**Running Heading: Mental Health Issues in the Fashion Industry 1**

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Mental Health Issues in the Fashion Industry

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Abstract

 Mental health issues in the fashion industry is reflective on an image in the industry. It can either be seen in a good or a bad light. In this paper I will explain the two sides. It plays a big role of the standards in the industry. As a society in the fashion world we have high expectations to look a certain way. This can come with so much pressure that eventually leads us to have depression, anxiety, eating disorders and etc. We try to live up to this high expectations without seeing the harm in it. Even the most brilliant designers have been reflective to the harm of mental issues due to the pressure of their work. Many people wonder if the fashion industry is aware of this health issue. But as we know everything has two sides of it so that being said, the health issue is aware in the industry. It has shown a link into the creativity of the designers. It helps them to be expressive and create content for their consumers. Designers have also helped to show awareness of the health issue in their clothing which can help people relate to their work and let them understand they are not the only one out their.

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In the fashion world it is often portrayed in a light of perfection. It is a world full of the glamourous looks and extravagant designs. But this all takes a lot of time to put everything together. Something many of us may not see, is the behind the scenes of the wild world. The fashion industry is a fast paced world that bring a lot of pressure. An image in the industry controls a big part of it. Due to the image it can affect a lot of people mental health.

 “A million girls will kill for this job” is a statement known by Emily from the famous movie The Devil Wears Prada. It is a statement that represent the fashion industry perfectly. It is a competitive field that takes a lot to get in but also takes a lot to maintain. In this article it states

“In talking to any fashion professional, they will acknowledge that the industry is tough. There are long hours, stresses and pressures. The "fashionista" perceptions are idealistic at best and injurious and undermining at worst” (Flynn, K. 2018). Due to the pressure of the work it starts to mess with the psychological part of a person in the field. Working in the creative field it becomes intensive and aggressive which changes your perception in many ways. It can make you feel down on who you really are.

 As of now the fashion world has changed its image but the intensive labor of the industry still continues. Mental health is an important topic but business in the fashion industry is all based on image so the pressure is really high to create an appealing image. In this article it states “Products of the fashion industry, including clothing, accessories, magazines, campaigns, and more, are likely to reflect and radiate positively appealing sentiments because they’re all commodities that need to be sold to the consumer. Designers are not going to make clothes that

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make their consumers feel cheerless and the business professionals will not push low-selling strategies. Products of fashion are sold when consumers can agree, find values and feel content with what they see” (Davis, S., & Ihnatova, N. 2018). As it stated in that article, value and content is an important part of the image to provide in the industry. Many consumers look upon this as a role model to lead in their life.

 Based on the media in the fashion world, the image has changed but beauty still hold its spot. Specifically many women holds this unrealistic standards to their body. “Society has created an ideal body image for women throughout various time periods and the relevance of that issue holds a powerful connection to problems facing body image in the fashion world. Mair argues, “A woman’s experience of her own body arises from how she believes it compares with the magnified images of women that surround her on billboards, on television, in films, magazines and newspapers. This statement authentically expresses the mentality brought out by women in societies all over the world when comparing their own body to unrealistic standards. This ideology of body image all starts in the minds of young girls and boys who are enveloped in a world full of impractical image standards” (Cox, A. 2016). Basically this states that our mental illness evolve on our image of our body. We live in a society where we compare our body to an impractical standard because what is naturally presented to us, has about million people that worked on it. In our minds we define beauty in one way which is what looks nice not based on what is healthy for us.

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Enough talking about the perception fashion gives us because the designers who are in the field are also harmed by this too. It becomes dangerous to work in a fast paced field because you need to worry about your business 24/7 all the time. You need to have a new idea every minute because in a designer shoes there's many seasons that needs a whole marketing plan. For example it states “Designer John Galliano, who has worked with companies like Givenchy and Christian Dior as well as creating his own label, expressed feeling the pressure of production in an interview with Vanity Fair, “I had all these voices in my head, asking so many questions. I was afraid to say no, I thought it showed weakness…I was going to end up in a mental asylum or six feet under”(Designed By Depression.2019, September). Presented to the world as high notch designer it puts them in this box to feel like they should not express their emotions because it is a sign of weakness. These designers lived in a judgemental world where they needed approval from their consumers to proceed in their business.

 In 2010 we lost a legend due to depression in the designer world known as Alexander McQueen. His work was always extravagant. He always had a story to tell in his work. After realizing his mental health status, his work was more clear to many people. Every dark secret he was hiding from the world was visualized in his runways. After presenting each season, he set the standards higher and higher for him. It started to become intensive which interacting with his personal life. He had no line between because the business was taking over. He had an image to maintain and that was his main goal.

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Another designer that was affected with depression was Kate Spade. After her passing it was a big eye opener in the industry. This was the most shocking thing to hear since Alexander McQueen death. Kate Spade has always created this bright vibrant colors in her brand. She was always seen happy and cheerful. Her brand always represented positive messages so depression would be the last thing to come to mind regarding her death. “She was actively seeking help for depression and anxiety over the last five years, seeing a doctor on a regular basis and taking medication for both depression and anxiety, her husband Andy Spade said in a statement to The New York Times. Spade’s sister also spoke out to news reports: She was always a very excitable little girl and I felt all the stress/pressure of her brand may have flipped the switch where she eventually became full-on manic depressive” (Press, K. 2019). Based on the statement made by her sister her mentality started to become highly effective when it came to her business. The combination of the pressure and expectations of her work started to build onto her.

 These two designers, Alexander McQueen and Kate Spade are completely different designers which reflected on mental health issues differently. They both are guilty of hiding their mental health from the public but through their work it was expressive in a unique way. Alexander McQueen was more of this dark person who lived in a fantasy world. Whereas Kate Spade created her things to be more brightly colorful. They both were able to use their platform to relate their life to their work.

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Due to all of this designer pressure in the industry, would we be able to get the same craft without it? Designers struggles with a lot of heat when working on its line but working in the field you love, it is only right to take it to the next level. It is your job to try to change the standard in the industry. To create perfection it takes a lot of time but it gives you a high value in your name. According to my research about 25 percent of creative people most likely travel with mental illness. “Creatives naturally think more about small details, making connections and replaying things in their mind to better understand them. This way of thinking aids them in coming up with new and innovative ideas.The thought pattern can become a problem, however, when applied to other areas of life, such as painful or stressful experiences. Playing a negative event over and over in your mind and wondering what you could have done differently is bound to lead to feelings of hopelessness and depression. Countless psychologists and psychiatrists agree that depression is amplified in those who tend to ruminate on their thoughts. So, the basic fact that rumination helps in creative thinking is also the factor that more readily exposes someone to depression” (Bobb, B. 2018). Based on research it has shown a link between creativity and mental illness. Designers mainly create good work when they are subjectively in a certain lifestyle.

 Alexander McQueen is a great example of showing creativity. In one of his runway he made a tribute to his friend Isabella blow. Through his grieves, he was able to develop a line to represent her proudly. Each of the garment was detailed out from head to toe. He also dedicate

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some of his early collection based on his childhood trauma. He was raped by his brother in law because of his homesexuality. “The trauma haunted several of his early collections, which featured models smeared with blood, or criss-crossed with tyre prints” (Lewis, H. 2015).

 Mental illness has shown a link into the creativity in collection of designs by these designers. It helps the designers to think a different way and create better content. Relating its personal life to the runway show help to create content. As for the well being of the designer they have control on what to do. Designers are the ones who create their own pathway in their career. For example in this article it states “Similarly, Tunisian designer Azzedine Alaïa makes his own rules relative to releasing collections. Alaïa refuses to show according to fashion week’s calendar, instead he presents his collections only when he feels that they are complete. Scottish fashion designer, Christopher Kane, believes success in fashion lies not in the pace of producing collections but in an alliance between the creative and commercial cannons. Kane thinks that more business-oriented people should work in the fashion industry” (Designed By Depression. 2019).

 Even though the mental illness leads into the creativity of the fashion awareness. It is very important in the industry. After these tragic death due to suicidal, fashion designers wanted to make more of an awareness on it. But as we know this it is a very sensitive subject so it needs to be thought out very carefully. A fashion statement piece representing mental illness want to be able to relate to people. Based on Kenneth Cole expertise he says “It’s hard to really make a

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meaningful social impact today without offending anybody,” Cole told WWD at an event in his Bond Street store, where he was readying for a panel on mental health in early May. “With social media today, those minority voices are very loud. You have to just believe in what you’re doing and stay true to it and not relent” (Acollins.wwd. 2019)

This doesn't stop the fashion awareness. Designers have been influence to motivate each other in their line. To the consumers and the designers depression is a real thing. It is extremely important to take note of it in the industry. Beside including it into the clothing to motivate people, an app has been developed. This app is seeking help from therapy. The good thing about this is that you can stay anonymous. You can be Tom Ford expressing your problems but they would never know who you are. This way you can receive treatment and keep low key profile of your mental issues.

As you can see the mental issues can be in many different ways.“The fashion industry focuses on the superficial,” Van Dahlen said, “It’s about what we wear, how we look, how we act.” She explains how people who have a vulnerable mental state are more prone to developing mental health disorders like depression and anxiety in creative fields because their work is so closely associated with their value, worth and identity” Designed By Depression. (2019). It is so easy to get lost in a fantasy world like the fashion industry. In the world of creativity it is expected to have a meltdown but there's a lot of help to receive out their. Fashion designers have been able to include awareness on this matter**.**

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Overall image plays an important role in the mental health issues in the fashion industry. The intense work environment can cause pressure but it helps to create creativity. When you highly value your craft it becomes stressful to maintain perfection. Your value in your work becomes important and your standard starts to change in the society. Living up to the standard can be looked upon as a negative thing but we live in a world of criticism. Their will always be something wrong with your image until you love yourself. According to my research mental issue cause suicidal because we create these unrealistic standards to our life without realizing an ideal image is not all done by one person. Making something look nice takes hours to be done so realistically one person can not get the same results. Especially as haute couture designers they are on a high prestige platform that needs to detail everything.

Based on my research I concluded that the fashion industry mental health issues help to develop creativity. Creative people have long been associated with mental illness. But the real question is, does the creative industry attract such individuals or does it create them? Alexander McQueen was a perfect example to show how his emotions express into his work. He knew how to detail his work based on his lost friend. He was always this detail oriented person but using his emotions help to boost his designs. As of the fashion industry today it has been more aware of mental health issues. It helps to send a positive message out and create good content for their consumers.

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