

Research Article

Recycling Tailors' Offcuts: A Viable Means for Wealth Creation and Waste Management in Enugu Metropolis, South East Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the potential of recycling tailors' offcuts in Enugu metropolis, Nigeria, to address waste management challenges, create economic opportunities, and generate employment. Indiscriminate disposal of these offcuts in dumps and drainage canals contributes to environmental hazards and poses risks to public health and property. This research aimed to identify the causes of offcuts, explore suitable recycling techniques, and determine the types of products that can be created from this waste material. A survey research methodology was employed, targeting registered tailors within Enugu metropolis. Fifty tailors' shops were randomly selected from a population of approximately 250 shops. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire, which was validated by experts and demonstrated high reliability ($KR-21 = 0.88$). Data analysis involved frequency distribution and mean scores, with a criterion mean of 2.5 used for item acceptance. The findings revealed several key causes of offcuts, including freehand cutting, fabric misprints, pattern mistakes, apprentice errors, inadequate remnants, tailors' laxity, and lack of appropriate tools. Effective recycling techniques identified included applique, embroidery, patchwork, adhesive use, elastic bands, and crocheting. These techniques can be used to create various functional and marketable products such as hair bands, rugs, throw pillows, mufflers, dress embellishments, shopping bags, duvets, and foot mats. The study concludes that recycling tailors' offcuts presents a viable solution for waste management, offering opportunities for wealth creation and employment, thereby contributing to a cleaner environment and improved livelihoods in Enugu metropolis. The study recommends that the Enugu State Waste Management Authority (ESWAMA) establish designated fabric waste disposal sites and organize educational seminars for tailors on proper waste management practices.

Keywords

Recycling, Tailor, Wealth, Waste Management, Human Utility, Climate Change

1. Introduction

Waste management presents a significant environmental and socio-economic challenge, particularly in rapidly urbanizing areas of developing countries. In Enugu metropolis, Nigeria, the tailoring industry generates considerable amounts

of fabric offcuts, which are often discarded indiscriminately, contributing to environmental pollution and lost economic potential. This study investigates the feasibility of recycling these tailors' offcuts to address waste management concerns

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and create economic opportunities. Employing a survey methodology, the research aims to identify the primary causes of offcuts, explore appropriate recycling techniques, and determine the types of marketable products that can be produced from recycled textile waste. The findings of this study will contribute to the development of sustainable waste management strategies and promote economic empowerment within the local community.

2. Literature Review

Climate change, primarily manifested as global warming, is a pressing global issue exacerbated by factors such as poor waste management, deforestation, industrial activities, and greenhouse gas emissions. This phenomenon poses a significant threat, particularly to tropical and developing nations like Nigeria [1]. The impacts of climate change in Nigeria include increased flooding due to improper waste disposal, drought, deforestation, and irregular rainfall patterns. These environmental changes have had devastating consequences on human health, leading to loss of life, destruction of farmlands, and displacement of millions [2, 3]. These environmental challenges contribute to poverty and can lead to social unrest and insecurity.

Waste management is a critical aspect of environmental sustainability. Indiscriminate waste disposal, particularly in urban areas like Enugu metropolis, contributes to environmental degradation, public health risks, and economic losses. Tailors' offcuts, a significant component of textile waste, are often disposed of improperly, contributing to drainage blockages and other environmental problems. The Enugu State Waste Management Authority (ESWAMA), established by Law No. 8 of 2004 with support from the British Department for International Development (DFID) [4], is responsible for waste management in the state. However, effective waste management requires a collaborative effort from the government, community, industries, and individuals [5].

Recycling offers a sustainable solution to waste management challenges. Recycling, defined as the reuse of materials to create new products [6, 7], can significantly reduce the volume of waste going to landfills and mitigate environmental impacts. In Nigeria, textile waste, including tailors' offcuts, is a growing concern, often ending up in landfills [8]. Converting these offcuts into useful products not only addresses waste management but also presents opportunities for economic empowerment and job creation. Several studies have highlighted the potential of converting fabric scraps into valuable products [9, 10].

Offcuts are a natural byproduct of tailoring, often resulting from freehand cutting, fabric misprints, pattern errors, apprentice mistakes, and inadequate remnant management. While offcuts are unavoidable, their quantity can be minimized through careful pattern drafting and efficient use of materials. Many tailors avoid pattern drafting, perceiving it as time-consuming, which contributes to increased fabric wastage [12, 13]. The concentration of textile waste is higher in

urban areas due to increased commercial activity and the prevalence of tailoring businesses [11]. The present study focuses on Enugu metropolis, a hub of commercial activity with numerous tailoring establishments, to explore the potential of transforming fabric waste into valuable resources.

3. Significance of Studies

This study is significant for several reasons:

a. **Environmental Sustainability:** By exploring the recycling of tailors' offcuts, the study contributes to sustainable waste management practices and mitigates the environmental impact of textile waste. It provides practical solutions to reduce waste accumulation in landfills and prevent drainage blockages, thus addressing the problem of flooding exacerbated by improper waste disposal.

b. **Economic Development:** The study highlights the potential of recycling offcuts as a source of income generation and employment, particularly for unemployed youth. This can contribute to poverty reduction and economic empowerment within Enugu metropolis.

c. **Social Impact:** By promoting recycling initiatives, the study can foster community awareness about environmental responsibility and encourage sustainable practices. It also offers a potential avenue for reducing crime rates by providing alternative livelihoods for individuals engaged in illicit activities [6].

d. **Practical Application:** The study provides practical insights into the causes of offcuts, effective recycling techniques, and marketable products that can be created from recycled materials. This information can be used by tailors, entrepreneurs, and policymakers to implement sustainable waste management strategies and create economic opportunities.

e. **Contribution to Existing Literature:** This study adds to the existing body of knowledge on waste management, recycling, and sustainable development, particularly within the Nigerian context. It provides empirical data and practical recommendations that can inform future research and policy interventions.

4. Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that textile wastes, particularly those from tailors' shops are dumped indiscriminately around Enugu metropolis. The lackadaisical manner towards waste management by some individuals in the city, has adversely affected the properties, health and economy of the State. Offcuts from tailors' shops are not biodegradables, rather, they contribute to drainage blockages and trigger flooding and other environmental issues. In as much as tailors' offcuts can be leveraged to produce items of utilitarian value; it can also create employment for the unemployed and promote self-reliance. Therefore, there is need to salvage the city from danger associated with reckless dumping of refuse, to create sustainable textiles in the 21st century as well as means of

livelihood to the unemployed.

5. Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study is to recycle tailors' offcuts which is a viable means for wealth creation and waste management in Enugu metropolis. Specifically, the study identified the following:

1. Causes of offcuts in tailors' shops
2. Techniques for recycling tailors' offcuts
3. Articles/ products of tailors' offcuts

6. Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the causes of offcuts in tailors' shops?
2. What are the appropriate techniques for recycling tailors' offcuts?
3. What are the functional articles that can be created from tailors' offcuts?

7. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative survey research design to investigate the potential for recycling tailors' offcuts in Enugu metropolis, Nigeria. The study focused on identifying the causes of offcuts, exploring suitable recycling techniques, and determining the feasibility of creating marketable products from these textile wastes.

7.1. Area of Study

The research was conducted in Enugu metropolis, the capital of Enugu State, located in southeastern Nigeria. Known as the "Coal City," Enugu metropolis comprises three local government areas: Enugu South, Enugu North, and Enugu East. The city's economy is driven primarily by civil service and small businesses, including a significant tailoring sector. Enugu metropolis was selected due to its high concentration of skilled tailors, whose expertise in clothing construction made them ideal respondents for providing insights into offcuts generation and recycling possibilities.

7.2. Study Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of registered tailors operating within Enugu metropolis, as identified through the Enugu Tailors Association. The estimated population size was approximately 250 tailoring establishments. A sample of 50 tailors' shops was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. Enugu metropolis was divided into five strata based on geographic location: (A) New Haven and Independence Layout; (B) Abakpa and Trans-Ekulu; (C) Garikki, One Day, and Mayor; (D) Achara Layout, Uwani, and New

Layout; and (E) Ogbete Main Market and GRA. From each stratum, 10 tailors' shops were randomly selected, ensuring representation across different areas of the city. Registered tailors were prioritized due to their established experience in the field, increasing the likelihood of obtaining reliable data regarding offcut generation and potential recycling practices.

7.3. Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was developed as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire comprised 21 items designed to address the research objectives, covering areas such as causes of offcuts, suitable recycling techniques, and potential products. The questionnaire was subjected to rigorous validation procedures. Three experts in textile and design, waste management, and research methodology reviewed the instrument for face and content validity, ensuring clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the items. Feedback from the expert review was incorporated into revisions of the questionnaire. The internal consistency of the final questionnaire was assessed using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 (KR-21), yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.88, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

7.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted through direct, face-to-face administration of the questionnaires by the researcher. This method allowed for clarification of any questions or ambiguities encountered by the respondents, maximizing the completeness and accuracy of the collected data. All 50 distributed questionnaires were successfully completed and returned, resulting in a 100% response rate.

8. Data Analysis

Data was organized using frequency tables, the mean scores and standard deviation of each item was computed and used for data analysis. The mean score and standard deviation were used to determine the perceived importance level expressed on a five-point Likert scale adopted for each of the items. Decision was made using a criterion mean of 2.5. Thus, all items with a mean score of 2.5 and above were accepted as true and if otherwise, the items were rejected.

9. Results

The presentations were made in tables showing the frequency and the mean scores of each item. Each table contains information from the response to the research questions.

9.1. Research Question One

What are the causes of offcuts in tailors' shops?

Table 1. Mean scores of responses on the causes of offcuts in tailors' shops.

S/N	Causes of offcuts in tailors' shops	Mean (X) Remarks
1	Free hand cutting	3.05 Agreed
2	Fabric Misprints	3.00 Agreed
3	Mistake from pattern	2.57 Agreed
4	Mistakes from apprentices	3.68 Agreed
5	Inadequate remnants after cutting	3.50 Agreed
6	Tailors' laxity	2.75 Agreed
7	Unable to employ necessary sewing tools	3.38 Agreed
8	Too much fabrics	2.25 Disagreed

Table 1 revealed that causes of offcuts in tailors' shops are due to free hand cutting of fabrics, fabrics misprints, mistake from the pattern, I mistake from apprentices, inadequate remnants after cutting, tailors' laxity, and tailors' inability to employ necessary sewing tools.

9.2. Research Question Two

What are the appropriate techniques for recycling tailors' offcuts?

Table 2. Mean scores of responses on the possible techniques needed for recycling tailors' offcuts.

S/N	Techniques for recycling tailors' offcuts	Mean (X) Remarks
1	The use of applique	3.80 Agreed
2	The use of embroidery	3.47 Agreed
3	The use of patchwork	3.78 Agreed
4	The use of adhesive	2.85 Agreed
5	The use of elastic bands	2.73 Agreed
6	Incorporation of crocheting	2.56 Agreed

Table 2 shows that tailors' offcuts can be recycled or converted to functional items through these techniques: the use of applique, the use of embroidery, patchwork, use of adhesive and elastic bands and the incorporation of crocheting.

9.3. Research Question Three

What are the functional articles that can be created from tailors' offcuts?

Tables 3. Mean scores of responses on articles that can be created out of these tailors' offcuts.

S/N	Articles / products of tailors' offcuts	Mean (X) Remarks
1	Hair bands	3.22 Agreed
2	Centre rug	3.01 Agreed

S/N	Articles / products of tailors' offcuts	Mean (X) Remarks
3	Throw pillow	3.46 Agreed
4	Muffler	2.85 Agreed
5	Dress embellishments (roses)	3.75 Agreed
6	Shopping bags	3.48 Agreed
7	Duvet	3.71 Agreed
8	Foot mat	3.64 Agreed

Table 3 above revealed that tailors' offcuts can be leveraged for the creation of new and useful items like hair bands, centre rugs, throw pillow, muffler, dress embellishments, shopping bags, duvet and foot mats. These products and many more can be created by joining together pieces of multi-coloured fabrics.

9.4. Findings

The study identified the following:

- A. Seven (7) causes of tailors' offcuts (see Table 1)
- B. Six (6) techniques apt for recycling these offcuts (see Table 2)
- C. Eight (8) premium items of human utility that be produced with tailors' offcuts (see Table 3)

10. Discussion

The respondents agreed that freehand cutting is a major cause of tailors' offcuts. Freehand cutting simply means cutting of fabric without pattern. Fundamentally, fabrics should be cut with a pattern that has been drafted by the tailor. Pattern drafting is the process of creating templates from which patterns are obtained from. Therefore, it is necessary to cut fabrics with pattern for easy adjustment and to avoid fabric wastage [12, 13]. According to Azonuche and Osia, scholars and teachers shy away from pattern drafting in the area of clothing construction [12]. This may be due to its time-consuming nature as it requires great expertise as well as acquiring some special tools and materials for perfect construction. Fabric misprint is another cause of offcuts identified; textile companies most times produce fabrics with inconsistent designs. Ostensibly, the tailors will avoid those areas with misprint to achieve their desired style and this contributes to massive wastage of fabrics in tailors' shops.

Moreover, mistakes from pattern were also noted but not a major contributor to the causes. Another prominent cause to tailors' offcuts is mistakes from apprentices; apprentices in the tailors' shops are those who are still learning the skill of tailoring. These people are prone to mistakes given their level of experience in the skill. Inadequate remnant of fabric after cutting was revealed as a contributor of wastes; when the

remaining fabric is viewed as insignificant, the tailors always discard them as wastes. Tailors' laxity is a factor to tailors' offcuts, in other words, tailors' carelessness has led to numerous offcuts in tailors' shops. Defects is an unavoidable issue occasionally encounter by tailors which slows production and results to waste of resources. Some tailors claim to have knowledge of a particular style that obviously they cannot handle; damaging their clients' fabrics beyond repair and constituting to wastes in their shops [14, 15]. Inability of the tailors to acquire necessary tools and materials that will enable them achieve successful results in clothing construction has also been identified in this study as a factor that militates to massive offcuts in tailors' shops. Some of these tailors were not aware of certain tools like pinky shear, tracing wheel and the likes. These are tools that will enable them reduce and control offcuts that are generated in their shops.

The respondents agreed that applique can be used to recycle tailors' offcuts. As a decorative design that entails cutting pieces of fabrics and stitching them on the surface of another fabric for decoration. This can easily be achieved with the offcuts, because it will reduce the cost of buying fabrics of different types and colours for applique by individuals and designers. The use of embroidery was also revealed by the respondents as appropriate technique for offcuts recycling. Adigun noted that embroidery is ornamentation or embellishment made on fabrics for the purpose of decoration [16]. Akinrujomu, asserts that when fabrics and other materials are decorated through the use of needle and thread, embroidery is achieved [17]. Thus, offcuts from tailors' shops can be recycled with embroidery technique for more visual appeal.

Furthermore, the respondents agreed that patchwork technique is suitable for recycling of tailors' offcuts. Patchwork is related to applique, but the former is applied on the surface of a fabric while the later involves the use of needle and thread to sew together different colours and types of pieces of fabrics into a larger design. The respondents agreed that adhesive can be used to recycle tailors' offcuts to functional items. Therefore, adhesive will enable the recyclers bind some arears as well as introduce elastic that would give room for people of different sizes to access these products created out of offcuts.

The respondents revealed that leveraging tailors' offcuts with the above techniques would contribute to the production

of functional items like hair band, center rug, throw pillow, muffler, dress embellishments, shopping bags and duvet. The items listed above comprises of both interior decorative pieces and fashion accessories, hence, offcuts can be used to create different items for different purposes.

10.1. Conclusion and Summary

This study comprehensively investigated the potential of recycling tailors' offcuts in Enugu metropolis, Nigeria, as a viable strategy for waste management, economic empowerment, and sustainable development. Through a survey of 50 tailoring establishments, the research identified key factors contributing to fabric waste generation, explored appropriate recycling techniques, and determined the feasibility of creating marketable products from these discarded materials. The findings offer valuable insights for addressing both environmental and socio-economic challenges within the local context.

The study revealed several significant causes of offcuts in tailoring shops. Freehand cutting, a practice often employed due to perceived time constraints or a lack of pattern drafting skills, emerged as a primary contributor. This finding underscores the importance of promoting and training tailors in proper pattern drafting techniques to minimize fabric wastage at the source. Other significant causes included fabric misprints from manufacturers, mistakes arising from pattern cutting or by apprentices during the sewing process, inadequate management of fabric remnants after cutting, tailors' laxity or carelessness, and the lack of access to or use of appropriate sewing tools. Addressing these issues through training, quality control measures, and improved resource management within tailoring businesses could significantly reduce the volume of offcuts generated.

The research also identified a range of effective techniques for recycling tailors' offcuts. These included applique, a decorative technique involving stitching fabric pieces onto a larger surface; embroidery, which adds decorative embellishments using needle and thread; patchwork, a method of sewing together various fabric pieces to create larger designs; the use of adhesives for bonding fabric pieces; the incorporation of elastic bands for creating flexible and adaptable products; and crocheting, a technique of creating fabric from yarn or thread using a hook. These techniques offer diverse possibilities for transforming offcuts into valuable resources.

Furthermore, the study demonstrated the feasibility of creating a variety of marketable products from recycled offcuts. These products ranged from fashion accessories like hair bands and mufflers to household items such as center rugs, throw pillows, duvets, and foot mats, as well as practical items like shopping bags and decorative elements like dress embellishments. This diverse range of potential products highlights the economic potential of recycling tailors' offcuts, creating opportunities for income generation and small business development.

The findings of this study have significant implications for environmental sustainability, economic development, and social well-being in Enugu metropolis. By diverting textile waste from landfills and drainage systems, recycling initiatives can contribute to a cleaner environment, reduce the risk of flooding, and mitigate other environmental hazards. Moreover, the creation of new businesses and employment opportunities in the recycling sector can contribute to poverty reduction, economic empowerment, and improved livelihoods within the local community. The research also highlights the importance of collaboration between stakeholders, including tailors, entrepreneurs, government agencies like ESWAMA, and community organizations, to implement effective waste management and recycling programs.

In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence for the potential of recycling tailors' offcuts as a sustainable and economically viable solution to waste management challenges in Enugu metropolis. By addressing the causes of offcuts, promoting appropriate recycling techniques, and supporting the development of markets for recycled products, stakeholders can contribute to a more sustainable environment, a stronger local economy, and improved social well-being.

10.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research:

1. Enugu State ministry of education should consider introducing recycling of tailors' offcuts in the curriculum for pupils at the basic level, this will help to inculcate in them that waste can be reused if well handled.
2. Enugu State Waste Management Authority (ESWAMA) should map out special sites for fabric wastes disposal, to enable the recyclers salvage these wastes without being contaminated with other wastes.
3. There should be a form of annual seminar organized by ESWAMA for tailors in the metropolis to enlighten them on the need for proper waste management.
4. Skill acquisition centers should be created in strategic areas of the state by governments, NGO's, Churches and individuals with more focus on recycling of tailors' offcuts.

Abbreviations

ESWAMA	Enugu State Waste Management Authority
KR-21	Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 (A Statistical Method Used to Assess Internal Consistency)
DFID	Department for International Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

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Author Contributions

Adaeze Queendaline Silas-Ufelle is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the outcome of this research work has been reported in this manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest from any financial, commercial or related affiliations whatsoever.

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Biography



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Research Field

Adaeze Queendaline Silas-Ufelle: Indigenous Textile, Interior Aesthetics and Decoration, Textile Production, Semiotics, Hermeneutics, Ethics in Art and Design