatively impact self-comfort and confidence (Barry & Martin, 2015; Jones & Lim, 2021; Reddy-best & Pedersen, 2014; Reilly & Barry, 2020). Self-expression has been

lauded as highly significant for wellbeing in research and the study's results further support this relationship (McNeill & Venter, 2019; Rocamora, 2017; Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017). It also validates the need for fashion self-congruity and justifies how the discrepancy between clothes and the self-concept negatively impacted mental health (Casidy et al., 2015; Sontag & Lee, 2004; Sirgy, 1982).

Strengths of the Research

This study has several strengths. Research on the psychological lens of clothing is a growing field. However, there continues to be a gap of research on the positive influences of clothing of functioning and wellbeing. The thesis is the first ever study to intersect clothing and mental health and is a significant contribution to fashion psychology, as well as a whole new area of research. The findings of the study also consolidate the existence and importance of this complex relationship, demonstrating the need for further research.

Another strength of the study is the extensive and interdisciplinary literature review. This thesis provides a foundation of knowledge on the significances of clothing and fashion involvement on the sociological and psychological scale. Articles were also pulled from other disciplines such as marketing and economics. The review of literature has compiled many important articles to strengthen understanding on the intricate topics involved.

The study's sample size of 574 emerging adults is another strength. It exceeds the goal size the researcher initially set and surpasses typical sample sizes in studies on clothing that are upward of 300. Furthermore, individuals from each Canadian province participated in the survey (see Appendix J). Therefore, the study has a rich data set representing the views of emerging adults in Canada.

Finally, the mix of quantitative and qualitative methodologies was another strength of the study. Specifically, the qualitative aspect of the thesis gave the opportunity to go beyond numbers and capture the experiences of emerging adults. Furthermore, analysis from the responses greatly assisted in contextualizing the numbers from quantitative analyses. While the quantitative research demonstrates a lack of significance between fashion and mental health, the thematic analysis captures what the study set out to examine which is the relationship between clothing and mental health. The findings outline how clothing did affect emerging adult's experience during the pandemic and their mental health.

Limitations of the Research

The study has several significant strengths, but there are also a few limitations to consider when reviewing findings and implications. Despite being significant, the first two quantitative analyses conducted in research questions one and two found low correlations. Furthermore, no correlational significance was found between clothing as a mood enhancer and mental health. This necessitated the researcher to rely on qualitative findings which suggested by way of thematic analyses that a relationship does in fact exist. In order to demonstrate a quantitative relationship between clothing and mental health, additional research will be required. The researcher strongly encourages future studies to explore this connection.

The retrospective nature of the survey is a limitation as well. The survey was active from December 2022 to mid-February 2023. Participants were requested to recall and share their experiences about the peaks of the pandemic which took place between March 2020 and May 2022. As such, the participant's answers may be subject to recall bias. This means that their recall of experiences may be partially inaccurate.

Another limitation is related to the sample recruited. The study is limited with a sample population drawn exclusively from Canada and thus, the findings would be difficult to generalize across all young adults. Furthermore, most respondents who completed the survey came from the platform Reddit.com. It is a popular webpage, however, not all Canadian emerging adults utilize it. Therefore, the sample might have been stronger if the recruitment was successful among all social media platforms that were employed.

The thesis aims to examine the relationship between clothing and mental health during the pandemic. At the time of developing the survey, the researcher was limited in selecting a survey scale that represented COVID-19 as a variable. There was not a variety of instruments to choose from at the time. Other variables continue to emerge as well. Perhaps it would have been more impactful if the instrument selected measured another variable such as the impact of COVID on stress.

Lastly, the survey's length was a limitation for recruitment. The survey's total sample was 574 after subtracting 676 incomplete surveys. Participants might have felt that the survey was longer than anticipated or preferred and exited before it's completion. Therefore, the length of the survey led to a smaller sample size.

Future Directions

This thesis signifies the first study to explore the link between fashion and mental health. To build onto this study, future directions will be discussed for researchers and mental health clinicians.

Future Research

This study's quantitative analysis did not find a relationship between use of clothing as a mood enhancer and mental wellbeing, while the qualitative portion did reveal participant's

observations of both positive and negative effects of clothing. It is crucial that research further investigates the links between clothing, mood, and mental health to provide a clearer understanding of this relationship. Several new inquiries emerge, such as what is the span of time in which clothing can boost mood? What are the long-term effects of consistently wearing preferred and flattering clothing? How does clothing, fashion, and haute couture differentiate in the effect on wellbeing. What factors need to be in place to propagate a strong effect? Future studies can also pursue longitudinal or cross-sectional studies to understand the many mechanisms that can impact mental health, such as body image, self-concept, self-efficacy, self-congruency, identity, connection, self-expression, and self-esteem.

The researcher is also curious in exploring a new psychotherapy modality that utilizes clothing as a tool for healing. Specifically, if the relationship between clothing and mental health can be brought into the therapeutic relationship to strengthen mental health of clients seeking counselling. At the present there is a concept called retail therapy which argues that shopping for clothing can enhance positive affect (Rick et al., 2014). There is also a proposed modality called fashion therapy (Lee et al., 2020) in which combines cognitive behavioural therapy and appearance enhancement strategies that include cosmetics, styling, and nail education. This proposed modality centers around bolstering confidence through self-expression, satisfaction, and acceptance of one's self-image (Lee et al., 2020). The researcher proposes a different stream of fashion therapy that aligns more with traditional therapy. Psychotherapy includes the processing of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, as well as the treatment of pathology that is not limited to body image (Young, 2020). Therefore, fashion therapy can go beyond body satisfaction to bolster self-understanding, emotional expression, holistic confidence, self-efficacy, self-congruency, and more. Furthermore, other modalities of therapy may be integrated

with the use of clothing as a tool, such as trauma therapy, art therapy, or somatic therapy. The development of this modality will require a practice framework, development of evidence-based interventions, and research to capture the efficacy of this framework and interventions.

Implications for Clothing and Fashion Engagement

This study's findings partially support that clothing was used as a coping mechanism for Canadian emerging adults during the pandemic to support mental wellbeing. There are several implications from these research findings. Clothing was proven to assist emerging adults in coping with fear and stress, as well as bolster important areas of wellbeing including mood, positive emotions, identity, self-esteem, and body image. With these impacts of clothing in mind, it may be very helpful for individuals to explore the importance of clothing in their lives and process personal meanings of their attire. As indicated by the data, it may be very empowering to identify what functions can be used to meet one's own emotional and psychological needs. Furthermore, in the pursuit of self-development, incorporating clothing into the balance of transformation may yield significant results. For example, in the tv series *Queer Eye* individuals shared how their transformation of style and appearance enhanced their experience and mental health (Collins, 2018).

Implications for Mental Health Clinicians

As this study demonstrates a relationship between clothing and mental health, there are several implications that clinicians can consider in their practice with individuals seeking counselling. There is presently no official modality or evidence-based interventions that incorporate clothing into therapy. However, evidence from literature and this study's findings points in the direction that clothing can be a helpful tool for mental health. Therefore, it can be a transformative tool to bring into counselling. Clothing can be considered as an area of focus to

meet a therapy goal that was relevant to the client's presenting issues. These goals may include enhancing self-esteem, mood, self-efficacy, self-empowerment, exploring the self, or finding ways to boost self-expression. Ultimately, this exploration should only be introduced to clients who are interested and consent to discussing clothing or fashion in light of meeting their therapy goals.

Conclusion

This thesis employed mixed methods to investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted clothing engagement, the use of clothing as a mood enhancer, and its implications on mental health in emerging adults. This thesis represents the first attempt to explore the relationship between clothing and wellbeing. Findings revealed two distinct occurrences in which emerging adults either increased or decreased their fashion involvement during the peaks of the pandemic. This implied that the pandemic shifted lifestyle, moods, and consumption habits that either strengthened or weakened the relationship emerging adults had with their clothing. Quantitative analyses revealed that greater fear of COVID-19 was positively correlated and predicted by fashion involvement and the use of clothing as a mood enhancer. Motivations involved bolstering self-concept, self-esteem, and comfort. Emerging adults that had closer relationships with their clothing reported prioritizing fashion at home, or balanced comfort and fashion. There was no significant correlation between fashion as a mood enhancer and mental health in participants. However, the qualitative analysis revealed reports of both positive and negative effects of clothing on mental wellbeing. Positive effects included mood enhancement, self-empowerment, and increased self-esteem. Negative effects involved decreased self-esteem and self-efficacy, as well as incongruence with one's self-concept.

The study's findings partially supported that clothing was used as a coping mechanism for Canadian emerging adults during the pandemic to support mental wellbeing. One implication of the thesis is that the use of clothing to enhance mood and cope decreased for a greater portion of emerging adults. Another implication is that clothing and fashion can potentially meet emotional and psychological needs. Though the study's findings partially support this connection, it is evident that this relationship is complex and multi-faceted. This paper demonstrates the importance of further research to elaborate on this link and delve deeper into the psychological benefits of clothing and fashion. The researcher is committed to contribute to this area of research, and to explore clothing as a doorway for mental wellbeing in her career as a therapist. The researcher hopes to inspire others to explore their relationship with clothing in order to honour their identity, values, preferences, and creativity. Hopefully this thesis will also encourage individuals to seek out the benefits in clothing for their own mental wellbeing.

References

- Abacus Data. (2010). *Ethical consumerism and Canadians*. Abacus Data. Retrieved April 3, 2022, from <http://abacusdata.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2011/01/CCSR-Ethical-ConsumerismFinal.pdf>
- Adam, H., & Galinsky, A. D. (2012). Enclothed cognition. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(4), 918-925. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.02.008>
- Cohen, A. S. (2023, March 23). Advanced Style. <https://www.advanced.style/>
- Ahorsu, D. K., Lin, C., Imani, V., Saffari, M., Griffiths, M. D., & Pakpour, A. H. (2020). The fear of covid-19 scale: development and initial validation. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 20(3), 1537-1545. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-020-00270-8>
- Alexandera, L. C. Y. (2014). *The study of fashion consciousness of the millennial generation in the luxury fashion market* [Unpublished Master dissertation]. Hong Kong Polytechnic University.
- Almila, A. M., & Inglis, D. (2018). *The Routledge International Handbook to Veils and Veiling*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315613734>
- Altman, D. G., & Bland, J. M. (1995). Statistics notes: the normal distribution. *Bmj*, 310 (6975), 298-298. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.310.6975.298>
- Andrews, F. M., & Withey, S. B. (1976). *Social indicators of wellbeing: Americans' perceptions of life quality*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4684-2253-5>
- Angus Reid Institute & Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (2022, March 10). *COVID at two: vast majorities say the pandemic has pulled Canadians apart, brought out the worst in people*. <https://angusreid.org/covid-19-two-year-anniversary/>

- Anić, I. D., & Mihić, M. (2015). Demographic profile and purchasing outcomes of fashion conscious consumers in Croatia. *Ekonomski Pregled*, 66(2), 103–118.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281766071_Demographic_profile_and_purchasing_outcomes_of_fashion_conscious_consumers_in_Croatia
- American Psychological Association. (n.d.-a). Body Dysmorphia. In *APA Dictionary of Psychology*. <https://dictionary.apa.org/body-dysmorphia>
- American Psychological Association. (n.d.-b). Fashion. In *APA Dictionary of Psychology*.
<https://dictionary.apa.org/fashion>
- American Psychological Association. (n.d.-c). Gender Dysphoria. In *APA Dictionary of Psychology*. <https://dictionary.apa.org/gender-dysphoria>
- American Psychological Association. (n.d.-d). Mental Health. In *APA Dictionary of Psychology*.
<https://dictionary.apa.org/mental-health>
- American Psychological Association. (n.d.-e). Mood. In *APA Dictionary of Psychology*.
<https://dictionary.apa.org/mood>
- Arnett, J. J. (2016). Does emerging adulthood theory apply across social classes? National data on a persistent question. *Emerging Adulthood*, 4(4), 227-235. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696815613000>
- Arora, N., Charm, T., Grimmelt, A., Ortega, M., Robinson, K., Sexauer, C., & Yamakawa, N. (2020). *A global view of how consumer behavior is changing amid COVID-19*. McKinsey & Company.
<https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Marketing%20and%20Sales/Our%20Insights/A%20global%20view%20of%20how%20consumer%20beh>

[avior%20is%20changing%20amid%20COVID%2019/20200707/covid-19-global-consumer-sentiment-20200707.pdf](#)

Attieh, R., Koffi, K., Touré, M., Parr-Labbé, É., Pakpour, A. H., & Poder, T. G. (2022).

Validation of the Canadian french version of the fear of COVID-19 scale in the general population of Quebec. *Brain and Behavior*, 12(5), 1-10.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/brb3.2550>

Bakewell, C. & Mitchell, V. W. (2003). Generation Y female consumer decision-making styles.

International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 31(2), 95-106.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/09590550310461994>

Barron, A. M., Krumrei-Mancuso, E. J., & Harriger, J. A. (2021). The effects of fitspiration and

self-compassion instagram posts on body image and self-compassion in men and

women. *Body Image*, 37, 14-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2021.01.003>

Barry, B., & Martin, D. (2015). Dapper dudes: Young men's fashion consumption and

expressions of masculinity. *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion*, 2(1), 5–21.

https://doi.org/10.1386/csmf.2.1.5_1

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal

attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497-

529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>

Blake, D. A. (2018). *Stylin' blaqueer feminisms: The politics of queer black women's fashion*

Activism [Doctoral Dissertation]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Becker-Leifhold, C., & Heuer, M. (2018). *Eco-friendly and fair: Fast fashion and consumer*

behaviour. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351058353>

- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139-168. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209154>
- Bhaduri, G., & Stanforth, N. (2017). To (or not to) label products as artisanal: Effect of fashion involvement on customer perceived value. *The Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 26(2), 177-189. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-04-2016-1153>
- Blau, W. (2020, January 17). *Reversing climate change is fashion's next big thing*. Global Fashion Agenda. <https://www2.globalfashionagenda.com/reversing-climate-change-is-fashions-next-big-thing/#>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 297–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613>
- Canada Post. (2017, March 20). *Looking to attract the Canadian millennial shopper? Get to know them first*. <https://www.canadapost-postescanada.ca/blogs/business/ecommerce/looking-to-attract-the-canadian-millennial-shopper-get-to-know-them-first/>
- Caplan, C. (1964). *Principles of preventive psychiatry*. Basic Books.
- Caplan, C. (1974). *Support systems and community mental health: Lectures on concept development*. Behavioral Publications.
- Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintraub, J. K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56(2), 267–283. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.56.2.267>
- Casidy, R., Asti, N. N., & Sri Rahayu, H. H. (2015). Linking fashion consciousness with Gen Y attitude towards prestige brands. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 27(3), 406-420. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/APJML-09-2014-0136>

- Cramer, P. (2008). Seven pillars of defense mechanism theory. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2(5), 1963-1981. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00135.x>
- Collins, D. (Creator). (2018-2023). *Queer eye* [TV series]. Netflix. <https://www.netflix.com/>
- Costa, P. T., Jr., Zonderman, A. B., & McCrae, R. R. (1991). Personality, defense, coping, and adaptation in older adulthood. In E. M. Cummings, A. L. Greene & K. H. Karraker (Eds.), *Life-span developmental psychology: Perspectives on stress and coping* (pp. 277–293). Erlbaum.
- Chen, W. (2020). How cultural values affect subjective wellbeing among older adults: The role of proximity of clothing to self. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 22(1), 95-111. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-020-00220-0>
- Choi, S. M., & Rifon, N. J. (2012). It is a match: The impact of congruence between celebrity image and consumer ideal self on endorsement effectiveness. *Psychology & Marketing*, 29(9), 639-650. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20550>
- Crane, D., & Bovone, L. (2006). Approaches to material culture: the sociology of fashion and clothing. *Poetics*, 34, 319-33.
- Cummings, E.M., Greene, A.L., & Karraker, K.H. (Eds.). (1991). *Life-span developmental Psychology: Perspectives on stress and coping* (1st ed.). Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315807867>
- Darity, W. A. (2008). Self-Concept. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Gale. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3045302375/WHIC?u=leth89164&sid=bookmarkWHIC&xid=7095de14>

- Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative data analysis: A user friendly guide for social scientists* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203412497>
- Dharmesti, M., Dharmesti, T. R. S., Kuhne, S., & Thaichon, P. (2021). Understanding online shopping behaviours and purchase intentions amongst millennials. *Young Consumers*, 22(1), 152-167. <https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-12-2018-0922>
- Djafarova, E., & Foots, S. (2022). Exploring ethical consumption of generation Z: Theory of planned behaviour. *Young Consumers*, 23(3), 413-431. <https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-10-2021-1405>
- Diddi, S., Yan, R., Bloodhart, B., Bajtelsmit, V., & McShane, K. (2019). Exploring young adult consumers' sustainable clothing consumption intention-behavior gap: A behavioral reasoning theory perspective. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 18, 200-209. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2019.02.009>
- Doré, I., O'Loughlin, J. L., Sabiston, C. M., & Fournier, L. (2017). Psychometric evaluation of the mental health continuum—Short form in french Canadian young adults. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 62(4), 286-294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0706743716675855>
- Dubler, M. L. J., & Gurel, L. M. (1984). Depression: Relationships to clothing and appearance self-concept. *Home Economics Research Journal*, 13, 21-26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077727X8401300104>
- Elliott, A. C., & Woodward, W. A. (2007). *Statistical analysis quick reference guidebook*. SAGE Publications, Inc., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412985949>
- Fashion Takes Action. (n.d.). *Fashion facts*. <https://fashiontakesaction.com/facts/>

- Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M. F., & Buss, A. H. (1975). Public and private self-consciousness: Assessment and theory. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 43(4), 522–527. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0076760>
- Fisher, S. (1973). *Body consciousness: You are what you feel*. Prentice-Hall.
- Frasquet-Deltoro, M., Alarcón-del-Amo, M., & Lorenzo-Romero, C. (2019). Antecedents and consequences of virtual customer co-creation behaviours. *Internet Research*, 29(1), 218–244. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-06-2017-0243>
- Ford, T. C. (Ed.). (2015). *Liberated threads: Black women, style, and the global politics of soul*. The University of North Carolina Press. https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469625164_ford
- Frith, H., & Gleeson, K. (2004). Clothing and embodiment: Men managing body image and appearance. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 5(1), 40–48. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.5.1.40>
- Gall, M., Gall, J., & Borg, R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction* (8th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Gardner, M. P. (1985). Mood states and consumer behavior: A critical review. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 12(3), 281–300. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208516>
- Gatterson, B. A. K. (2016). *Church dress: Oral narratives of African american women* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Iowa State University.
- Ghasemi, A., & Zahediasl, S. (2012). Normality tests for statistical analysis: a guide for non-statisticians. *International journal of endocrinology and metabolism*, 10(2), 486–489. <https://doi.org/10.5812/ijem.3505>
- Gould, S., & Stern, B. B. (1989). Gender schema and fashion consciousness. *Psychology and Marketing*, 6(2), 129–145. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220060205>

- Government of Canada. (2022). *Mental health support: Get help*.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-services/mental-health-get-help.html>
- Gross, J. J., Uusberg, H., & Uusberg, A. (2019). Mental illness and well-being: An affect regulation perspective. *World Psychiatry, 18*(2), 130-139.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20618>
- Handa, M. & Khare, A. (2013) Gender as a moderator of the relationship between materialism And fashion clothing involvement among Indian youth. *International Journal of Consumer Studies, 37*, 112–120. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2011.01057.x>
- Han, F., & Wang, Q. (2022). Positive and negative mood states mediated the effects of psychological resilience on emotional stability among high school students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 967669-967669.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.967669>
- Hannover, B., & Kühnen, U. (2002). The clothing makes the self via knowledge activation. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32*(12), 2513-2525. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2002.tb02754.x>
- Hirschman, E. C., & Adcock, W. O. (1978). An examination of innovative communicators, opinion leaders and innovators for men's fashion apparel. *Advances in Consumer Research, 5*, 308-314.
- Hollander, A. (1994). *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress*. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Horn, M.J., and Gurel, L.M. (1981). *The Second Skin: An Interdisciplinary Study of Clothing*. Houghton-Mifflin, Co.

- Hosany, S., & Martin, D. (2012). Self-image congruence in consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(5), 685-691. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.03.015>
- Hoyer, J., Dechmann, J. C. G., Stender, T., & Čolić, J. (2021). Selecting and imagining rewarding activities during the COVID-19 lockdown: effects on mood and what moderates them. *International Journal of Psychology*, 56(4), 585-593. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12759>
- Hribar, C. A., Chandran, A., Piazza, M., & Quinsey, C. S. (2023). Association between patient perception of surgeons and color of scrub attire. *JAMA Surgery*, 158(4), 421. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamasurg.2022.5837>
- Hsu, H., Hsu, T., Lee, K., & Wolff, L. (2017). Evaluating the construct validity of ryff's scales of psychological wellbeing using exploratory structural equation modeling. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 35(6), 633-638. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734282916652756>
- James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Johnson, T. W., Francis, S. K., & Burns, L. D. (2007). Appearance management behavior and the five factor model of personality. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 25(3), 230-243. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X07302982>
- Jones, D., & Lim, H. (2021). Journey to the self: in-depth case studies of trans men's self-Construction through body work and clothing. *Fashion Theory* 26(7), 1035-1058. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2021.1974710>
- Joung, H., & Park-Poaps, H. (2013). Factors motivating and influencing clothing disposal behaviours. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 37(1), 105-111. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2011.01048.x>

- Kallstrom L. (2009). *Why Do Clothes Create the Mood*. Life Style.
- Kang, J. M., Johnson, K. K. P., & Kim, J. (2013). Clothing functions and use of clothing to alter mood. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 6(1), 43-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17543266.2012.762428>
- Kaur, H., & Anand, S. (2021) Actual versus ideal self: An examination of the impact of fashion self congruence on consumer's fashion consciousness and status consumption tendencies. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 12(2), 146-160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2020.1856705>
- Kawamura, Y. (2005). *Fashion-ology: An introduction to fashion studies*. Berg.
- Kellerman, J. M., & Laird, J. D. (1982). The effect of appearance on self-perceptions. *Journal of Personality*, 50(3), 296–351. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1982.tb00752.x>
- Keyes, C.L.M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 43, 207–222. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3090197>
- Keyes, C. L. M. (2009). Atlanta: *Brief description of the mental health continuum short form (MHC-SF)*. Retrieved June 24, 2022, from <http://www.sociology.emory.edu/ckeyes/>
- Kim, H. Y. (2013). Statistical notes for clinical researchers: assessing normal distribution using skewness and kurtosis. *Restorative dentistry & endodontics*, 38(1), 52–54. <https://doi.org/10.5395/rde.2013.38.1.52>
- Kim, J., & Kang, J. M. (2015). Investigation of the role of proximity of clothing to self anticipating risky appearance management behaviours. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 8(3), 235-242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17543266.2015.1074292>

- Klabi, F. (2020). To what extent do conspicuous consumption and status consumption reinforce the effect of self-image congruence on emotional brand attachment? Evidence from the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Marketing Analytics*, 8(2), 99-117. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41270-020-00073-9>
- Knowles, J., Ettenson, R., Lynch, P., & Dollens, J. (2020). Growth opportunities for brands during the covid-19 crisis. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 61(4), 2–6.
- Kodzoman, D. (2019) The psychology of clothing: meaning of colors, body image and gender expression in fashion. *Textile & Leather Review*, 2(2), 90-103.
<https://doi.org/10.31881/TLR.2019.22>
- Koksal, MH. (2014). Psychological and behavioural drivers of male fashion leadership. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 26(3), 430-449.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-06-2013-0067>
- Kolcaba, K. (2003). *Comfort theory and practice: a vision for holistic health care and research*. Springer Publishing Company.
- Kumagai, K., & Nagasawa, S. (2016). The influence of social self-congruity on Japanese consumers' luxury and non-luxury apparel brand attitudes. *Luxury Research*, 1(2), 128. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1504/LRJ.2016.078130>
- Kwon, Y. H. (1988). Effects of situational and individual influences on the selection of daily clothing. *Textiles Research Journal*, 6(4), 6-12.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X8800600402>
- Kwon, Y.H. (1987). Daily clothing selection: Interrelationships among motivating factors. *Clothing and Textile Research Journal*, 5(2), 21-27.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X8700500204>

- Kwon, Y.H. (1991). The influence of the perception of mood and self-consciousness on the selection of clothing. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 9(4), 41-46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X9100900406>
- Kwon, Y.H. (1992). Body consciousness, self-consciousness, and women's attitudes toward clothing practices. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 20(4), 295-307. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.1992.20.4.295>
- Kwon, Y.H. (1994). Feeling toward one's clothing and self-perception of emotion, sociability, and work competency. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 9(1), 129-139.
- Kwon, Y.H., & Parham, E. S. (1994). Effects of state of fatness perception on weight conscious women's clothing practices. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 12(4), 16-21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X9401200403>
- Kwon, Y.H., & Shim, S. (1999). A structural model for weight satisfaction, self-consciousness and women's use of clothing in mood enhancement. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 17(4), 203-212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X9901700404>
- Laitala, K. (2014). Consumers' clothing disposal behaviour - a synthesis of research results. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 38(5), 444-457. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12088>
- Larsen, R. J. (2000). Toward a science of mood regulation. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(3), 129-141. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1103_01
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer.
- Lee, H. K., & Choo, H. J. (2015). Daily outfit satisfaction: The effects of self and others' evaluation on satisfaction with what I wear today. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 39(3), 261-268. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12174>

- Lee, S.E., Lee, Y., & Yoo, J. J. (2020). Understanding the Fashion Therapy (FT) Experience through the Cognitive Behavioral Perspective on Body Image. *International Journal of Costume and Fashion*, 20 (2), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.7233/ijcf.2020.20.2.001>
- Leung, A. C. Y., Yee, R. W. Y., & Lo, E. S. C. (2015). Psychological and Social Factors of Fashion Consciousness: An Empirical Study in the Luxury Fashion Market. *Research Journal of Textile and Apparel*, 19(3), 58-69. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RJTA-19-03-2015-B008>
- Ladhari, R., Gonthier, J., & Lajante, M. (2019). Generation Y and online fashion shopping: Orientations and profiles. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 48, 113-121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.02.003>
- Liu, C., Xia, S., & Lang, C. (2021). Clothing consumption during the covid-19 pandemic: Evidence from mining tweets. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 39(4), 314-330. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X211014973>
- Loureiro, S. M. C., & Breazeale, M. (2016). Pressing the buy button: generation y's online clothing shopping orientation and its impact on purchase. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 34(3), 163–178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X16633530>
- Madinga, N. W., Maziriri, E. T., Dondolo, B. H., & Chuchu, T. (2020). Modelling fashion clothing involvement among gay consumers in South Africa. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 6(1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2020.1760415>
- Manley, A., Seock, Y., & Shin, J. (2023). Exploring the perceptions and motivations of gen Z and millennials toward sustainable clothing. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 51(4), 313-327. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fcsr.12475>

- Marx, P. (2020, July 9). *The slob-chic style of the coronavirus pandemic*. The New Yorker. Retrieved Nov 3, 2021, from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/07/20/the-slob-chic-style-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic>
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370.
- Maslow, A. H. (1969). Various meanings of transcendence. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 1(1), 55–56.
- McNeill, L. S., Hamlin, R. P., McQueen, R. H., Degenstein, L., Garrett, T. C., Dunn, L., & Wakes, S. (2020). Fashion sensitive young consumers and fashion garment repair: Emotional connections to garments as a sustainability strategy. *International Journal Consumer Studies*, 44(4), 361–368. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12572>
- McNeill, L., & Venter, B. (2019). Identity, self-concept and young women's engagement with collaborative, sustainable fashion consumption models. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 43(4), 368–378. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12516>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *COVID-19*. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved September 18, 2023, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/COVID-19>
- Mishra, P., Pandey, C. M., Singh, U., Gupta, A., Sahu, C., & Keshri, A. (2019). Descriptive statistics and normality tests for statistical data. *Annals of Cardiac Anaesthesia*, 22(1), 67–72. https://doi.org/10.4103/aca.ACA_157_18
- Monopoli, M. (2022, July 21). *Canadian fashion trends and how they influence our spending*. Abacus Data. <https://abacusdata.ca/fashion-trends/>

- Moody, W., Kinderman, P., & Sinha, P. (2010). An exploratory study: Relationships between trying on clothing, mood, emotion, personality and clothing preference. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 14(1), 161-179.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13612021011025483>
- Moore, M. (2018). *Fabulous: The rise of the beautiful eccentric*. Yale University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300235074-002>
- Nam, J., Hamlin, R., Gam, H. J., Kang, J. H., Kim, J., Kumphai, P., Starr, C., & Richards, L. (2007). Fashion-conscious behaviours of mature female consumers. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 31(1), 102-108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2006.00497.x>
- O'Cass, A. (2000). An assessment of consumers product, purchase decision, advertising and consumption involvement in fashion clothing. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 21(5), 545-576. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-4870\(00\)00018-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-4870(00)00018-0)
- O'Cass, A. (2004). Fashion clothing consumption: Antecedents and consequences of fashion clothing involvement. *European Journal of Marketing*, 38(7), 869-882.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560410539294>
- O'Cass, A., & Julian, C. (2001, December 1-5). *Fashion clothing consumption: Studying the effects of materialistic values, self-image/product-image congruency relationships, gender and age on fashion clothing involvement* [Conference paper]. Bridging marketing theory and practice: Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC) Conference, Massey University. Auckland, New Zealand.
- O'Cass, A., & McEwen, H. (2004). Exploring consumer status and conspicuous consumption. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 4(1), 25-39.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.155>

- Orpana, H., Vachon, J., Dykxhoorn, J., & Jayaraman, G. (2017). Measuring positive mental health in Canada: Construct validation of the mental health continuum-short form. *Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention in Canada*, 37(4), 123-130. <https://doi.org/10.24095/hpcdp.37.4.03>
- Paulicelli, E., Manlow, V., & Wissinger, E. (2021). *The Routledge Companion to Fashion Studies*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429264405>
- Peluchette, J. V., & Karl, K. (2007). The impact of workplace attire on employee self-perceptions. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 18(3), 345-360. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.1208>
- Petrillo, G., Capone, V., Caso, D., & Keyes, CL. (2014). The mental health continuum– short form (mhc–sf) as a measure of wellbeing in the Italian context. *Soc Indic Res*, 121(1), 291-12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-014-0629-3>
- Preuit, R., & Yan, R. N. (2016). Fashion and sustainability: Increasing knowledge about slow fashion through an educational module. *International Journal of Environmental & Science Education*, 12(5), 1139-1154. https://doi.org/10.31274/itaa_proceedings-180814-1317.
- Price, B. R., & Pettijohn, T. F. (2006). The effect of ballet dance attire on body and self-perceptions of female dancers. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 34(8), 991-998. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2006.34.8.991>
- Raunio, A.M. (1982). Favorite clothes – a look at individuals' experience of clothing, in Suojanen, U. (Ed.), *Clothing and its Social, Psychological, Cultural and Environmental Aspects*, Research Report No. 161, Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki, 179-94.

- Rahman, O., Fung, B. C. M., & Kharb, D. (2021). Factors influencing consumer choice: A study of apparel and sustainable cues from Canadian and Indian consumers' perspectives. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 14(2), 151-161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17543266.2021.1898681>
- Rajkumar, R. P. (2020). COVID-19 and mental health: A review of the existing literature. *Asian journal of psychiatry*, 52, 102066. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102066>
- Reilly, A., Catalpa, J., & McGuire, J. (2019). Clothing fit issues for trans people. *Fashion Studies*, 1(2), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.38055/fs01020>
- Reddy-Best, K. L., & Pedersen, E. L. (2015). The relationship of gender expression, sexual identity, distress, appearance, and clothing choices for queer women. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 8(1), 54-65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17543266.2014.958576>
- Reilly, A., & Barry, B. (2020). *Crossing gender boundaries: Fashion to create, disrupt and transcend*. Intellect.
- Reis, H. T., O'Keefe, S. D., & Lane, R. D. (2017). fun is more fun when others are involved. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(6), 547–557. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1221123>
- Rick, S. I., Pereira, B., & Burson, K. A. (2014). The benefits of retail therapy: Making purchase decisions reduces residual sadness. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 24(3), 373-380. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2013.12.004>
- Rocamora, A. (2017). Mediatization and digital media in the field of fashion. *Fashion Theory*, 21(5), 505-522. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2016.1173349>

- Roces, M. (2022). Dress as symbolic resistance in Asia. *Internationales Asien Forum*, 53(1), 5-12. <https://doi.org/10.11588/iqas.2022.1.18155>
- Romualdas, M., & Audrone, D. (2017). Psychological wellbeing and self-esteem in students across the transition between secondary school and university: A longitudinal study. *Psihologija*, 50(1), 21-36. <https://doi.org/10.2298/PSI160506003M>
- Rubin, G. J., & Wessely, S. (2020). The psychological effects of quarantining a city. *BMJ*, 368, 313-313. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m313>
- Ruppert-Stroescu, M., LeHew, M. L. A., Connell, K. Y. H., & Armstrong, C. M. (2015). Creativity and sustainable fashion apparel consumption: The fashion detox. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 33(3), 167-182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X15579990>
- Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological wellbeing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069-1081. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069>
- Saeed, P. S., & Yeoh, K. K. (2018). Excessive social networking sites use and online compulsive buying in young adults: The mediating role of money attitude. *Young Consumers*, 19(3), 310-327. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uleth.ca/10.1108/YC-10-2017-00743>
- Salam, M. T., Muhamad, N., & Leong, V. S. (2019). Muslim millennials' attitudes towards fashion advertising. *International Journal of Advertising*, 38(5), 796-819. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1585648>
- Samala, N., & Singh, S. (2019). Millennial's engagement with fashion brands: A moderated-mediation model of brand engagement with self-concept, involvement and knowledge. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 23(1), 2-16. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-04-2018-0045>

- Schlegel, R. J., Hicks, J. A., Arndt, J., & King, L. A. (2009). Thine own self: True self-concept accessibility and meaning in life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(2), 473-490. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014060>
- Shahbandeh, M. (2021, February 15). *Household expenditure: Clothing Canada 2019*. Retrieved October 15, 2021, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/437142/annual-household-expenditure-on-clothing-and-accessories-canada/>
- Shaughnessey, Z. (2017, May 3–May 5). *The lived experience of female breast cancer survivors, and their relationship with clothing, from a posttraumatic growth perspective*. British Psychological Society Annual Conference, Brighton, UK.
- Simmel, G. (1957). fashion. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 62(6), 541-558.
- Simmers, C. S., Parker, R. S., & Schaefer, A. D. (2014). The importance of fashion: The chinese and U.S. gen y perspective. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 27(2), 94-105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2013.864372>
- Simpson, N. J., Oliffe, J. L., Rice, S. M., Kealy, D., Seidler, Z. E., & Ogrodniczuk, J. S. (2022). Social disconnection and psychological distress in Canadian men during the covid-19 pandemic. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 16(1), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15579883221078145>
- Sindicich, D., & Black, C. (2011). An assessment of fit and sizing of men's business clothing. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 15(4), 446-463. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13612021111169942>
- Sirgy, M. J. (1982). Self-concept in consumer behavior: A critical review. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(3), 287-300. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208924>

- Smith, K. T. (2011). Digital marketing strategies that millennials find appealing, motivating, or just annoying. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 19(6), 489-499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2011.581383>
- Solomon, M. R. (1983). The role of products as social stimuli: A symbolic interactionism perspective. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 10(3), 319-329. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208971>
- Sonderskov, K.M., Dinesen, P.T., Santini, Z.I., Ostergaard, S.D., (2020). The depressive state of Denmark during the covid-19 pandemic. *Acta Neuropsychiatr*, 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1017/neu.2020.15>
- Sontag, M. S. (1979). *Clothing as an indicator of perceived quality of life* [Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University]. *Dissertation Abstracts International*.
- Sontag, M. S., & Lee, J. (2004). Proximity of clothing to self scale. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 22(4), 161-177.
- Statistics Canada. (2020). *Canadians' mental health during the covid-19 pandemic*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200527/dq200527b-eng.htm>.
- Statistics Canada. (2021). *Self-perceived mental health and mental health care needs during the covid-19 pandemic*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2021001/article/00031-eng.htm>
- Statistics Canada. (2022). *Survey on mental health and stressful events, august to december 2021*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/220520/dq220520b-eng.pdf?st=7H8YFW8>
- Stratton, S. J. (2021). Population research: Convenience sampling strategies. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 36(4), 373-374. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X21000649>

- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge University Press. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1017/CBO9780511557842>
- Suh, J., Lee, Y., & Kim, S. (2018). The effects of collaborated character's image congruence on cosmetic products evaluation: The relative importance of ideal and actual self-image congruence. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 9(2), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2018.1426482>
- Sung, J., & Yan, R. (2020). Predicting clothing behaviors of generation y men through self-esteem and body dissatisfaction. *Fashion and Textiles*, 7(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40691-019-0200-6>
- The Business of Fashion and McKinsey & Company. (2017). *The state of fashion 2017*. <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Industries/Retail/Our%20Insights/The%20state%20of%20fashion/The-state-of-fashion-2017-McK-BoF-report.pdf>
- Through Line Limited. (2022). *Helplines in Canada*. <https://findahelpline.com/ca>
- Tiggemann, M., & Lacey, C. (2009). Shopping for clothes: Body satisfaction, appearance investment, and functions of clothing among female shoppers. *Body Image*, 6(4), 285-291. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2009.07.002>
- Tiggemann, M., & Andrew, R. (2012). Clothes make a difference: The role of self-objectification. *Sex Roles*, 66(9-10), 646-654. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-0085-3>
- Valaei, N., & Nikhashemi, S. R. (2017). Generation Y consumers' buying behaviour in fashion apparel industry: A moderation analysis. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 21(4), 523-543. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-01-2017-0002>
- Van Selm, M., & N. Jankowski. (2006). Conducting online surveys. *Quality & Quantity*, 40(3): 435–456. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-005-8081-8>

- Vigolo, V., & Ugolini, M. M. (2016). Does this fit my style? The role of self-congruity in young women's repurchase intention for intimate apparel. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 20(4), 417-434. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-02-2015-0016>
- Vindegaard, N., & Benros, M. E. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic and mental health consequences: Systematic review of the current evidence. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 89, 531-542. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbi.2020.05.048>
- Wan, F., Youn, S., & Fang, T. (2001). Passionate surfers in image driven consumer culture: Fashion conscious, appearance-savvy people and their way of life. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 28, 266-274.
- Wang, X., Wang, X., Lei, J., & Chao, M. C. (2021). The clothes that make you eat healthy: the impact of clothes style on food choice. *Journal of Business Research*, 132, 787-799. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.10.063>
- Weiss, M. (2003). To be about to be. *American Demographics*, 25, 28-36.
- Westerhof, G. J., & Keyes, C. L. (2010). Mental Illness and Mental Health: The two continua model across the lifespan. *Journal of Adult Development*, 17(2), 110–119. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-009-9082-y>
- Williams, K. C. & Page, R.A. (2011). Marketing to the generations. *Journal of Behavioral Studies in Business*, 3(1), 1-17.
- Workman, J. E. (2010). Fashion consumer groups, gender, and need for touch. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 28(2), 126-139. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X09356323>
- Workman, J. & Kidd, L. (2000) Use of the need for uniqueness scale to characterize fashion consumer groups. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 18(4), 227-236. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X0001800402>

- Workman, J. E., & Lee, S. (2011a). Vanity and public self-consciousness: a comparison of fashion consumer groups and gender. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 35(3), 307-315. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2010.00934.x>
- Workman, J. E., & Lee, S. (2011b). Materialism, fashion consumers and gender: A cross-cultural study. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 35(1), 50-57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2010.00935.x>
- Workman, J. E., & Freeburg, B. W. (2009). *Dress and society*. Fairchild Publications.
- Workman, J. E., & Studak, C. M. (2006). Fashion consumers and fashion problem recognition style. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 30(1), 75-84. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2005.00451.x>
- World Health Organization. (2020, March 11). *WHO director-general's opening remarks at the media briefing on covid-19 - 11 march 2020*. <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>
- World Health Organization. (2022). *WHO coronavirus (covid-19) dashboard*. <https://covid19.who.int/>
- Wright, N. D., Claiborne, C. B., & Sirgy, M. J. (1992). The effects of product symbolism on consumer self-concept. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 19, 311.
- Young, M.E. (2020). *Learning the art of helping: Building blocks and techniques* (7th Ed.). Pearson Education Inc.

Appendix A: Views of Clothing Survey Implied Consent

Views of Clothing Survey

Thank you for your interest in completing this survey!

Title of the Study: The use of fashion as a mood enhancer and its effect on mental health in emerging adults in Canada during a global pandemic

Principle Investigator

Malgosia Wenderski
Graduate Student
Faculty of Education
Counselling Psychology
University of Lethbridge
Lethbridge, AB
Malgosia.wenderski@uleth.ca

Supervisors

Julia Wasilewski
julia.wasilewski@uleth.ca
Dr. Jaehee Jung
jajung@udel.edu

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in this research study because you live in Canada, fall in the age range of 18 to 29 years old, and are fluent in English.

Purpose of the Survey: This study seeks to investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the use of fashion as a mood enhancer and its implications on relationships to clothing and mental health.

Participation: If you wish to participate in this study, please complete the survey. The survey should take you approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary; you may decline to participate. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. Once you have completed the survey, please click on the arrow after the debriefing page to submit your answers.

Benefits: By completing this survey you are contributing to research on coping with fashion, and the developing field of fashion psychology. If you are interested in fashion, you may enjoy completing survey as it explores your fashion engagement and dressing habits. It is possible that you do not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study.

Risks: There is one potential risk with participating in this study. Participants are asked to answer questions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic which may cause psychological or emotional distress. If you experience emotional upset after completing the survey, please contact someone you trust. You may also find a helpline in your province through this site <https://findahelpline.com/ca>, or access <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-services/mental-health-get-help.html> to find local mental health services.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The information that you will share will remain strictly confidential and will be used solely for the purposes of this research. The only people who will have access to the research data is the primary researcher Malgosia Wenderski. Your answers to open-ended questions may be used verbatim in presentations and/or publications but you will not be identified. This means that your responses will be combined with other people's responses. In order to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality, we recommend that you use standard safety measures such as signing out of your account, closing your browser, and locking your screen or device when you have completed the study. Results will be published in a pooled (aggregate) format. Anonymity is guaranteed since you are not being asked to provide your name or any personal information. As your answers are anonymous and confidential, once submitted your data will be impossible to identify, retrieve, and remove.

The survey is being hosted on Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com). The researchers acknowledge that the host of the online survey (e.g., Qualtrics) may automatically collect participant data without their knowledge (i.e., IP addresses). Please note that confidentiality of data cannot be entirely guaranteed while in transit over the Internet. Although this information may be provided or made accessible, the researchers will not use or save this information. If you have privacy concerns, you can visit their privacy policy here: <https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>.

Data Storage: Data files will be encrypted in a digital folder on the researcher's computer. It will then be moved to an external hard drive and stored safely for 7 years until it will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer. Should you choose to withdraw midway through the electronic survey, simply close the browser and do not submit your responses. No responses will be included if you do so. If you have closed the browser, the completed parts of

the survey will be erased and will not be added to the dataset. Once the "continue" button is clicked after each page, you cannot go back to the previous page. Given the anonymous nature of the survey, once you have submitted your responses it will no longer be possible to withdraw them from the study.

Information about the Study Results: The research findings will be disseminated as a thesis, published peer-reviewed article, and at research conferences. Please reach out to the researcher to be informed about the study results.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or require more information about the study itself, you may contact the researcher Malgosia, Malgosia.wenderski@uleth.ca.

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta (Pro00125715). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant or how the research is being conducted you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615.

Please print a copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for reading through the form. Completion and submission of the survey means your (1) understanding the information provided about your participation in the study, and (2) you consent to participate.

Eligibility Screening

Do you consent to participate in this survey?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please indicate your age:

- ☐ 9 or younger
- ☐ 10-13
- ☐ 14-17
- ☐ 18-21
- ☐ 22-25

- 26-29
- 30-33
- 34-37
- 38 or older

Please indicate what country you live in:

- Canada
- United States
- Other:

When completing this survey, you are asked to reflect on your thoughts and experiences during the peaks of the pandemic. This study defines the peaks of the pandemic by the times where you experienced isolation, struggles adapting to the pandemic, and the multiple COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns with restrictions including stay-at-home orders, curfews, and quarantining. Please reflect on these experiences as the peaks of the pandemic.

Appendix B: Demographics

What gender do you identify with?

- ☐ cis-male
- ☐ cis-female
- ☐ transgender male
- ☐ transgender female
- ☐ non-binary
- ☐ prefer not to say

What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ Indigenous
- ☐ Arab
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Caribbean
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Filipino
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Latin American
- ☐ South Asian (e.g., Pakistani, East Indian, etc.)
- ☐ Southeast Asian (e.g., Thai, Vietnamese, etc.)
- ☐ West Asian (e.g. Iranian, Afghan, etc.)
- ☐ White
- ☐ West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan, etc.)
- ☐ Mixed ethnicity
- ☐ Other: _____

What is your employment status?

- ☐ Employed full-time
- ☐ Employed part-time
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Elementary school level or less
- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ College diploma
- ☐ Undergraduate degree
- ☐ Masters degree
- ☐ Doctorate degree

What is your current province of living?

- ☐ Canada, AB
- ☐ Canada, BC
- ☐ Canada, MB
- ☐ Canada, NB
- ☐ Canada, NL
- ☐ Canada, NS
- ☐ Canada, NT
- ☐ Canada, NU
- ☐ Canada, ON
- ☐ Canada, PE
- ☐ Canada, QC
- ☐ Canada, SK
- ☐ Canada, YT

What is the size of the city or town that you live in?

- ☐ Large Urban city (population greater than 100,000)
- ☐ Medium sized city (population between 30,000 and 99,999)
- ☐ Small town (population between 1,000 and 29,999)
- ☐ Rural town (population less than 1,000)

For the following questions, reflect on your fashion purchases and dressing habits during the peaks of the pandemic.

What is the amount of your monthly fashion purchases?

- ☐ \$0 - \$100
- ☐ \$100 - \$200
- ☐ \$300 - \$400
- ☐ \$500 +

How often do you shop in a month?

- ☐ 1-2
- ☐ 2-3
- ☐ 3-4
- ☐ 4-5
- ☐ 5-6
- ☐ 7+

What are your preferred clothing items to purchase (select all that apply)?

- ☐ Luxury fashion
- ☐ Sportswear
- ☐ Sustainable fashion
- ☐ Thrifted fashion
- ☐ Other:

What type of clothing do you prefer to wear (select all that apply)?

- ☐ Formal wear (business wear, cocktail/semi-formal)
- ☐ Dressy casual (blouse, trousers, dress)
- ☐ Casual (t-shirts, hoodies, leggings)

What is your preferred styles of clothing (select all that apply)?

- ☐ Bohemian
- ☐ Camp
- ☐ Classic
- ☐ Hipster
- ☐ Goth
- ☐ Grunge
- ☐ Preppy
- ☐ Punk
- ☐ Streetwear
- ☐ Other:

When dressing yourself during the lockdown of the pandemic, did you exhibit your preferred style at home?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

What does clothing represent to you (select all that apply)?

- ☐ Fun
- ☐ Creativity
- ☐ Identity
- ☐ Expression
- ☐ Adventure
- ☐ Coping
- ☐ Other:

Appendix C: Fear of COVID-19 Scale

For the following questions, reflect on your thoughts of COVID-19 during the peaks of the pandemic.

I am most afraid of COVID-19.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

It makes me uncomfortable to think about COVID-19.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am afraid of losing my life because of COVID-19.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

When watching news and stories about COVID-19 on social media, I become nervous or anxious.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I cannot sleep because I'm worrying about getting COVID-19.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

My heart races or palpitates when I think about getting COVID-19.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree

- Strongly agree
- (Ahorsu et al., 2020)

How often do you think about COVID-19?

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your use of clothing?

Appendix D: Fashion Involvement Scale

For the following questions, think about the extent of your interest in clothing during the peaks of the pandemic and how it impacted how you dressed.

Clothing means a lot to me

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

Clothing is a significant part of my life

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I consider clothing to be a central part of my life

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I think about clothing a lot

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

For me personally clothing is an important product

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am interested in clothing

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree

- Strongly agree

Some individuals are completely involved with clothing, attached to it, absorbed by it. For others clothing is simply not that involving. How involved are you with clothing?

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

Clothing is important to me

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I am very much involved in/with clothing

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I find clothing a very relevant product in my life

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

(O'Cass, 2000).

What are your motivations to wear clothing during the peaks of the pandemic (select all that apply)?

- ☐ To increase self-comfort
- ☐ To be fashionable
- ☐ To camouflage parts I don't like
- ☐ To increase feelings of security and self-confidence (self-assurance)
- ☐ To show my individuality

In a few words, please explain your choices:

Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the importance of clothing for you?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Slightly
- ☐ Moderately
- ☐ Very
- ☐ Extremely

In a few words, please explain your choice:

Appendix E: Women's Use of Clothing in Mood Enhancement Scale

Reflect on how clothes have been a tool for you to enhance your mood during the peaks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The right kinds of clothing often lift up my mood

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

Usually the way I dress reflects my mood.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

The way I dress at any given time influences my mood.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

It is important that I wear the clothes that make me feel good at the beginning of the day.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

I often deliberately change my clothes in order to influence my mood.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

The way I look in my clothes is important to me.

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

I consider clothing to be important in presenting myself.

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

(Kwon, 1992).

Appendix F: Proximity of Clothing to Self Scale

For the following questions, think about how clothing related to your identity and how it impacted your dressing habits during the peaks of the pandemic.

Dimension 1 Clothing in Relation to Self as Structure

What I wear is consistent with who I am.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

My clothing is a part of me, not just a simple possession.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

Clothes help me become the person I want to be.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

The clothes I wear help me to be who I am.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

My clothing reflects how I feel about myself.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am a certain type of person, and my clothes reflect that.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree

- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

When I wear clothing that reflect who I am, my mood improves.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

For the following questions, think about how clothing related to your self-esteem and how it impacted your clothing preferences COVID-19 during the peaks of the pandemic.

Dimension 4: Clothing in Relation to Self-esteem – Evaluative Process Dominant

The clothes I like to wear help me feel self-assured.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

My self-confidence increases when I dress appropriately.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

I try to buy clothing that makes me feel attractive.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

When I wear clothes that make me feel good, I am better able to talk with others.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Dressing up makes me feel important.

- Strongly disagree

- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Good quality clothes that look good on me make me feel competent.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

The way I dress is important in giving me a sense of being in control of my life.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

When I feel good about what I am wearing, then I have confidence in myself.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

(Sontag & Lee, 2004).

Appendix G: Scale of Mental Health Continuum- Short Form

Reflect on your personal experiences during the peaks of the COVID-19 pandemic. How often did you feel:

Happy.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

Interested in life.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

Satisfied with life.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

That you had something important to contribute to society.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

That you belonged to a community (like a social group, or your neighbourhood).

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

That our society is a good place, or is becoming a better place, for all people.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time

- Most of the time
- Always

That people are basically good.

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

That the way our society works makes sense to you.

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

That you liked most parts of your personality.

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

Good at managing the responsibilities of your daily life.

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

That you had warm and trusting relationships with others.

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

That you had experiences that challenged you to grow and become a better person.

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

Confident to think or express your own ideas and opinions.

- Never
- Sometimes

- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

That your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it.

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

(Keyes, 2002).

How has clothing impacted your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Clothing had a very negative effect on my mental health
- Clothing had a mildly negative effect on my mental health
- Clothing had no effect on my mental health
- Clothing had a mildly positive effect on my mental health
- Clothing had a very positive effect on my mental health

In a few words, please explain your answer:

Appendix I: Debriefing Page

Debriefing Page

Thank you for participating in the survey!

Purpose of the survey

This study seeks to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the use of clothing as a function that helps individuals enhance their mood. The study also aims to explore the relationship between clothing, mood, and mental health. The study will add to the literature that explores the intersection of fashion and mental health in emerging adults in Canada.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office at reoffice@ualberta.ca or 780-492-2615 and quote Ethics ID Pro00125715. This office is independent of the study investigators.

If you experience emotional upset after completing the survey, please contact someone you trust, or find a helpline in your province through this site <https://findahelpline.com/ca>. To access local free mental health services, please go to <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mentalhealth-services/mental-health-get-help.html>.

Appendix J: Sample Demographic Characteristics Table

Table 9

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

	N	%
Age		
18-21	307	53.3
22-25	175	30.4
26-29	94	16.3
Gender		
Cis-female	392	68.1
Cis-male	126	21.9
Non-binary	9	1.6
Transgender female	20	3.5
Transgender male	17	3.0
Prefer not to say	4	0.7
Other	6	1.2
Ethnicity		
Indigenous	7	1.2
Arab	6	1.0
Black	33	5.7
Caribbean	2	0.3
Chinese	29	5.0
Filipino	20	3.5
Japanese	2	0.3
Korean	2	0.3
Latin American	4	0.7
South Asian (e.g., Pakistani, East Indian, etc.)	50	8.7
Southeast Asian (e.g., Thai, Vietnamese, etc.)	13	2.3
West Asian (e.g. Iranian, Afghan, etc.)	3	0.5
White	351	60.9

Mixed Ethnicity	35	6.1
Prefer not to say	9	1.6
Other	10	1.7
<hr/>		
Province		
AB	308	53.6
BC	42	7.3
MB	31	5.4
NB	14	2.4
NL	1	0.2
NS	14	2.4
NT	2	0.3
NU	1	0.2
ON	128	22.6
PE	13	2.3
QC	18	3.1
SK	2	0.2
<hr/>		

Appendix K: Histograms and QQ plots

Figure 12

Histogram of Fashion Involvement Variable

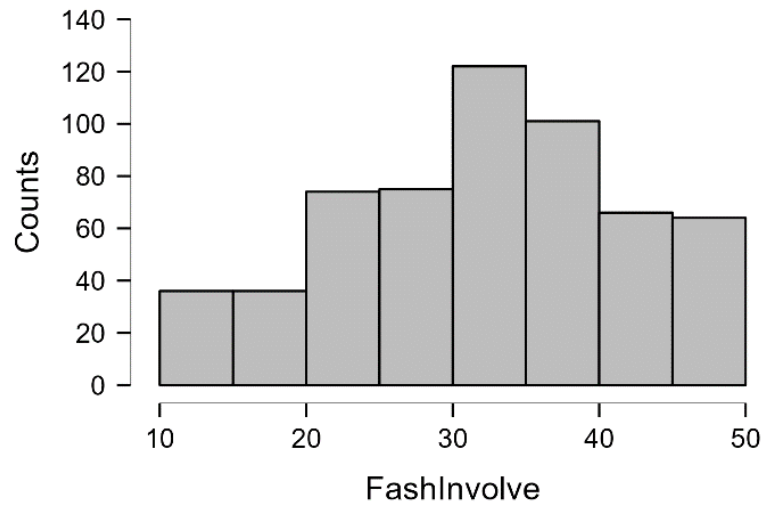


Figure 13

Histogram of Fear of COVID-19 Variable

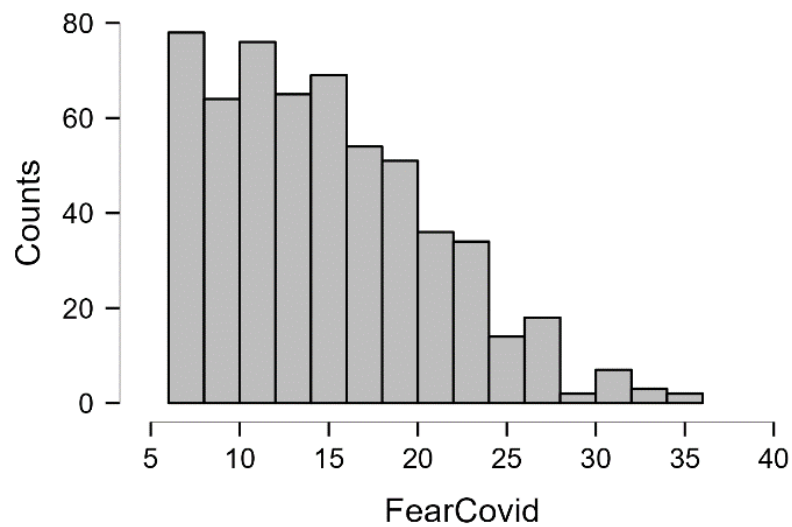


Figure 14

Histogram of Mood Enhancement Variable

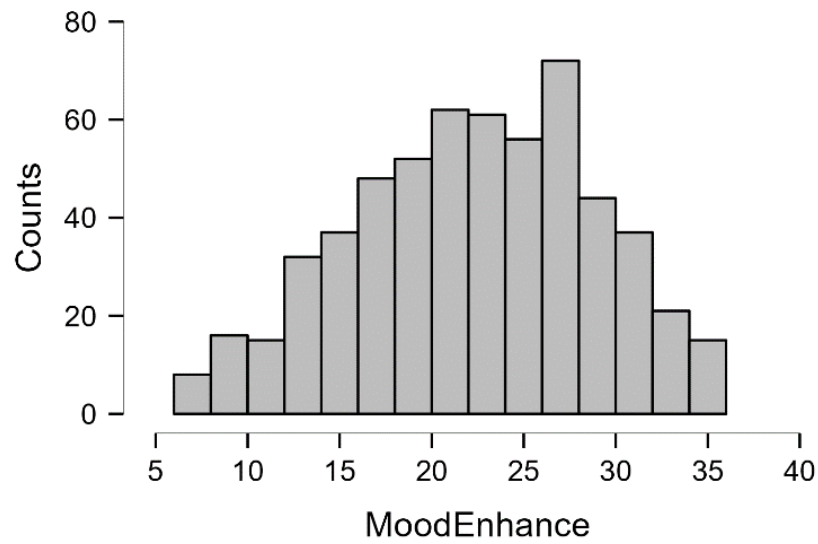


Figure 15

Histogram of Self as Structure Variable

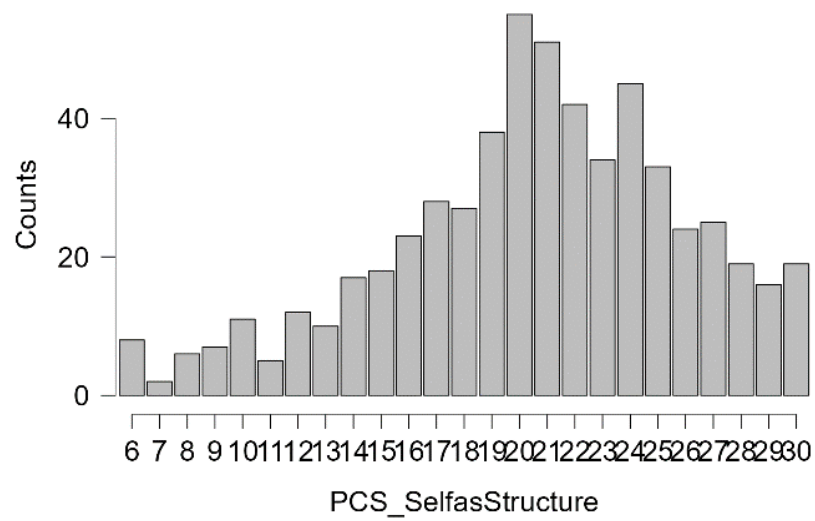


Figure 16

Histogram of Self Esteem Variable

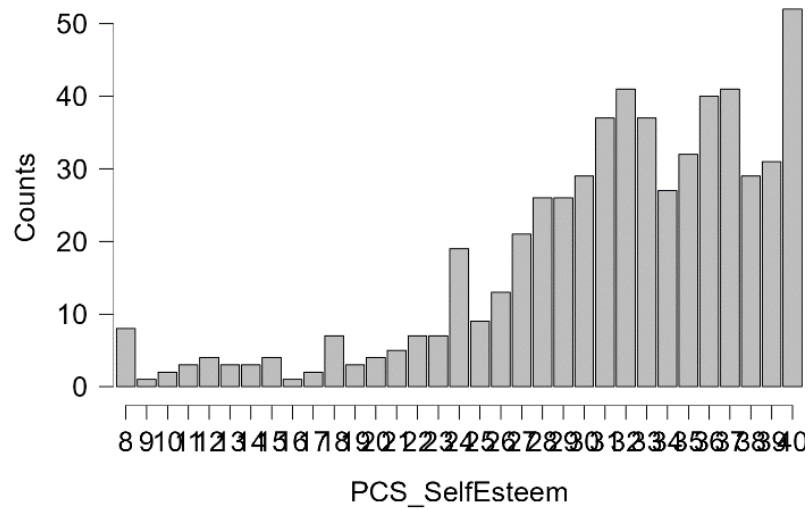


Figure 17

Histogram of Mental Health Variable

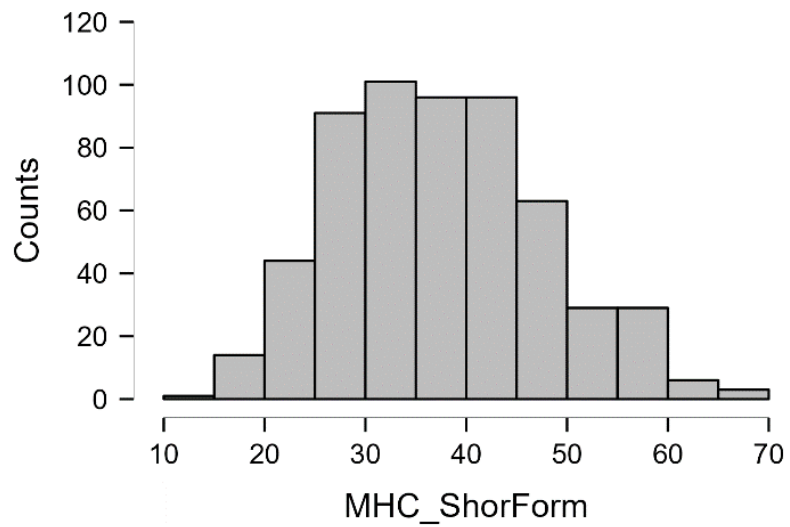


Figure 18

QQ Plot of Fashion Involvement Variable

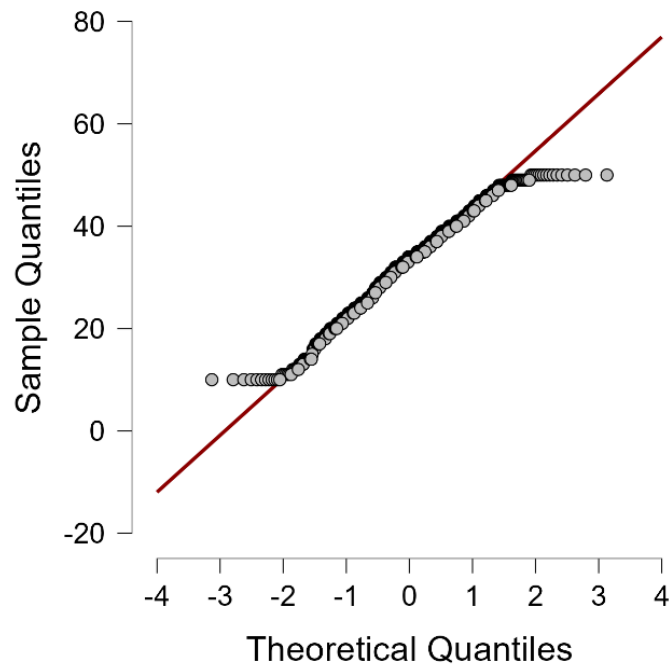


Figure 19

QQ Plot of Fear of COVID-19 Variable

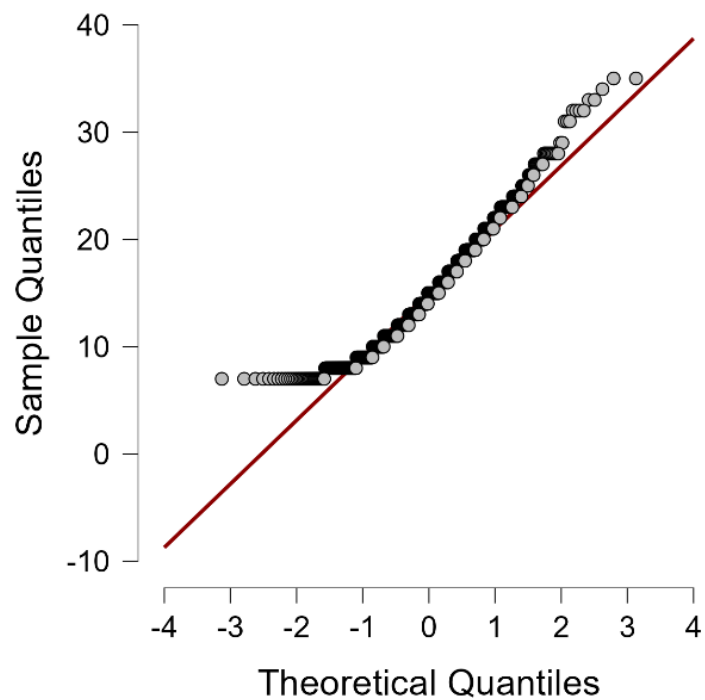


Figure 20

QQ Plot of Mood Enhancement Variable

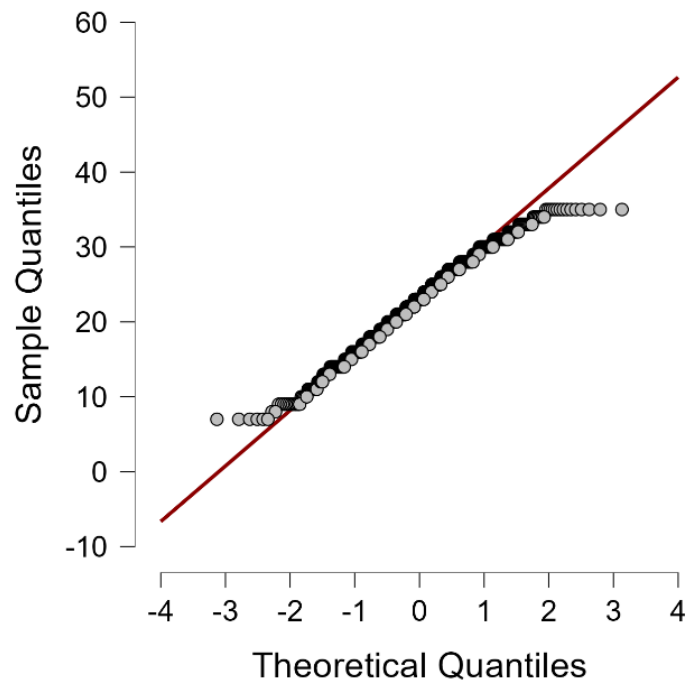


Figure 21

QQ Plot of Self as Structure Variable

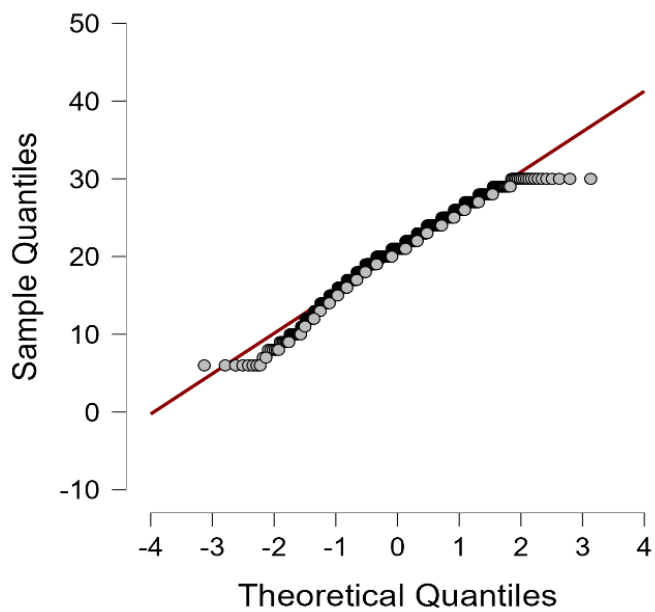


Figure 22

QQ Plot of Self Esteem Variable

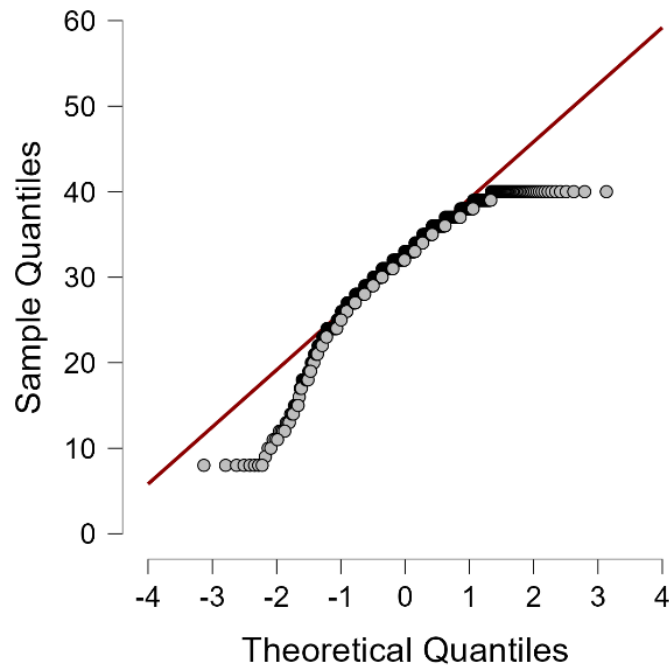
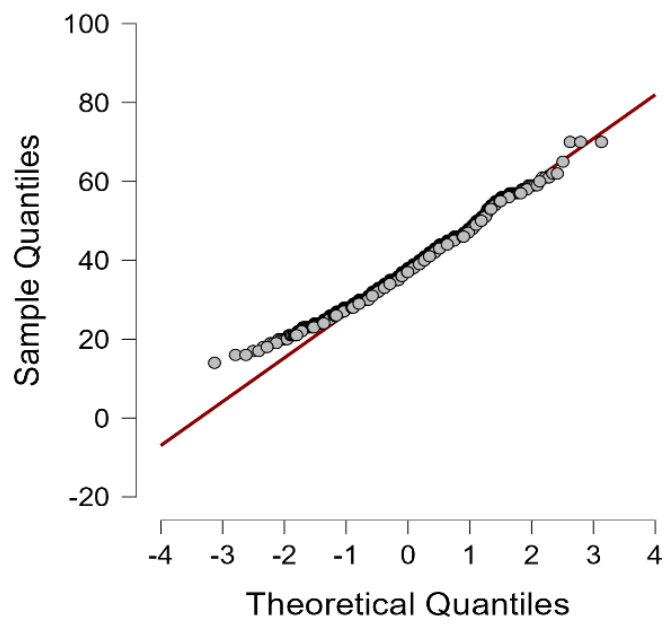


Figure 22

QQ Plot of Mental health Variable



Appendix L: Tests of Normality and Correlational Matrixes

Table 10

Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test on Study Variables

	N	Statistic	Sig.
FearCovid	566	.093	<.001
FashInvolve	566	.064	<.001
MoodEnhance	566	.070	<.001
SelfasStructure	566	.090	<.001
SelfEsteem	566	.114	<.001
MHC	566	.058	<.001

Table 11

Results of Shapiro-Wilk Test on Study Variables

	N	Statistic	Sig.
FearCovid	566	.949	<.001
FashInvolve	566	.977	<.001
MoodEnhance	566	.983	<.001
SelfasStructure	566	.973	<.001
SelfEsteem	566	.898	<.001
MHC	566	.989	<.001

Table 12*Spearman's Correlations for Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. FearCovid	—					
2. FashInvolve	0.123 *	—				
3. MoodEnhance	0.231 **	0.703 **	—			
4. SelfasStructure	0.127 *	0.696 **	0.722 **	—		
5. SelfEsteem	0.228 **	0.613 **	0.732 **	0.654 **	—	
6. MHC	-0.242 **	0.037	-0.006	0.044	-0.025	—

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Appendix M: Permission for Use of Fashion Involvement Scale

From: Aron O'Cass <aron.ocass@mq.edu.au>
Sent: Tuesday, November 23, 2021 6:08 PM
To: Wenderski, Malgosia <malgosia.wenderski@uleth.ca>
Subject: RE: Permission to Reuse Scale

Cau on: This email was sent from someone **outside of the University of Lethbridge**. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you know they are safe. Suspicious emails should be forwarded to phishing@uleth.ca.

Dear Malgosia, that sounds fine by me

Yours,

Professor Aron O'Cass

Professor of Marketing

PhD, MBus, BCom

Head - Department of Marketing

Room 253, 3 Management Drive

Macquarie University | NSW 2109 Australia

☎ 61 2 9850 8558 (office)

☎ 0417771360 (mobile)

✉: aron.ocass@mq.edu.au



CRICOS Provider 00002J.

Appendix N: Permission for Women's Use of Clothing in Mood Enhancement Scale



A Structural Model for Weight Satisfaction, Self-Consciousness and Women's Use of Clothing in Mood Enhancement

Author: Yoon-Hee Kwon, Soyeon Shim
Publication: CLOTHING AND TEXTILES RESEARCH JOURNAL
Publisher: SAGE Publications
Date: 09/01/1999

Copyright © 1999, © SAGE Publications

Gratis Reuse

Permission is granted at no cost for use of content in a Master's Thesis and/or Doctoral Dissertation, subject to the following limitations. You may use a single excerpt or up to 3 figures tables. If you use more than those limits, or intend to distribute or sell your Master's Thesis/Doctoral Dissertation to the general public through print or website publication, please return to the previous page and select 'Republish in a Book/Journal' or 'Post on intranet/password-protected website' to complete your request.

[BACK](#)

[CLOSE WINDOW](#)

Appendix O: Permission for Use of Fear of COVID-19 Scale



Griffiths, Mark <mark.griffiths@ntu.ac.uk>

Wed 12/1/2021 6:19 PM

To: Wenderski, Malgosia



Caution: This email was sent from someone **outside of the University of Lethbridge**. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you know they are safe. Suspicious emails should be forwarded to phishing@uleth.ca.

No permission is needed to use the scale. It is in the public domain. Good luck with your research

Dr Mark Griffiths
Distinguished Professor of Behavioural Addiction

Appendix P: Permission for Use of Proximity of Clothing to Self Scale



Sontag, M Suzanne <sontag@msu.edu> 

Tue 11/30/2021 8:08 PM

To: Wenderski, Malgosia




Caution: This email was sent from someone **outside of the University of Lethbridge**. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you know they are safe. Suspicious emails should be forwarded to phishing@uleth.ca.


Dear Malgosia,


Thank you for the clarification of your planned investigation. I am attaching a copy of the 39-item Proximity of Clothing to Self Scale. You have my permission to use the 39-item PCS Scale for your research. The confirmatory factor analysis that we did as published in Sontag, M. S. & Lee, J. (2004). Proximity of Clothing to Self Scale. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 22 (4), 161-177 that resulted in the 39 items gives the statistical data that this analysis produced, i.e., the standardized factor loadings of each item on its appropriate dimension as well as other statistics described in the Note at the bottom of the table.






There is no scoring manual as such for the PCS Scale. What you will need to do is calculate the sum and average of the items for each dimension and/or for the total number of scale items. You can find the assignment of an item with its appropriate dimension in the 2004 article above (Table 1).

Appendix Q: Permission Sought for MHC Scale

Permission to use MHC - SF

 You forwarded this message on Fri 5/19/2023 11:28 AM

**Wenderski, Malgosia**
To: ckeyes@emory.edu




Wed 6/22/2022 3:01 PM

Hello Dr. Keyes,

I hope you are well! My name is Malgosia. It is nice to e-meet you. I am a graduate student at the University of Lethbridge in the Master of Education program studying counselling psychology. I am pursuing a thesis that explores the use of fashion as a mood enhancer and its effects on psychological well-being in Canadian young adults during a global pandemic. May I have permission to use the Mental Health Continuum - Short Form scale in my study? The scale will be incorporated into a survey for participants to measure their well-being.

With Appreciation,

Malgosia Wenderski
"Keep your face always toward the sunshine - and shadows will fall behind you." Walt Whitman.

 Reply  Forward

Appendix R: Ethics Approval of Study

Notification of Approval

Date: November 29, 2022
Study ID: Pro00125715
Principal Investigator: [Malgosia Wenderski](#)
Study Supervisor: [Julia Wasilewski](#)
Study Title: The use of fashion as a mood enhancer and its effect on mental health in emerging adults in Canada during a global pandemic
Approval Expiry Date: November 28, 2023

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 2. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

Approved Documents:

Recruitment Materials

[Recruitment template for emailing institutions](#)

[Recruitment template to post on sites/platforms](#)

Consent Forms

[Views of Clothing Survey Debriefing Document.pdf](#)

[implied consent form](#)

Questionnaires, Cover Letters, Surveys, Tests, Interview Scripts, etc.

[Qualtrics Survey PDF.docx](#)

Protocol/Research Proposal

[Malgosia Wenderski's Thesis Proposal \(1\).pdf](#)

Any proposed changes to the study must be submitted to the REB for approval prior to implementation. A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the REB does not constitute authorization to initiate the conduct of this research. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring required approvals from other involved organizations (e.g., Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, community organizations, school boards) are obtained, before the research begins.

Sincerely,

Ubaka Ogbogu, LLB, BL, LLM, SJD
Chair, Research Ethics Board 2

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).