

## **Aromatherapy and Mental Well-being: A Critical Review of Clinical and Experimental Studies**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Aromatherapy, the therapeutic use of essential oils derived from plants, has garnered increasing attention in recent years for its potential to enhance psychological well-being. This review synthesizes findings from peer-reviewed studies published between 2000 and 2024 to assess the efficacy of aromatherapy in reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and enhancing mood and cognitive function. A growing body of evidence supports the calming and mood-enhancing effects of essential oils such as lavender, bergamot, and rose. Clinical trials indicate that inhalation of lavender essential oil significantly reduces anxiety and improves sleep quality in both clinical and non-clinical populations (Perry & Perry, 2006; Lee et al., 2011). Similarly, studies have shown that bergamot oil can lower cortisol levels and induce positive emotions in controlled environments (Watanabe et al., 2015). Mechanistically, the olfactory system directly influences the limbic brain, particularly the amygdala and hippocampus, which are central to emotion regulation. However, methodological limitations—such as small sample sizes, lack of long-term follow-ups, and variations in oil purity—warrant caution. Overall, the evidence suggests that aromatherapy may serve as a complementary intervention for enhancing psychological well-being, especially when integrated with mindfulness or therapeutic settings. Future research should focus on randomized controlled trials with larger cohorts and standardized protocols to strengthen the evidence base.

