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Aso-ebi Custom among the Yoruba People of Southwest Nigeria: An Assessment of Trend, Challenges and Prospects

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the trend, challenges and prospects of Aso-Ebi practice among the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria. The major objective of the study was to compare the benefits of the phenomenon with the challenges associated with it. This is to reach a cogent premise for upholding or discouraging the practice. The methodology followed a survey research design that involved generating data from individuals who patronize Aso-Ebi in Osun and Oyo States. Primary data sources came from a well-designed questionnaire which was administered to 270 respondents. The result findings revealed that: (i) Distress arising from the financial burden emanating from incessant purchase of Aso-Ebi fabrics (ii) Distress caused by unhealthy flamboyant competition among Aso-Ebi patrons, and (iii) Distress caused by compromising personal taste and choice for chosen Aso-Ebi fabrics are all significant challenges allied with the phenomenon. On the other hand, (i) Distress caused by the suspension of the use of personal clothes (ii) Distress caused by stocking loads of Aso-Ebi fabrics in personal wardrobes are found not to be significant. The study also found that the benefits associated with the practice outweigh the challenges therein. Consequently, it was recommended in the study that: (i) the practice of Aso-Ebi should be upheld and encouraged (ii) individuals, organizations and the Nigerian government at all levels should leverage on its potentials as a panacea for capacity building and economic growth (iii) it should be harnessed as an instrument for fostering social cohesion in Nigeria.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

From the Stone-age through prehistoric times, man explored clothing as an elemental necessity to life. It is acknowledged by social anthropologists, historians and scholars as a phenomenon devised to cover nudity and proffer protection from harsh and malevolent weather conditions [1-5]. On their part, Economists rate clothing as the second necessity of life, falling between food and shelter. Some scholars however perceive clothing, as a moveable shelter, due to its protective functions. Despite its importance in miscellaneous ways and degrees, the origin of cloth is argued to be masked in ambiguity and obscurity. [2], corroborated by [5] deduce that among many reasons “why man first wore clothes”, protection is most plausible. On the contrary, [4] considers “modesty and shame”, as a more conceivable reason. Her argument supports the background provided by the biblical account of “the fall of man” (KJV, Gen 3:7), in which Adam and Eve’s eyes were open after eating the “forbidden fruit”. On realizing that they were naked, they were ashamed and subsequently cut fig leaves with which they made aprons to cover their nudity.

Civilization, however, enabled clothing to progress from mere practical use, to serve other socio-economic and aesthetic functions. [1], revealed that it gradually steeped into the cultural life of many societies and became a mode of corporeal, psychological and non-verbatim expressions. These considerations became infused into fabric designs, patterns, colours, styles, accentuations and use.

One observable fact that is germane among the Yoruba people’s use of cloth is uniform dressing-Aso-Ebi. As explained by [6], it is the elucidation of a people’s belief in the magnitude of blood-relationship and family-bond. This is a subsidiary of a venerated indigenous custom among the Yoruba people- *Ebi* (Kinship). Aso-Ebi therefore, originated as a custom of uniform dressing for social events to portray sorority among extended family members, and is commonly conceptualized by extant studies like [7-10] and many others as “Family Uniform” or “Cloth of the Family”; believed to demonstrate unanimity, shared responsibility, amity and harmony.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the modifications and commodification [8] that have entangled with the conventional perception of Aso-Ebi, the phenomenon is no doubt enjoying prominence and renown among Yorubas and other ethnic groups in Nigeria. This may be credited to the modifications and transformations that validate it as an essential feature of celebration in Yoruba socio-cultural events. Despite this, the veracity of the contemporary trend is yet to be duly addressed by extant studies, while some suffer epochal aloofness. This inescapably creates a knowledge gap. Secondly, the mounting reputation of Aso-Ebi makes renewed attention among scholars crucial, because, when compared to the recent trend of Aso-Ebi in Nigeria, existing academic materials on the subject do not commensurate with the pace of its use and expansion, especially in the Yoruba socio-cultural milieu. Thirdly, a dearth of empirical results to validate submissions from prior studies concerning the intrinsic worth and demerits of the practice is observed. Also, while it is alleged that Aso-Ebi adds colour to events and makes them more glamorous, feedback from the streets reveal that many participants lament and express exhaustion at how it belabours them. The study, therefore, finds it expedient to investigate the burdens which have been narrowed down as I. Financial burden of having to recurrently purchase fabrics for several celebrations as they occur time after time. II. The “do me, I do you” practice, otherwise known as “reciprocity”- the obligation of returning the gesture. III. The pressure of conforming to peer-group demand to patronize Aso-Ebi, thereby putting them in psychological distress that stems from lack of financial wherewithal. IV. When the chosen fabric does not conform to personal taste and choice. V. When the Aso-Ebi fabrics are retailed at exorbitant prices by party hosts.

It is against these noted grounds that this research study is carried out.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to survey by empirical means, the merits, as well as the challenges of Aso-Ebi within the Yoruba Society, especially during special events. In essence, the study shall:

- Investigate the challenges confronting the ardent patrons of Aso-Ebi.
- Examine the benefits associated with the phenomenon to ascertain whether the practice is worthy to be upheld and sustained.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study covered an evaluation of the trend of Aso-Ebi practice among Yoruba people and conducted empirical analyses of the integrity and challenges connected with the practice. The geographical scope covered Osun and Oyo States of Southwest Nigeria.

1.5 Research Questions

1. Which of the challenges that confront Aso-Ebi patrons in Osun and Oyo States are significant?
2. What merits of Aso-Ebi patronage are significant?

2. THE YORUBA PEOPLE AND EARLY CLOTH-MAKING

Yoruba people are endowed with a rich cultural heritage, mirrored in their acute taste for fashion. A major tribe in Nigeria, a multi-cultural country in West Africa, they inhabit the Southwestern part of the country. According to [11], they are structured in large subgroups such as Egba, Ekiti and Ijebu...and are one of the most sophisticated groups in Nigeria, with a rich culture and a relatively long period of recorded history. They extend to the southwest, north-central, as well as southern and central Benin. As a sociable people, they have historical records of clothing and fashion that distinguishes them from other cultures. [11] further reveals that their main cash crop is cocoa, while many of their crafts like cloth industry-weaving, spinning and dyeing have translated to widespread cottage industries. Many of these industries are organized on a compound basis and are generally carried on in the verandah or courtyard of houses owned by workers who are often also the proprietors.

Additionally, [6] explains that:

Generally, both Yoruba men and women are very fashion-conscious. Styles, colours and their names, as well as cloth-both locally woven or imported from other West African countries or further afield- change with the times: political situations, the economic

health of the country new imports and/or availability of new items. Cloth and its accoutrements are comfortably carried and incorporated into the non-verbal language of the Yorubas.

Accordingly, Yoruba people's rich cultural heritage is often exhibited in social events such as christening/naming ceremonies, engagement/marriage ceremonies, chieftaincy title conferment/coronation ceremonies, funeral rites and ceremonies, graduation, the rite of passage, house-warming and many others. To commemorate these events, extended family members are obliged to participate in one aptitude or another. Many of these events called for expressly selected fabrics, selected by the chief host, to be worn by his/her kinsmen; a confederation of people who are related by blood, known as "extended family". Many utterances that denote the importance of kinship recurrently feature among the Yorubas. This includes *Agbo ile-nla*- "a large family compound"; *Olori-Ebi*- "Head of the Family" and *Molebi*- "Extended Family", to mention a few. Indigenous proverbs and idioms are also used to portend the magnitude of kinship, for instance, *omo to so ebi e nu so apo iya ko*, translated as "a man who deserts his kinsmen straps on his shoulder a satchel of misfortune". This amplifies the Yoruba's fervour in the indispensability of kinsmen. This significance is accentuated throughout the life of an individual in the Yoruba society, which is supported by [12] that: "no matter how homogeneous a group may be, whether large or small, the individual interprets the cultural pattern he learns, throughout his life in terms of his personality or idiosyncratic needs, and terms of his own experience and immediate social group".

The essence of kinship is distinguished in the various aspects of Yoruba life and it is articulated in sundry ways, physically, psychologically, vocally and through other tangible and intangible means, one of which as earlier mentioned is the Aso-Ebi culture, whose inception dates back to pre-colonial Yoruba society. During this period, kinsmen festooned themselves in fabrics specially selected to be sewn and worn as uniform for celebration. It was originally premeditated for cohesion, unanimity, amity and incorporation among people of mutual ancestry, to set apart a principal host of a social event and members of his/her family from other members of a community. During this era, it was prestigious to hail a family with a large number of kinsmen,

as this was tantamount to prosperity and affluence. It is to this end that [9] extrapolated that "a distinguished feature of Africans, is the spirit of oneness manifesting in "we feeling", live and let live, serious concern for others and fraternity. This is born out of unavoidable interaction with other members of society. In other words, no man is an island".

Going further, [13] presents a cogent premise for the development of Aso-Ebi. He posited that the 1920s post-world economic boom was triggered by higher prices on products such as Oil-palm. During this period, Aso ebi became a novelty, and the need to communicate and announce social worth among groups helped to boost its growth and acceptance. This period, therefore, marks the beginning of the contemporary trend of Aso-Ebi, which derives apparently from the interface of *Ankoo*-“Uniformity”; *Aso-Egbe*-“Group attire” or *Egbejoda*- “Uniform of a Group”. As pointed out by [8], (further corroborated by elderly correspondents in Ibadan metropolis), they disclose that extended family members, social groups in communities in many parts of Yoruba-land wore uniform attires for social events to institute and reinforce unity and mutual sense of purpose.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Overview of the Functions of Clothes

The functions of clothes in diverse societies, in depicting individual roles and collective responsibilities cannot be over-emphasized. Oftentimes, these roles and responsibilities often have close affinity with the history and cultural values of individual society. Also, development and cosmopolitan living, enabled by science, technology and industrialization further enhanced living conditions in diverse facets of life, clothing inclusive. With this, many societies around the world were able to improve on their dress culture. But this was influenced by their histories, climate and other ecological and sociological factors as revealed by [11,4]. [4] further argues that: “customs, fashions and individual inclinations causes the wearer to regard dress as part of self, yet consciously or unconsciously, the manner of performing certain functions or establishing, and maintaining certain attitudes, will vary from society to society because of the dress and accoutrements”.

Clothes play significant roles in magnifying the psychology, sociology, economic, material

culture and personal idiosyncrasies of individuals, while the cultural indices of people are made more visible through what they wear. This view is supported by [14] that: "the language of the dress has its principles of beauty, that are dependent on simple reasoning. An effect is produced, an idea is expressed. People are given away by dress more often than they realize. The type of clothes they choose sometimes reveal what they dare not put in words". Also, [1] asserted that clothes evolved in response to the demands of climate, historical events, the varying degrees of the civilization of different peoples, their moral laws and their aesthetic sensibilities. Additionally, [15] note that the costume and make-up designs of African theatre are influenced by nature and culture, serving more than aesthetic purposes; passing cultural and religious messages, expressing their aesthetics and sharing the worldviews of people”.

3.2 Etymology of Aso-Ebi

Aso-Ebi has been extensively translated by extant studies as ‘Family Uniform’; “Group Uniform”; “Cloth of the Family”; “Social Uniform” and “Group Attire” among many other concepts [16,7,17] construes that Aso-Ebi is a dress practice that functions in reinforcing social identity and solidarity among group members. Arguing further, [8] submits that Aso-Ebi originally refers to the uniform dress worn by family members during social events in Nigeria. The emphasis here is the process by which family and friends fraternize at social events for the establishment and reinforcement of solidarity, friendship and amity especially when attired in uniform. In such event, communication is non-verbatim, while the uniform dressing engineers inclusion, integration and interaction. In his opinion, [18] submits that Aso-Ebi as it is popularly used today, is a fabric that is selected, made into garments and worn by groups of people who are correlated to one another in various ways such as families, friends or comrades. Such uniforms are worn for social jamboree like marriage, birthdays, child naming, funeral etc. For these parties, guests are anticipated to dress in the same fabric especially when such celebrations are elaborate and loud, much like a grand spectacle that is being put on to show wealth, unity and flamboyance. Aso-Ebi is worn on such occasions to represent a social identity that reflects the culture, social status, rank, professional affiliation, among other indicators. In a related study, [10] conceive Aso-

Ebi as a unique fabric worn in special ceremonies by family members and friends to symbolize unity and support. Similarly, Urban online dictionary defined Aso-Ebi as “outfits made by matching the fabric to be worn by a group of people to parties like wedding, or funeral as a uniform”. Further, [19] opines that Aso-Ebi is a social uniform attire that is inextricable from the “Owanbe” spectacle of the Yoruba culture, which in itself is a social performance (or simply a party or celebratory occasion). [19] Its definition is however contentious because the word “inextricable” connotes that celebration cannot take place without Aso-Ebi. Also, [20], a fashion commentator on fashion considers Aso-Ebi as “a popular Ankara or lace uniform worn during social functions in Nigeria”. This is also erroneous since the concept of Aso-Ebi is uniform dressing, irrespective of the fabric. She considers this definition from the prejudice of the recent trend of Aso-Ebi in Nigeria, whereby the popular fabrics are lace and Ankara. The archetype, though, may have shifted from mutual ancestry to purchasing power and the compliance to be part of a social event, uniformity is still the norm. This hereby leads to social cohesion and break barricades of tribal and ethnic sentiments. It is so extensively conventional in many parts of Nigeria, some parts of Africa and among Nigerians in diaspora, that its planning, coordination and execution has taken a professional turn.

In a similar vein, this study conceptualizes Aso-Ebi as the ritual (among Yoruba people) of wearing selected uniform fabrics to social events. These, in many cases, are fabrics pre-determined by hosts of events, or leaders of social groups attending an event. Over the past few decades, this has become extremely trendy in Nigeria, perhaps, due to the transformations it has undergone. Its widespread renown and popularity have, as mentioned earlier, extended beyond the geographical and social landscape of the Yoruba people in Nigeria. Some challenges have however intertwined with the Aso-Ebi practice; hence, this study examines the trend among the Yoruba people and investigates its merits and demerits.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive survey research design of the expo-facto type in determining the trend, challenges and prospects of Aso-Ebi socio-cultural practice among the Yoruba people.

The population of the study is the Yoruba adults residing in Osun and Oyo states of Nigeria. Proportional random sampling technique was followed to select 270 respondents, comprising 135 males and 135 females. The sampling population was obtained by applying Cochran’s formula and following quota sampling procedures. This ensured that the respondents for the study were drawn from the fourteen Federal constituencies in Oyo State and the nine federal constituencies in Osun State.

Primary data served as the main research instrument for the study. The primary data was obtained using self-designed questionnaires titled “Challenges and Prospects Associated with Aso-Ebi Phenomenon Questionnaire (CPAAPQ). The questionnaires were structured with four options, according to Likert’s type scales namely “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree”.

The questionnaire for the study was administered to the respondents by the researcher with the aid of two research assistants that had been trained for the purpose. The responses obtained from the questionnaires administered were then subjected to data analysis by an expert. Before the administration of the questionnaires to the sampled respondents, the researcher conducted the face, content and constructs validity of the instrument, and subjected the instrument to the scrutiny of an expert. Also, the reliability of the instrument was determined. Cronbach Alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the test items for which Alpha coefficient value of 0.91 was obtained. The research questions raised in the study were answered using average mean score statistics. A weighted mean average of 3.30 was used as a premise for decision making in the data analysis. This value was found appropriate for the study, based on a pilot test conducted.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What challenges confronting patrons of Aso-Ebi are significant?

Table 1 gives a summary of the challenges confronting Aso-Ebi patrons and the status of their significance.

In Table 1, a mean score value of 3.79 was obtained for the “distress arising from the financial burden caused by the incessant purchase of Aso-Ebi fabrics”.

Table 1. Summary of the challenges confronting Aso-Ebi patrons and the status of their significance

| S/N | Challenges of Aso-Ebi Phenomenon | Mean Score | Remark |
|-----|--|------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Distress arising from the financial burden caused by the incessant purchase of Aso-Ebi fabrics | 3.79 | Significant |
| 2 | Distress caused by the suspension of the use of personal clothes | 3.11 | Not significant |
| 3 | Distress caused by stocking loads of Aso- Ebi fabrics in wardrobes | 2.88 | Not significant |
| 4 | Distress caused by unhealthy flamboyant competition among Aso-Ebi patrons | 3.64 | Significant |
| 5. | Distress caused by compromising personal taste and choice for chosen Aso-Ebi fabrics | 3.68 | Significant |

This exceeds the weighted benchmark of 3.30. Therefore, the distress is a significant challenge confronting Aso-Ebi patrons. This could be ascribed to the addictive effect that this phenomenon possesses, which propels continued struggle to spend on the purchase of uniform fabrics, whether the financial capacity is available or not. This is scarcely helped by the fact that Aso-Ebi fabrics are often selected for a particular event by the celebrant; as such potential wearers are under pressure to acquire the fabrics from the same source and sew within a stipulated time. Due to the poor economic status of some citizens, the struggle to meet up with the deadline becomes overwhelming. Corroborating, [10] point out that some Nigerians can do anything including giving up their children's school fees to buy Aso-Ebi. This, however, is not considered a deterrent to the explosion of the trend.

Concerned, [18] decries the overwhelming economic impact of this phenomenon on young adults like himself. He states that oftentimes, the adult participants would not only struggle to purchase theirs, but are also encumbered with the burden of catering for the fabrics of their younger ones, as well as the elderly members of their family and extended family who may not be gainfully employed. This is not all, as the distress in the recurrence of the Aso-Ebi culture is even more devastating.

Further, the distress caused by the suspension of the use of personal clothes" in Table 1 above, shows a mean score value of 3.11; which falls below the weighted benchmark of 3.30. Hence, this is not a significant challenge facing Aso-Ebi patrons in Oyo and Osun States. Even though Aso-Ebi disenfranchises individuals in western Nigeria from adequately wearing clothes from

their existing wardrobe, it is not considered a serious predicament among them. This is probably because they have opportunities to wear them on other days. This finding is contrary to the opinion of [21] that the opportunity to express oneself in personalized clothing has been replaced by Aso-Ebi clothing in recent times. Often, socio-cultural events in which Aso-Ebi materials are worn occupy many weekends, leaving only a few, for the adornment of personal clothes.

Concerning the "distress caused by stocking loads of Aso-Ebi fabrics in wardrobes", Table 1 above shows a mean score of 2.88, falling below the weighted benchmark of 3.30. It, therefore, implies that the challenge is not significant. This is not considered an issue of great concern despite the consternation that persistent patronage of uniform fabrics contribute to escalating their wardrobe. It is however not considered burdensome by the typical Yorubas in Osun and Oyo States.

From Table 1 above, a mean score value of 3.64 was obtained for the "distress caused by unhealthy flamboyant competition among Aso-Ebi patrons. This exceeds the weighted benchmark of 3.30. Hence, this challenge is significant and is corroborated by the submission of [8], that in "the 1950s, members of women organizations or egbes turned out to ceremonies and anniversaries of relatives in the same style of dress, sandals, lappa, smock, necklace, and this culture signifies close friendship". He explains further that the uniform dressing can also be a measure of personal affluence because Aso-Ebi involved rivalry between various egbes or groups, with each group competing to outshine each other in terms of eminence, novelty and sumptuousness of the uniform. This

reveals that rivalry exists among participants in Aso-Ebi, especially women, who exude the behaviour of trying to exhibit flamboyance and superiority over their comrades. For this reason, when Aso-Ebi is selected for an occasion, many participants splurge lavishly to come up with appearances that supplant others. This trend is illustrated by a recent advertisement of a telecommunication company operating in Nigeria (Airtel), coined along the corridor of Aso-Ebi rivalry, with the song of Simi (a Nigerian female artist), titled '*Gele mi ga ju ti e lo*'- My headgear is bigger than yours. To this end, [10] express consternation that instead of being a culture of camaraderie, the culture of Aso-Ebi has transmuted to serve as a medium of social dissension, display of material comfort, and social bigotry, especially against people who are disinclined or unable to patronize Aso-Ebi at social events.

Lastly, Table 1 above also shows a mean score value of 3.68 for the "distress caused by the compromise of personal taste and preference for selected Aso-Ebi fabrics" as a significant challenge confronting Aso-Ebi patrons. This also surpasses the weighted benchmark of 3.30.

Research Question 2: What merits of Aso-Ebi patronage are significant?

Table 2 gives a summary of the merits of Aso-Ebi patronage and the status of their significance.

Table 2 shows Aso-Ebi as booster of camaraderie (mean = 3.41); Booster of mutual and collective sense of purpose (mean = 3.77), Booster of social incorporation and cohesion (mean = 3.81); Booster of decorum and deference (mean = 3.60) and Booster of economic value for individuals involved in the production and merchandising of traditionally woven fabrics (mean =3.81) as merits associated with Aso-Ebi socio-cultural practice. The mean

score values obtained exceeded the weighted mean score of 3.30. On the other hand, Booster of social egalitarianism (mean = 3.04) was not found to be a merit of Aso-Ebi practice.

As a booster of camaraderie, findings consent to earlier submissions of extant scholars that the socio-cultural practice of Aso-Ebi was conceived by the Yorubas, to reinforce affection, friendship and unity. Uniform dressing at social events elicits a spirit of oneness and sense of principle. The culture, therefore, becomes a metaphor for harmony and togetherness. [22] infers that this creates and strengthens the networks of loyalties and common identities that join families and their neighbours.

Furthermore, Aso-Ebi is a booster of social incorporation and cohesion. Its recent trend has even transmuted to suit cosmopolitan needs, extending beyond its literary meaning of "cloth of the family" to becoming a "symbol of accord in multiplicity; a prototype for integration; a viaduct for discrepancy and miscellany beyond the framework of the Yoruba people's socio-cultural environment. As a catalyst for cohesion, Aso-Ebi gives the wearer a sense of being part of a group.

Furthermore, Aso-Ebi helps the Yoruba people to endorse and fortify their cultural heritage, not in other tribes, but the trend, heightened by transformations has gained a reputation among people in Diaspora.

Additionally, this study found Aso-Ebi to be a booster of economic value for individuals involved in the production and merchandising of traditionally woven fabrics, thus ensuring the growth of the cottage industries that promote the crafts of the Yoruba people. Employment and entrepreneurship are facilitated through this, curtailing redundancy and poverty.

Table 2. Merits of Aso-Ebi patronage and the status of their significance

| S/N | Merits of Aso-Ebi Phenomenon | Mean Score | Remark |
|-----|---|------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Booster of camaraderie | 3.41 | Significant |
| 2 | Booster of the mutual and collective sense of purpose | 3.77 | Significant |
| 3 | Booster of social incorporation and cohesion | 3.81 | Significant |
| 4. | Booster of social egalitarianism | 3.04 | Not Significant |
| 5. | Booster of decorum and deference | 3.60 | Significant |
| 6. | Booster of economic value for individuals involved in the production and merchandising of traditionally woven fabrics | 3.81 | Significant |

The author, [23] points out that many textile-related businesses which she refers to as “costume enterprise chain” that is, merchandising, fashion designing, fashion promotion and other fashion services have grown enormously in Nigeria due to the recent Aso-Ebi trend. This perpetually leads to economic benefits for business entrepreneurs.

The practice has however not significantly enhanced social parity and egalitarianism. The social stratification of affluence and supremacy continues to exist among Yorubas Aso-Ebi patrons. Despite facilitating social cohesion, the phenomenon has not significantly bridged class fissure. Hierarchy and economic supremacy are often more obtrusive at social events where the Aso-Ebi fabrics diverge in eminence and worth. Many Aso-Ebi patrons discover the avenue to exhibit supremacy, class and material comfort, often to the mortification of the lower class.

Finally, the finding of the study reveals that more stipulate is placed on female folks than their male counterpart in the Aso-Ebi practice. [18] explains further that Aso-Ebi practice and the staging of owambe spectacle is predominantly the responsibility of females within the Yoruba society. The men are involved too, but with fewer obligations. This is probably because women are more fashion cognisant, and Aso-Ebi allows them to articulate their aesthetic tendencies. With this too, they also have ample opportunity to supplement their wardrobe with the latest fabrics and styles.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the mean score values for the “Distress caused by the suspension of the use of personal clothing”, and “Distress caused by stocking loads of Aso-Ebi fabrics in wardrobes” respectively fell below the weighted benchmark of 3.30, this study conclude that they are not significant challenges facing Aso-Ebi patrons in Oyo and Osun States. On the other hand, “Distress arising from the financial burden caused by incessant purchase of Aso-Ebi fabrics”, “Distress caused by unhealthy flamboyant competition among Aso-Ebi patrons”, and the “Distress caused by compromising personal taste and choice for chosen Aso-Ebi fabrics” are concluded in this study as significant challenges facing Aso-Ebi partons in Oyo and Osun States. This is because

the mean value obtained for each variable exceeds the weighted average of 3.30.

This study also discovers that the merits associated with the Aso-Ebi phenomenon are: Booster of camaraderie (mean = 3.41); Booster of mutual and collective sense of purpose (mean = 3.77), Booster of social incorporation and cohesion (mean = 3.81); Booster of decorum and deference (mean = 3.60), and Booster of economic value for individuals involved in the production and merchandising of traditionally woven fabrics (mean =3.81). All these mean score values exceed the weighted mean score of 3.30. On the other hand, Aso-Ebi is not a Booster of social egalitarianism, with a (mean = 3.04). It is therefore not a merit of Aso-Ebi practice.

The study thus concludes that Aso-Ebi is a panacea of socio-cultural incorporation and inclusion because of the camaraderie and comradeship it creates among wearers. It is also a demonstration of support, cohesion and fraternity and has recently become an act of social and cultural obligation. It is in the light of these findings that this study concludes that the benefits in the recent trend of Aso-Ebi phenomenon appreciably outweigh the challenges and recommends that the practice should be upheld and promoted. Further, individuals, organizations and the Nigerian government at all level should leverage on the prospect of Aso-Ebi as a viable channel of:

- i. Empowerment, entrepreneurship and capacity building for Nigerian citizens.
- ii. Establishing and growing aboriginal cottage industries.
- iii. Promoting the cultural heritage of the Yoruba people locally and internationally.
- iv. Generating revenue for the Nigerian economy.
- v. Establishing textile industries in the southwestern part of Nigeria.
- vi. Fostering tranquility and unanimity in the Nigerian society.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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