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Standardizing the Creative Process of Custom Fashion Design through the Integration of Moodboards and Material Selection in Technology and Vocational Education

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Abstract
Fashion design instruction within Technology and Vocational Education (TVE) tends to focus on technical production aspects, while conceptual elements such as idea development via moodboards and material understanding are not yet optimally integrated. This creates a gap with industry practices, particularly in custom fashion design, which demands alignment between design concepts and their realization. This study aims to analyze the roles of moodboards and material selection and to formulate a strategy for integrating them into the fashion design creative process. A literature review approach was employed, analyzing national and international scholarly articles published between 2020 and 2025. Literature selection was based on relevance to moodboards, material selection, the fashion design creative process, and the vocational education context. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and literature synthesis to identify patterns, conceptual relationships, and research gaps. The findings indicate that moodboards play a crucial role in idea exploration and visual communication between designers and clients, whereas material selection is a primary factor determining the quality of the realized design. However, most existing research addresses these two aspects separately. The synthesis reveals that integrating moodboards and material selection into a unified creative workflow enhances the alignment between design concepts and final outcomes. Such integration serves as a key element in standardizing the creative process for custom fashion design and holds the potential to improve the quality of fashion design education within the TVE sector.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Technology and Vocational Education (TVE), particularly in the field of fashion design, plays a strategic role in preparing graduates who possess not only technical skills but also the ability to develop creativity and adapt to changing industry demands. Fashion education is not limited to production skills but also encompasses idea development, concept visualization, design exploration, and decision-making related to materials and product characteristics. Fashion education needs to provide learning experiences that foster creativity through exploration, idea development, and design problem-solving [1]. In line with this, learning practices in vocational high schools (SMKs) still tend to emphasize technical aspects more than creativity and design conceptualization [2].

An excessive focus on technical aspects may result in students' conceptual abilities in producing designs not being optimally developed. Design ability is demonstrated not only through drawing skills but also through the ability to develop and organize ideas into

concepts in which the various design elements are interconnected. [3] demonstrated that creativity is one of the aspects associated with learning fashion design drawing among Fashion Design students. Meanwhile, [4] found that students still face difficulties in developing design concepts and connecting design ideas with the characteristics of the products to be realized. These conditions indicate the importance of learning activities that provide students with opportunities to systematically develop concepts before entering the product realization stage.

The development of creativity in Fashion Design education can be supported through learning models that provide direct experience in the design process. [5] demonstrated that the implementation of Project-Based Learning in practical Fashion Design instruction can support students' creativity through exploration, problem-solving, idea development, and product creation. In addition to learning models, the use of digital media can also support the development of creativity. [6] found that the use of Canva as a digital medium in Fashion Design learning had an influence on students' creativity. These findings indicate that the fashion design learning process can be developed through learning experiences that allow students to explore and visualize ideas more flexibly.

One of the media used in developing fashion design concepts is a moodboard. A moodboard is a collection of visual elements used to communicate the atmosphere, inspiration, character, and direction of a design concept. Elements that can be incorporated into a moodboard include reference images, colors, textures, shapes, materials, and style references that are related to the design theme [7]. In the learning process, moodboards can help students organize various sources of inspiration into a more focused visual concept. [8] demonstrated that the use of moodboards in learning can support students' creativity in expressing design ideas. The development of digital moodboards also demonstrates potential for improving the quality of the fashion design learning process [9].

The function of a moodboard in the design process is not limited to presenting inspiration; it can also serve as a reference for determining various design elements. Creativity-oriented fashion education needs to provide learners with opportunities to conduct visual exploration and develop design ideas gradually [1]. In this context, moodboards can be used to organize visual inspiration before it is developed into a more specific design. The use of digital media in concept development also provides flexibility in combining various visual elements and modifying concepts throughout the design process [6].

In addition to concept development, material selection is an important component of the fashion design process because material characteristics influence the appearance and character of the resulting product. Materials can affect the structure, texture, drape, comfort, function, and visual character of a garment. [10] explained that material selection is an important part of the fashion design process and should consider the characteristics of the fibers and the properties of the materials used. [11] also positioned material selection as an important stage in the design process following concept development through moodboards. Therefore, material selection is closely related to the design concept developed during the preceding stages.

Material characteristics also determine whether a design can be realized according to the initial concept. Differences in material properties, such as thickness, flexibility, texture, luster, transparency, and ability to form a silhouette, can produce different appearances when applied to the same design. [10] emphasized that material selection should consider material characteristics and their suitability for the intended design objectives. In fashion design education, material exploration can also become part of the creative process because it provides students with opportunities to understand the relationship between material characteristics and the resulting design [12].

The relationship between design concepts and materials becomes increasingly important in custom fashion design. Custom fashion design involves adapting designs according to the needs, characteristics, and preferences of users or clients; therefore, design decisions need to consider various aspects in an integrated manner. In this process, moodboards can be used to visualize the desired concept and character, while material selection determines the materials capable of supporting the visual and functional characteristics of the design. The integration of conceptual development and material exploration is also consistent with a design education approach that positions ideation, material experimentation, prototype development, and realization as interconnected stages [12][1].

Although previous studies on moodboards have demonstrated their benefits in supporting creativity development and design concept visualization [7][8][9], these studies generally emphasize the function of moodboards as learning media and tools for idea development. Studies on material selection have also examined material characteristics and suitability in the design process [11][10], but they have not sufficiently connected material selection directly with moodboards as a basis for concept development. Thus, research concerning the integration of moodboards and material selection within a single creative fashion design process remains open for further development.

This research gap is particularly relevant in the context of TVE because vocational education is directed toward developing competencies that correspond to workplace requirements. Learning designs that integrate creativity, concept visualization, material exploration, and product realization can provide learning experiences that more closely resemble professional practices in the fashion industry [1][5]. Therefore, it is necessary to examine moodboards and material selection not as separate activities but as interconnected stages within the fashion design creative process.

Based on this review, the present study aims to analyze the roles of moodboards and material selection and to formulate their integration as a basis for standardizing the creative process of fashion design, particularly in custom fashion design practices. This integration is expected to provide a more systematic process framework, beginning with visual concept development through moodboards, identification of material characteristics, selection of appropriate materials, and examination of their relationship with the resulting design.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a literature review approach aimed at examining, comparing, and synthesizing previous research on moodboards, material selection, and the creative process of fashion design, particularly within the context of Technology and Vocational Education (TVE). The literature review approach was selected because it enables researchers to obtain a comprehensive understanding of developments in the field, identify trends in previous research findings, and identify research gaps that may serve as a basis for further investigation. The data sources consisted of national and international scholarly journal articles obtained from academic databases, including Google Scholar and other indexed journal portals. The literature was limited to publications from the most recent five-year period, namely 2020–2025, while considering the relevance and currency of the information analyzed. Literature was selected based on its alignment with the research focus; therefore, the selected articles were related to moodboards, material selection, the creative process in fashion design, and fashion design learning within the vocational education context. The literature selection process followed predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria comprised articles discussing the use of moodboards in fashion design, material selection in the design process, the creative process in fashion design, and their application in vocational learning or education. Articles that

were irrelevant to the research focus, unavailable in full text, or did not meet academic standards were excluded.

The literature collection process consisted of several stages: identification, searching, screening, and documentation. Searches were conducted using relevant keywords, including *moodboard*, *material selection*, *creative process*, and *fashion design*. The retrieved literature was initially screened based on titles and abstracts to identify its relevance to the research topic. Articles that met the initial criteria were then examined more thoroughly based on their contents and findings. Relevant information from each article was documented and grouped according to the topics or concepts discussed. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying, grouping, and comparing research findings based on major themes relevant to the objectives of the review. The themes included the role of moodboards in design concept development, material selection, and the creative process in fashion design. The findings were subsequently compared to identify similarities, differences, trends, and relationships among the studies. A literature synthesis was then conducted to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between moodboards, material selection, and the creative process. The synthesis served as the basis for identifying the research gap and formulating a conceptual framework for integrating moodboards and material selection into the creative process of fashion design, particularly within TVE and custom fashion design practices.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Results

a. The Role of Moodboards in the Creative Process of Fashion Design

Based on the literature review, moodboards play an important role in the early stages of the fashion design creative process. Moodboards function as visual media that assist designers in organizing ideas, exploring concepts, and determining design direction systematically [7]. Visual elements such as colors, textures, shapes, and style references arranged within a moodboard enable the formation of a more concrete representation of a concept before entering the production stage. In the learning context, the use of moodboards can improve students' creativity and ability to express design ideas. This indicates that moodboards function not only as visual aids but also as effective learning media for developing students' conceptual abilities [8][9]. In addition, digital moodboards provide greater flexibility in exploring ideas and can accelerate the design process [13].

Furthermore, in custom fashion design practices, moodboards serve as a communication tool between designers and clients. Moodboards help establish a shared understanding of the desired design concept, thereby minimizing interpretation errors during production. Thus, moodboards constitute an initial foundation that determines the direction of the overall fashion design creative process.

b. The Role of Material Selection in Design Realization

In addition to conceptual aspects, material selection is a crucial factor determining the success of fashion design realization. Materials do not merely function as physical media but also significantly influence the shape, drape, texture, and comfort of the final product [11]. Therefore, material selection must consider its compatibility with the previously developed design concept. In practice, inappropriate material selection can cause the final design to deviate from the initial concept, even when the design idea has been well developed through a moodboard. This demonstrates that design success is determined not only by the quality of the concept but also by the ability to translate the concept into appropriate materials.

However, in vocational high school learning, material selection tends to be positioned as part of the production stage rather than as an integral component of the creative process. This condition may result in students having limited understanding of the importance of the relationship between design concepts and material characteristics in producing optimal products.

c. Literature Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature synthesis indicates a tendency for previous studies to discuss moodboards and material selection separately. Research on moodboards has primarily emphasized idea development and creativity enhancement among students in fashion design learning [14][15]. Meanwhile, studies related to material selection have focused more on technical aspects and final product quality without directly connecting these aspects to the conceptual design process. This condition indicates a research gap, namely the limited integration of moodboards as representations of design concepts and material selection as a means of realizing those concepts within a unified creative process. In fact, within the practice of custom fashion design, these two aspects are interrelated and cannot be separated. Based on these findings, the integration of moodboards and material selection can be considered an important element in producing fashion designs that are not only conceptually strong but also feasible and optimal in realization. Therefore, a conceptual framework connecting these two aspects is required as a basis for standardizing the creative process, particularly within the context of Technology and Vocational Education.

3.2. Discussion

The findings indicate that moodboards and material selection are two major components of the fashion design creative process that complement one another. Moodboards function as visual representations of design ideas and concepts, enabling designers to develop ideas systematically and communicate them effectively [7]. Within the educational context, the use of moodboards has been shown to support students' creativity and conceptual abilities in designing [8]. However, the strength of a concept developed through a moodboard cannot be fully realized without appropriate material selection. Materials play an important role in determining the shape, structure, and final quality of a design and therefore constitute a key factor in the realization process [11]. Inappropriate alignment between the concept and material can result in a design that does not correspond to initial expectations, particularly in custom fashion design, which requires a high level of precision and personalization. Compared with previous research, studies concerning moodboards have predominantly focused on idea development and their use as learning media, whereas material-related studies have tended to emphasize technical production aspects [14][15]. This indicates that the two aspects continue to be studied partially rather than being integrated within a comprehensive creative process. From the perspective of Technology and Vocational Education, this condition may limit the effectiveness of fashion design learning in bridging conceptual knowledge and practical application. Students may be able to generate design ideas but may not fully understand how to realize those ideas through appropriate material selection. Conversely, strong technical skills are not necessarily accompanied by equally strong conceptual abilities.

Based on this analysis, the integration of moodboards and material selection represents a fundamental requirement in the fashion design creative process. The integration establishes a workflow beginning with visual concept development,

followed by alignment of perceptions, translation of the concept through appropriate material selection, and evaluation of the resulting design against the initial concept. Accordingly, a conceptual framework for the creative process can be formulated consisting of several stages: (1) moodboard development as the conceptual foundation, (2) alignment of understanding between designer and client, (3) material selection as a means of realizing the concept, and (4) evaluation of the alignment between the design concept and the final outcome. This framework demonstrates that successful fashion design is not determined by a single aspect but by the integration of concept and material within a systematic process.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that moodboards and material selection are two interconnected components of the fashion design creative process, particularly in custom fashion design. Moodboards play a role in developing and communicating design concepts visually, whereas material selection determines the success of design realization in terms of aesthetics, structure, and comfort. The literature review indicates that previous studies have tended to discuss these two aspects separately and therefore have not yet provided a comprehensive representation of the creative process. Therefore, integrating moodboards and material selection is important as a basis for standardizing the creative process, particularly within the context of Technology and Vocational Education. Such integration can improve the alignment between design concepts and final outcomes while supporting fashion design learning that is more relevant to industry needs.

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