

## Legal, Forensic Linguistics, Social, and Psychological Dimensions of Hate Speech in Fashion.

- **Dr. Mokhtar BOULAARES<sup>1</sup>, Prof. DJEMAI MAHMOUD**

**BOULAARES<sup>2</sup>\***

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mokhtar BOULAARES, Associate  
Professor in Private Law (Maitre de  
conference B). College of Law and Political  
Science. University of Martyr Sheikh Larbi  
Tebessi, Tebessa, Algeria  
[mokhtar.boulaares@univ-tebessa.dz](mailto:mokhtar.boulaares@univ-tebessa.dz)  
[boulaaresmokhtar@yahoo.fr](mailto:boulaaresmokhtar@yahoo.fr)  
+213 696 915 918  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-8025-5191>

<sup>2</sup> Prof. DJEMAI MAHMOUD  
BOULAARES, Professor of Applied  
Linguistics. Department of Language  
Preparation for Non-Native Speakers of  
Arabic. College of Languages, King Saud  
University. KSA  
[dboulaares@ksu.edu.sa](mailto:dboulaares@ksu.edu.sa)  
[boulaares.djemai@gmail.com](mailto:boulaares.djemai@gmail.com)  
[boulaares.d@live.fr](mailto:boulaares.d@live.fr)  
+966 53 843 9104  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4292-517X>

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### Abstract:

This study investigates the use of clothing as a medium for incitement and hate speech through an interdisciplinary lens combining legal, forensic linguistic, sociological, and psychological perspectives. It explores how provocative slogans and symbols printed on apparel function as mobile expressions of ideological violence, often concealed under the guise of humour, fashion, or free expression. The legal analysis compares international, European, American, and Arab approaches to regulating hate messages on clothing. The study applies forensic linguistic tools to uncover implicit incitement and symbolic aggression embedded in slogans. Psychosocial dimensions are examined to assess both the motivations of wearers and the emotional harm inflicted upon targeted individuals. The paper concludes with policy recommendations addressing legal reform, corporate

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\* Corresponding Author.

accountability, educational interventions, and psychological support. It argues for a comprehensive societal response that treats hate-coded apparel not as a trivial provocation but as a potent form of symbolic violence requiring legal, cultural, and therapeutic counteraction.

**Keywords:** Hate Speech; Forensic Linguistics; Symbolic Violence; Legal Frameworks; Radicalisation; Clothing Discourse.

### الملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة التداخل بين القانون واللسانيات الجنائية في معالجة ظاهرة استخدام الملابس كوسيلة لنشر رسائل تحريضية وخطاب كراهية. تركز الورقة على تحليل الأبعاد القانونية واللغوية لهذه الظاهرة، مسطرة الضوء على التحديات التي تواجه الأطر التشريعية في التعامل مع التعبيرات البصرية واللغوية المثيرة للجدل على الملابس، فمن الناحية القانونية، تستعرض الدراسة كيفية تعامل الأنظمة القضائية مع الرسائل التحريضية المعروضة على الملابس، وتناقش مدى كفاية القوانين الحالية في مواجهة هذه الظاهرة. كما تقترح تعزيز الأطر القانونية لتشمل هذا النوع من التعبير، مع الحفاظ على التوازن بين حرية التعبير وضرورة حماية المجتمع من التحريض على الكراهية والعنف، أما من الجانب اللساني، فتعتمد الورقة على منهجيات اللسانيات الجنائية لتحليل الشعارات والرموز المستخدمة على الملابس، وتفكيك معانيها الضمنية والسياقية. توضح الدراسة كيف يمكن للخبراء اللغويين أن يساهموا في تفسير هذه الرسائل وتقديم الأدلة في السياقات القانونية، وتخلص الدراسة إلى ضرورة تبني نهج متعدد التخصصات يجمع بين القانون واللسانيات لمواجهة هذه الظاهرة بفعالية، وتوصي بتطوير سياسات قانونية واضحة وتدريب الجهات المعنية على التعرف على الرسائل التحريضية وتفسيرها ضمن سياقاتها الثقافية والاجتماعية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** خطاب الكراهية؛ التحريض؛ اللسانيات الجنائية؛ حرية التعبير؛ التشريعات القانونية؛ الرموز البصرية

## 1. Introduction

In contemporary societies, the use of clothing as a medium for broadcasting provocative, politically charged, or hateful messages has seen a notable surge. T-shirts, hoodies, and jackets increasingly feature slogans or symbols that aim—either subtly or explicitly—to incite hostility, propagate ideological extremism, or provoke social unrest. This phenomenon raises intricate legal, linguistic, and sociocultural questions. Legally, it challenges existing frameworks that attempt to reconcile the right to freedom of expression with the prohibition of hate speech. Linguistically, it invites scrutiny of the semiotic and pragmatic implications of such slogans. Socially and psychologically, it implicates processes of identity construction, symbolic aggression, and the normalisation of violence through wearable discourse.

Furthermore, the amplification effect of social and digital media has both accelerated the dissemination of these messages and complicated regulatory

responses. This study, therefore, adopts a multidisciplinary analytical framework to interrogate the boundaries of lawful expression in the context of inciting apparel and to propose strategies for mitigating the misuse of clothing as a platform for hate.

## **2. Methodology**

This research adopts a multidimensional, interdisciplinary methodology that synthesises legal, forensic linguistic, sociological, and psychological approaches. From a legal perspective, the study conducts a comparative analysis of international and regional legal frameworks, focusing particularly on European, American, and Arab legal systems, regarding freedom of expression and the criminalisation of hate speech. Particular emphasis is placed on how these legal systems address inciting slogans and symbols when displayed on clothing, and whether current laws sufficiently encompass such forms of expression.

On the linguistic front, the study employs methodologies from forensic linguistics, including discourse analysis and forensic text analysis, to examine the slogans inscribed on clothing. These analytical tools allow for the interpretation of implicit meanings, intentions, and sociocultural implications that may not be overtly articulated (Mintowati & Dasion, 2019, December).

The sociological dimension of the study is informed by theories of social influence and social identity. These frameworks help elucidate how inciting slogans gain traction, function as markers of group belonging, and contribute to social polarisation and exclusion. The analysis extends to the role of mass and social media in both amplifying and resisting these messages.

The psychological analysis focuses on the mechanisms of symbolic violence, radicalisation, and emotional manipulation. It incorporates insights from colour psychology, symbolic cognition, and affective response theory to assess how certain symbols and messages may trigger aggressive behaviour or fear responses in observers.

The study draws upon a wide corpus of legal texts, scholarly literature, case law, and incident reports. Where appropriate, comparative tables are included to summarise key differences in legal treatment and institutional responses across jurisdictions.

## **3. The Legal Framework Governing Inciting Slogans on Clothing**

Freedom of expression is enshrined as a fundamental right in most constitutional and international legal instruments. Nevertheless, this right is not absolute, particularly when it conflicts with the rights, safety, or dignity of others. Within this context, inciting slogans on clothing are defined as expressions that either explicitly or implicitly advocate hatred, violence, or discrimination against individuals or groups based on protected characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation.

The central legal question addressed here is whether a slogan printed on a T-shirt or garment constitutes protected expression under freedom of speech or whether it qualifies as incitement warranting legal restriction or prosecution.

### **3.1. International and Regional Instruments**

Under international law, Article 20(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) places a clear obligation upon states to prohibit "any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence." This provision sets a binding precedent for national legislatures to criminalise hate speech that meets certain thresholds. The Rabat Plan of Action (2012), developed within the United Nations framework, offers detailed guidelines on assessing incitement. It stresses the importance of evaluating the context of the expression, the identity and intent of the speaker, the content of the message, its dissemination method, and the likelihood of imminent harm before imposing criminal sanctions (Parmar, 2015).

In Europe, a more restrictive approach to hate speech is often taken compared to the United States. Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights guarantees freedom of expression but permits its limitation when deemed "necessary in a democratic society" to protect public order and the rights of others. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has repeatedly upheld state sanctions against expressions of hatred, even those not calling directly for violence, on the basis that incitement to hatred falls outside the scope of protected speech. For instance, in *Vejdeland v. Sweden* (2012), the Court upheld the conviction of individuals who distributed homophobic leaflets in a school, deeming the act an infringement on the dignity of the targeted group (Thayer, 2013).

Several European states have adopted specific laws banning certain hate-related symbols and slogans. Germany, for example, prohibits Nazi symbols under Article 86a of its Penal Code, including their display on clothing. In Sweden, while neo-Nazi assemblies are legally permitted, wearing racist symbols or inciting slogans in public demonstrations is prohibited as a form of "agitation against an ethnic group" (United States Department of State, 2016, April 13).

These examples highlight a shared regional consensus: that inciting slogans on clothing may be restricted or criminalised when they threaten public peace, infringe upon the dignity of protected groups, or constitute implicit incitement to hatred.

### **3.2.The United States Approach**

The United States adopts a markedly different stance, placing a strong emphasis on the protection of speech under the First Amendment. The landmark case *Brandenburg v. Ohio* (1969) established a high threshold for restricting incitement: speech must be "directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action" and must be "likely to incite or produce such action" in order to lose its constitutional protection (*Brandenburg v. Ohio*, 2009). Consequently, a violent or offensive slogan on a T-shirt would not, in itself, constitute a criminal act unless it is clearly linked to immediate unlawful behaviour.

Thus, hate speech—no matter how egregious—is generally not criminalised at the federal level unless it meets the criteria of true threats or fighting words. For instance, a T-shirt bearing a racist slogan may be legally protected unless it directly incites violence or presents an imminent threat. There are, however, exceptions in sensitive environments such as schools. In a notable 2006 case, a federal court upheld a school's decision to ban a student from wearing a T-shirt that read "Homosexuality is shameful," reasoning that the slogan could cause psychological harm and disrupt the educational environment (Reuters, 2006, May 2). The ruling underscored that even within the American free speech paradigm, contextual harm, particularly in settings involving minors, may justify certain restrictions.

### **3.3.Arab Jurisdictions**

In contrast to Western liberal legal traditions, many Arab countries adopt more prohibitive approaches to inciting expressions, especially those perceived to threaten national unity or religious harmony. Laws in several jurisdictions explicitly criminalise religious or sectarian hate speech, often with severe penalties. For instance, the United Arab Emirates' 2015 Anti-Discrimination Law imposes stringent penalties—including up to fifteen years' imprisonment and heavy fines—for acts that promote hatred or discrimination (Khodeir & Marshall, 2015).

In Egypt, in response to politically charged slogans used by groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the legislature tightened penalties for inciting unauthorised protests, making such acts punishable by up to fifteen years in prison and large financial fines (*Youm7*, 2020). Jordan criminalises the promotion of sectarian or

racial discord under its Penal Code. In all these examples, wearing slogans deemed to incite discord in public spaces is treated as a serious criminal offence.

### **3.4. Corporate Liability and Ethical Responsibility**

An often-overlooked dimension of this legal discourse involves the responsibility of clothing manufacturers and retailers. In common law jurisdictions, companies are typically not held liable for the expressive content of garments unless it contravenes specific prohibitions (e.g., symbols of proscribed organisations). Nevertheless, public backlash has forced many brands to self-regulate. In 2013, Amazon faced global outrage after selling shirts bearing the slogan “Keep Calm and Rape...,” leading to the eventual bankruptcy of the manufacturer, Solid Gold Bomb (Sidell, 2013; Solid Gold Bomb, 2024).

Other incidents have prompted companies like Abercrombie & Fitch to withdraw racially offensive products. In countries such as the UK, the Public Order Act 1986 may be used to prosecute vendors who intentionally distribute clothing that incites racial hatred. There is an emerging trend towards corporate codes of conduct that prohibit the promotion of hate messages, driven by both legal risk and reputational concerns.

In Synthesis, the legal treatment of inciting slogans on clothing varies considerably across jurisdictions. While U.S. law tends to favour expressive liberty even in controversial cases, European and Arab legal frameworks often draw clearer lines where expression morphs into incitement. This divergence poses a legal and regulatory challenge in the digital age, where an inciting garment photographed in one country can be disseminated globally within seconds.

To address these challenges, this study recommends harmonising national laws with international human rights standards, developing corporate codes of ethical conduct, and holding distributors accountable for the circulation of hate-related merchandise. A clearly defined and equitably enforced legal foundation is essential for curbing this growing form of symbolic incitement.

## **4. Forensic Linguistic Analysis of Inciting Slogans**

Forensic linguistics, a subfield of applied linguistics, is devoted to the analysis of language as it pertains to legal contexts. It plays an increasingly vital role in courtrooms and investigations by elucidating the meaning, intent, and implications of disputed expressions. In the case of inciting slogans on clothing, forensic linguistic expertise becomes instrumental in answering crucial questions: Does the slogan constitute direct incitement to violence? Can it be interpreted innocently, or

is it inherently aggressive? Does it contain coded language or embedded symbolism that encourages hostility or dehumanisation?

A fundamental technique in this domain is contextual analysis. Words that appear benign in isolation may acquire inciting or inflammatory character within specific socio-political contexts. For example, the word “purge” on a T-shirt may, in a neutral setting, refer to sports or health, yet within an ethnically charged environment, it may connote genocidal rhetoric. The forensic linguist thus considers the broader communicative situation and historical associations of the language used.

Further analytical methods include lexical and semantic analysis, which identify derogatory or racially charged terminology embedded within slogans. For instance, a term perceived as neutral by one group may carry violent connotations for another. Speech act theory is also applied to determine whether the slogan performs a directive illocutionary act, such as a command, exhortation, or provocation. A phrase like “Kill the enemy” is an unequivocal directive, while others may rely on metaphor or sarcasm to veil inciting content.

This is where pragmatic analysis, particularly of implicature, becomes crucial. Slogans may appear humorous or ironic on the surface, but function as carriers of veiled hatred. For example, an ostensibly satirical statement may mask serious intent to incite discrimination or exclusion, especially when decoded within the community of intended recipients.

Another advanced technique involves intertextual comparison: forensic linguists may compare the slogan in question with known rhetoric from extremist organisations or hate-based propaganda. If identical or near-identical phrasing is found in the publications or statements of known hate groups, this provides compelling evidence of ideological alignment and deliberate intent.

Of special relevance is the identification of coded language and dog whistles—expressions designed to evade scrutiny from the general public while being intelligible to in-group members. Examples include numerals such as “14/88” (referencing white supremacist ideology), or ambiguous symbols such as the Celtic cross or stylised skulls. These may not appear threatening to an uninformed observer, yet they function as potent emblems of hate within extremist circles.

Notably, intentions behind such slogans are often concealed under claims of humour, irony, or artistic licence. Here, the forensic linguist's role is to dismantle such defences by demonstrating that the language employed cannot be credibly

interpreted as innocent or apolitical. For instance, pragmatic-semantic analysis has proven effective in revealing latent aggression and discriminatory intent beneath superficially ambiguous expressions (Mintowati & Dasion, 2019, December).

The forensic linguist's testimony in court can be decisive in establishing whether a slogan was likely to be interpreted by the average reader as a call to violence or hatred. Conversely, linguistic analysis can also exonerate individuals wrongfully accused of incitement when slogans are taken out of context or misinterpreted by non-experts.

In addition to direct incitement, forensic linguistics concerns itself with implicit and inferential hate speech. Overt statements such as "Exterminate Group X" are legally actionable, but more oblique references—e.g., invoking coded historical quotes or indirect threats—require expert deconstruction. Tools from critical discourse analysis (CDA) are particularly useful in these cases, revealing how banal-seeming language may operate within a broader ideology of exclusion or symbolic violence.

The analysis of sarcasm, parody, and double entendre is also central. Researchers such as Reyes & Saldívar (2022) have shown how hate speech may be cloaked in mockery or humour to avoid direct culpability while achieving similar psychological and ideological impact. Forensic linguists thus must account for tone, implied meaning, and shared cultural references to unmask the latent hostility.

Moreover, comparative linguistic profiling can reveal affiliations between the speaker or designer and extremist movements. If the linguistic style or symbolic vocabulary aligns with known extremist corpora, this can establish ideological intent or even authorship in cases of anonymous production.

Lastly, linguistic experts contribute to evaluating criminal responsibility by clarifying whether a slogan meets legal thresholds of incitement. This includes assessing the linguistic force of imperatives, collective pronouns, lexical aggression, and modal verbs. A seemingly mild statement may, upon close analysis, reveal coercive or exhortative qualities that sway interpretation decisively towards incitement.

In conclusion, the forensic linguistic analysis of inciting slogans demonstrates that the language used on clothing is rarely accidental or neutral. The deliberate selection of terms, symbols, or rhetorical constructions often reveals a calculated attempt to provoke, divide, or intimidate. Through pragmatic deconstruction, forensic linguistics provides courts and investigative bodies with empirically grounded assessments of linguistic harm and communicative intention.

This study strongly recommends the systematic inclusion of forensic linguists in hate speech cases involving apparel, the development of linguistic reference databases for hate-coded slogans and symbols, and the creation of interdisciplinary training programmes for law enforcement and judicial professionals. Understanding language is the key to unveiling incitement, and this section has underscored the indispensable role of linguistics in safeguarding social cohesion and justice.

## **5. The Social and Cultural Impact of Inciting Messages on Clothing**

Inciting slogans on clothing cannot be examined in isolation from their broader sociocultural context. The act of wearing a provocative slogan in public is, in itself, a performative social gesture—one that communicates affiliation, defiance, or aggression. It is not merely about fashion or aesthetic choice; rather, it functions as a semiotic act aimed at broadcasting ideological identity, challenging prevailing social norms, or seeking alignment with particular communities.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, clothing that bears inciting messages functions as a form of visual discourse—a wearable language that carries meaning, intention, and affect. In societies with charged histories of conflict or discrimination, the semiotic weight of certain slogans or symbols can be immense. For instance, the display of the Confederate flag in the United States, while defended by some as a cultural emblem, is widely perceived as a symbol of white supremacy and slavery, and its public display constitutes a form of symbolic violence against marginalised communities.

The appropriation of historical, religious, or ethnic symbols on garments to convey incitement is a tactic that weaponises collective memory. When individuals wear garments featuring, for example, the swastika, the Ku Klux Klan insignia, or coded slogans associated with extremist ideologies, they are not merely expressing an opinion; they are activating latent social tensions and signalling allegiance to ideologies of exclusion and hate. This semiotic weaponisation of clothing becomes particularly volatile in multicultural societies where symbolic aggression can reignite dormant hostilities.

In the Arab context, the use of sectarian or militia-affiliated slogans on clothing may serve as a flashpoint for community polarisation. A seemingly innocuous slogan may, in a given cultural setting, function as an explicit provocation, evoking memories of conflict, martyrdom, or political rivalry. In these cases, the garment becomes a battlefield of memory, identity, and antagonism.

The influence of social media and celebrity culture further amplifies the social spread of hate-related clothing. Influencers or public figures who wear controversial garments may normalise or glamorise such messages, especially among impressionable youth. Here, social learning theory becomes relevant: individuals are more likely to emulate behaviours (including dress) they see modelled by admired figures. The rebellious allure of provocative slogans may attract adolescents seeking identity affirmation or peer recognition, especially when such messages are perceived as taboo-breaking or edgy.

Moreover, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner) offers insight into the group dynamics underpinning this phenomenon. Wearing hate-laden slogans often signifies group membership and solidarity. In radicalised communities, uniforms may be informal—defined by common slogans, colour schemes, or symbols—that serve to strengthen in-group cohesion and antagonise out-groups. The result is a performative differentiation that visually demarcates “us” from “them,” reinforcing tribalised or polarised worldviews.

At the community level, the unchecked proliferation of inciting slogans on clothing can lead to the normalisation of hate culture. When citizens routinely encounter garments adorned with racist, homophobic, or sectarian messages, society may grow desensitised to their offensiveness. This phenomenon resembles cultural bullying, where targeted groups are forced to co-exist with public messages attacking their identity, eroding social trust and psychological safety.

Conversely, these slogans can also provoke counter-reactions, sparking grassroots movements or expressive rebuttals in the form of counter-slogans (e.g., anti-racist T-shirts worn in protest). In this way, the public space becomes a discursive battlefield, wherein conflicting ideologies are visually performed and contested through fashion.

Digital platforms such as Redbubble, Teespring, and Etsy have also facilitated the global commodification of hate messages, allowing users to customise and distribute inciting garments with relative ease. While these platforms often have content moderation policies, enforcement is inconsistent. At the same time, social media enables viral condemnation: images of individuals wearing inciting clothing often circulate rapidly, prompting public backlash and even legal action. The case of a U.S. Capitol rioter photographed wearing a “Camp Auschwitz” hoodie in 2021 illustrates how such slogans can achieve widespread visibility and provoke international outrage.

Cultural subgroups—such as punk or anarchist fashion movements—have historically used offensive slogans as tools of rebellion. In contemporary contexts, this blurring between anti-establishment expression and actual hate propaganda

presents a challenge. Some wear inciting clothing for shock value, irony, or aesthetic nonconformity, without necessarily espousing the underlying ideology. This ambiguity of intent complicates legal and moral evaluations, though the social harm remains irrespective of the wearer's professed motivations.

Ultimately, clothing with inciting messages functions as a **mobile semiotic device**—an embodied statement that circulates through public spaces, signalling aggression, defiance, or allegiance. Its impact transcends the individual and ripples through collective consciousness, shaping perceptions of safety, inclusion, and societal values.

In recommendations, to mitigate the social normalisation of hate-coded fashion, this study recommends:

- **Educational curricula** that cultivate critical visual literacy and empathy, enabling young people to decode harmful symbols and resist their allure.
- **Media ethics guidelines** to avoid inadvertently amplifying hateful slogans by giving them disproportionate coverage without critical framing.
- **Public campaigns** (e.g., “What You Wear, You Say”) that sensitise individuals to the ethical and emotional consequences of displaying inciting messages in public.
- **Fashion alternatives** that popularise positive messages of inclusion, dignity, and solidarity—making hate less fashionable and empathy more aspirational.

## **6. The Psychological Dimension of Wearing Inciting Apparel**

Understanding the psychological underpinnings of wearing inciting slogans on clothing necessitates a dual perspective: that of the agent (the wearer or producer of the message) and that of the recipient (the viewer or target of the message). What compels an individual to publicly display antagonistic or violent language on their body? And what psychological effects does this act impose upon those who encounter such messages, especially when they belong to the targeted group?

From the standpoint of the wearer, the behaviour is often rooted in what psychologists term violent and extremist cognition. Individuals who embrace radical ideologies or harbour deep-seated animosities may externalise these beliefs through clothing as a form of identity assertion, provocation, or catharsis. Wearing a slogan that advocates harm can elicit a sense of empowerment, as it transforms private hostility into a public declaration. This aligns with mechanisms such as

identification with extremist groups, where donning the group's symbols fosters a sense of belonging and collective boldness.

A related mechanism is the justification of violence. The constant visual reinforcement of one's ideology by wearing it can facilitate internal rationalisation, embedding hatred more deeply into the self-concept. Through repetition, such expressions become part of the individual's daily narrative, leading to self-radicalisation. Bandura's theory of moral disengagement is highly applicable here: the individual cognitively restructures their actions (e.g., "It's just a shirt") to neutralise guilt and frame the act as socially acceptable or even virtuous.

Another phenomenon is desensitisation. Individuals who progress to wearing hateful or shocking slogans may have undergone a gradual erosion of sensitivity to verbal aggression. What may have begun as a joke or an edgy expression morphs, through repeated exposure, into something normalised and emboldened.

From the recipient's perspective—particularly those who are part of the targeted group—the psychological impact is immediate and often traumatic. Confronting a message such as "Burn all [X]" or "Kill [Y]" in one's public environment can trigger acute fear, humiliation, or rage. Psychologically, such encounters function as public micro-aggressions, activating the fight-or-flight response and compromising the sense of safety in communal spaces.

Victims of these verbal assaults report experiencing anxiety, alienation, and a diminished sense of belonging. Research indicates that repeated exposure to hate speech—even in visual or symbolic form—can lead to psychological conditions such as social withdrawal, depression, and identity fragmentation (Saha et al., 2019). Thus, inciting garments do not merely offend; they wound, intimidate, and erode the psychological integrity of communities.

### **6.1. The Psychology of Colour and Symbolism**

Visual elements—particularly colour and symbol—play a crucial psychological role in amplifying the effect of inciting slogans. Colour psychology shows that red, for example, is associated with dominance, aggression, and threat perception. Studies demonstrate that individuals wearing red are often perceived as more hostile or intimidating (Wiedemann et al., 2015). Similarly, black has been linked to rebellion, power, and violence, and teams wearing black uniforms have been found to receive more penalties, possibly due to subconscious associations of aggression.

Extremist groups are often acutely aware of these psychological effects and select colours and symbols accordingly to maximise intimidation. Abstract imagery—

such as skulls, thunderbolts, or predatory animals—serves to dehumanise the target and glorify destructive power. The use of such imagery contributes to moral disengagement, enabling wearers to symbolically strip their targets of humanity and reduce empathic restraint.

This symbolic dehumanisation is not merely metaphorical. By representing the target as a threat or an inferior being (e.g., an insect, a demon), the wearer and their audience are cognitively distanced from the moral implications of violence. Hate is thus made palatable, even righteous.

## **6.2. Psychopathic Enjoyment and Reciprocal Escalation**

A particularly disturbing subset of wearers derive sadistic pleasure from the distress provoked by their clothing. Psychological profiles of such individuals often indicate subclinical psychopathy, characterised by a lack of empathy, need for dominance, and enjoyment of others' discomfort. These individuals may actively seek out public spaces precisely to witness the impact of their inciting slogans.

This dynamic, however, creates fertile ground for reciprocal escalation. When targets or bystanders respond—verbally or physically—to the provocation, the situation may spiral into confrontation or violence. Thus, a single garment can function as a triggering device, transforming symbolic aggression into actual conflict.

## **6.3. Psychological Intervention and Rehabilitation**

Recent psychological interventions have sought to address the underlying drivers of such behaviour. De-radicalisation programmes, particularly for youth, often involve symbolic reorientation, encouraging individuals to discard hateful apparel as a first step in identity reconstruction. The act of removing or renouncing the garment becomes a cognitive and emotional turning point, marking the abandonment of violent ideology.

Equally crucial is psychological support for victims. Those subjected to repeated visual hate speech may require counselling, community solidarity, and resilience-building strategies. Group support sessions, therapeutic dialogues, and public affirmations of belonging can help restore psychological safety and prevent withdrawal.

**In conclusion,** inciting clothing is not merely a stylistic choice; it is an embodied ideology—a mobile provocation capable of inflicting psychological harm and

fuelling ideological extremism. Both the perpetrator and the target experience profound psychological effects, albeit in diametrically opposed ways. Recognising the emotional dynamics of hate fashion is essential for designing preventative, rehabilitative, and restorative interventions. Educational institutions, mental health services, and civil society must work in tandem to defuse the psychological weapons encoded in what we wear.

## 7. Policy Recommendations and Strategic Proposals

In light of the multifaceted analysis presented—legal, linguistic, sociological, and psychological—it becomes evident that the use of clothing as a platform for incitement is a complex and evolving phenomenon. Effective mitigation requires a comprehensive, interdisciplinary strategy that addresses the phenomenon from regulatory, educational, corporate, and psychological angles.

### 7.1. Legal and Regulatory Measures

1. **Closing Legislative Gaps:** Legislators in jurisdictions lacking explicit provisions should enact laws that criminalise public incitement through any medium, including garments. International benchmarks, such as Article 20 of the ICCPR, may guide the definition of prohibited expression, particularly where incitement leads to discrimination, violence, or hatred.
2. **Balanced and Context-Aware Enforcement:** While legislative action is essential, overreach must be avoided. States should refrain from using hate speech laws to suppress legitimate dissent. The Rabat Plan of Action recommends a **six-part threshold test**—including intent, context, content, extent, and likelihood of harm—as a safeguard against arbitrary prosecution (Parmar, 2015). This framework should be institutionalised to distinguish between genuinely dangerous slogans and those merely offensive or unpopular.
3. **Corporate Accountability:** Fashion brands and digital marketplaces must assume ethical and legal responsibility. Administrative fines or civil penalties may be imposed for the mass production or distribution of legally banned slogans. In severe cases (e.g., Nazi symbols in Germany), authorities may seize products or suspend business operations. E-commerce giants should adopt unified global policies to prevent the sale of inciting apparel, similar to Amazon’s post-scandal reforms (Sidell, 2013).

4. **Cross-Border Collaboration:** Given the transnational nature of online retail and ideological mobilisation, states should pursue multilateral treaties or digital crime protocols to criminalise the online trade of hate-branded clothing. International cooperation is key to halting the flow of such products across borders, especially during periods of political unrest.

## **7.2.Educational and Social Strategies**

1. **Counter-Extremism Education:** Schools and universities must serve as the first line of defence. Curricula should integrate modules on hate speech, media literacy, and historical propaganda, fostering critical awareness of the social impact of inciting language. Creative interventions—such as peace-themed fashion design contests—can subvert hateful fashion by promoting inclusive expression.
2. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Civil society organisations and media outlets should launch awareness initiatives (e.g., “What You Wear Matters”) that emphasise the ethical implications of public messaging through clothing. Such campaigns should encourage self-reflection and foster collective responsibility in resisting hate-coded apparel.
3. **Positive Fashion Alternatives:** By supporting brands and artists who promote messages of dignity, inclusion, and solidarity, societies can shift fashion trends away from divisiveness. Cultural influencers, artists, and public figures should model apparel that affirms shared values, offering youth a constructive alternative to provocation.

## **7.3.Digital and Media Interventions**

1. **Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms:** Authorities should facilitate easy public reporting of hate slogans on clothing via hotlines or dedicated apps. Reports must be rapidly assessed against legal criteria to determine proportional responses.
2. **Platform Accountability:** Social media platforms should prevent the normalisation and glorification of hate clothing by banning related advertisements, user-generated shops, and viral content that trivialises incitement. Automated flagging systems and transparent enforcement protocols are essential.
3. **Responsible Journalism:** The Media must strike a balance between ignoring and amplifying hate speech. Investigative reports may expose networks manufacturing and distributing such apparel, while expert commentary (from linguists, psychologists, etc.) can educate the public about its implications without sensationalism.

## 7.4. Psychological and Individual-Level Interventions

1. **Early Psychological Intervention:** Youth who begin to wear extremist slogans may be at risk of radicalisation. Mental health professionals, educators, and community workers must engage such individuals early through non-confrontational counselling and ideological disengagement programmes.
2. **Support for Victims:** Victims of targeted visual hate messaging should be provided with **psychosocial support**, including therapy, community solidarity events, and access to restorative justice mechanisms. Collective resilience can transform intimidation into empowerment.
3. **Symbolic Reframing:** In some contexts, communities may choose to reclaim and repurpose hate-associated symbols for positive ends. Through artistic or cultural projects, the symbolic power of certain colours, numbers, or slogans may be diluted or redirected.

## Conclusion

This study has sought to offer a comprehensive and interdisciplinary portrait of clothing as a conduit for incitement, traversing the legal, linguistic, sociological, and psychological terrains that underpin the phenomenon. The findings clearly demonstrate that inciting slogans on apparel are not merely fashion statements, nor are they trivial provocations; they are semiotic weapons—manifestations of ideologically charged discourse worn on the body and projected into the public sphere.

Such slogans exploit legal ambiguities, cultural sensitivities, and psychological vulnerabilities, thereby requiring a response that is equally multifaceted. The paper has argued that tackling this phenomenon must involve:

- robust yet balanced legal frameworks grounded in international human rights norms;
- forensic linguistic expertise capable of decoding ambiguity and intent;
- social strategies that address the roots of symbolic violence and normalisation;
- and psychological support systems that serve both the perpetrators and victims of hate fashion.

Ultimately, countering hate-laden apparel must not be reduced to censorship or policing aesthetics. Rather, it must be part of a broader cultural commitment to promoting human dignity, empathy, and diversity. When societies affirm their refusal to tolerate the commodification of hatred—even when cloaked in irony or

satire—they begin to reclaim the symbolic spaces through which violence proliferates.

A society that nurtures critical consciousness and invests in symbolic justice can render hate speech on clothing not only unlawful but also socially and morally indefensible. In such a society, the power of the word—whether written, spoken, or worn—becomes a force for dignity, not division.

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