

Development of Sustainable Fashion Soft Skills by Fashion Educationists Through Non-Formal Education Programs

Evania Yessica^{1*}, Tri Siwi Agustina², Eka Mega Pertiwi³, Rohmatuz Zuhroh Sofwani⁴

Master in Human Resources Development, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia^{1 2 4*}

Master in Islamic Finance and Banking, Islamic Business School, College of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia³

*Corresponding

Author

✉ evania.yessica-2023@pasca.unar.ac.id

Abstrak:

This research aims to discuss the development of students' soft skills in achieving fashion sustainability taught by fashion educators and to explore the materials applied in fashion education institutions. Fashion is one of the primary human needs that provides self-identity, boosts self-confidence, offers comfort, and upholds values of modesty. Consequently, the fast fashion industry competes to produce clothing on a large scale, often unaware of the negative impacts such as pre-consumption and post-consumption waste, which harm the environment and threaten human well-being. Therefore, the term sustainable fashion has emerged, referring to environmentally friendly clothing. In response, non-formal fashion education institutions have taken the initiative to teach materials related to soft skills aimed at fashion sustainability, including the development of leadership character, ethical fashion, skills in designing sustainable fashion garments, and fashion business. This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method, with data collected through in-depth interviews and observations of fashion educationists. Through the programs and materials provided to students, this scientific research is expected to benefit related human resources and raise awareness about preserving the environment through clothing.

Keywords : *Soft skills, Sustainability Fashion, Fashion Educationist, Nonformal education.*

INTRODUCTION

As time progresses, an individual's need for clothing has evolved into a fashion necessity, where clothing serves as a means of self-identity, reflects self-image, boosts confidence, adds personal value, and becomes a platform for self-actualization and existence (Castagna et al., 2022). Increasing awareness among individuals about the importance of an appealing appearance and its impact on social interactions is also evident (Yulia Trisnawati, 2011). In response, the fast fashion industry has capitalized on this opportunity by producing clothing in massive quantities at relatively affordable prices, featuring trendy designs, and marketing them within short cycles of approximately three months (Brewer, 2019). This drives a consumerist behavior in society, as people are encouraged to purchase new clothes frequently in large quantities, which negatively impacts environmental sustainability when these garments reach the end of their lifecycle (Henninger et al., 2016).

According to data collected by the National Waste System of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (SIPSN KLHK) in 2021, textile waste in Indonesia was recorded at approximately 2.3 million tons. This figure consists of 2 million tons of post-consumer textile waste (worn-out clothing discarded by consumers) and around 0.3 million tons of pre-consumer textile waste (textile waste generated during the clothing production process), showing a 4% increase over two years from 2019 to 2021. This situation has led to environmental pollution, as textile waste is inorganic and not easily decomposable. It contributes to water pollution due to the use of chemical dyes in production processes and increases greenhouse gas emissions from the fast fashion industry. If this issue is not promptly addressed, it could threaten human well-being, pollute the environment, damage ecosystems, and result in continuous waste accumulation (Astuti et al., 2023).

Communities aware of the negative impacts of textile waste resulting from issues in the fast fashion industry have spurred creative innovation through the concept of sustainable fashion. This sustainability movement focuses on addressing ethical concerns regarding environmental conservation by designing and producing eco-friendly clothing that is easy to recycle due to its organic materials, features timeless designs, and emphasizes long-lasting durability (Anguelov, 2021). The role of human resources in the fashion industry, particularly fashion educators, is vital. Fashion educators provide students with valuable experiences, especially in non-formal education, which serves as an initial platform for learning specific fields. Non-formal education offers a more flexible, private, and easily understood teaching-learning system. It aims to contribute to developing superior character soft skills and fostering environmental awareness, teaching fashion business strategies so students can establish sustainable fashion businesses, and actively promoting eco-friendly clothing to the public. The core material includes creating sustainable fashion garments by considering fabric scraps to minimize leftover materials, utilizing natural fibers to reduce chemical waste from production, or recycling fabrics and garments with creative, innovative, and unique ideas to produce high-quality works (Made Weda Githapradana & Rahmi Julia, 2020).

The purpose of this research journal is to support other fashion educators in implementing material programs aimed at developing students' soft skills based on sustainable fashion. This initiative seeks to minimize the amount of pre-consumer and post-consumer textile waste while fostering public awareness about the importance of maintaining the stability of the ecosystem through sustainable clothing consumption. From this explanation, a research problem can be formulated: How is the development of sustainable fashion soft skills facilitated by fashion educationists through non-formal education programs?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is an essential aspect of conducting research, as it facilitates the research process and enhances the quality of the study. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method. According to Sugiyono, qualitative research is a philosophical approach used to investigate scientific

experimental conditions, with a greater emphasis on meaning (Creswell & David Creswell, 2018). The data collection techniques used in this study provide information through two approaches. First, **primary data**, which is obtained directly from the first-hand source at the research site through in-depth interviews and direct observations gathered from informants related to the research topic. Second, **secondary data**, which is collected indirectly from data sources, including articles, books, or other reference materials related to the research topic (Sugiyono, 2018).

The researcher selected informants as research subjects through purposive sampling. The informants were chosen because they could provide information based on their conscious activities and experiences in the field of non-formal fashion education. The selected informants were educators from the non-formal education institution Quinna School of Fashion, located in Malang City. This institution was chosen as the research object because it is the first pioneer in non-formal fashion education, has 14 years of experience, has alumni who have successfully established their own fashion brands, actively participates in fashion events in Malang, holds official certifications, and operates under legal protection. The institution employs five female educators with educational backgrounds in fashion. These include one senior fashion educationist, who teaches entrepreneurship, character development, and advanced subjects, and is also the owner of the non-formal education institution. Additionally, there are two fashion educationists who specialize in teaching fashion design illustration and two others who focus on pattern making and sewing, specifically guiding students in producing garments.

RESULT

In this study, which employs a descriptive qualitative method, several approaches to developing sustainable fashion soft skills have been implemented by fashion educationists through non-formal education programs. These initiatives aim to enhance garment production skills, foster innovation and creativity in designing sustainable fashion garments, and cultivate leadership and entrepreneurial qualities, particularly in the context of selling sustainable clothing. The focus is on addressing the growing issue of textile waste, which poses significant environmental threats, and promoting environmental restoration through effective and eco-friendly fashion products. The educational program emphasizes three key aspects: (1) Leadership character development, (2) Entrepreneurial character development, (3) Innovation and creativity in production skills.

Leadership Character

According to Rost's theory, leadership is a correlation between leaders and followers motivated to enact real change to achieve shared goals (Ngayo Fotso, 2021)

1. Fashion Show

Program students at the non-formal fashion education institution, Quinna School of Fashion, are required to actively participate in fashion show activities regularly organized by various parties, including:

- **Internal organizers:** The non-formal education institution itself, during graduation events (for students who have completed the fashion education program). Students present fashion creations

themed around local wisdom, incorporating traditional fabrics (*wastra*), eco-friendly materials, and production techniques that generate minimal waste.



Picture 1: *Graduation Actually*

(2) Fashion Show in collaboration with the government of Pamekasan, Madura and carrying out fashion show activities using typical Pamekasan batik fabric at Pendopo Tuban in 2022, at the Pamekasan Batik Festival event.



Picture 2: Fashion Show, Gebyar Batik Pamekasan (2022)

(3) Fashion Shows organized by communities such as Malang Fashion Week, Malang Fashion Runway, Malang Fashion Movement, these programs are held periodically every year, within the scope of Malang City which are generally held in malls such as MOG or Matos. This program was held to foster students' self-confidence as well as introduce the wider community to environmentally friendly clothing and *wastra* fabrics.



Picture 3: *Fashion Show MFM*

1. *Ethical Fashion*

In the fashion sector, things that must be paid attention to are not only talking about a successful fashion business and making beautiful and marketable clothing designs. However, we must also pay attention to social aspects related to ethical fashion in its sustainability (Stringer et al., 2020). This is done as a form of concern for workers, such as sequin makers, tailors, etc. who have contributed to the fashion making process. Fashion students are taught how to employ tailors for work ordered in the form of clothing ethically by paying appropriate wages, communicating well, not in a high tone or shouting, and employing tailors humanely.

The aim of providing this material is to sharpen ethics and manners towards other people, pay attention to human values and norms, and improve students' leadership spirit through business management and treatment of workers.

2. *Fashion Competition*

Various kinds of competitions in the fashion sector are also often held by several agencies, such as Radar Malang, certain boutiques, or even other fashion schools located outside Malang City. Fashion Educationists recommend that students take part in competitions regardless of their results. For fashion students who have participated in a series of competitions, there is a special award in the form of additional plus points which are included in their diploma grades later.

This makes students motivated to excel, collect various awards, and can increase healthy competition between competitors, and as a means of self-existence. If seen from another perspective, the fashion competition held can increase expertise and skills regarding clothing design techniques that are typical of sustainable fashion, develop potential through creativity and innovation, while if seen from the benefits obtained by fashion students, it is considered that they can realize their design ideas into clothing. or other fashion items, can channel their ideas, get awards for work which are generally obtained through certain competitions.

Entrepreneur Character

The definition of entrepreneurship according to Choo and Bontis (2002) describes a process of finding, recognizing and empowering new opportunities (Fontana & Musa, 2017).

1. Fashion Business

In creating a successful business venture, a thorough planning strategy is needed starting from the quality of the clothing products produced, financial management so that income and expenditure are balanced, the sales promotion process for clothing products to selecting the packaging used in accordance with standards, including minimizing usage. plastic packaging, but instead replace it with recycled paper which is more environmentally friendly until the sales stage, the aim of teaching this material to fashion students is to prepare them for their future careers.

2. Sale and Marketing

From a marketing perspective, the role that a fashion educator can play is to carry out learning programs with marketing promotional materials around the local area first, such as to friends, acquaintances, at the city level first. This aims to present the existence of the product and build trust in relationships, satisfied consumers will make repeat purchases, even a few "word of mouth" marketing strategies are carried out to expedite the product transaction process and after that consumers are asked to provide reviews of the product along with input, criticism and suggestions. which is built to improve the quality of clothing products in the future, which can then be developed into large-scale sales which can be done on various e-commerce sites such as Shoope, Tokopedia or TikTok as well as various social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Where this can be adjusted to market segmentation.

Another thing that is pursued regarding offline sales is by participating in bazaars, exhibitions or other certain activities that are held. The goal is to build active participation from fashion students. Good promotion is also carried out through the photoshoot process using photos of professional models with interesting concept themes that match the theme of sustainable clothing, which is useful for making a business brand remain stable even though the product produced is sustainable fashion, there is an emotional bond, product trust, good relationships, the resulting match between fashion designers and consumers (Sarokin & Bocken, 2024).

Innovation Skill and Production Creativity

1. *Upcycle Fashion and Recycle Fashion*

Fashion educators also provide programs to recycle old and unused rags or clothing into sustainable products. The program is upcycle and recycle fashion, which is an effort that utilizes rags, both pre-consumer and post-consumer waste in the form of cloth residues. which are no longer used to become craft items or wearable clothing of high value which supports the circulation of materials, thereby minimizing fashion waste which supports the circulation of materials, thereby minimizing fashion waste(Nidia & Suhartini, 2020).

Talking about recycling fashion, it is a process of destroying the original item and then it can be reshaped into a new item, and is based on the conversion of materials from existing products into different and interesting items (Şener et al., 2023). For example, the patchwork fabric that has been collected can be processed by fashion students into creative fabric called yo-yos, slashing fabric, flower corsage, patchwork clothing, or if the remaining material is felt to be still wide enough then the use is more for making bags, hats, scarves. , other handicrafts, or used as accessories for bandanas, hair clips, ribbons and decorations, can also be processed into household linens such as tablecloths, sofa cushion covers, aprons, hand towels, eating mats, etc.



Picture 4: Craft yo-yo, 2023

Upcycling fashion is a form of activity that recycles by changing original items into items that have new uses without leaving the original form of existing clothing, implementing aesthetic changes (Janigo dan DeLong,2017). As an application, for clothes that are worn out, clothes that have not been used for a long time, clothes that are old fashioned, clothes that do not fit the current body size, this can be done by fashion students to renovate these clothes by remaking clothes (reshaping clothes).) and make it according to design requirements, adding buttons, zippers or other decorative elements to the clothing. This method is used to avoid post-consumer waste originating from consumers.

2. Clothes Production

The material on sustainability soft skills by fashion educators in the field of pattern making and sewing as an implementation of sustainable fashion and the main initiator in the field of fashion is Zero Waste Fashion, which is a method in fashion design that produces little textile waste or even zero waste in other contexts. as an effort to reduce waste on clothing which is carried out at every stage in the production chain (ElShishtawy et al., 2022). Zero waste fashion aims to create fashion

products and alternatives to the problem of fashion waste which pollutes the environment, encourage public awareness of the negative impacts resulting from fast fashion industry waste and it is hoped that it will increase active participation in preserving the environment (Made Weda Githapradana & Rahmi Julia, 2020).

The mission of zero waste fashion is to change the norms of the fashion industry by implementing fashion creations without waste. According to the owner of the Quinna School of Fashion, the process of making zero waste clothing uses a pattern without voids so that it leaves no rags, or only very little, in the form of fabric threads, and fabric edges. The remaining patchwork can be used as accessories, pockets, or other decorations on clothing. In this way, the clothes produced are waste-free and more environmentally friendly (Prafirra Viniani, 2022).



Picture 5 : Zero Wate Pattern

Source: Kompas Digital, 2023

The clothes created by this fashion designer offer product innovation as a solution to the issue of textile waste, changing the norms of the fashion industry by introducing a new mindset in the process of creative fashion education (Hanantiani & Nursari, 2020). Apart from that, there are various other types of zero waste clothing, such as pants made from wastra fabric/ lurik fabric, outerwear/outerwear made from square fabric which is patterned in such a way as to produce clothing with 0% fabric waste, zero waste women's blouses/tops which can be used by various body sizes. This type of clothing can provide ideas for students to become entrepreneurs later.

3. Textile

The program taught to students is providing textile training material in the form of fabric that is environmentally friendly and has minimal waste. This fabric is known as Ecoprint Fashion Textile, which is an environmentally friendly fabric made from organic materials, made from cotton fabric, silk fabric or natural fiber fabric that is capable of Absorbs color from leaves which are used to make motifs on clothing or fabric, including teak leaves, layang leaves, jatropha kepyar leaves, keres leaves, African leaves, matoa leaves, acacia leaves and truja leaves. The coloring material for

ecoprint is wood stems and leaves after going through the process, there are natural colors produced from the leaves such as purple, blue, red, green, yellow, orange, but not as intense as in the chemical process. (Hye-Won Professor & Hyewon, 2012).

Fashion educators teach various techniques that can be combined with ecoprint fabric, such as embroidery sewing techniques, embroidery or even beading. This technique is carried out to develop creativity and innovation and create works of art of high quality and marketability. All ecoprint making techniques are done manually using equipment often found in households, including large tables, stoves, large pans, places to dry cloth. (Stevin Herlina Felix Ari Dartono Setyawan Kriya Tekstil et al., 2018).

Fashion educators also emphasize in fashion education programs that making sustainable clothing has aspects that must be considered, such as (1) Aesthetic aspects which are understood as the basic science of design that concerns beauty. elements of motif, color, composition. (2) The functional aspect is understood in the form of an exclusive clothing style because the design introduces natural materials and the level of comfort of the clothing when worn.



Picture 6: Ecoprint fabric, (Namira Ecoprint Surabaya, 2024)

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Conclusion

The research used a descriptive qualitative method entitled "Development of Sustainable Fashion Soft Skills by Fashion Educationists Through Non-formal Education Programs". The soft skills program implemented includes several things including (1) Leadership character, including fashion

show programs, ethical fashion, fashion competitions. This aims to hone students' leadership spirit, self-confidence, ethical character according to norms and values. (2) The entrepreneurial character consisting of fashion business, sales and exhibitions aims to sharpen innovation and business creativity skills in the context of sustainable fashion clothing. (3) Innovation skills and production creativity which include, Zero waste fashion to minimize the amount of leftover patchwork from the start of the manufacturing process, Upcycle Fashion and Recycle Fashion by utilizing pre-consumer and post-consumer waste from patchwork which is realized in new works of art to add value aesthetics of these goods, textiles to introduce environmentally friendly craft products using leaves as fabric motifs and fabrics made from natural fibers, aiming to develop skills in producing sustainable fashion clothing that is good and of superior quality in an effort to reduce the amount of post and pre-consumer waste.

If many people and fashion enthusiasts actively participate in this strategy, then predictions about reducing the amount of textile waste can have a positive impact on environmental comfort and human welfare.

DISCUSSION

The suggestion that the author gives in this research is to re-evaluate the results obtained from the application of "Development of Sustainable Fashion Soft Skills by Fashion Educationists Through Non-formal Education Programs" by adding other educational programs so that the knowledge gained by fashion students is enriched, for example developing training about soft skills for fashion sustainability in the wider community, counseling for PKK mothers, students at school level. There is also a need for public awareness regarding textile waste, which can be done by providing material about the effectiveness of protecting the environment in the world of education or even education with training related to this vision.

It is hoped that other fashion educational institutions will play an active role in working together to reduce the amount of existing textile waste, and that government support, both in the form of operational funds and regulations regarding environmental sustainability laws, can be implemented firmly.

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