



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN FASHION DESIGN IN MAKURDI METROPOLIS, BENUE STATE

AIZE, Deborah Enene; ODUMS, Chinonso, Princewel; AJUNWA Edache
& Agbo, Diana ADA

Department of Family and Consumer Sciences
College of Food Technology and Human Ecology
Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi-Nigeria

Abstract: *This research carried out to empower women through fashion design skills in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. The research was guided by the specific objectives which included; to assess the current level of fashion designing competence of women in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State, to find out the current level of fashion designing skills and competence of women in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State, to ascertain the effect of technical skills empowerment of women enrolled in the fashion design programme in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State and, to examine competence level of branding and marketing of women enrolled in skills in fashion design programme in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State. Quasi experimental research design was adopted for the study with a population of fifty (146,329) women were chosen to participate in the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the fifty (50) women for the study through structured questionnaire and evaluation form was used to generate the data for this study. The data generated was analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. The result on current level of fashion designing skills and competence of women in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State showed that participants prior to the training had no knowledge about Principles for taking body measurement (1.06), participant prior to participating in the training had no skills in Sew garments parts (1.92) and participant had no knowledge of fashion branding (2.12). On Competence of Women Enrolled in Skills in Fashion Design Empowerment programme in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue state, the result showed that the participant gained knowledge about clothing after participating in the training gained knowledge in clothing (3.46), participant became Knowledgeable about figure types after the training (3.46), participant Understands line, color and texture, include elements of designs to garment production, achieve harmony and unity in garment and Produce garment with overall balance with scores of (2.94, 2.60, 3.26). On technical skills empowerment of Women enrolled in the fashion design programme in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue state, the result showed that participant after the training were able to accurately identify machine parts (3.90) and participants are able to accurately take body measurements (3.90). It was recommended that similar fashion design empowerment programs be extended to more women in other regions. This will provide a wider reach and impact, enabling more women to gain critical fashion design and entrepreneurial skills.*

Keywords: *Empower, Women, fashion design skills*

1.0

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Women's empowerment is a multi-dimensional process that helps women to gain control over their lives. It is the degree of autonomy and self-determination in women. Kabeer (2018), defined women empowerment to include accepting women's viewpoints or making an effort to seek them, raising the status of women through education, awareness, literacy, and training. Women's empowerment equips and allows women to make life-determining decisions through the different problems in society. Women empowerment is a multifaceted process that aims to increase the social, economic, and political strength of women. In the context of Makurdi metropolis, Benue State, one of the most effective means of empowering women has been through the acquisition and application of fashion designing skills. This approach not only provides women with a source of income but also fosters creativity, independence, and social recognition therefore, fashion designing offers a viable pathway for economic empowerment among women in Makurdi. Many women in Makurdi Metropolis ply their trade in various small-scale businesses such as bakeries, poultry farming, restaurants, simple textile production, and jewelry ventures (Abdulraheem et al., 2024). Women are usually faced with significant barriers that limit their access to essential resources such as property, recognition, education, knowledge, networks, materials, and marketplaces (Quiñones, 2023). These limitations are compounded by societal and economic factors, where women are often underrated and unable to exploit professional opportunities to advance their ventures effectively. This challenge is particularly pronounced in Northern regions, where many women cannot own property and are financially dependent on their husbands and relatives.

The lack of property ownership and financial independence hampers their ability to secure professional recognition and leverage economic opportunities. The main purpose of fostering fashion programmes for creating business opportunities and economic development is critical for decision-makers, especially as the awareness of the importance of empowering women in less developed economies has grown significantly in recent years (Jamir, 2019). According to Adamu (2020), the fashion industry in Nigeria has seen significant growth, providing numerous opportunities for women to establish their own businesses and achieve financial independence. This economic upliftment enables women to contribute to household incomes and improve their families' standard of living. Aimua et al. (2023), noted that many women who have acquired fashion designing skills have successfully transitioned from informal to formal economic activities, thereby enhancing their economic stability. Abdullahi (2024), highlighted that the empowerment of women through fashion designing contributes to the broader economic development of the region by increasing employment and promoting local industries. The social impact of fashion designing skills on women in Makurdi is profound. Fashion designing not only equips women with a practical skill but also boosts their self-esteem and social status. According to Kato (2019), women who engage in fashion designing often experience a heightened sense of self-worth and confidence, as they are able to express their creativity and receive recognition for their work.

Fashion designers in Makurdi have become role models within their communities, inspiring other women to pursue similar paths. This social recognition and respect further motivate women to continue developing their skills and exploring new opportunities in the fashion industry. The collaborative nature of the fashion industry therefore fosters a sense of community and support among women, which is crucial for their economic and social empowerment. The process of learning and mastering fashion designing is an important aspect of women's empowerment in Makurdi.

Educational initiatives and vocational training programs tailored to fashion designing have proven effective in equipping women with the necessary skills and knowledge. In today's society, particular emphasis is placed on material items and the construction of one's image. According to Belk (1988), possessions can serve as a symbol of self-definition and an extension of the self. Eneji (2021), asserted that such training programs not only teach technical skills but also cover business management and entrepreneurship, thereby preparing women to run successful enterprises. Furthermore, Schulz (2023), highlights that access to education in fashion designing enhances women's problem-solving abilities and critical thinking, which are essential for innovation in the industry. According to Meyer (2020), continuous learning and skill development in fashion designing contribute to the overall empowerment of women by enabling them to adapt to changing market demands and technological advancements.

Fashion designing also plays a crucial role in cultural preservation and innovation in Makurdi. Women designers often incorporate traditional motifs and fabrics into their creations, thereby preserving and promoting Benue State's rich cultural heritage. According to Audita (2023), this blending of traditional and modern elements in fashion not only enhances the cultural value of their work but also appeals to a broader market. Ikpe (2024), observed that by using local materials and traditional techniques, women designers contribute to the sustainability of indigenous crafts and skills. Furthermore, Wubs (2020), emphasizes that the innovative aspects of fashion designing enable women to create unique and marketable products, thus ensuring their competitiveness in the industry. Despite the numerous benefits, women in Makurdi face several challenges in the field of fashion designing. These challenges include limited access to capital, inadequate training facilities, and cultural barriers. According to Ujah (2021), many women struggle to secure loans and funding necessary to start or expand their businesses. Additionally, Urama (2022), points out that the lack of adequate training centers hampers the development of advanced skills. Cultural norms and stereotypes also pose significant obstacles, as noted by Akinyele (2020), who discusses the societal expectations that can restrict women's participation in certain professional fields. However, these challenges also present opportunities for policy intervention and support from both governmental and non-governmental organizations. By addressing these issues, stakeholders can create a more conducive environment for women to thrive in the fashion industry.

According to Adeyemi et al. (2023), skill training programs play a crucial role in bridging the gap between raw talent and professional expertise, thereby enabling women to transform their creative ideas into marketable products. Similarly, Chukwuma et al. (2021), emphasized that such programs can significantly enhance women's employability and entrepreneurial potential, leading to economic independence and social empowerment. Furthermore, Okoro et al. (2022), argued that skill training in fashion design can also contribute to community development by fostering local businesses and promoting cultural heritage through traditional designs. The curriculum of fashion design skill training programs typically includes a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Core subjects often cover areas such as pattern making, sewing techniques, fabric selection, textile science, and fashion illustration. According to Adebayo et al. (2020), a well-rounded curriculum should also incorporate modules on fashion history, trend analysis, and color theory to provide students with a broad understanding of the fashion industry. Additionally, Olatunji et al. (2023) highlight the importance of including business and marketing courses in the curriculum to equip women with the knowledge needed to manage their own fashion enterprises successfully. Therefore, this study seeks to empower women through skills in fashion designing in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State. Despite the notable potential of fashion designing as a means of women empowerment in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State, several persistent challenges hinder its full realization. These challenges span across economic,

educational, and infrastructural dimensions, thereby limiting the effectiveness of fashion designing in empowering women and contributing to their overall well-being and societal development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Women in Makurdi have been given little attention when it comes to human development and empowerment, they often lack access to education and skills training, which hinders their ability to earn a sustainable income and contribute to their households' economic wellbeing. Many women involved in tailoring have informal or very little training in fashion designing as such, their level of output from the work they put in is very little or none. Most of them are discouraged and some have abandoned the profession. This has reduced the influence of the role of women to nation building. A critical issue is the inadequate availability and accessibility of quality training programs. While there are some vocational training centers in Makurdi, they are often insufficient in number and quality to meet the growing demand for fashion designing skills. Many training programs lack comprehensive curricula/manuals that cover both technical and business management aspects of fashion designing. As a result, women may acquire basic skills but remain ill-equipped to compete in a dynamic and competitive industry. This gap in education and training significantly hampers their ability to develop sustainable and successful fashion enterprises.

Cultural norms and social stereotypes present formidable challenges to women seeking empowerment through fashion designing. In many communities within Makurdi, traditional gender roles and expectations limit women's participation in professional and entrepreneurial activities. Women are often expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities over career aspirations, which restricts their ability to invest time and effort into developing their fashion designing skills. These deficiencies make it difficult for women to produce high-quality products to meet market demands, and compete with established brands. Furthermore, the lack of dedicated spaces for fashion designers, such as workshops and marketplaces, restricts their ability to showcase and sell their creations effectively.

The absence of robust policy frameworks and institutional support further complicates the empowerment of women through fashion designing. Governmental and non-governmental organizations in Makurdi have not sufficiently prioritized or supported initiatives aimed at enhancing women's skills and economic opportunities in the fashion industry. This lack of strategic support and advocacy results in missed opportunities for women to gain visibility, access resources, and receive mentorship and guidance necessary for their growth and success. There is also a notable gap in research and data on the impact of fashion designing on women's empowerment in Makurdi. Comprehensive and systematic studies that explore the challenges, successes, and potential strategies for empowering women through fashion designing are scarce. There is need to bridge the gap by empowering women, with the right skills in the right order who will in-turn get empowered and also empower other women. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates women empowerment through fashion design skills in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State so as to bridge the gap.

1.3 Objective of the study

The broad objective of the study was to investigate women empowerment through fashion design skills in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State. The study specific objectives of the study were to;

- i. assess the current level of fashion designing competence of women in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State
- ii. find out the current level of fashion designing skills and competence of women in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State

- iii. ascertain the effect of technical skills empowerment of women enrolled in the fashion design programme in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State
- iv. examine competence level of branding and marketing of women enrolled in skills in fashion design programme in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State

1.4 Research Questions

1. What fashion design competence and skills training programme will be adapted and implemented for women in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State?
2. What is the current level of fashion designing skills and competence of women in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State?
3. To what extent does technical skills empowerment affect Women enrolled in the fashion design programme in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue state?
4. What is the competence level on branding and marketing of women enrolled in skills in fashion design programme in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State?

The findings of the study are significant to various stake holders such as Fashion industry and Educational Institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The fashion industry stands to gain from a well-trained and empowered workforce. The study's emphasis on skill development and innovation with a guided manual will ensure that the industry has access to talented designers who can drive creativity and growth. Understanding the dynamics of the local fashion scene, industry players can identify new market opportunities. The study will provide insights into consumer preferences, local materials, and traditional techniques, enabling the fashion industry to tap into unique and culturally rich products. The study will provide evidence-based recommendations for creating supportive policies that facilitate access to capital, infrastructure, and training. Policymakers can use this information to develop targeted interventions that address the unique needs of women in Makurdi.

Educational institutions can leverage the study's findings to enhance their training programs. The insights on effective skill development and the integration of business management courses will help institutions design more comprehensive and practical curricula. This will ensure that graduates are better prepared to enter and succeed in the fashion industry. NGOs focused on women's empowerment and skill development will benefit from the study's detailed analysis. The findings will guide the design and implementation of programs that effectively address the challenges faced by women in the fashion industry. NGOs can use this information to secure funding, advocate for policy changes, and create impactful initiatives. The study on women empowerment through fashion designing skills in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State is particularly significant for Home Economics graduates. The integration of fashion designing into Home Economics curricula and professional practice has numerous implications for graduates, impacting their career prospects, skill-sets, economic opportunities, and contributions to community development.

The scope of the study was limited to empowerment of women through skills in fashion designing in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State. The study covered women from 4 areas in Makurdi metropolis. The areas were, Welfare quarters, Yakor, Kanshio and New GRA respectively, the areas were selected due to their proximity to the fashion house where the training was carried out in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State. The study was limited to women with certificates from tertiary institutions with interest in developing understanding of clothing and design, technical skills of clothing as well as branding and marketing of clothing to enable them have comprehensive basic knowledge on how to be a fashion designer.

2.0

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The study made use of quasi experimental design. Their assessment before the administration of the training which was the pre-test and, after the training the evaluation was the post-test. The training involved women who were exposed to the same training facility and equipment for the same duration of time. The cluster mean before and after the training were compared to ascertain the effectiveness of the training. Each variable was in line with the objective of the study and after which, results were use to generalize on the entire population of the study.

2.2 Area of the study

This research was carried out in Makurdi metropolis. In 2016, Makurdi and the surrounding areas had an estimated population of 365,000. The study was carried out in 4 areas of Makurdi metropolis which are, New GRA, Kanshio, Welfare Quarters and Yakyoo.

2.3 Population of the study

The study is made up of 146,239 women source (National population commission of Nigeria (2006). The study covered fifty (50) graduates from tertiary institution interested in fashion designing. Purposive sampling technique was used to get Women with interest in acquiring skills in fashion designing within Makurdi metropolis.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling technique was used to select the four areas in Makurdi metropolis and snowballing was used to obtain the participant for this study. Fifty (50) women were selected being those with interest and available for the training. Therefore, the sample of the study was 50 women drawn from the four different areas in Makurdi metropolis.

2.5 Instrument for data collection

The instruments used for data collection were, a developed structured questionnaire titled "Women empowerment questionnaire" (WEQ) and evaluation form titled "Women empowerment form" (WEF) containing open-ended and closed questions was used in data collection. Structured questionnaire was used to answer research one (1) while the evaluation form was used to answer research question three (3), four (4) and five (5). Section A of the questionnaire sorted information on the biodata of the respondent; section B sorted information on the specific objectives and hypothesis of the study. They comprised of a 4point likert scale of preference [4 strongly agree, 3agree, 2disagree, 1strongly disagree]

2.6 Validation of Research Instrument

The instrument for data collection was validated by three specialists; two from the Department of Home Science and Management and one from the Department of Educational Foundation, all from Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation to ascertain the appropriateness of language use and items relevance to the stated objectives. Their observations, comments and suggestions such as checking for grammatical errors, correcting loaded items, improving on clarity of items, checking the ambiguity of the items to suit the study were properly adhered to in order to raise the quality of the instrument for the study.

2.7 Reliability of the Research Instrument

The instruments for data collection was tested for internal consistency, and validation was done by three experts, two from the department of home science and management and, one from the department of educational foundation. A pilot study was carried out on twenty (20) non-participant

group (from Kwali area of FCT) to ascertain the reliability of the instruments on the competence level. This was determined using Cronbach Alpha of estimating reliability. The reliability score of 0.81 and 0.84 were obtained. This indicates that the instruments were consistent in measuring what it purported to measure. The justification is gotten from McIntosh in Alonge (2004) that a reliability coefficient of $0.81 < r < 0.85$ is substantial. The choice of Cronbach Alpha was because the instrument was in the form of four point scale (strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed).

2.8 Method of Data Collection

The data for this study was collected using questionnaires before the training to obtain base line and evaluation forms after the training to evaluate the impact of the training. They were administered by self with help of three research assistant who were taught how to fill the forms prior to the training and collected on the spot. The data was collected in four phases:

- i. **Phase 1:** Development of training manual
- ii. **Phase 2:** Administration of questionnaire to obtain the baseline competence and skills level women in fashion designing in Makurdi metropolis. (pre-test)
- iii. **Phase 3:** Development of fashion design skill training program for women empowerment in Makurdi metropolis. The training was carried out in, Debitalia fashion house, to enable theoretical and practical aspects be effectively carried out for a period of four months.
 - First month: introduction to fashion and design
 - Second month: machine, measurements and pattern drafting
 - Third month: garment production and introduction to fashion branding and marketing
 - Fourth month: internships [practical application of all the skills from the program with the fashion house]
- iv. **Phase 4:** Evaluation of the level of competence and fashion designing skills of women enrolled in the fashion designing training program. (post-test)

2.9 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage and means) and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data on a four-point scale, where SA has 4-point SD with 1 point. The calculated Means of above 2.50 showed that the result is significant at ($P > 0.05$) and accepted while the Means less than 2.50 showed that the result is not significant at ($P < 0.05$) and the results were rejected (disagreed).

The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using the t-test and the calculated value of the t-test was greater or equal to the null was accepted, otherwise rejected.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

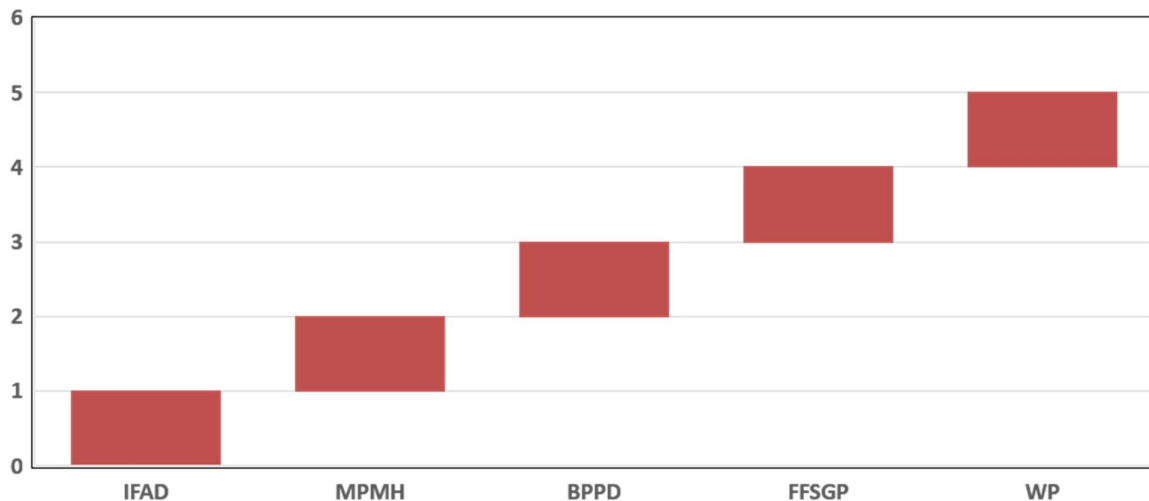
The respondents comprised of women in Makurdi metropolis who graduated from tertiary institutions.

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of the current level of fashion design competence

The result on table 1 showed the mean responses on current level of fashion designing skills and competence of women in Makurdi. On competence and skill of the participants, the result showed participants prior to the training had no knowledge about Principles for taking body measurement with a mean score of 1.06, the result also showed that the participant had knowledge of figure types

with mean rating of 2.88. The result further showed that the participant had no knowledge about fabric cutting with a mean score of 1.9. the result further revealed that the participant no Knowledge of garments for various figure types with a mean score of 1.00, the result of also showed that the participant had no knowledge about current trends in fashion design with a mean score of 1.10. The result further revealed that the participant had no knowledge of elements and principles of design to fashion design and Problem-solving skills in fashion design (design alteration, applique and machine handling) with mean scores of 1.10 and 2.26 respectively. On technical skills, the result showed that the participant prior to participating in the training had no skills in Sew garments parts, machine parts, Knowledge of pattern drafting, Taking body measurement and Identifying and correcting sewing errors with mean rating of 1.92, 2.16,1.76, 2.04 and 1.04 respectively. On Basic introduction to fashion design Branding and marketing, the result showed that the participant had no knowledge of fashion branding, Identifying target market for various fashion brands, positioning brand in the market and Knowledge dynamics in fashion branding with mean rating of 2.12, 1.88, 1.72 and 2.00 respectively.

Research Question 2: What fashion design competence and skill training programme will be adapted and implemented for women in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State?



Bars are Fashion design programmes for fifty (50) women participated in Skills in Fashion Design Programme (SFADP)

Figure 3: Women enrolled in fashion design programme (SFADP) in Makurdi metropolis of Benue

Key:

IFAD= Introduction to Fashion Design,

MPMH=Machine Handling and Machine Parts,

FFSGP= Fabrics, Fabric selection, Garment Production

BPPD= Body parts and Pattern Drafting,

WP= Workshop practice

Table 5: Mean and Standard deviation of Competence of Women Enrolled in Fashion Design Empowerment programme

S/N	Knowledge of clothing	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1.	Knowledgeable about clothing	3.46	0.480	Agreed
2.	State theories of clothing	2.66	0.485	Agreed
3.	Understands purpose of clothing	3.20	0.486	Agreed
4.	Apply elements of designs to garment production	2.78	0.501	Agreed
5.	Origin of clothing	2.90	0.507	Agreed
	Cluster mean =	3.00	0.492	Agreed
Understanding of figure types				
1	Knowledgeable about figure types	3.46	0.478	Agreed
2	Able to explain key characteristics of each figure	3.88	0.512	Agreed
3	Use garment to conceal figure defects	3.22	0.487	Agreed
4	Enhance figure with garment	3.44	0.508	Agreed
5	Produce tailored garment for different figure types	2.54	0.520	Agreed
	Cluster mean =	3.31	0.501	Agreed
Application of design element & principles				
1	Understands line, color and texture	2.94	0.517	Agreed
2	Include elements of designs to garment production	2.60	0.545	Agreed
3	Include principles of design to garment production	2.06	0.542	Disagreed
4	Achieve harmony and unity in garment	3.26	0.310	Agreed
5	Produce garment with overall balance	3.54	0.336	Agreed
	Cluster mean =	2.88	0.450	Agreed
Creativity in design				
1	Achieve design concepts with originality	3.28	0.365	Agreed
2	Add details to traditional styles	3.06	0.420	Agreed
3	Combine different styles to one outfit	3.98	0.452	Agreed
4	Think outside the box	3.24	0.057	Agreed
5	Willing to try new styles	3.16	0.372	Agreed
	Cluster mean =	3.34	0.333	Agreed

The result on table 2 showed the Mean and Standard deviation of competence of women enrolled in skills in fashion design empowerment programme in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State. On Knowledge of clothing, the result showed that the participant gained knowledge about clothing after participating in the training gained knowledge in clothing with a mean rating of 3.46, the result also showed that the participant learnt about theories of clothing after the training with mean score of 2.66. The result further revealed that the participant understood the purpose of clothing after the training with a mean score of 3.20. The result further showed that the participants can apply elements of designs to garment production with a mean score of 2.78. The result further showed that the participant learnt and understood the origin of clothing after the training with a mean rating of 2.90.

On Understanding of figure types, the result showed that the participant became knowledgeable about figure types after the training with mean score of 3.46, the result also showed that he participants were Able to explain key characteristics of each figure, use garment to conceal figure defects, and Enhance figure with garment with mean scores of 3.88, 3.22 and 3.44 respectively. The result also showed that the participants were also able to produce tailored garment for different figure types with a mean score of 2.54.

On Application of design element & principles, the result showed that the participant Understands line, color and texture, include elements of designs to garment production, achieve harmony and unity in garment and Produce garment with overall balance with scores of 2.94, 2.60, 3.26 and 3.54 respectively. The result further revealed that the respondents were unable to include principles of design to garment production with a mean rating of 2.06.

On Creativity in design, the result showed that the participants learnt how to Achieve design concepts with originality with a mean score of 3.28. The result also showed that the participant learnt how to add details to traditional styles, combine different styles to one outfit and Think outside the box with mean scores of 3.06, 3.98 and 3.24 respectively. The result also showed that the participants were willing to try new styles with mean scores of 3.16.

Table 6: Mean and Standard deviation of Technical skills empowerment of Women enrolled in fashion design programme.

S/N	Machine knowledge	X	SD	Remark
1.	Accurately identify machine parts	3.90	0.286	Agreed
2.	Understands functions of machine parts	3.16	0.284	Agreed
3.	Properly care for machine	3.64	0.275	Agreed
4.	Paddle properly	3.64	0.282	Agreed
5.	Set up and thread machine properly	3.76	0.291	Agreed
	Cluster mean =	3.62	0.284	Agreed
Accuracy in measurements				
1	Accurately take body measurements	3.90	0.296	Agreed

2	Precisely group body measurements	3.68	0.292	Agreed
3	Effectively draft patterns using body measurements	2.82	0.300	Agreed
4	Apply the right ease in measurements	3.56	0.229	Agreed
5	Accurately use measuring tools	3.68	0.239	Agreed
	Cluster mean =	3.54	0.268	Agreed
Sewing and assembling skills				
1	Ability to make straight seams	3.68	0.282	Agreed
2	Ability to make curved seams	3.22	0.313	Agreed
3	Identify and correct sewing errors	3.68	0.272	Agreed
4	Consistent seams	3.30	0.333	Agreed
5	Assemble garment parts correctly	3.82	0.071	Agreed
6	Meticulous in overall finishing	3.92	0.296	Agreed
	Cluster mean =	3.60	0.261	Agreed

Table 3 showed the Mean and Standard deviation of Technical skills empowerment of Women enrolled in the fashion design programme in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue state. On Machine knowledge, the result showed that the participant after the training were able to Accurately identify machine parts (3.90), Understands functions of machine parts (3.16), Properly care for machine (3.64), Paddle properly (3.64) and Set up and thread machine properly (3.62). On Accuracy in measurements, the result showed that the participants are able to accurately take body measurements (3.90), precisely group body measurements (3.68), effectively draft patterns using body measurements (2.82), apply the right ease in measurements (3.56) and accurately use measuring tools after the training. On Sewing and assembling skills, the result showed that the participants developed the Ability to make straight seams (3.68), Ability to make curved seams (3.22), Identify and correct sewing errors (3.68), make Consistent seams (3.30), Assemble garment parts correctly (3.82) and Meticulous in overall finishing (3.92).

Table 8: Dependent t-tests for competence, Technical skills, Branding and Marketing in fashion industry for women empowerment training programme.

Variable	Baseline Mean	Mean After	Difference of Means	Standard deviation of Mean	Df	p-value	Remark
Competence in Fashion Design Empowerment	1.620	3.133	1.513	0.19751	1	0.0520	Accepted
Technical skills empowerment	2.140	3.573	1.433	0.2652	1	0.0846	Accepted

Level of Significance $P > 0.05$

Since the level of significance is $p > 0.05$, the null hypothesis is **accepted** for "Competence and Skills" and "Technical Skills Empowerment," and **rejected** for "Branding and Marketing."

Table 9: Spearman Rank Order of Positive Relationship between Women Empowerment and the Development of Skills of Women Enrolled in the Fashion Design Training programme.

Empowerment	Cluster Mean	Rank
Application of design element/principles	2.88	1
Branding	2.94	2
Knowledge of clothing	3.00	3
Marketing target	3.14	4
Understanding of figure	3.31	5
Creativity in design	3.34	6
Ability to develop a unique brand	3.44	7
Accuracy in measurements	3.54	8
Assembling of garment	3.60	9
Machine knowledge	3.62	10

Discussion of findings

Table 1 showed the Mean and standard deviation of assess the current level of fashion designing skills and competence of women in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State. The result showed that on competence and skill of the participants, the result showed participants prior to the training had no knowledge about Principles for taking body measurement with a mean score of 1.06. This result agreed with the findings of Adu-Gyamfi (2020) in a study on technical skills acquisition in fashion designing: Implications for creativity. Adu-Gyamfi opined that beginner in fashion training lack knowledge about Principles for taking body measurement. The result on the technical skills showed that participant prior to participating in the training had no skills in Sew garments parts, machine parts, knowledge of pattern drafting, taking body measurement and identifying and correcting sewing errors with mean rating of 1.92, 2.16, 1.76. This result is in agreement with the findings of Chukwu and Nwankwo (2022) in a study on Innovation in fashion design. Chukwu and Nwankwo found that prior to training, fashion trainees lack knowledge in Sew garments parts, machine parts, Knowledge of pattern drafting, taking body measurement and identifying and correcting sewing errors.

Table 2 showed the Mean and Standard deviation of Competence of Women Enrolled in Skills in Fashion Design Empowerment programme in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State. The result showed that after training participant gained knowledge about clothing after participating in the training gained knowledge in clothing (3.46). This result agreed with the findings of Okoro (2022). On Understanding of figure types, the result showed that the participant became Knowledgeable about figure types after the training (3.46). On application of design element & principles, the result showed that the participant Understands line, color and texture, include elements of designs to garment production, achieve harmony and unity in garment and Produce garment with overall balance (2.94, 2.60, 3.26). This result agreed with the findings of Obiora (2021). On Creativity in design, the result

showed that the participants learnt how to achieve design concepts with originality (3.28) (Obiora, 2021).

Table 3 showed the mean and Standard deviation of technical skills empowerment of Women enrolled in the fashion design programme in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue state. On Machine knowledge, the result showed that the participant after the training were able to Accurately identify machine parts (3.90) this result agreed with the findings of Agbor (2021). On Accuracy in measurements, the result showed that the participants are able to accurately take body measurements (3.90) (Ajayi, 2023). On Sewing and assembling skills, the result showed that the participants developed the Ability to make straight seams (3.68) (Adeola, 2023).

Table 4 showed the Mean and standard deviation on the competence level on Branding and Marketing of Women Enrolled in Skills in Fashion Design Programme in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State. On employment, the result also showed that participant agreed that Branding is important for fashion designers (3.20). On Ability to develop a unique brand identity, the result showed that the respondents are able to apply branding to produce unique products (3.40). On Marketing strategies and execution, the participant are able to Identify target market (3.84). On Marketing positioning and targeting, the participants were found to be able to Use social media for sales (3.70)

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that fashion design empowerment program in Makurdi Metropolis has proven effective in bridging the knowledge and skills gap in fashion design for women. It has not only equipped participants with essential technical and creative skills but also introduced them to key business concepts like branding, positioning them to pursue careers in the fashion industry more effectively. This demonstrates the program's potential to empower women economically and foster sustainable livelihoods in the fashion sector. Specifically, the study concluded that; on skill levels, participants initially lacked knowledge and skills in fundamental areas, such as body measurement, garment sewing, and fashion branding. This indicates a significant skill gap prior to the training. On improvements in competence post-training, the program effectively increased participants' knowledge and competence. Participants gained foundational knowledge in clothing design, understanding figure types, and the principles of line, color, and texture. They were able to incorporate design elements to achieve unity, balance, and harmony in garment production, showcasing an improvement in creative design competencies. That of technical skills development, participants demonstrated a substantial improvement in technical skills, such as accurately identifying machine parts and taking body measurements. This indicates that the program succeeded in teaching practical skills necessary for garment construction and fit. For branding and marketing competence, there was a notable shift in participants' understanding of the importance of branding for fashion designers, signifying an awareness of the business aspect of fashion and the relevance of branding for successful market positioning.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the study results, the following recommendations could be proposed to enhance the effectiveness of the fashion design empowerment program for women in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State. They are;

1. On initial skill Levels, provide foundational courses focusing on body measurement, basic sewing techniques, and introductory fashion branding. To address the initial skill gap, the program should start with practical, hands-on sessions on measuring techniques, sewing basics, and garment construction. This ensures all participants, regardless of prior experience, gain essential skills.
2. On improvements in competence post-training, integrating advanced design principles in line, color, texture, and harmony into the curriculum, expanding on what participants already learned. Offer projects that involve real-world design scenarios, allowing participants to experiment with combining design elements to create cohesive garment collections. This will help reinforce creative design skills and encourage innovation in garment production.
3. For technical skill development, ensure participants have access to high-quality sewing machines and measuring tools to practice and refine their technical skills. Incorporate regular workshops on machine maintenance, sewing techniques, and garment finishing. This hands-on access will solidify technical skills, and maintenance training will empower participants to keep their equipment in good working order for consistent quality in production.
4. Finally, on branding and marketing competence, expanding the program to include comprehensive training in fashion branding, marketing, and sales strategies. Topics could include digital marketing, customer targeting, and brand building. Additionally, participants could benefit from setting up online portfolios or social media pages as part of the program, enabling them to apply branding strategies in real-time and potentially attract clients.

These targeted recommendations will ensure that the program continues to build on its success and addresses areas that can empower participants with a well-rounded skill set, making them competitive in the fashion industry.

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