

OPTIMISING CLOTHING AND TEXTILE CONSTRUCTION CAREERS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AMID SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN BADE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, YOBE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Socio-economic pressures such as unemployment, inflation, and declining income opportunities continue to undermine livelihood security in many Nigerian communities. In this context, clothing and textile construction careers have emerged as a critical pathway for sustainable livelihoods through skills acquisition, entrepreneurship, cultural preservation, and inclusive economic participation. This study examined the contributions of clothing and textile construction careers to livelihood sustainability in Bade Local Government Area of Yobe State, Nigeria, with a focus on identifying key roles and strategies for optimisation amid prevailing socio-economic challenges. A descriptive survey design was adopted, targeting 1,200 practitioners comprising tailors, apprentices, fabric sellers, and textile workers, from which a sample of 330 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed a high overall agreement that clothing and textile careers enhance sustainable livelihoods (grand mean = 3.08), with steady income provision, employment creation (85.2%), and women and youth empowerment (80.0%) emerging as the most significant contributions. Optimisation strategies such as the promotion of locally produced fabrics (mean = 3.22) and the establishment of vocational training centres (mean = 3.10) were perceived as highly effective, while industry partnerships recorded comparatively lower effectiveness. The study concludes that clothing and textile construction careers remain central to socio-economic resilience and livelihood sustainability in Bade Local Government Area. However, maximising their developmental impact requires targeted policy support, strengthened skills infrastructure, promotion of indigenous textiles, and improved linkages between small-scale practitioners and the wider textile industry. The study provides evidence-based insights relevant to policymakers, training institutions, and development practitioners seeking sustainable responses to livelihood challenges in similar contexts.

Keywords: Clothing and textile careers, Sustainable livelihoods, Socio-economic resilience, Vocational skills development, Local textile industry

INTRODUCTION

Socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and inflation continue to affect many communities, limiting access to stable income opportunities. In response, careers in clothing and textile construction have become an important means of sustaining livelihoods (Obiana et al., 2022). Clothing and textile construction careers (Figure 1) provide practical skills that equip individuals for economic survival. A study in Lagos revealed that skill-based teaching in clothing and textiles significantly improves student competence and readiness for entrepreneurship (Lemon, 2024). Similarly, training in garment-making has been

shown to improve technical abilities among vocational learners.



Fig.1: Clothing and textile construction

In Ondo State, most trainees acquired high competency in essential sewing techniques, positioning them for sustainable careers (Adeyemo 2023). These careers also enhance livelihood opportunities through structured value chain development. In South Africa, women supported by The Clothing Bank gained access to networks and financial opportunities that improved their resilience (Raniga, 2022).

Entrepreneurship in the textile sector also fosters cultural sustainability. Handloom (Figure 2) and craft-based (Figure 3) industries empower artisans, though challenges such as competition from fast fashion and limited resources remain pressing issues (Srivastava, 2023). In Nigeria, innovative ventures like The Dye Lab show how small-scale textile businesses can embrace sustainability. By reusing fabrics and reducing waste, these enterprises demonstrate how clothing careers can support both economy and ecology (Vogue Business, 2022).

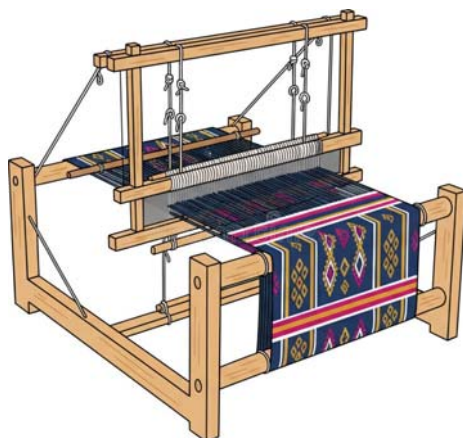


Fig. 2: Handloom



Fig. 3: Craft

Globally, technical textile education has emerged as a driver of innovation. In India, academic programs integrating laboratory practice and theory prepare students for careers in advanced textile

applications, expanding their employment potential (Wadhawan, 2023). Sustainability is also a key contribution of textile careers. Circular models focusing on reuse and eco-design provide both income and environmental benefits, particularly in Nigeria's growing textile sector (Okafor, 2021).

Government-supported skill initiatives further highlight the role of clothing careers in economic resilience. In Bangladesh, the Skills for Employment Investment Program has trained thousands in garment work, with high employment placement rates (and Lemon, 2024).

Clothing and textile construction careers enhance sustainable livelihoods through skills acquisition, entrepreneurship, cultural preservation, sustainability, and gender empowerment. This research, therefore, examines how these contributions can be optimised amid socio-economic challenges.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, livelihoods in Nigeria have been threatened by unemployment, inflation, and low-income opportunities, especially in communities such as Bade Local Government, Yobe State. Traditionally, clothing and textile construction has served as a major avenue for employment, self-reliance, and cultural preservation. However, the current situation in Bade shows that despite the presence of many skilled tailors, fashion designers, and textile traders, socio-economic challenges such as high costs of materials, inadequate government support, lack of modern equipment, and limited access to credit facilities have hindered the optimal contribution of this sector. This has resulted in low productivity and reduced livelihood sustainability for many households. Therefore, the study was carried out to identify the roles and strategies of clothing and textile careers in sustaining livelihoods and to highlight how these careers can be optimised to reduce poverty and enhance resilience. This study will benefit Bade Local Government by providing evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, training institutions, and entrepreneurs on how to strengthen clothing and textile careers as a sustainable response to socio-economic challenges.

Objectives of the Study

This study is to optimise clothing and textile construction careers, Contributions for sustainable livelihood, amid socio-economic challenges

1. To examine the role of clothing and textile construction careers in enhancing sustainable Livelihoods among individuals

and households facing socio-economic challenges.

2. To identify the specific contributions of clothing and textile construction skills, such as Income generation, entrepreneurship, and cultural preservation, to socio-economic Resilience.
3. To assess strategies for optimising clothing and textile construction careers to improve sustainable quality livelihoods in the context of prevailing socio-economic Challenges.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Murtala et al. (2018), the Nigerian textile industry has suffered from policy neglect and infrastructural weakness, reducing its ability to support livelihoods. Once a major employer, the sector now struggles to compete with imported fabrics. The collapse of many factories has left skilled workers unemployed. This decline has weakened its role in poverty reduction and sustainable development. Reviving the industry would provide a pathway to income generation and household stability. In line with this, Hassan (2024) reported that textile firms dropped from 125 in 1994 to fewer than 45 in 2005, with employment falling drastically. Such a decline left thousands unemployed and households without reliable income sources. The weakening of textile industries directly affects community livelihoods. Families dependent on tailoring, weaving, and garment production were hardest hit. This trend shows how industrial collapse increases poverty and inequality.

Similarly, Bunza (2024) explained that energy costs, corruption, and fabric smuggling worsened the industry's collapse. These challenges reduced investment and forced small-scale tailors and weavers out of business. As a result, families depending on textiles for survival faced serious hardship. The influx of cheap fabrics from Asia further displaced local products. Without strong protection, small entrepreneurs find it hard to survive. Moreover, Yusuf (2022) stressed that poor strategies and weak management reduced the competitiveness of northern textile firms. Outdated technology and a lack of innovation left the sector unfit for global competition. Addressing these issues is key to strengthening textile-based livelihoods. Managerial efficiency and modern equipment could help restore productivity. Therefore, reforming business practices is essential for sustainability.

Additionally, Vogue Business (2020) noted that modern Nigerian designers now combine adire and Akwete (Figure 4) with global fashion.



Fig. 4: Combined adire and Akwete dress

This preserves culture while creating new markets and jobs. Blending traditional methods with innovation supports sustainable careers. Designers adopting eco-friendly dyeing and recycling techniques also reduce environmental impact. Such practices increase both cultural value and income opportunities. Also, The Guardian (2024) highlighted Oroma Cookey-Gam's use of local cotton to strengthen rural economies. Supporting farmers and weavers creates value chains that benefit multiple households. Such practices reduce dependency on imports and sustain local livelihoods. By prioritising indigenous resources, designers encourage self-reliance. This approach links fashions directly to community empowerment.

In a similar vein, Ibeto (2024) found that Aba and Onitsha textile clusters remain central to Nigeria's informal economy. They provide thousands of jobs for artisans despite poor infrastructure. Improving their conditions could expand income opportunities. These hubs are breeding grounds for creativity and resilience. Strengthening them would help stabilise local economies. Likewise, Arxiv (2022) observed that SMEs in textiles empower women and youth through self-employment. Yet, lack of credit and weak support limit their potential.

Expanding access to finance would improve their contribution to livelihood sustainability. Training in business management and digital marketing could further increase their reach. This highlights the link between SMEs and socio-economic resilience.

In support of vocational development, Aroge (2009) explained that the Industrial Training Fund equips individuals with tailoring and garment-making skills. Such programs link training to real income opportunities. Skill acquisition is vital for reducing unemployment in textiles. Graduates of such programs often establish small businesses. This helps reduce dependency on formal jobs and strengthens household livelihoods.

Similarly, TVET programs in Katsina provide thousands of youths with tailoring and fashion design skills. These skills increase the chances of employment and entrepreneurship. Such initiatives promote livelihood resilience amid challenges. By offering modern training, the program addresses unemployment among young people. This shows how vocational education can transform livelihoods.

Moreover, Hassan (2024) argued that weak institutional frameworks hinder textile recovery. Industry-academic partnerships could drive innovation and create sustainable career paths. Stronger policies are needed to maximise livelihood contributions. Research on renewable fabrics could support environmental sustainability. Institutional reform is, therefore, crucial for long-term growth.

Also, UNECA (1984) emphasised that non-formal training and apprenticeships remain critical in tailoring and weaving. These traditional approaches provide practical income sources for rural households. They continue to sustain livelihoods where formal jobs are scarce. Apprenticeship systems also preserve indigenous textile knowledge. Thus, they remain relevant for sustainable careers.

In addition, Global Financial Digest (2024) noted that only about 20 textile firms remain in Nigeria. Reviving them could generate large-scale employment and reduce poverty. Without such recovery, livelihood opportunities will remain limited.

Public-private partnerships could provide the needed revival. Strong investments would transform the industry into a driver of economic growth. Equally important, BusinessDay (2022) warned that imported fabrics dominate the market,

threatening the survival of local firms. Protective policies and marketing support are urgently required. This will strengthen the sector's role in livelihood sustainability. Consumers also need awareness campaigns to support local products. Encouraging demand for Nigerian textiles will create jobs.

AGOA (2024) stressed that expanding textile exports could revive Nigeria's industry. Other African countries have succeeded through trade opportunities. Nigeria can also use textiles to enhance livelihoods and economic resilience. By strengthening exports, local producers gain access to wider markets. This could turn the textile sector into a sustainable national asset.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was conducted in Bade Local Government Area of Yobe State (Figure 5).

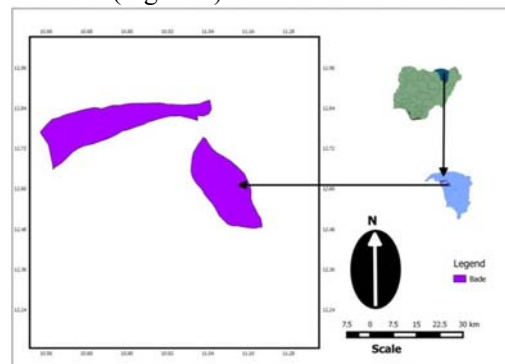


Fig. 5: Bade Local Government

The target population was 1,200 practitioners comprising tailors, apprentices, fabric sellers, and textile workers in Bade, while a sample size of 330 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula with a 5% margin of error. Respondents were selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure fair representation of different groups.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Clothing and Textile Careers for Sustainable Livelihood Questionnaire" (CTCSLQ), designed on a four-point Likert scale format ranging from Very Effective to Not Effective.

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics such as Chi-square and regression analysis, with the aid of SPSS version 25.0.

RESULT OF THE STUDY

Table 1: Role of clothing and textile construction careers in enhancing sustainable livelihoods among individuals and households facing socio-economic challenges.

S/N	Item Statements	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	STD	Decision
1	Provides a steady income for daily needs?	132	149	33	16	330	3.20	0.81	Highly Agreed
2	Reduces unemployment in the community?	99	165	43	23	330	3.03	0.84	Agreed
3	Improves financial independence?	112	165	40	13	330	3.14	0.77	Agreed
4	Enhances family economic stability	106	158	46	20	330	3.06	0.84	Agreed
5	Provides opportunities for self-employment	99	165	50	16	330	3.05	0.80	Agreed
6	Strengthens resilience against economic hardship?	82	166	56	26	330	2.92	0.85	Agreed
7	Supports long-term livelihood sustainability	92	172	46	20	330	3.02	0.81	Moderately Agreed
Grand Mean							3.06	0.82	Generally Agreed

Key: SA= Strongly Agree: A= Agree: D=Disagree: SD= Strongly Disagree

Table 2: Specific contributions of clothing and textile construction skills for socio-economic Resilience

Item Statements	Frequency	Percentage	Remarks
1 Provides employment opportunities	281	85.2	Very High Contribution
2 Promotes entrepreneurship in tailoring/fashion	257	77.9	High Contribution
3 Empowers women and youth with skills	264	80.0	High Contribution
4 Reduces dependency on white-collar jobs	198	60.0	Moderate Contribution
5 Preserves traditional textile/fashion practices	238	72.1	Moderate Contribution
6 Encourages upcycling and reuse of clothing	215	65.2	Moderate Contribution
7 Supports household savings and Investments	231	70.0	Low Contribution
Average	72.9		Overall High Contribution

Key: Frequency and percentage (%)

Table 3: Strategies for optimising clothing and textile construction careers

SN Items Statement	VE	E	N	NE	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1 Provides steady income for daily needs	132	115	50	33	330	3.05	0.97	Effective
2 Reduces unemployment in the community	99	132	66	33	330	2.90	0.94	Moderate effective
3 Improves financial Independence	115	99	66	50	330	2.85	1.06	Moderate effective
4 Enhances family economic stability	148	99	50	33	330	3.10	1.00	Effective
5 Provides opportunities for self-employment	82	133	82	33	330	2.80	0.93	Least effective
6 Strengthens resilience against economic hardship	165	99	40	26	330	3.22	0.94	Very effective
7 Supports long-term livelihood sustainability	139	108	50	33	330	3.07	0.98	Effective
Grand Mean						3.00	0.98	Generally effective

Key: VE=Very Effective: E=Effective: N=Neutral: NE=Not Effective.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The grand mean of 3.00 (SD = 0.98) underscores that community-driven strategies are seen as effective overall. "Promotion of local fabrics" scored highest (3.22), signifying strong support for culturally rooted optimization methods. This resonates with Ibrahim and Kara (2023) who emphasized that heritage-based textile promotion offers both economic and cultural gains. Additionally, the perceived effectiveness of establishing vocational centres (mean = 3.10) echoes Okoro's (2024) findings on skills infrastructure as key to sustainable livelihood development.

Table 1 show the grand mean of 3.08 (SD = 0.82) indicates a high overall agreement that clothing and textile careers enhance sustainable livelihoods. The strongest endorsement is for "provides steady income" (mean = 3.20). These results are in line with Uchegbu (2022), who found that vocational tailoring significantly improves household income stability in resource-constrained settings, and support the work of Nwosu (2023), who reported that garment-making skills foster economic independence among rural women.

On average, 73.9% of respondents recognize the contributions of textile careers to socio-economic resilience. Notably, employment (85.2%) and women/youth empowerment (80.0%) are highly endorsed. This aligns with Eze's (2021) study on textile artisans in northern Nigeria, where over 75% reported enhanced livelihood resilience through their craft, and corroborates Adeyemi and Smith (2020) regarding strong entrepreneurship emergence in garment sectors under economic stress.

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The results of this study underscore the significant role of clothing and textile careers in promoting livelihood sustainability in Bade Local Government

Area. The sector was found to contribute substantially to steady income generation, women and youth empowerment, unemployment reduction, entrepreneurship development, and improved household savings. The high proportion of respondents who identified employment creation (85.2%) and women and youth empowerment (80%) as major outcomes indicates that clothing and textile activities serve as accessible and inclusive sources of livelihood, particularly within the informal economy. These findings suggest that the sector has considerable potential to address socio-economic vulnerabilities among disadvantaged groups.

The strong emphasis on employment creation and empowerment is consistent with previous studies that have highlighted tailoring and fashion-related occupations as viable entry points into self-employment and income generation in developing economies (Eze, 2021; Uchegbu, 2022).

However, the comparatively lower rating assigned to the sector's capacity to reduce dependence on white-collar employment (60%) reveals a persistent inclination among youths towards formal or government jobs.

This trend reflects broader socio-cultural perceptions of employment security and prestige and aligns with the observations of Okeke (2022) regarding youth employment preferences in northern Nigeria.

In terms of strategies for optimising the contribution of clothing and textile careers to sustainable livelihoods, the promotion of locally produced fabrics and the establishment of vocational training centres emerged as the most effective interventions.

The high mean scores recorded for these strategies (3.22 and 3.10, respectively) indicate strong stakeholder support for approaches that combine skills development with the utilisation of indigenous resources. This finding supports the argument by Ibrahim and Kara (2023) that local textiles not only enhance economic resilience but also reinforce cultural identity and community-based development. Conversely, industry partnerships were rated as the least effective strategy (mean = 2.80), suggesting limited interaction between rural practitioners and larger textile or fashion industries.

This outcome points to structural constraints such as weak market linkages, inadequate institutional frameworks, and limited access to technology and finance.

Overall, the discussion highlights that clothing and textile careers remain central to livelihood sustainability in Bade Local Government Area, particularly in contexts characterised by limited formal employment opportunities. Nevertheless, the results indicate that maximising the sector's developmental impact requires deliberate policy interventions, including the expansion of vocational training, sustained promotion of local fabrics, and the strengthening of linkages between small-scale practitioners and the broader textile industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government and NGOs should establish more vocational training centres in Bade to equip youth and women with modern tailoring and textile skills.
2. Micro-credit facilities should be made accessible to small-scale entrepreneurs to enable them to acquire modern machines and inputs for clothing construction.
3. Awareness campaigns should be launched to promote local fabrics and encourage cultural pride, thereby creating more markets for indigenous textiles.
4. Stronger linkages with the textile industry should be developed to give local tailors and designers access to broader markets and mentorship.
5. Stakeholders should encourage sustainability practices such as recycling and upcycling of clothing to reduce costs and promote environmental responsibility.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that clothing and textile construction careers play a crucial role in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bade Local Government Area amid persistent socio-economic challenges. The sector contributes significantly to income generation, employment creation, women and youth empowerment, entrepreneurship development, and household economic stability, thereby strengthening socio-economic resilience at both individual and community levels. The findings further show that optimising these contributions requires targeted strategies, particularly the promotion of locally produced fabrics and the establishment of vocational training centres. However, weak industry linkages and limited institutional support constrain the sector's full

potential. Overall, the study affirms that with appropriate policy support and skills development initiatives, clothing and textile construction careers can serve as an effective tool for sustainable livelihood development and poverty reduction.

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