



## Life satisfaction and depression associated with a fashion designer's creative design process

Ja Young Hwang & Kim Hahn  
Kent State University, Kent, OH

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**Introduction.** According to National Institute of Mental Health, an estimate of 16.2 million people in the US working-age population, representing 6.7 % of all U.S. adults, have experienced depression, and this trend has continued to increase over the years (NIMH, 2016). Previous research indicates that job satisfaction often extends into other areas such as life satisfaction, and vice versa (Iverson & Maguire, 1999). With the increased number of depressed individuals in US, it is crucial to understand the relationships between life satisfaction and depression that affect passion and job performance. Unfortunately, relatively little is known about the exact effects of life satisfaction and depression level on creative activities, especially those related to designer passion and performance. Designing is a creative process requiring designers to be not only creative but innovative and intuitive. Success in design is often led by a designer's ability to identify solutions to design problems (Regan, Kincaide, & Sheldon, 1997). Will designers who are happy with life exhibit successful design, or will designers dealing with depressive episodes experience difficulty in engaging in their creative design process? The aim of this study is to understand the effects of life satisfaction and depression level of fashion designers on their perception of effort, challenges, and harmonious passion during their creative design process.

**Methods.** Using an on-line survey, data were collected from a convenient sample of U.S. professionals in the fashion industry. The survey invitation link was shared in SNS groups (LinkedIn, Facebook) and professional organization websites, where participation was voluntary. Four instruments were measured on 7-point scales: (1) *fashion designer's creative design process*-developed by one of the researchers, (2) *satisfaction with life scale* (Diener, et al, 1985), (3) *harmonious passion* (Vallerand, et.al., 2003) (4) *depression measure* (Spitzer, Kroenke, & Williams, 1999). The results were based on a sampling of 180 fashion designers who either have worked or are currently working as designers. The sample population was 46.7% male, 56.6% Caucasian/White, and 49.5% had completed a 4-year college degree. We employed One-Way ANOVA to determine whether there were statistically-significant differences in fashion designers' iterative design processes, effort, challenges involved, and harmonious passion between the means of two high- and low-score groups with respect to life satisfaction and depression level of fashion designers.

**Results.** The one-way ANOVA revealed that the high life satisfaction group placed significantly higher importance on all **iterative design processes** (*processes occurring simultaneously with psychological aspects of designer's creation*) such as 'identifying problems and opportunities' (mean\_high life satisfaction=4.14 vs. low life satisfaction=3.36,  $p<.001$ ), 'brainstorming and sketching' (Mean high life satisfaction=4.20 vs. low life satisfaction=3.23,  $p<.001$ ) than the low life satisfaction group. With respect to **effort and challenge** during the design process, the high life satisfaction group invested significantly more effort when engaging in design (mean\_high life satisfaction=5.48 vs. low life satisfaction=4.83,  $p<.001$ ) and felt significantly more challenged during the design process (mean\_high life satisfaction=5.34 vs. low life satisfaction=4.92,  $p<.05$ ) than the

low score groups. However, while the low depression-level group exerted significantly more effort (mean\_high DL=5.39 vs. low DL=5.04,  $p<.05$ ), there were no significant differences between two groups in terms of feeling challenged during the design process. With respect to **harmonious passion** (*passion that emerges when an activity is freely incorporated into one's identity and harmonious with other aspects of the one's life*), both high life satisfaction and low depression groups exhibited a significantly higher level of harmonious passion for two items: 'This activity is in harmony with the other activities in my life' (mean\_high life satisfaction=4.00 vs. low life satisfaction=3.59,  $p<.001$ ; mean\_high DL=3.65 vs. low DL=4.00,  $p<.01$ ) and 'The new things that I discover with my design process allow me to appreciate it even more' (mean\_high life satisfaction=4.11 vs. low life satisfaction=3.54,  $p<.001$ ; mean\_high DL=3.63 vs. low DL=4.10,  $p<.01$ ), but some differences were found between life satisfaction and depression level in terms of harmonious passion. For example, for the statement 'This activity allows me to live a variety of experiences', the low depression group had a significantly high score than the high depression group (mean\_high DL=4.08 vs. low DL=3.73,  $p<.05$ ) while no significant differences were found between the high and low life satisfaction groups. On the other hand, with respect to the statement 'If I could I would only do my activity', while the high and low life satisfaction groups had significant differences (mean\_high life satisfaction=3.65 vs. low life satisfaction=3.15,  $p<.05$ ), no significant difference was found between high and low depression groups.

**Conclusion.** The results indicate that overall, compared to the highly-depressed, low life satisfaction group, those in the low-depressed, high life satisfaction group, tend to exert more effort, have higher harmonious passion, and value their work more highly, a result consistent with previous research findings (Harvey, et al., 2011). Exploring how life satisfaction and healthy mental state affect fashion professionals' creative design processes will help in understanding fashion designers' creative processes and in increasing their performance.

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