



The Role of Textile Art Education in Mitigating Social Vices among Nigerian Youth: A Study of the South-west Region

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Abstract

Nigeria's significant youth demographic presents both a major opportunity and a severe challenge, particularly in the Southwest region, where rising unemployment and idleness have fuelled an alarming increase in social vices such as cybercrime, cultism, and drug abuse. This study investigates the potential of textile art education as a culturally resonant and vocational tool to mitigate these destructive trends. Adopting a case study approach focused on Southwest Nigeria, a region with a rich heritage in textile arts like Adire and Aso-Oke, this paper analyses how engagement in these practices can foster positive behavioural change, provide entrepreneurial skills, and promote social inclusion. The research posits that participation in textile practices such as batik, tie-dye, screen printing, and weaving does more than impart technical skills; it cultivates discipline, patience, and a sense of purpose, while also offering viable pathways to self-employment and economic empowerment. Furthermore, it reconnects youths with their cultural heritage, strengthening their identity and reinforcing positive community values. The paper concludes that textile art education is a potent and practical strategy for curbing social vices. It recommends a multi-stakeholder approach involving the integration of vocational arts into national youth development policies, curriculum reform in educational institutions, and community-led efforts to destigmatise artisanal careers.

Keywords: Social Vices, Youth Empowerment, Textile Art Education, Southwest Nigeria, Vocational Training, Unemployment, Creative Economy, Adire, Aso-Oke.

Introduction

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation, is characterised by a significant youth demographic, often referred to as a "youth bulge," with estimates suggesting that over 60% of its population is under the age of 25 (United Nations Population Fund, 2023). This demographic presents both a tremendous opportunity for socio-economic development and a considerable challenge. When productively engaged, young people can be a powerful engine for innovation, creativity, and national growth. Education, in its various forms, stands as the primary vehicle for harnessing this potential. Beyond conventional academic pursuits, vocational and creative education, such as textile art, offers a unique pathway for skill acquisition, cultural preservation, and personal development. The Southwest region of Nigeria, with its rich history and cultural heritage in textile arts like Adire (tie-dye) and Aso-Oke (woven cloth), provides a fertile ground for exploring how this indigenous creative practice can be leveraged for contemporary youth engagement.

In the whole world, it is very rare to find a school or an institution without any form of social vice, which implies that they are present in all educational sectors, be it primary, secondary, or tertiary institutions. These are acts that violate social norms and values, immoral actions that are viewed as unethical behaviour that does not conform to societal expectations or beliefs and are considered detrimental to the well-being of society. Some of the social vices include cultism, prostitution, armed robbery, cybercrime, banditry/terrorism, drug abuse, and hooliganism. All these are common among young males and females in our various institutions/schools.

Education is pivotal to the development of human capital and overall socio-economic development and growth. Globally, education is recognised as the bedrock of individual and national development. The foundation for the development of every society is rooted in the ability of its citizens to transform educational theories into practice based on the knowledge and skills they have acquired in their educational pursuits. Education is an instrument for change, an avenue for civilisation, and it is the key that opens the door to societal development and elevates youths from the lower class to the higher class. According to Adegboyega (2006), societies with higher literacy levels enjoy relative peace and unity, constant growth, and economic empowerment, which is the essence of education.

According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2012), one of the major aims is the moulding of character and the development of sound attitudes and morals in children, starting from primary school. Good education through textile arts should, therefore, lead to detectable gains in knowledge, acquisition of skills, and values. Education in textile arts is regarded as a very important tool for national development, as well as curbing social vices among our youth. It is also an investment in human resources and an essential source of economic growth. According to Adebisi and Ganiyu (2016), Nigeria's image and reckoning seem to be nosediving in almost all facets of noble rating, whether from the perspective of its education, politics, economy, ethics, or security, which has been compromised due to the inability of the government and other relevant stakeholders to provide quality education to the youth in some sections of the country, which has turned the nation into a serious crisis arising from insurgency and other vices.

Statement of Problem

Despite the potential of its youth population, Southwest Nigeria is grappling with a rising tide of social vices among its young people (Adebayo & Ojo, 2021). High rates of unemployment and underemployment—with the national youth unemployment rate standing at a staggering 42.5% in recent figures (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023)—have created a vacuum that is increasingly filled by negative activities. These social vices include, but are not limited to, a surge in cybercrime ('yahoo-yahoo'), widespread drug and substance abuse, campus and street cultism, and political thuggery.

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has consistently warned about the alarming rate of drug abuse among youths, linking it directly to the surge in violent crimes (NDLEA, 2023). This trend not only jeopardises the future of the youth involved but also poses a significant threat to community safety, social stability, and economic progress.

The formal education system, often criticised for its theoretical focus, has struggled to provide the practical, entrepreneurial skills required for self-reliance in a competitive job market (Adepoju, 2020). This leaves many youths disillusioned and vulnerable to the allure of illicit activities, highlighting an urgent need for alternative, constructive interventions that can redirect youthful energy.

Objectives of the Study

This research aims to investigate the role and effectiveness of textile art education as a viable tool for curbing the prevalence of social vices among youth in Southwest Nigeria. The primary goal is to determine how engagement in this creative and vocational practice can foster positive behavioural change and provide a sustainable alternative to delinquency.

The specific objectives are to:

- i. Identify the prevalent social vices among youth in Southwest Nigeria and analyse their root causes, particularly unemployment and idleness;
- ii. Explore factors responsible for social vices among youths in Southwest Nigeria
- iii. Assess the role of textile art education in the attitudes, skills, and social behaviour of the youth in Southwest Nigeria;

Social Vices Concepts

While social vices represent a global phenomenon, their manifestation within Nigeria has taken on a particularly acute and troubling dimension. Scholars note that such vices are a burgeoning trend that transcends ethnic, racial, and even religious divisions (Apase & Yawe, 2019). In the Nigerian context, social vices encompass a broad spectrum of behaviours deemed detrimental to social order and national well-being. These range from systemic issues like corruption to criminal activities including drug and substance abuse, cultism, banditry, and armed robbery, which are increasingly prevalent among the nation's youths (Ogunbameru & Oribabor, 2021).

The severity of the situation is compounded by large-scale security challenges that destabilise the country, such as the Boko Haram insurgency, persistent violent clashes between pastoralists and farmers, and a pervasive kidnapping-for-ransom industry (International Crisis Group, 2022). These overlapping crises stretch the nation's security apparatus to its limits and contribute to a climate of fear and lawlessness. This erosion of societal norms is what Igbo (2013) metaphorically describes as a "virus" that infects the moral fabric of society, creating an environment where social maladies can flourish. The concentration of these destructive behaviours among young people is particularly alarming, as it not only jeopardises their individual futures but also threatens the nation's long-term development and social cohesion. The inability of existing structures to effectively check this menace makes the search for innovative and constructive interventions, such as vocational arts education, a matter of national urgency.

Prevalent Social Vices among Youth in Southwest Nigeria

1. Cultism

Campus cultism represents one of the most pernicious social vices within Nigeria's higher education system, posing a direct threat to academic life and institutional stability. These

clandestine organisations, as defined by Ogbonnaya (2012), are bound by strict oaths of secrecy regarding their rituals, membership, and codes, with severe repercussions for violation. Their proliferation is extensive; Nwadike (2003) noted the existence of dozens of such groups, including the notorious Sea Dogs, Black Axe, and Aiye, each with distinct hierarchies and insignia. More recent studies affirm that these groups continue to thrive, driven by youths' desires for power, protection, and perceived social status in a competitive campus environment (Adekunle & Folarin, 2020).

The impact of their activities is profoundly damaging. The frequent and violent clashes between rival cults routinely disrupt teaching and learning, lead to the wanton destruction of university property, and tragically result in the premature deaths of both students and academic staff (Ezeanokwasa, 2019). Furthermore, the influence of cultism corrodes academic integrity. Members often exhibit poor engagement with their studies and have been documented using intimidation and coercion to secure passing grades from lecturers, regardless of their academic performance (Adekunle & Folarin, 2020). Consequently, cultism functions as a severe impediment to the core mission of higher learning institutions, undermining safety, scholarly pursuits, and the very credibility of the educational process in Nigeria.

2. Cybercrime

Cybercrime has emerged as a pervasive social vice, particularly among youths in Nigeria's educational institutions. It is broadly defined as any illegal act requiring the use of a computer or a digital network, encompassing activities such as internet fraud (known locally as 'yahoo-yahoo'), identity theft, and hacking into financial or private systems (Adebisi, 2017). The problem has evolved beyond simple fraud into more sinister forms, including "yahoo-plus," where perpetrators reportedly incorporate ritualistic practices to enhance their illicit activities, posing a grave physical and psychological threat to victims (Asiyanbi, 2022). Panda (2018) notes that the methods employed by cyber-criminals—from deploying malware and social engineering to exploit kits—are constantly evolving. The cumulative effect is a multi-faceted threat that undermines economic stability, compromises national security, and erodes social trust.

3. Sexual Vices: Transactional Sex and Promiscuity

High-risk sexual behaviour, encompassing both transactional sex (prostitution) and general promiscuity, is a significant concern among Nigerian youths. Makinde (2009) defines these vices as the engagement in illicit sexual relationships for material gain, pleasure, or social status. For many students, particularly young women, the university environment represents a newfound freedom from parental supervision, which can increase their vulnerability to such activities (Okafor & Duru, 2010). The pursuit of financial independence or a luxurious lifestyle drives some into transactional sex, while others may engage in promiscuous behaviour that detracts significantly from their academic responsibilities. This can lead to poor attendance, a reliance on seduction to obtain marks from lecturers, and profound ignorance of the associated health risks, such as sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies (Akinwale & George, 2020).

4. Drug and Substance Abuse

Drug and substance abuse constitute a critical public health crisis among Nigeria's youth. It is defined as the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs, in a manner that deviates from approved medical or social norms (Abdulahi, 2009). The root causes are multifaceted, often linked to peer pressure, poor parenting, unemployment-related depression, and a desire for social acceptance (Makinde et al., 2020). The trend has become alarmingly normalised, with reports indicating a rise in the consumption of potent cocktails, such as mixing prescription opioids like Tramadol with soft drinks (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency [NDLEA], 2022). The consequences are severe, leading to cognitive impairment, memory loss, aggression, mental health disorders, and in many cases, untimely death.

5. Indecent Dressing and its Perceived Social Impact

The issue of "indecent dressing" represents a significant point of cultural and social tension within Nigerian society, especially in educational settings. While traditional African cultures often link modesty to virtue and respect (Lockhart, 2021), contemporary fashion trends among students—such as wearing revealing, transparent, or body-contouring attire—are frequently perceived as a violation of these norms. This has led many institutions to enforce strict dress codes. Critically, this social vice is often controversially linked to sexual violence, with proponents of this view arguing that such attire invites unwanted sexual advances. However, gender advocates strongly counter this narrative, identifying it as a form of victim-blaming that deflects responsibility from perpetrators (Chukwuemeka, 2018). The debate was famously crystallised in the 2008 'Public Nudity Bill' proposed by Senator Ekaete, which sought to criminalise indecent exposure but was ultimately shelved following widespread criticism that it infringed on personal freedoms and human rights. The issue thus remains a complex interplay of cultural values, personal expression, and contested social meanings.

Factors Responsible for Social Vices Among Youths in Southwest Nigeria

The proliferation of social vices among Nigerian youths is not attributable to a single cause but rather stems from a complex interplay of systemic failures and socio-personal challenges. At a macro-level, decades of poor governance, political instability, and endemic corruption have created a societal environment where illicit activities often appear to be a viable, if not necessary, path to survival and success (Transparency International, 2023). These overarching failures manifest in specific, tangible pressures on the youth population.

i. Economic Deprivation: Unemployment and Poverty

Economic deprivation is arguably one of the most significant drivers pushing youths towards social vices. Nigeria's high youth unemployment rate means that a large cohort of educated and qualified young people remain jobless, leading to widespread frustration and disillusionment (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). This lack of legitimate economic opportunities contributes directly to endemic poverty, trapping many families in a state of precariousness where household income is insufficient to meet basic needs. For youths from low socio-economic backgrounds, the pressure is immense, often leading to them dropping out of school and seeing illicit activities like cyber-crime or banditry as rational alternatives for

survival and social mobility (Ajaegbu, 2012). The inability to secure gainful employment erodes their stake in societal stability, making them more susceptible to the allure of a criminal economy.

ii. **Socio-Familial Factors: Parental Neglect and Peer Influence**

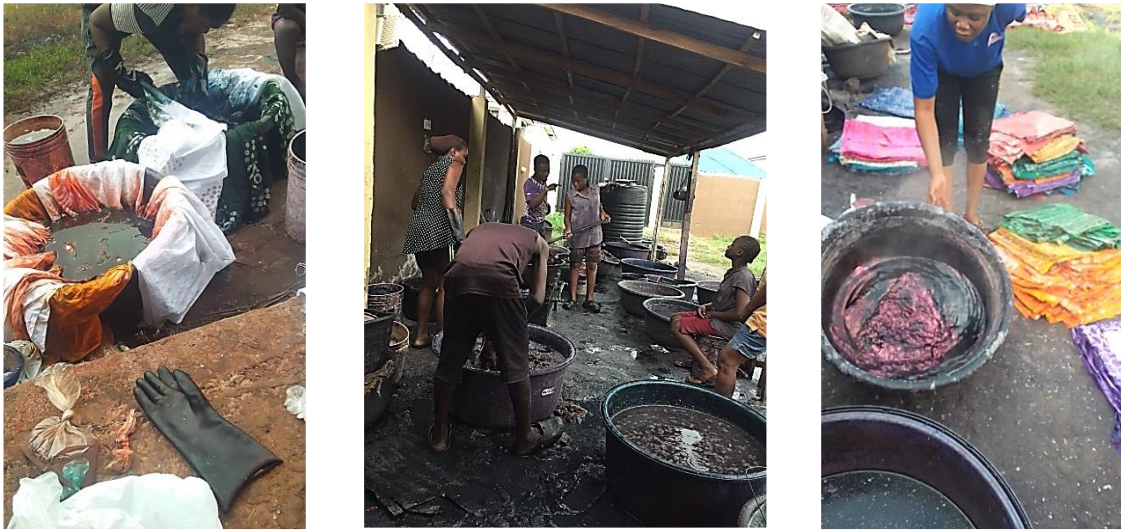
Beyond economic pressures, factors within the immediate social environment, particularly the family, play a crucial role. Parental neglect—characterised by inadequate supervision, a lack of emotional support, and a breakdown in moral guidance—creates a profound vacuum in a young person's development (Ujoh & Igbudu, 2018). Youths experiencing such neglect may gravitate towards deviant peer groups, such as campus cults or criminal gangs, in search of the identity, protection, and sense of belonging that is absent at home. These groups often provide a powerful, albeit destructive, social structure. Consequently, what begins as a quest for attention or direction can quickly escalate into deep involvement in violent and criminal behaviour, as the individual becomes embedded in a subculture with its anti-social norms and values.

The Role of Textile Art Education in The Attitudes, Skills, and Social Behaviour of The Youth in Southwest Nigeria.

Textile art, a key discipline within the applied arts, encompasses the production and embellishment of fabric using both natural and synthetic fibres. As a field of study and practice, it involves a range of techniques including weaving, screen printing, and various methods of resist-dyeing such as batik and tie-dye (Babatunde, 1999; Yusuf, 2014). In Southwest Nigeria, these textile traditions are not merely artistic expressions but are deeply embedded in the cultural and economic life of the region. When harnessed as a form of vocational education, these practices offer youths a powerful pathway to skill acquisition, entrepreneurship, and positive social engagement, thereby presenting a constructive alternative to idleness and delinquency (Arema & Ojo, 2021).

- i. **Batik and Tie-Dye (Adire) as Vocational Pathways:** Batik and tie-dye are two prominent forms of resist-dyeing that hold significant entrepreneurial potential for youths. Both are central to the indigenous Adire textile tradition of the Yoruba people in Southwest Nigeria (Okediji, 2018).
 - a) **Batik:** This technique involves applying hot melted wax to a fabric using tools like stamps or a tjanting pen to create a design. When the fabric is submerged in a dye bath, the waxed areas resist the colour. The subsequent removal of the wax reveals an intricate, multi-layered pattern. Mastery of batik provides youths with a highly marketable skill, enabling them to produce unique fabrics for fashion and interior design.

Figure 1: Apprentice engagement in the Batik Production and dying process with Ayinke Art African Aesthetics and clothing Limited



Source: Oluwatobiloba Johnson IPAYE, 2025

- b) **Tie-Dye:** This method creates patterns by physically manipulating the fabric to prevent dye from reaching certain areas. Techniques such as folding, twisting, pleating, and crumpling the cloth before binding it with thread and immersing it in dye result in a wide array of vibrant and often spontaneous designs. Due to its relatively low start-up costs and creative flexibility, tie-dye is an accessible entry point for youths seeking self-employment (Aremo & Ojo, 2021).

Figure 2: Finished Batik Products at Ayinke Art African Aesthetics and clothing Limited



Source: Oluwatobiloba Johnson IPAYE, 2025

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, by engaging in these practices, youths learn not only a craft but also patience, attention to detail, and project management skills—attributes that are transferable to all aspects of life and stand in direct opposition to the impulsivity associated with many social vices.

- ii. **Screen Printing for Modern Design and Commerce:** Screen printing is a versatile printing technique where ink is forced through a stencilled mesh screen onto a surface. Originally using silk, modern screens are typically made of synthetic polymers like terylene.

A squeegee is used to press the ink through the open areas of the stencil, transferring the design onto materials such as fabric, paper, or wood. This technique bridges traditional art with modern commercial demand, allowing for the mass production of branded apparel, posters, and other merchandise. For youths, learning screen printing opens opportunities in graphic design, fashion, and advertising, providing a clear path towards legitimate income generation in the urban economy.

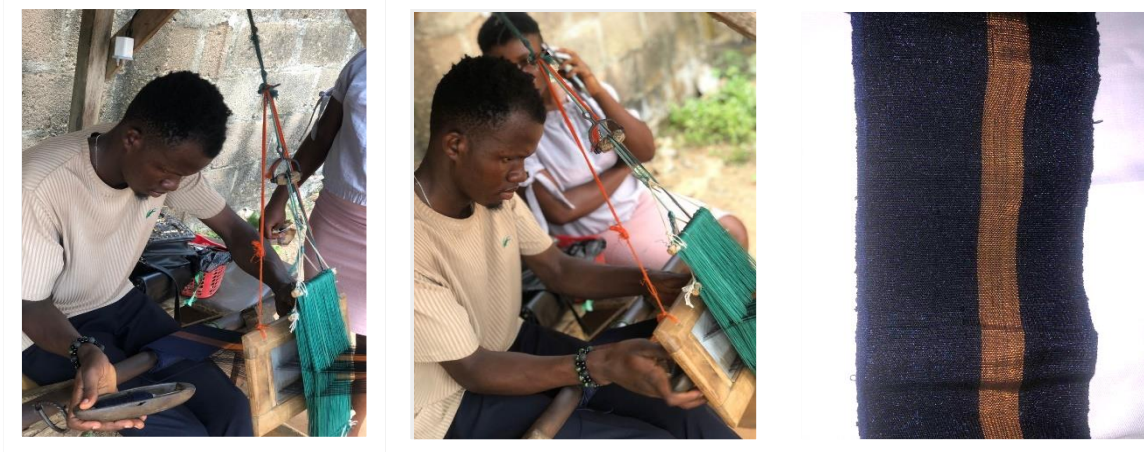
Figure 3: Screen Printing Process and Products



Source: Oluwatobiloba Johnson IPAYE, 2025

- iii. **Weaving (Aso-Oke) and Cultural Heritage:** Weaving is the foundational craft of textile production, defined by Makinde et al. (2009) as the process of interlacing two sets of yarns—the warp (longitudinal) and the weft (transverse)—at right angles on a loom to create cloth. In the Yoruba tradition, two primary looms are used: the vertical broad loom, traditionally operated by women, and the horizontal narrow-strip loom, used by men to create the prestigious Aso-Oke fabric (Okediji, 2018).

Figure 4: Apprentice Engagement Weaving Process and Products at Ore Ofe Weaving Centre, Oguntuga, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.



Source: Oluwatobiloba Johnson IPAYE, 2025

Figure 4 above unveils the role of textile education in engaging youths in weaving, which does more than teach a skill; it connects them to their cultural heritage and instils a sense of pride and identity. The production of high-value cultural artefacts like Aso-Oke provides a sustainable livelihood and reinforces positive community values, offering a powerful antidote to the alienation that can lead to anti-social behaviour.

Conclusion

Engaging youths in traditional crafts like weaving does more than impart a technical skill; it connects them to their cultural heritage and can instil a renewed sense of pride and identity. As this paper has argued, the production of high-value cultural artefacts like Aso-Oke provides a pathway to a sustainable livelihood and reinforces positive community values. This offers a powerful antidote to the social alienation and economic despair that often lead to anti-social behaviour.

The prevalence of social vices among Nigerian youths is a critical menace that impedes national growth and development. This study has established that these vices are not random acts of deviance but are deeply rooted in systemic issues of unemployment, poverty, and a disconnect from constructive social engagement. The various career options within textile art education—from Adire dyeing to screen printing and weaving—present a multifaceted and culturally resonant tool for intervention. By equipping youths with practical, entrepreneurial skills, textile art education fosters discipline, creativity, and self-reliance, thereby providing a viable alternative to a life of crime and idleness. It is not merely a hobby but a strategic instrument for positive youth development and societal revitalisation.

Recommendations

To effectively leverage textile art education as a tool to curb social vices, a concerted and multi-stakeholder approach is required. The following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Government at all levels should formally integrate vocational training, specifically in indigenous crafts like textiles, into national youth development and employment strategies.
- ii. Beyond training, the government should create an enabling environment for the creative industries. This can be achieved through offering start-up grants, tax incentives for small-scale textile businesses, and establishing creative hubs where youths can access equipment, mentorship, and markets.
- iii. Simultaneously, policies must aggressively target the root causes of social vices by investing in poverty alleviation programmes and implementing measures to stimulate broad-based job creation.
- iv. Primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions should revise their curricula to move beyond theoretical art education. They must introduce practical, project-based textile programmes that are explicitly linked to entrepreneurship and industry needs.
- v. Schools and vocational centres should establish formal partnerships with local artisans, textile companies, and fashion houses to facilitate apprenticeships, internships, and mentorship opportunities, ensuring that students gain real-world experience.

- vi. Parents have a fundamental role in providing emotional support and moral guidance. Families should be encouraged to support their children's interests in vocational skills.
- vii. Community leaders, religious organisations, and the media must work to challenge the societal stigma that often values white-collar professions over skilled craftsmanship. Promoting successful textile entrepreneurs as role models can help shift perceptions and present these careers as respectable and lucrative options for youths.

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