

CLOTHING AND TEXTILE FOR FAMILY SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA

By

EJEABUKWA, CHIMA A.
Home Economics Department
Federal College of Education (Technical)
Umunze, Anambra State, Nigeria

Abstract

In the midst of the present economic reality in which the scourge of unemployment bites harder, countries are at a fix on the way forward for the teeming population without decent jobs. Clothing and textile offers wonderful opportunities along the value chain to provide family sustainability. This paper contends that providing families with skills and knowledge of clothing and textile can provide long time incentives for family sustainability. Using documentary sources, the paper provided statistics on the unemployment situation, explored the concept of clothing and textile, highlighted the economic benefits of clothing and textile and linked these benefits to family sustainability. In view of this, the paper suggested among others, the need to explore clothing and textiles as potential source of revenue to the family and government; and families should be encouraged to tap from the potential benefits of clothing and textile; while women training centres should include wardrobe planning principles and clothing selection and management in their training programmes for family sustainability.

Key Words: Family, Clothing and Textile, Sustainability

Introduction

The family is the nucleus of the society. Societal survival is tied to the family from which real development centres. Thus, robust Gross Domestic Product and other indices of national development that could not take into account the state of the family economic well-being translate to mere academic exercise. It is a paradox that Nigeria is assumed to be the largest economy in Africa while at the micro level most of her citizens wallow in poverty. Nigeria alongside other three countries namely, China, Indonesia and India, is home to half of the world's poor people (United Nations, 2016). This classification is not a palatable one for Nigeria given the enormous human and natural endowments that Mother Nature has bestowed on the country. The Labour

Statistics obtained from the National Bureau of statistics (2020) indicate that as at the second quarter of 2020 unemployment rate in the country was 27.1 per cent. Among young people aged 15-34, unemployment rate was the highest at 34.9 per cent. The economic downturn occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation. The gains recorded on course of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) seem to have been eroded by the present reality.

The MDGs got wound up in the year 2015 to give way to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although, some countries failed to meet up with the MDGs, the transition to SDGs is enough to warn non-performing countries that the world cannot stand still to wait. Development is a progressive move. The number eight goal of sustainable development is to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. Inclusive economic growth means that no citizen is left out; that families feel the impact of economic growth. The impact is made manifest through engagement in decent work. The UN (2015) describes decent work as opportunities for everyone to get work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration. There is no place in the world, however where government provides 'decent work' for all her citizens. What government does is to provide an enabling environment for sustainable economic growth. Governments can work to build dynamic, sustainable, innovative and people-centred economies, promoting youth employment and women economic empowerment, in particular, as well as decent work for all.

Clothing and Textile is one area that provides incentives for family survival given its historical attachment to domestic wellbeing. Clothing and Textile is an important component of Home Economics. It is concerned with knowledge, attitude and skills needed to choose, design and sew clothes. It also involves knowledge of the different textiles, clothing selection and maintenance. Clothing and textiles equips individuals with skills, thereby preparing them for enormous employment opportunities in many clothing related occupations including fashion and design, modeling, fashion editing among others. The Covid-19 safety protocol that requires individuals to wear face mask provides another window of opportunity for people skillful in clothing and textile. This paper attempts to explore clothing and textile as a veritable avenue to sustainable family wellbeing.

What is Clothing and Textile?

Clothing and Textiles may be viewed in two ways: as discipline or course of study in the higher institutions of learning and as an economic activity that satisfies some needs. As a course of study, Clothing and Textiles is one of the three major areas of Home Economics taught in Tertiary Institution in the State. It is characteristically skill and activity oriented which when properly

taught will equip the learner with saleable skills needed for self-reliance. Arubayi (2009) observed that the value of the quality of instruction in the teaching of Clothing and Textiles in Tertiary Institutions to national development and the economic empowerment of individuals is not in doubt. Clothing and Textiles is a lucrative and an interesting aspect of Home Economics which is of inestimable value to society. Anyakoha (1993) sees Clothing and Textiles and related arts as an area of Vocational and Technical education which enables an individual to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, abilities and attitudes required to function effectively for the development of self and the society, thus contributing to the economic advancement of the nation (Arubayi, 2010). At the colleges of education, Uwameiye and Osho (2011) observed that clothing and textile component runs across the three years of the programme. It has many courses embedded in it, which include, pattern drafting, pattern adaptation, pattern manipulation, and tie and die.

As an economic activity, Clothing and textile is concerned with knowledge, attitude and skills needed to choose, design and sew clothes. It also involves knowledge of the different textiles, clothing selection and maintenance. Clothing and textiles equips individuals with skills, thereby preparing them for enormous employment opportunities in many clothing related occupations including fashion and design, modeling, fashion editing among others. For the family, it provides opportunities for family well-being. Families will be in a better position to make informed choices based on family limited resources and sustainability.

Clothing is one of the basic necessities of life. The value of clothing and textiles to man has been variously stressed undisputedly and unequivocally. Clothing is the general term for the various coverings design to protect and adore the human body. It may be woven, knitted, felted or made by other methods of making cloth. It could be made from natural or man-made fibres. Oladebo (2007) pointed out that clothing is all forms of body ornamentation and portable articles which are worn or carried by a person. It also includes ornaments, decorations such as body adornment and body painting. Clothing as defined by Usman (2007) is apparel worn by men and women or set for covering the body such as clothes and accessories. She explains further that clothing can be influential in meeting psychological needs. It contributes to the need for self-reliance.

Economic Imperative of Clothing and Textile

Clothing is one of the largest industries in the world economy, generating annual revenues of around 3 trillion USD, producing 80 billion garments, and employing 60 to 75 million people with direct jobs worldwide, of which two thirds are women (United Nations, 2017). The industry is a global one, with its supply chains spreading across all countries, driven mostly by big retailers and traders that determine where to produce, what to produce, and at which prices to sell. The

negative social and environmental impacts of the fashion industry have been well documented over the past few decades, demonstrating that these impacts mostly occur within the upstream portion of the supply chain.

The T&C industries are very important for a handful of countries, in terms of trade, GDP and employment and have contributed significantly in several other countries. The T&C industries provide opportunities for export diversification and expansion of manufactured exports for low-income countries that can exploit their labour cost advantages and fill emerging niches and meet buyer demands. There are also dynamic effects of T&C industries and these dynamic effects are greater, the more linkages have been built up between the garment industry and local textile suppliers.

Some brief country case studies provide evidence of the role of textile industry in development (Keane & Velde, 2008):

- Growing from a virtually non-existent base in the 1990s, Cambodia's garment industry has become a key source of manufacturing exports (80%) and formal employment (65%), and contributes 10-12% to the country's GDP;
- The garment industry is the largest employer in Bangladesh after agriculture. It is the main source of manufacturing employment and exports;
- Mauritius diversified from sugar into textile and clothing in the 1980s and subsequently into tourism and other services. The T&C industry still generated around 19% of manufacturing value added, indirect employment for 250,000 people, and direct employment for around 78,000 people, 70% of total manufacturing employment, although this is now declining due to competition of China in a world less constrained by quotas;
- Madagascar has benefited in important ways from the textiles and clothing industry. It benefited in particular from trade preferences and low labour costs, especially after job relocation away from higher costs in Mauritius, though there are questions about sustainability in a post-MFA quota world also competing with China.

Nigeria is not exempt. Obunadike (2009) observed that clothing and textile has made enormous contributions in the following areas: local means of income, reduction of import quota on clothing and textile, creation of agro-allied investment opportunities, creation of local job opportunities, improvement of vocational skills, enhancement of industrialization and, development of local agro-producing communities, and provides means of specialization in textile production.

Clothing and Textile and Family Sustainability

Clothing and textiles are significant forms of African art, which play vital roles in the cultural milieu of the people (Akinbileje, 2014). Cloth and dress have been described as a mirror of the culture of the people in any society. They symbolize the practices of the society, bounded by the same geographical location, sharing the same cultural values. In the cultural context cloth serves basic needs as clothing and shelter. For society to be considered 'developed', it means the quality of life is, to a large extent, satisfactory to the average member. To be considered 'developing' is to assume or believe that the society is improving the quality of life of its members to an appreciable extent (Olutayo & Akanle, 2009). The well-being of the family is a good indication of societal development. This development or developing concept should also take into account the future. Thus, sustainability is considered a universal methodology for evaluating whether human options will yield social and environmental vitality. It represents the development which meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is considered a precautionary principle, which requires ecological preservation in cases of scientific uncertainty where irreversible damage is threatened (Rosa, 2019).

The principles of sustainability as outlined by Carew and Mitchell (2002, p. 351) in Pasricha (2010) include,

1. Recognition and respect for the limits of nature's capacity for regeneration, and limits to society and the economy of economic systems to support and guide transactions emanating from human activity;
2. Recognition of interdependence and intradependence of ecosystem, socio-system, and economy...between human and non-human entities;
3. Intergenerational equity, in other words the right of future generation to inherit a healthy and ecologically balanced environment from present generations;
4. Intragenerational equity, for example, redistribution of wealth, power and opportunity with a view to reducing current interpersonal and international disparity;
5. Respect for social and cultural freedom, with concomitant acceptance of the responsibilities inherent in cultural and social freedom;
6. Meaningful involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process, including the public and private sectors, international and local representatives, and non-human agents. The more extreme position is a call for equal distribution of power amongst all stake-holders in decision-making;
7. Equal representation of economic, environmental and social priorities in decision-making; and
8. Recognition of the unique contextual factors in each decision-making situation taking responsibility for the impacts resulting from one's decisions.

Sustainable clothing has been described as clothing which incorporates one or more aspects of social and environmental sustainability.

Clothing and textile has been identified as providing support for family sustainability. Clothing is worn for a variety of reasons including protection, communication, status and culture. It is one of the basic needs of individuals. Clothing along with food and shelter has been recognized as a primary need of mankind. In view of this, Horn (2015) stated that there is probably no sphere of human activities in which our values and life styles are reflected more vividly than they are in the clothes we choose to wear. He explains further that the dress an individual wears is a kind of sign language that communicates a complex set of information and usually has basis on which immediate impression are formed. Craig (2003) is of the opinion that clothing like food, housing, religion and arts is an important expression of every culture and that taboos, religion, belief, geographical location and technological progress have all influenced clothing. He went further to explain that man wears clothe for protection against weather, insects bites and human economics, modesty, and adornment. He also stated that man wore clothe for ceremonial use, group identity, sex attraction or self-expression. Clothing affects behaviour, self-expression, creativity, individuality, change, adventure and extension of self. Clothing also plays a number of social, psychological and symbolic roles. If clothing is to perform its varied functions, it has to be appropriately selected for specified purposes or functions. Consumers aim to maximize satisfaction by using available scam resources. Clothing selection practices of home - makers is very important in the family because human needs in terms of clothing are insatiable and the family's resources to satisfy these clothing needs are limited.

According to Okoli (2013) these factors affect clothing decision: The income of a family will play a great part in the type of clothing decisions its family members embark on. For instance, it will be ridiculous for a low income family to contemplate purchasing very expensive clothes for any occasion. Example, some types of lace materials, satin and jacquard that cost up to one thousand naira per yard. It is always advisable to buy the best one can afford and avoid cheap and poor quality clothes as they fade far too soon with usage. Increased income however, can make a family to change its clothing decision by budgeting for more sophisticated clothes, underwear, stockings, tights, socks and ties.

The type of role one plays in a society will determine to a large extent, the type of clothing decisions one makes. For instance, it will be unnecessary for a woman who is engaged in an occupation to participate fully in a uniform to diversify her clothing choice. A nurse will make clothing decisions that will primarily concern the type of dress she wears to work. At the same time, the same nurse when changed to another occupation like modelling, will find that her new role will require her to change her clothing decision thereby purchasing more elegant, gay and sophisticated clothes to suit her new status in the society.

For family sustainability, there is the need for appropriate clothing planning that reflects family income, choices, and behaviours. All these have influence on clothing and textile that can sustain family well-being.

Suggestion

1. The Provision of another source of government revenue apart from oil, increment of national GDP through export of textile materials, and reduction of import quota on clothing and textiles are the highest areas of economic significance to be derived from clothing and textiles education for family sustainability in Nigeria.
2. Clothing and textiles is a potential source of revenue to the family and government. Families should therefore be encouraged to tap from the potential benefits of clothing and textile.
3. Women training centres should include wardrobe planning principles and clothing selection and management in their training programmes.
4. Clothing and textile programmes in schools and extension programmes should organise workshop seminars, symposium, and conferences to create awareness of these principles of clothing.

Conclusion

The family is the nucleus of the society. Societal survival is tied to the family from which real development centres. Clothing and textile offers enormous incentives for family sustainability. Avenues for family involvement in the choice, participation and management of clothing abound. There is the need for proper planning for clothing consumption that will consider family income and preferences for sustainability.

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