

# Using Empowerment through Creativity in Fashion Design for Post-Covid19 Pandemic Unemployment Alleviation

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## Abstract

Recognizing that fashion design is an emerging trend in Sub-Saharan Africa with some level of creativity empowering the unemployed youth through skills acquisition from the fashion school cannot be over-emphasized. Fashion design manifests art, culture and symbolism, a multi-billion dollar industry that creates jobs for designers, models, event organizers, men and women, young and adults. However, fashion design needs to be given the proper attention, mostly in public fashion schools in Nigeria. Given this, this study was conducted on creativity in fashion design: a means of sustaining clothing and textile among students in private and public fashion design schools for empowerment in southwest Nigeria. Two hundred students were randomly selected from home science management, clothing and textile in four Federal Colleges of Education and two Federal Universities in Lagos and Ogun State. In comparison, seventy students were selected from private fashion schools to make 270 respondents the sample size for the study.

**Keywords: Empowerment Programs; Post-Covid19; Creativity; Unemployment**

## Introduction

Coronavirus disease 2019, also known as the coronavirus, or COVID-19 is a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome. The first known case was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. It was initially reported to the World Health Organization [WHO] on December 31, 2019. On January 30, 2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, spreading the disease worldwide.

On April 3, 2020, the Center for Disease Control [CDC] recommended that the general public, even those without symptoms, should wear face coverings in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain to abate the spread of COVID-19. According to the CDC, individuals at high risk for infection include persons in areas with ongoing local transmission, healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19, close contact with infected persons, and travellers returning from locations where local spread has been reported.

Transmission of COVID-19 occurs when people are exposed to virus-containing respiratory droplets and air-borne particles exhaled by an infected person. Those particles may be inhaled or

reach a person's mouth, nose, or eyes through touching or direct deposition [i.e., being coughed out]. The risk of infection is highest when people are close for a long time. However, particles can be inhaled over long distances indoors in poorly ventilated and crowded spaces. In those conditions, tiny particles can remain suspended in the air for minutes to hours. Touching a contaminated surface or object may lead to infection. However, this does not contribute substantially to transmitting infected people infected can transmit the virus to another person within two days before selves show symptoms. People remain infectious for up to ten days after the onset of symptoms in moderate cases and up to twenty days in severe cases.

Several testing methods have been developed to diagnose the disease. The standard diagnostic method is by detection of the virus nucleic acid by real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction [RT-PCR], transcription-mediated amplification [TMA], or by reverse transcription loop-mediated isothermal amplification {RT-LAMP} from a nasopharyngeal swab {Source}. Preventive measures include physical or social distancing, quarantining, and ventilation of indoor spaces, covering cough and sneezes, hand washing, and keeping unwashed hands away from the face. Face masks or covering have been recommended in public settings to minimize the risk of transmission. Several vaccines have been developed, and many countries have initiated mass vaccination campaigns. Although work is underway to develop drugs that inhibit the virus, the primary treatment is symptomatic. Management involves the treatment of symptoms, supportive care, isolation and experimental measures.

Poverty and unemployment are some of the problems bedeviling Nigerian society, much more after the advent of COVID-19. The most affected groups are youth and graduates of our tertiary institutions who believe something worthwhile awaits them after graduating from their different institutions. This can be traced to the global economic meltdown, which shut doors at white-collar jobs. Insecurity is another reason for poverty and unemployment.

Ochiagba {1995} defined skill acquisition as demonstrating the habits of achievement thinking or behaviours in a specific activity. He further stated that skill acquis is seen as the ability to do or perform something related to some meaningful exercise, work or job. He maintained that for skill to be acquired, appropriate knowledge, attitudes, habits of thought and character qualities are learnt to enable people to develop intellectual, emotional and moral character, which prepare them for a brighter future.

Douli [2002] believes that skill acquisition is the manifestation of ideas and knowledge through training geared towards instilling in individuals the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. He stressed that if individuals can acquire relevant skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work environment. He further maintains that skill acquisition increases competition and cooperation among people. Accordingly, Magbagbeola [2004] posited that skills acquisition requires accumulating different skills that enhance performance by integrating theoretical and practical knowledge forms. Acquisition of skill and youth empowerment is becoming the most viable and effective solution for economic problems faced by the country, whereby every youth empowered will be self-reliant and, in some cases, become an employer of labour.

Many graduates are turned out of our tertiary institutions in Nigeria yearly, having spent the stipulated time and met the stated conditions for awarding the certificates on their various campuses. However, these graduates are sent into the labour market to search for jobs to make ends meet. Many are looking for white-collar jobs which are not there, thereby leaving with their different certificates to roam about the streets. Because of this nasty experience, some joined bad gangs of armed robbery, internet fraudsters, and money ritual kidnappers.

The primary reason for unemployment and increased social vices resulted from a lack of marketable skills for most school graduates {Akpan and Udoh 2014}. In Nigeria today, there is an increasing rate of poverty, unemployment and other social problems that have bewailed the Nigerian public. The incidence of poverty and unemployment is high as the number of students graduating from various levels of the education system is increasing. This may have resulted from the need for more appropriate skill acquisition by graduates in the education system. The National Bureau of Statistics {2012} and Central Bank of Nigeria, Survey {2007} indicates that the unemployment trends in Nigeria from 2010-2014 are as follows:

**2010: 21.1%; 2011: 23.9%; 2013: 28.5%; and 2014: 30%**

The problem of this study is the alarming and unprecedented increase in the number of unemployed graduates from institutions in Nigeria after the COVID-19 era and this demand for diversifying the economy and encouraging the practical acquisition of skills through inculcating the spirit of entrepreneurship in students of all higher institutions in Nigeria. This empowerment is envisaged in acquiring knowledge in fashion design among undergraduates to encourage self-reliant activities.

According to Nchonwa (1981), Fashion, like many other aspects of life, is never static but keeps moving round and round. Incorporating some ideas discarding others, and even resurrecting old ones. After years of patronizing imported clothes, people of the southwestern state have come to recognize the dignity of traditional clothes. Since then fashion industry in south Western states has continued to evolve. Before, people contended with *iro and buba*, *Sokoto and agbada*, *dashiki*, *blouses and two wrappers*, and since traditional styles mostly stayed the same, their creativity was not much.

However, Wikipedia (2009) noted that Designers have come up with a solution because people could not find it easier to tie and retying the wrappers. They have brought in new ideas to make African clothes more functional for everyday wear by eliminating the wrapper and coming up with a variety of long skirts, which skill gives the impression of the wrapper, especially for women and men. Various fabrics have also been used for men's wear, as many showrooms exist in Atlanta, Georgia, and Ogunlana Drive, Surulere, Lagos.

**Table 1: Distribution according to personal characteristics of the respondent [=270]**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%	Mean	S.D.
<b>Age [yrs]</b>				
<b>&lt; 20</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>44.4</b>		
<b>21-30</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>54.4</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>4.1</b>
<b>&gt;</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1.1</b>		

### **Gender**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%	Mean	S.D.
<b>Male</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>55.9</b>		
<b>Female</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>44.1</b>		

### **Household size [people]**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage%	Mean	S.D.
<b>&lt; 4</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>65.6</b>		
<b>5-7</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>8-10</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9.3</b>		

<b>_&gt; 11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4.4</b>		
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### **Ethnicity**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
<b>Yoruba</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>70.4</b>		
<b>Igbo</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>14.4</b>		
<b>Hausa</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5.9</b>		
<b>Others</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9.3</b>		

### **Religion**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
<b>Christianity</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>84.4</b>		
<b>Islam</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>13.3</b>		
<b>Traditional practice</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>2.2</b>		

### **Parental Education**

<b>No-formal education</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>8.9</b>
<b>Primary Education</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>21.5</b>
<b>Secondary Education</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>31.1</b>
<b>Tertiary Education</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>38.5</b>

### **Parental Job status**

<b>Employed</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>70.7</b>
<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>18.9</b>
<b>Retired from active service</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>10.4</b>

### Parental Primary Occupation

Civil service	35	13.0
Teaching	70	25.9
Trading	115	42.6
Others	50	18.5

### Parental Secondary Occupation

Petty trading	105	38.9
Teaching	69	25.6
Civil service	28	10.4
Others	68	25.2

*Source: Field survey, 2017*

S.D – Standard Deviation

## Results and Discussion

### Personal Characteristics of the Respondent

The result in Table 1 revealed that the majority (42.7%) of the respondents were between 21-30 years of age, while only a very few (1.1%) were above 31 years of age, and 44.4% were below 21. The mean age of respondents is 20.8 years. Most tertiary students are in this age bracket, and they are full of energy. They can acquire knowledge and skills very fast, constituting an economically active part of the population (Oyediran and Omoare, 2014). The result further showed that 55.9% of the respondents were male and 44.1% were female, indicating the dominance of males in the vocational school system. The proportion of females also indicates that the gap between males and females is partial. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (2011), women are increasingly active in fashion design giving special consideration to some women designers and professionals in the industry. The mean household size was 5 people, with most [65.6%] of the respondents having less than 4 people in their households. This reveals a relatively small household size, and it is following the recommendation of the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1986/87 that a family should not have more than 4 children.

Nevertheless, 20.7% had between 5-7 people in their households. Most (70.4%) of the respondents were from the Yoruba ethnic group, 14.4% were Igbo, 5.9% were Hausa, and 9.2% belonged to other tribes in Nigeria. It shows the diversity of Nigeria's ethnic groups, with Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa as major ethnic groups. The dominance of the Yoruba ethnic group in this finding is attributed to the fact that this study was conducted in the southwest, the home of Yorubas. Previous studies by Omoare et al. (2015), Oyediran et al. (2016) and Olowookere et al. (2016) affirmed this finding majority [84.4%] of the respondent were Christians while 13.3% were Muslims. Moreover, parental educational status results revealed that 38.5% had tertiary education while 31.9% and 21.5% had secondary and primary education, respectively. Most of the parents had formal education, and as such, they were literate. Education enables the parent to guide and encourage their wards to take up entrepreneurial skills in fashion design going by the ever-increasing unemployment, economic crisis and crime rate so the children could be self-reliant and employers of labour. Employment status indicated that the parent was employed (70.7%), unemployed (18.9%), and retired from active service (10.4%). Those employed were primarily engaged in trading (42.6%), teaching (25.9%), and civil service (13%) as means of livelihood. Furthermore, petty trading accounted for 38.9%, teaching (25.6%), and civil service (10.4%) constituted secondary occupations among many parents. This means that the parents have multiple sources of income that can be used to provide quality education for their children, particularly at colleges of education level, since University and Polytechnic Education have become so expensive and a burden to the low-income class in Nigeria.

### **Facilities on the ground for transmitting fashion skills to the students**

The fashion design industry involves significant creativity and innovation, satisfying consumers' aesthetic design and utility criteria (WIPO, 2011). To achieve this objective, it is necessary to put some basic fashion design facilities on the ground for teaching and transmitting skills to learners. From the results in Table 2, all the respondents [100%] indicated that the sewing machine, scissors, tape rule and pressing iron were available and functional. Also, needle thread (85.9%), skirt marker (70%) and wardrobe (62.9%) were available and functional. These facilities are essential in fashion designing, with which there could be fashion designing and transmission of fashion skills to the students. Meanwhile, facilities like embroidery machines (37.8%), knitting machines (32.2%) and fitting machines (15.2%) were not adequately made

available in the fashion schools in the study areas; the situation is attributed to the lack of funds and less priority given to these facilities by the fashion schools.

**Table2: Facilities on ground for transmitting fashion skills to the students**

Facilities	Available	Not available	Functioning	Not functioning
Sewing machine	270[100.0]	0[0]	209[77.4]	61[22.6]
Needle threaders	232[85.9]	38[14.1]	185[79.7]	47[20.3]
Skirt maker	189[70.0]	81[30.0]	174[92.1]	15[7.9]
Scissors	270[100.0]	0[0.0]	270[100.0]	0[0.0]
Tape rule	270[100.0]	0[0.0]	270[100.0]	0[0.0]
Embroidery machine	102[37.8]	162[62.2]	65[63.7]	37[36.3]
Knitting machine	87[32.2]	183[67.8]	55[63.2]	32[36.8]
Pressing iron	270[100.0]	0[0.0]	218[80.7]	52[19.3]
Fitting machine	41[15.2]	229[84.8]	36[87.8]	05[12.2]
Ward robe	169[62.6]	101[37.4]	166[98.2]	03[1.8]

*Source: Field survey, 2017*

Figures in parenthesis are in percentage

PERCEPTION	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	S.D
Creativity in pattern drafting skills would help to reduce restiveness among youths	160[59.3]	101[37.1]	09[3.3]	0[0.0]	3.55	0.56
It would help in reducing unemployment and poverty among youth	125[46.3]	140[51.9]	05[1.9]	0[0.0]	3.44	0.53
It facilitates better productivity and enhanced income among youths	137[50.7]	123[45.6]	10[3.7]	0[0.0]	3.47	0.57
Improve standard of living of youth will be achieved	108[40.0]	151[55.9]	11[4.1]	0[0.0]	3.36	0.56



It could lead to self-reliant/self-employed of the youth	147[54.4]	108[40.0]	13[4.8]	02[0.7]	3.48	0.63
Creativity knowledge skills acquired would be very useful in personal business	148[54.8]	104[38.5]	14[5.2]	04[1.5]	3.47	0.66

### **Perception of Respondents towards Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition**

The result in Table 3 revealed that more than 50% of the respondents had a positive attitude towards acquiring entrepreneurial skills in fashion design.

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the first-hand information, data collated during the field visits, and findings of this study, it was established that:

The respondents interviewed are very young and active; they are mostly male and belong to the Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria.

The parents are literate; 38.5% had tertiary education; and employed (70.7%).

Economic activities of the parents are trading and teaching.

Sewing machines, scissors, tape rules, pressing iron, needle threaders, skirt marker and wardrobe were the available fashion design facilities for transmitting entrepreneurial skills to the students, and these facilities are in good shape.

#### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made in order to address the problems and reposition the entrepreneurial skills acquisition in fashion design in the study areas:

- Employment of more resource personnel in fashion schools, especially government-owned fashion schools, is required.
- Public awareness and enlightenment on the recent creativity in fashion schools to encourage more youth and public patronage is necessary.

- Provision of essential fashion design facilities in fashion schools to equip the students and to be able to compete at the international level must be made.
- Government should provide alternative cheaper sources of power to the schools in the study areas to increase the productivity of the schools.
- Alternative sources of power supply should be made available by the Donors, NGOs and government to overcome the problem of epileptic power supply in the Technical Colleges of Education in the study areas;
- More funds should be allocated to fashion schools going on the importance of clothing in human life.

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