

# Towards Youth Empowerment: A Focus On Yoruba Indigenous Textiles For Modern Interior Decoration And Cobbling Items In South-Western Nigeria

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**Abstract**—The research focused on the use of Yoruba indigenous textile for interior decoration and production of cobbling items for youth empowerment. Underutilisation of Yoruba indigenous textile for the creation of items for human needs apart from body adornment has hindered youths' empowerment and employment opportunities in Nigeria. The research adopted experimental design type. The study involves weavers and the sellers of aso-oke, dyers and sellers of adire, cobblers and youths in the textile making in Ekiti and Ondo states. The researcher collected indigenous textiles such as Aso-oke, Adire, Tie and Dye, Eleko and Batik for use. The study utilised the indigenous textiles and explored the process for its use as items for home decoration and cobbling. The study revealed that the use of indigenous fabrics for such items will improve the youth's social behaviour, social skill, self-esteem, and academic accomplishment for empowerment.

**Keywords**—Youths, Empowerment, Indigenous Textile, Interior Decoration, Cobbling.

## Introduction

There are varieties of indigenous textiles in the South-Western part of Nigeria. Some are woven (Aso-Oke) or embellished with wax, ropes, and prints (Eleko), the motifs and patterns on the fabrics somehow indicates the culture where the fabric belongs. The woven fabrics known as Aso-Oke in Yoruba land is produced by two types of looms, the horizontal and the vertical looms.

The accessories of horizontal loom are removable even during the weaving process with the warp yarn to be re-fixed, when necessary, that is why the looms are referred to as man's loom. In those days, men travelled a lot to assist their male counterparts with their farming chores who would in turn render assistance to them, by so doing they went with the accessories for continuity of the work. The vertical loom was mainly for women who took care of the home and children, so the vertical loom was termed the women's loom. The accessories of the vertical loom are fixed and cannot be removed during weaving

process likewise the warp yarn. It is pertinent to note that the Aso-Oke woven on vertical loom is supposed to be twice the length of the loom unlike the infinite yardage produced with horizontal loom. Hammed (2022) asserts that the Yoruba people are renowned for producing two types of indigenous cloths. It is also known as traditional cloths. People called it traditional due to the long practicing cloth production ever before the advent of foreigners.

The Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria embarked on the production of indigenous textile to serve human needs as bodycoverings and exhibit their fashion skills by using it for weddings, burial, and naming ceremonies. it also boosts their economy and serves as a means of livelihood. The cloth is an expression of cultural identity, also useful for political and religious purposes. In a way, this practice encourages self-reliance amongst the people. Most towns in South-Western Nigeria like Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, and Lagos engaged themselves in the production of indigenous fabrics. Ogunduyile & Adepeko (2013) declare that Yoruba consists of various cultures in the South-Western part of the country and that they are all practitioners of indigenous textiles.

Just like the propeller engine of a helicopter that keeps it afloat in the skies, youths in all nations of the world are relied upon for creativity, industriousness and versatility needed to keep the economy and social life of such nations booming. They are undoubtedly a major factor to reckon with in any society because of their huge influence on the economy index and cultural statement of their places of origin. Mbanefo (2022) explains that the pursuit of productivity growth involves development of ideas, ability, and skills for the task by any youth, also a key driver to prosperity and economic growth; therefore, the activities of the youth in any nation cannot be overemphasized. There is a dire need to empower the youths for self-reliance. Youth empowerment involves the ability of the youth to be stronger to decide and have control on his own life. Olusola (2019) describes youth empowerment as a process of gaining the ability to implement a change in one's life and lives of others. It is a means of encouragement to the youth to explore and perform new skills to impact their society positively. It is highly

important for Nigerian youths to embrace and explore production of items with indigenous fabric to support and promote the economy.

Empowerment is liable of gingering any youth to exhibit good behaviour by thinking rightly and positively for a better society. Fabric usage for utilitarian purpose had been in existence long ago. However, the indigenous textiles of the Yoruba people possess special qualities of colour arrangement, motifs, and good patterns. The special qualities can be seen on their Batik, Tie and Dye, Prints and Aso-Oke of all types. The fabrics can also be manipulated to create other items such as cobbling items and for interior decorations. This can as well be a source of empowerment for the youth in Nigeria.

### The Challenges

This research majorly focuses on the reluctance of youths who do not fully utilize the Yoruba indigenous textiles to produce interior decoration and cobbling items. There appears to be insufficient knowledge of indigenous fabrics and their decorative and cobbling potentials. This undoubtedly explains why the use of the fabric for decoration and cobbling is on a decline. Although most fashion labels are now incorporating objects which are cultural as important component of their collections. This serves as trademark pieces for their collections, some infuse them to exhibit their cultural identity Hassan (2023). This brings about a major challenge for indigenous art connoisseurs who crave for patronage. Interior decoration involves paintings, curtains, coverings, beddings, upholsteries, rugs, and placement of appliances wraps, head rests, and soft sculptures are all part of interior decoration. "Yoruba indigenous textiles have been described as one of the most graceful and skilfully demonstrated expertise of mankind" (Ojo, 2006 & Akintayo, 2020). "The use of fabrics for utilitarian purposes had existed in Africa before now. However, the Yoruba indigenous textiles possess complex set of traits and certain characteristics of design qualities, motifs, patterns, colour arrangement, and structure. These qualities can be seen on display as fabrics, prints, batik, embroidery, quilt, appliqué, and tie and dye of all techniques".

The apparent increase in textile production at cottage level would generally translate to establish cultural values as *modus operandi* for economic self-reliance of the youth. The lack of awareness and the seeming popularity of imported textile materials for interior decorations of homes and offices have created challenges for textile art practitioners. It also appears that youths are not fully involved in the usage of Yoruba indigenous fabric for the production of cobbling items apart from decorations of the interiors. At some of the sites of productions of indigenous textile, the producers were no longer producing these fabrics to meet the demand of people who are using it as garment talk less of home furnishing or for production of foot wears due to lack of awareness. The New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD

2011) noted that "Culture is an integral part of development efforts on the continent". Consequently, Nigerian youths are always enjoined to learn and acquire indigenous skills and tradition that is generated through cultural activities of the people. The acquisition of skills was not to be swept under the carpet but to metamorphosize into entrepreneurship for boosting the nation's economy and to curb social vices practised amongst the Nigerian youths.

Apart from the fact that youths are not really acquainted with indigenous textile materials since most believe they are "old school", unchecked-mated influx of foreign materials into the country has as well affected their competitiveness greatly. While some regard these fabrics as outdated, others consider them to be expensive to include as part of materials for production because they will narrow down the margin of profit at the point of sale.

Nigeria is without doubt an endowed nation. A nation with abundance of raw materials and huge manpower to drive the labour industry and should be a towering giant in the global manufacturing industry. For example, the Yoruba indigenous textile industry offers multiple opportunities that are waiting to be tapped. This can be actualised if the youths are encouraged to come into the sector, inject their versatility and innovation into making it a money-spinning venture. No doubt, the government and all agencies involved are doing a lot to empower the youths.

Kuso (2018) posits that Nigerian white collar job seekers can be self-reliant and employlabour with proper guidance and little support.

This research is important at this time when imported cultures have overridden the aesthetic psyche of Nigerians. The youthful exuberant syndrome for making quick money against skill acquisition and self-reliance brought about the sharp decline on the production and the use of Yoruba indigenous textiles for relevant items. This hindered partially the success of government's skill empowerment programme and economic growth. The concept of the findings of this study will be locked in the advocacy for self-sustenance, self-reliance, and economic development.

This research will enumerate on how to make use of Yoruba textile materials such as tie and dye, batik, appliqué etc to produce interior decoration and cobbling items.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this paper is situated on the idea of Sarah; Schwartz; Kirsten; Christensen & Laura Austin (2021). They declared that empowerment strategies and "Youth community organizing" are strategizing in engaging the youth to prevent them from violence. Also, to enable the youth to facilitate community well-being and involve themselves in positive developmental outcomes in the

society. The youth involved can build a healthy and unique environment for themselves and others through empowerment. Youths are to shun violence and embrace peace.

### Literature Review

Over the years, the crime rate in Nigeria has snowballed into an unprecedented height, putting security operatives under intense pressure to arrest the situation and return normalcy to the nation. From terrorism to kidnapping and banditry, the list is scary and endless. The painful aspect of this scenario is that the criminal behind all these cases of insecurity ravaging our country now use our precious youths often to perpetrate their dastardly acts. As the saying goes, the devil will always find a way to engage idle hands. To corroborate what has been said so far, Kalagbor & Harry (2018) posit that there are various challenges facing Nigerian youths such as unemployment and lack of youth empowerment, criminality in terms of drug abuse, kidnapping, oil theft, armed robbery, Boko Haram, and sea piracy. They declare that these menaces have a negative effect on the security of the nation.

From this perspective, crime experts therefore posit that it is the high rate of unemployment in the country that has made crime a tempting option to many youths. Moreover, scholars believe that youths are the most vulnerable in our society, hence, they do not only need utmost attention but should be, as a matter of expediency, be adequately engaged to prevent them delving into crime. To rescue the nation and the youths from the jaws of crime, the federal government of recent has doubled its efforts in collaboration with its affiliated agencies to establish more engaging and result-oriented empowerment programs for the youths.

The literature will be reviewed with attention focused on the following:

- A. Historical Contexts of Yoruba Indigenous Textiles.
- B. Traditional and Contemporary Uses of Batik, Aso-Oke, and Adire
- C. Youth Empowerment Initiatives in Nigeria
- D. Impact of Indigenous Textile Production on Economic Empowerment

#### A. Historical Contexts of Yoruba Indigenous Textiles

The origin of the Yoruba indigenous textile production and usage remains unknown, but production has reached the level of appreciation before European civilization. Ogunduyile (2005) declares that production of the textile fabric has been practiced long ago before the era of European colonization. Hammed (2022) postulates that evidence of long usage of textile clothes among the Yoruba which reflected in ancient sculptures has been dated back to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries ago.

Textile art involve many stages with different techniques to meet the demand of individuals. Weaving of aso-oke in Yoruba land started mainly among the Oyo people, Ede in Osun state, Kwara state, Okene in Kogi state. Consequently, production of handwoven fabrics in Nigeria came into existence before the era of colonialism as reported by scholars, Ojo (2006).

Indigo dyes are the common types of dyes in the olden days whereby colours are extracted mainly from leaves known as Elu in Yoruba land. Different techniques of tying are used. This maybe knot tying, folding types, tying with pebbles and the likes. Batik types involves decoration of fabrics with wax to form desired pattern while *adire-eleko* is fabric embellished with *eko* (pap) or *lafun* (cassava powder). *Adire-eleko* is an age-long technique of fabric decoration usually coloured in indigo dye. The three notable Yoruba traditional woven fabrics are *sanyan*, *alaari*, and *etu*. Production of these fabrics are mainly on two types of looms, the horizontal and the vertical looms. Other types are those produced with lustrous yarn commonly called shine-shine. Indigenous fabrics are Yoruba people's inheritance that must be preserved for generations.

#### B. Traditional and Contemporary Uses of Batik, Aso-Oke, and Adire

These fabrics were used traditionally as cultural garments to be worn at cultural events such as Egungun festivals, at age grades ceremonies, and chieftaincy events. The clothes were sometimes worn casually for day-to-day activities such as light meetings or casual visitation to friends and could also be worn to marketplaces. The styles of garment for both male and female were formal and permanent. Akinrujomu (2023) opines that in the days of old, the main style of dress for men were suit of large gown called *Agbada* and trousers, women put on a form of wrap-around skirt known as *iro*, a blouse called *buba*, shoulder cloth called *iborun* and head-tie called *gele*. The uses of the Yoruba indigenous textiles are in new dimension. The cloths are used for modern attires such as booboo, skirt, blouse, combat short and trouser, joggers and others.

Hassan (2023) added that many people have realised that these indigenous textiles have the potential to ooze a polished and modern essence. For some people, the fabrics provide a wonderful outlet for creativity. People are of the opinion that well-furnished house equipment can be made with indigenous fabrics such as sofas, trapunto, and flowers. Other items are shoes, bags, belt, and hats. Zelda and Adiji (2023) declare that southwest has a rich heritage, which is culturally unique and involves indigenous and contemporary textile practice. Facelift is necessary for modern embellishment by incorporating modern patterns and motifs to satisfy the consumer demands, Ojo (2007). Hassan (2023) asserts that many Nigerian fashion labels are now incorporating objects which are cultural as important components of their design.

These serves as trademarks for their collections, and some infuse them to exhibit their cultural identity.

### C. Youth Empowerment Initiatives in Nigeria

Report from scirp.org (2020) has it that former president Muhammadu Buhari launched a scheme in Abuja on October 12, 2020, known as P-YES. P-YES means President Youth Empowerment Scheme purposely launched to take care of at least 774,000 empowerment opportunities and to attach one thousand youths to one local government across the six geopolitical zones for capacity building and entrepreneurship.

In the same vein, yedis.org (2021) says Nigeria Jubilee Fellows Programme (NJFP) is a youth empowerment initiative launched on 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2021. It was launched purposely to initiate collaborations between the federal government of Nigeria and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The intention of the initiator is equipping youths and talented graduates with relevant practical knowledge and adequate skills, maybe they have job experience or not. The programme has improved the unemployed and youths in capacity building and entrepreneurship training.

### D. Impact of Indigenous Textile Production on Economic Empowerment

Production of indigenous textile creates employment for youths and the unemployed within the society. Among these indigenous textiles are weaving which Emidun & Akinrujumu (2021) described as the most prominent and most consistent handcrafted textile in the art industry in Nigeria. Weavers have incorporated various motifs and patterns with various technical skills over the years. Demands are increasing each day due to the modern usage of the fabric as commemorative cloths (aso-ebi) and fashionable dress styles like skirt and blouse, gowns, shirts, and the rest. There are greater opportunities for producers to make ends meet and most times engage in fabric merchandising. Moreover, there are several sources of inspiration in the indigenous dye textiles of Yoruba land. Various techniques are widely used to embellish fabrics at local level. Existing dyers and weavers in South-Western Nigeria acquire their knowledge of the craft through apprenticeship and inheritance. The youths can gain knowledge of production of the works also through the above means or class lectures.

### Methodology

The research design is experimental. The study adopted a purposive sampling technique to ascertain the key informants (dyers, and sellers of Adire, weavers and sellers of Aso-Oke and cobblers) and youths in textile making in Ondo and Ekiti states. The population of the study involved the traditional weavers, dyers, and youths and artisans in the states. Data collection also involved collection of Yoruba indigenous textiles (Batik, Aso-oke, and Adire etc). It

consisted of capacity building and production of interior decoration and cobbling items. Interview was adopted as the data collection instrument for this research. The research used qualitative analysis of the impact on youth participants, the quantitative analysis of the economic benefits and comparative analysis of traditional versus contemporary designs of indigenous fabrics.

### Indigenous Textile for the Production of:

#### A. Interior Decoration Items

i. Throw pillows- are products from fabrics, designed mostly in abstracts motifs, leaves, and floral designs in case of batiks or tie and dye to bring out interesting patterns, if it were to be an *adire* or tie and dye design. Aso-Oke stripes from horizontal looms are to be sewn together to form a panel big enough for the size of throw pillow if Aso-Oke fabrics are desired. The throw pillows are used around the resting chairs, beds, and sofas. They can also serve as headrest or seat support in an office or at home.

ii. Flowers- it is a known fact that flowers embellish the atmospheric condition in interior setting and the role cannot be over-emphasised. In some cultures, flowers are presented to visitors to welcome them into the house. Flowers constructed purposely for this project consist of valuable materials and fabrics such as Aso-Oke, Tie and Dye and other fabrics.

#### B. Cobbling items

i. Female Shoes- are shoes for girls and women. It serves the purpose of protection and most of the time designed by considering the style in vogue. Weavers are free to choose their desired styles whether high, medium, or low heel type. They are built with delicacy, sometimes with tiny ropes and soft cobbling materials.

ii. Male Shoes- are shoes for boys and men. They are built with harder materials and not necessarily fanciful. The common ones are covered shoes, slippers, and sandals.

### Results

The youths see indigenous fabrics majorly as cultural materials for garment production. New fashion trends have paved ways for modern innovation towards new styles and adequate materials.

The researcher's opinion is that the limitation on the usage of indigenous textile for decorating the interior of homes and for cobbling items could be eradicated through innovations, manipulating it to produce items with greater emphasis on their aesthetic potentials. The paper revealed that the usage of Yoruba indigenous textile for interior decoration and cobbling was possible contrary to the old belief that it was only useful for body coverings and cultural engagements. It is envisaged that usage of indigenous fabric for production of items for interior decoration and cobbling will inculcate in the youths, cultural values, a self-esteeming way of life, self-efficacy, improved social skills and social behaviours.

An increase in the production of indigenous textile at cottage level and practitioners' engagement in small scale entrepreneurial activities will bring about leverage for the gap existing between foreign and

indigenous patronage of fabrics in Nigeria. Also, this will open a channel for Nigerian youths to expand their horizon of creativity and employment opportunities for themselves and the society at large.

### Indigenous Fabric Producers and Product Types

State	Name of indigenous textile maker and seller	Batik	Tie & dye	Eleko	Aso – Oke [Assorted]	Alaari	Sanyan	Etu	Shinning design	Beads
Ekiti	Mide World. Clothes and fabric manufacturer Ekiti State University Area.	1	1	1	3	0	0	1	1	1
Ekiti	Explorer Fabrics. Iworoko.									
Ekiti	Asako Boutique. Ikere-Ekiti	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	0	0
Ekiti	Fasodara Tailoring Palace.	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
Ekiti	KrisdiditConcepts. Clothes and fabric manufacturer Odo-Ado Ado-Ekiti	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ekiti	African Essential @adire.4all	1	1	1	0	0	0		0	0
Ekiti	Savycon Local Ofi Enterprises Ado-Ekiti	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	1
Ekiti	Beegracias Ado-Ekiti	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
ondo	Sweet Mother GbadunsolaOritooke Aso-Oke store. Iparuku, Ondo town.	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	0

Ondo	Buksadire Textile Exporter. Yemisi Akintewe Road 3, Ondo city.	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Ondo	TraAdire. 126, Irowo street, Akure	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ondo	Adire – in – Akure. Akure	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ondo	Aso-Oke centre, Oke-ljebu Akure	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	0
Ondo	Pro360degrees First Bank off Oba Adesida Road, Akure.	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	1
Ondo	Flickerz Aso-Oke, Nepa Area, Akure South. Akure	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	0
Ondo	JaygoldAso-Oke concepts, OkitiOshorun, Ijebu Owo, Owo.	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	0
Ondo	Aso-Oke Ogbo, Olasojieyiolase, Owo	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1
Ondo	DebbayAlasooke, Igbonkuta, Iyalaje, Ondo town	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	1
Ondo	Iyalaje Aso-Oke Idiaje, Ondo town	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	1

## Shoe making(procedure).

### Materials Used:

Nora 4, Nora 3, Thick Lining, Folding Lining, Leather Gum, Mako (Hmm), Chinese Gum, Lass, and Buckle.

### Procedure

- Cut Mako 4 to shape of the sole
- Draw on the Folding Lining
- Apply gum to Mako 4
- File it
- Measure 2 inches on Mako and Lining
- Mark the 2 inches at the top (placed 1st stripe)
- At the bottom, mark 3 inches (place the 2nd stripe)
- Allow a 2-inch gap in between the two stripes
- Put the Lass to locate where Buckle will be placed (this is to make the stripes tight)
- File the sole and gum it with Chinese gum



## Interior Decoration (Procedure)

### Material Used

Aso-oke (woven fabric), adireonididi (tie and dye), adireeleko (starch resist/ printed fabric), green tape, thread, gum, needle, foam, metal.

### Throw Pillow

- Cut 45cm by 45cm fabric.
- Sew 3 sides.
- Fill with foam through the fourth side (before closing).
- Use the same procedure for the circle throw pillow.
- Sew the fourth side halfway.
- Fill with foam.
- Turn two sewn sides, one facing up and the other facing down.
- Pass needle and thread through it severally to achieve the circled shape.
- Close the centre by placing button or a small cloth.

### Flower

- Cut Aso-Oke, tie and dye etc. to stripes of 5cm by 60cm and 14cm by 14cm (for various flower shapes)
- Create different types of flowers with indigenous fabrics.
- Cut metal into various sizes.
- Wrap each metal with green tape.
- Place the flower on the metal (with needle and thread).
- Add gum.
- Cover the back with another piece of cloth.
- Cut another colour of fabric (5cm by 5cm)
- Make small dot with it to beautify the flower where necessary.



## Conclusion

Youths who are empowered have the motivation and urge to influence the society positively with their participatory behaviour, they can bring their ideas and innovations to reality such as using indigenous textiles of the South-Western Nigeria to create interior decoration and cobbling items. This enables them to forward the importance of these items beyond conventional uses as body adornment by manipulating the fabrics to form home items. It is envisaged that an increase in patronage of the indigenous textile at the cottage level would enable the cottage industries to thrive as bases to produce interior and cobbling items.

Meanwhile, youths when empowered and exposed to various uses of indigenous fabrics for production of items could go a long way to improve the economy of the nation starting from the grassroots.

## Contribution to Knowledge

- The seeming emergence of entrepreneurial activities in tertiary education in recent times provides succour for the present-day Nigerian youths who can be self-employed after graduation.
- Aso-Oke and dyed fabrics have revealed the relationship between creativity and innovation therefore traditional producers of indigenous fabrics should put these into consideration for successful output.
- It is expected that the National Directorate of Employment (N.D.E) in its capacity will help promote proposals for funding projects in support of job acquisitions for empowerment.

## Recommendations

- Government should establish local craft centres in all the states in Nigeria has done in Japan and China.
- Non-governmental agencies, groups and individuals should create awareness of the need for empowerment and skills acquisition programmes for youths for self-reliance.
- Groups, government, and individuals should sponsor youths for skill acquisition programmes.

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