



Empowering Women Through Ecoprint for Creativity Enhancement in Solo

Dyah Yuni Kurniawati ^{1,2}, Andrik Purwasito ^{2,3}, Sri Kusumo Habsari ², Agus Purwanto ^{1,2}, Magdalena Asmara ⁴

¹ Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

² Doctoral Program in Cultural Studies, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

³ Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

⁴ Department of Development Economics, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

dyahyunik@staff.uns.ac.id

Abstract. The evolving fashion landscape has spurred people in the Solo region to compete in creating new trends with artistic value as an integral component. The growing fashion demand has led to the expansion of the textile industry in Solo, which, in turn, has environmental implications. Leveraging its rich natural resources, Solo has embraced the opportunity to foster the creative economy through ecoprint, an eco-friendly fabric printing technique. Ecoprint employs natural resources like leaves and plants to imbue fabric patterns with philosophical depth. This eco-conscious approach offers the Solo fashion industry an avenue to mitigate its environmental footprint. The active involvement of women in fashion underscores the relevance of empowering women through ecoprint. This research aims to scrutinize women's role in enhancing creativity in Solo through ecoprint. Employing field observations, it directly examines female artisans practicing ecoprint in Solo. The observations demonstrate how women's engagement in ecoprint can elevate creativity within the Solo community, contributing to a more environmentally sustainable fashion industry. Moreover, women's empowerment through ecoprint highlights their potential to contribute to the overall well-being of the Solo community.

Keywords: Women, Ecoprint, Creativity.

1 Introduction

Of every creature that God has made, humans are the most ideal. Men and women are the two genders that comprise the human species that God created. Humans cannot be adequately and passively described in terms of their anatomy and psychology, as Erich Fromm (1965:21) explains. But that is not a complete definition of humans. Leo Tolstoy thought that since ancient times, there has been a clear distinction between men

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and women. In the past, women residing in aristocratic settings frequently faced discriminatory treatment from men, as was clearly visible. Customs and traditions prevalent during that time period bound and oppressed women.

Dagun (1990:9) explains that because humans are social creatures, it is impossible for them to live apart from the intellectual and spiritual facets of life. In essence, every action people take is a reflection of their identity and personality. According to Dagun (1990:50), people are dynamic and ever-changing. But ever since antiquity, men have possessed power and control over women, and women have been viewed as inferior. Gender equality, or the idea that women should have the same rights to development as men, has emerged as a result of this.

Women were only allowed to stay at home and take care of their husbands in the past because they were seen as weak. Women were prohibited from working, participating in procedures, or going to school alongside men. But as time went on, it was realized that women were being denied the chance to grow, and this was unfair. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, and 180 countries have ratified it. It delineates women's rights and equality, including their freedom from discrimination and equal rights under the law (Hubeis, 2011). As a result, the idea of gender equality was born.

According to Prastiwi, I. L. and Rahmadanik, D. (2022:2), gender equality is no longer a novel idea in Indonesia. Gender is a socially constructed role and a behavioral pattern resulting from the socialization and interaction of men and women. The concept of gender equality itself is the state in which men and women are accorded equal rights and responsibilities without distinction or bias. In summary, gender proportions are guaranteed by men and women having equal rights and responsibilities under this equality.

Women's rights to work and participate in self-development processes are made possible by gender equality. Women's empowerment programs are one way to increase the value that women add to society. Programs for women's empowerment, particularly in the fashion industry, can result in new goods that foster creativity. Since women and fashion go hand in hand, one way to put women's empowerment programs into practice is by offering training in the ecoprint technique for fabric production (Lestari, 2022). Using the ecoprint technique, plant leaves produce stunning patterns and colors that are then imprinted on fabric. Plant leaves can be layered onto fabric and boiled or steamed to release the plant's natural pigments (Bohr, 2020). This technique is called Ecoprinting. The Ecoprint technique can be applied to a variety of plant elements, including leaves, stems, flowers, roots, seeds, and bark (Saurina, 2022). A predisposition towards the fashion industry and the use of ecoprint can inspire women with a variety of ideas that they can turn into a product that appeals to the public, stimulating new creativity that can improve community well-being and lead to the creation of new job opportunities.

A research question is developed based on the author's background information: How can efforts to improve creativity through the empowerment program of women artisans in ecoprint result in the development of novel products that improve well-being? By using the ecoprint technique to create products, this research aims to show that

women can grow and make significant contributions to society and the country while also acknowledging human responsibility for environmental sustainability.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Women and the Patriarchy Concept

There is no justification for men to hold a higher status than women; both are equally valuable creations of God. Despite this, societal norms confine women to traditional roles, restricting their autonomy. Symbolic violence, as per Bourdieu (2001), emanates from male dominance, subtly shaping societal perceptions. The patriarchal discourse, as explained by Haryatmoko (2010), dictates women's thoughts and behaviors, perpetuating violence. Rakoczy (2004) notes the acceptance of patriarchal norms throughout history. Salden's feminist perspective emphasizes societal biases, portraying women as weaker and less capable. However, women's freedom to pursue interests and careers exists, provided they balance homemaking duties. Despite challenges, women can demand equal rights and positions, challenging the perceived weaknesses.

2.2 Women empowerment

Women's empowerment, per Pujono (1996), involves recognizing and celebrating their humanity, enabling them to realize their full potential and contribute to society. Khan (2018) suggests fostering empowerment through community groups, exemplified by Indonesia's PKK (Empowerment and Family Welfare) organization. Such groups provide training and business opportunities, like ecoprint dyeing for apparel production, aligning with women's connection to the fashion industry. Training women in ecoprinting taps into their insights on fashion trends, fostering the creation of marketable products. Through these initiatives, women not only enhance their capabilities but also make meaningful contributions to their communities, embodying the essence of empowerment.

2.3 History of Ecoprint

Since the 1600s, natural dyes have been integral to fabric dyeing, as noted by The Trustees of The British Museum (2012:65). Ecoprint, a technique employing plant-derived colors, is environmentally friendly and still prevalent in Indonesia, despite ecological concerns (Nuning, 2018:4). Sumino's research (2013:1) identifies 150 plants yielding natural colors. Evolving over time, ecoprint adapts to changing consumer preferences and environmental factors, transforming into an art form (Rahman, 2018:140). Rahman (2018:144) contends that culture emerges from problem-solving, inspiring innovative artistic patterns. As challenges arise, new concepts emerge, contributing to the dynamic evolution of cultural elements through communal customs and habits.

3 Methodology

This study employed a qualitative analysis approach combined with field observation methodology. A research method known as qualitative analysis generates descriptive data from observed objects in the form of spoken or written information (Moleong, 2007). To interpret and comprehend qualitative data from observations, interviews, and documentation, qualitative analysis is used. This process includes data transcription, data categorization, thematic analysis, and interpretation to make inferences. Direct observation of the phenomena or objects under study in the research location is the method used in the field observation approach. The following steps are used to implement this method. Choosing the research object and location comes first. The Solo region is the focus of this study, which looks at ecoprint as a tool for empowering women and fostering creativity. The focus of the investigation is the female ecoprint creators. Direct observation of female ecoprint artisans at the research site is the next step. Following the documentation and recording of the observations, data analysis is done to produce research conclusions.

4 Result

The majority of women frequently track trends in the fashion industry. This makes careers in the fashion industry a good fit for women looking to advance their careers. The ecoprint technique is one method that can be used to produce natural and eco-friendly products. Nuning (2018:4) claims that because the ecoprint method makes use of natural materials like different plants with naturally occurring color, it is thought to be environmentally friendly. Because the dye materials used in the ecoprint technique are derived from nature, it is a relatively simple process to implement and does not come with a high cost. Since the materials used in the ecoprint technique are natural, the waste generated during production will not damage or pollute the environment. Giving instruction on how to use the ecoprint technique to create naturally patterned fabrics is a great way to empower the community. This is due to a number of factors, including women's interest in fashion and the ease with which the materials can be obtained, as well as the simple and uncomplicated nature of the production process. Consequently, women can carry on honing their craft of using the ecoprint method to make fabric products, leading to the eventual production of high-quality goods that are advantageous to both the environment and themselves.



Fig. 1. Mordan Processes

In addition to learning how to use the ecoprint technique to create patterned fabrics, women in this program for women's empowerment also learn how to market and record their products to draw in customers. This is important because understanding marketing and documentation has a big impact on how consumers can identify and favor products. Through the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises (UMKM) that benefit both the nation's economy and the women themselves, the training seeks to empower women to become more independent. Because of this, the program can not only spread knowledge without any positive effects but also open up new job opportunities, demonstrating to women that they are capable of improving the welfare of Indonesian society. Indirectly supporting environmental preservation is the ecoprint method used in the manufacture of fabrics. In contrast to the apparel industry, which frequently produces large amounts of waste dye, ecoprint uses materials that are safe for the environment. River pollution results from large-scale fabric manufacturers' frequent poor waste management and treatment practices. In addition to producing foul smells and clouding rivers, this type of pollution endangers the health of nearby communities and those that depend on river water. Ecoprint guarantees more environmentally friendly disposal by drastically reducing waste. Moreover, communities—women in particular—can produce ecoprint apparel at home thanks to the ecoprint method's simplicity. This not only supports environmentally friendly practices but also gives women a creative way to generate income and enhances the well-being of the environment.



Fig. 2. Ecoprint Patterns Created by Female Ecoprint Artisans

Ecoprint has grown in popularity over the past few years, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through interviews with female ecoprint artisans like Rinuk (2023) owner of Rinrin Ecoprint, Harry Amore (2023) owner of Alas Jati Ecoprint, and Anggi (2023) owner of Syirka Ecoprint, it was discovered that the growth of ecoprint during these difficult times has had a number of beneficial effects, most notably the empowerment of women:

4.1 Ecoprint as a Savior in Difficult

Harry Amore (2023) states that ecoprint plays a role as a savior, especially during challenging times like the Covid-19 pandemic. In the face of a tough economy and reduced consumer purchasing power, ecoprint products have become an attractive alternative for consumers. The increasing awareness of the importance of environmental conservation has also driven the demand for eco-friendly products like ecoprint.

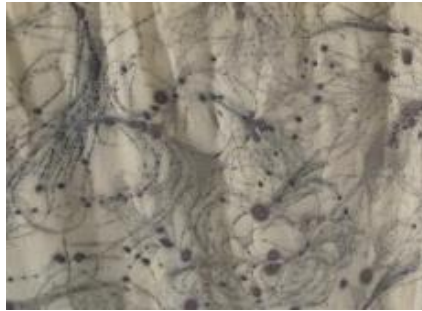


Fig. 3. Ecoprint uses Pine Tree leaves.



Fig. 4. Ecoprint product entering the export market.

4.2 Exploring Creativity in Ecoprint Expansion

Ecoprint initially emerged as a dyeing and motif creation technique, but over time, creativity in its craftsmanship has enhanced the artistic value and uniqueness of ecoprint products. Women, especially ecoprint artisans, play a significant role in diversifying patterns and product outputs. This is emphasized by Anggi (2023), who believes that women's flexibility in creativity leads to a variety of ecoprint designs that captivate the market's interest.



Fig. 5. Diversification of Ecoprint Products

4.3 Empowering Women Through Ecoprint

In addition to serving as an income alternative during difficult times, ecoprint also empowers women. As stated by Anggi (2023), ecoprint provides opportunities for women to develop their potential and self-expression. Women, as ecoprint artisans, have their own uniqueness in their work, allowing them to explore creativity and motifs more freely.



Fig. 6. Empowering Women Through Ecoprint

4.4 Emotional Significance in Ecoprint

Rinuk (2023) emphasizes that ecoprint holds deep emotional dimensions for artisans. The process of creating patterns on fabric using leaves and plants involves the expression of their inner thoughts and feelings. This makes each ecoprint creation have a unique personal meaning and experience.

Positive effects have been brought about by ecoprint, particularly when it comes to women's empowerment. For women who work as artisans, ecoprint emerged as a cost-effective substitute during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through their distinctive and extremely artistic work, they could foster creativity and self-expression. Women are essential to the growth of ecoprint because they develop a variety of patterns and product outputs that appeal to consumers. They now have the chance to improve their standard

of living and become financially independent thanks to this. Moreover, the artisans derive a distinct meaning from the intricate emotional dimensions involved in creating ecoprint pieces. Women can express their inner selves and make art with deeper meanings through ecoprint. Overall, ecoprint has had a significant positive impact on the sustainable appreciation of natural resources and the empowerment of women.

5 Conclusion

This research underscores the crucial role of women's empowerment in promoting creativity within Solo's fashion sector. Women significantly contribute to shaping new trends with artistic elements through ecoprint techniques, enhancing both societal and industry value. In Solo, ecoprint serves as a valuable avenue for nurturing women's creativity. By utilizing organic materials like leaves and plants, ecoprint enables women to express life principles and indigenous knowledge in their artistic endeavors. This approach delivers eco-friendly products, contributing innovation to the fashion sector. Ecoprint not only sparks creativity but also mirrors Solo's societal ideals, fostering environmental respect and cultural heritage preservation through its patterns. Ultimately, female involvement in ecoprint practices supports environmentally sustainable creative economics in Solo.

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