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REVIVAL AND INNOVATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL (KOKOBILO) AND CONTEMPORARY DISCHARGE RESIST TECHNIQUES IN NIGERIAN FASHION

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ABSTRACT

Kokobilo is an indigenous Yoruba material culture that employs bleaching and resist techniques for fabric embellishment, particularly within traditional textile practices. Despite its aesthetic and cultural significance, kokobilo faces several challenges, including technical rigidity, limited tools and materials, and inadequate documentation, which have contributed to its gradual decline and near extinction. This study argues that the integration of contemporary discharge resist techniques can serve as a viable strategy for reviving and innovating the traditional kokobilo practice. The research therefore undertakes a comparative study of traditional (kokobilo) and contemporary discharge resist techniques with the aim of enhancing modern Nigerian fashion. Specifically, the study identifies the types of fabrics used, examines the bleaching and resist agents employed, and analyses the similarities and differences between traditional and contemporary practices. The theoretical framework is anchored on the revival theory of lost material culture. A qualitative research design was adopted, utilising descriptive, historical, and studio-based exploratory approaches. Data were collected through primary and secondary sources, including oral interviews, observation, documentary evidence, participation, and practical studio experimentation. The study population comprised craftsmen (30), craftswomen (20), marketers (10), and buyers (10) drawn from Adire International Market (Skill Acquisition Centre), Asero-Osiele, and the Dyeing Centre, Itoku, Abeokuta, Nigeria. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the validity and reliability of responses. Findings reveal that contemporary discharge resist techniques offer greater flexibility, material variety, and technical efficiency, while retaining the aesthetic essence of traditional kokobilo. The study contributes to the advancement of knowledge by demonstrating how contemporary discharge resist methods can revitalises indigenous textile practices and strengthen innovation within the Nigerian fashion industry.

Keywords: *Kokobilo, Aesthetics, Bleaching, Discharge Resist, Nigerian Fashion, Textile revival.*

INTRODUCTION

Textile decoration has historically served functional, symbolic, and aesthetic roles across cultures, evolving through diverse techniques of dye manipulation, resist processes, and surface embellishment. Early societies developed distinctive textile motifs and patterns as expressions of identity, belief systems, and socio-economic activities (Barber, 1994). In contemporary practice, fabric decoration is characterised by advanced methods such as layering of motifs, stencil application, folding, brushing, and spraying, combined with folkloric, geometric, floral, and animal-inspired designs. These approaches have expanded the aesthetic and commercial potential of textiles, particularly within fashion contexts.

Among the Yoruba people of Abeokuta, *kokobilo* represents an indigenous discharge resist technique in which bleaching agents are applied to dyed fabrics to create decorative patterns. Historically, *kokobilo* designs were predominantly linear and monochromatic, with limited motif and colour variation. Although the technique allows for the incorporation of non-dischargeable dyes to achieve multi-coloured effects (Henry, 2008), such innovations remain minimal in traditional practice. Despite its affordability, soft fabric handle, and cultural relevance, *kokobilo* has remained largely confined to traditional production modes, limiting its adaptation to contemporary fashion demands.

Abeokuta is a major centre of indigenous textile production, with *kokobilo* contributing to local livelihoods and cultural heritage. However, the practice is increasingly threatened by an ageing artisan population, inadequate documentation, and resistance to technical innovation. While contemporary discharge resist techniques have benefited from technological advancements,

improved materials, and experimental design processes (John, 2008), these developments have not been sufficiently explored within the context of *kokobilo*. As a result, *kokobilo* remains marginalised in Nigerian fashion, where designers increasingly favour more flexible and commercially adaptable textile techniques.

The justification for this study lies in the urgent need to prevent the gradual extinction of *kokobilo* as an indigenous Yoruba textile technique while repositioning it for relevance in Nigerian fashion. Although *kokobilo* possesses cultural, aesthetic, and economic value, its continued practice is constrained by technical rigidity, limited innovation, and inadequate scholarly documentation. Contemporary discharge resist techniques offer expanded possibilities in material use, design flexibility, and production efficiency; however, their application to traditional *kokobilo* has not been sufficiently investigated. By comparatively examining traditional and contemporary discharge resist techniques, this study provides a framework for reviving *kokobilo* through innovation, thereby bridging indigenous textile knowledge and contemporary fashion practices. The findings are justified by their potential contribution to academic scholarship, cultural preservation, artisan empowerment, and the sustainable growth of Nigeria's fashion industry.

This study addresses the existing knowledge gap by comparatively examining traditional *kokobilo* and contemporary discharge resist techniques to determine their similarities, differences, and potential for innovation. Anchored on the revival theory of lost material culture, the research adopts a qualitative approach combining historical, descriptive, and studio-based exploratory methods. By integrating contemporary discharge resist techniques with traditional *kokobilo* practice, the study seeks to enhance design diversity, aesthetic value, and functional relevance, thereby repositioning *kokobilo* as a viable resource for innovation in Nigerian fashion.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Textile practices have long functioned as repositories of cultural knowledge, social identity, and historical memory across African societies. Scholars argue that indigenous textile techniques embody encoded narratives of belief systems, gender relations, social status, and ecological adaptation (Eicher and Erekosima, 1995; Picton and Mack, 2010). In the Nigerian context, resist-dye traditions such as *adire*, batik, and *kokobilo* constitute important elements of Yoruba material culture, serving both utilitarian and symbolic functions (Renard, 2016). These practices are increasingly framed within heritage discourse as forms of intangible cultural heritage that require documentation, adaptation, and transmission to remain viable in contemporary society (UNESCO, 2018).

Recent scholarship emphasises that the survival of textile heritage depends not only on preservation but also on creative transformation. Karp and Kratz (2015) argue that cultural continuity is sustained when traditional forms are re-contextualised within new economic, technological, and aesthetic frameworks. This perspective supports the view that indigenous techniques such as *kokobilo* must evolve in response to changing fashion markets and production contexts if they are to avoid obsolescence.

Discharge resist printing is a surface-design technique that produces patterns on pre-dyed fabrics through the selective destruction of colour. Karthikeyan and Bharathi (2012) describe the process as a chemical reaction in which oxidising or reducing agents break down dye molecules in targeted areas, resulting in white or light-toned motifs against darker grounds. Common industrial discharge agents include sulphoxylate formaldehyde and thiourea dioxide, which are effective in discharging reactive and direct dyes on cellulosic fibres.

The basic principle involves first dyeing the fabric and subsequently applying a discharge agent through printing or resist methods. Traditionally, azo dyes are discharged using reducing agents, followed by steaming to activate the reaction and washing to remove decomposed dye residues, producing clearly defined patterns (Milne, 1981). While technically effective, these processes require controlled conditions and careful handling, limiting their accessibility for small-scale and indigenous practitioners.

Contemporary textile research has increasingly focused on addressing the environmental and health challenges associated with chemical discharge agents. Formaldehyde emissions and chlorine-based bleaching agents have raised concerns regarding toxicity and ecological impact (Broadbent, 2019). In response, recent studies have explored enzymatic and low-impact discharge processes that align with sustainable textile production practices.

For example, Youssef *et al.* (2020) report the use of peroxidase enzymes in combination with hydrogen peroxide to selectively discharge

reactive dyes on cotton fabrics. These methods reduce toxic by-products while maintaining aesthetic quality, demonstrating the adaptability of discharge resist techniques to environmentally responsible production models. Such innovations highlight the potential for integrating traditional discharge concepts with contemporary scientific advances.

Discharge resist printing can be executed through various application methods, including brushing, spraying, stencilling, wrapping, dipping, and masking. These methods allow designers to control chemical exposure and generate diverse visual effects ranging from sharp linear motifs to soft tonal transitions (Kadolph, 2017). Parker and Glen (1967) note that discharge techniques are particularly effective on cotton, linen, and viscose fabrics dyed with reactive, direct, or vat dyes, producing high-contrast designs that are visually durable.

Unlike additive colour techniques, discharge printing operates through colour removal, making it inherently unpredictable and experimentally driven. This unpredictability requires extensive material testing and skill, which partly explains its limited adoption in indigenous settings where material loss carries economic risk. Nevertheless, the technique's aesthetic depth and durability have sustained its relevance in fashion applications, especially in garments requiring long-lasting surface design.

Recent African fashion scholarship emphasises the role of indigenous textile techniques as sources of innovation rather than static traditions. Rabine (2016) and Allman (2020) argue that contemporary African fashion thrives on the reinterpretation of heritage practices through modern silhouettes, materials, and production methods. In Nigeria, designers increasingly draw on *adire* and related resist techniques to assert cultural identity while engaging global fashion markets (Adeyemi and Bello, 2021).

Discharge resist printing also referred to as extract printing. produces either white or coloured motifs on dyed grounds using agents such as hydrosulphite or chlorine (Kadolph and Langford, 2018). Coloured discharge printing is achieved when dyes resistant to bleaching are combined with discharge pastes, allowing for greater chromatic complexity. While industrial screen and roller printing methods offer precision and repeatability, their high cost limits their applicability in small-scale contexts. Studio-based adaptations, however, enable designers to explore discharge resist techniques using accessible tools and materials, expanding their relevance to contemporary fashion practice.

Although existing literature provides extensive technical knowledge on discharge resist printing and growing discourse on African fashion innovation, limited scholarly attention has been given to the comparative study of traditional *kokobilo* and contemporary discharge resist adaptations. In particular, there is a paucity of studio-based research that critically examines how material flexibility, process innovation, and aesthetic transformation can reposition *kokobilo* within modern Nigerian fashion. This gap underscores the need for research that bridges indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary textile practice to enhance cultural sustainability, creative relevance, and commercial viability.

MATERIALS AND METHODS RESEARCH

Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design integrating historical, descriptive, and studio-based exploratory approaches. The design was chosen to enable a comprehensive comparison between traditional *kokobilo* and contemporary discharge resist techniques, with the objective of assessing their potential to enhance Nigerian fashion. The historical approach was used to examine the origin, evolution, and cultural significance of *kokobilo* (Adetoro, 1997). The descriptive method facilitated the documentation and analysis of materials, tools, processes, and visual characteristics of both traditional and contemporary discharge resist techniques. The studio-based exploratory approach enabled practical experimentation through the creation of textile samples and fashion items, allowing for direct assessment of aesthetic quality, material performance, and design adaptability.

The research design was guided by the following research questions and corresponding methods:

a) What materials, tools, and processes characterise traditional *kokobilo* and contemporary discharge resist techniques? It was addressed through observation, interviews, and studio experimentation.
b) What similarities and differences exist between traditional and contemporary discharge resist techniques? It was addressed through descriptive analysis and comparative studio outputs.
c) How can contemporary discharge resist techniques enhance the

aesthetic and functional relevance of *kokobilo* in Nigerian fashion? It was addressed through studio practice, exhibition, and visual analysis using Feldman's method.

Sources of Data

Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through oral interviews, direct observation, participation in production processes, and studio experimentation conducted at *Adire* International Market (Skill Acquisition Centre), Asero- Osiele, and the Dyeing Centre, Itoku, Abeokuta, Nigeria. Secondary data were sourced from books, journal articles, theses, and documented studies on discharge resist techniques and indigenous textile practices. Similar fieldwork approaches have been successfully employed in textile and art research by Saliu (1994), Duniya (2009), and Babalola (2010).

Population and Sample Size

The study population comprised 70 participants drawn from key stakeholder groups directly involved in *kokobilo* production and consumption: craftsmen (20), craftswomen (30), marketers (10), and buyers (10). This population size was considered adequate for qualitative inquiry, as it allowed for in-depth data collection across diverse but relevant perspectives while remaining manageable for detailed analysis. The inclusion of producers, distributors, and consumers ensured triangulation of experiential, technical, and market-based insights.

Sampling Technique and Selection Criteria

A stratified purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure balanced representation and relevance. The population was divided into four strata based on professional roles:

Craftsmen (20): Male practitioners actively engaged in traditional *kokobilo* production for a minimum of five years. Craftswomen (30): Female practitioners involved in discharge resist or related textile practices with demonstrable experience. Marketers (10): Individuals responsible for the distribution and sale of *kokobilo* and related textiles within the study locations. Buyers (10): Regular consumers of indigenous or contemporary textile products.

Participants were selected based on expertise, years of experience, and direct involvement with discharge resist techniques. This approach ensured that only information-rich cases relevant to the study objectives were included, thereby enhancing validity and reliability.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Interview: Semi-structured interview guides were used to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility. Key interview themes included: origin and evolution of *kokobilo*, materials and tools used, production challenges, perceptions of contemporary techniques, and relevance to modern fashion. Interviews were conducted orally, recorded in written form, and cross-checked for accuracy.

Observation: Systematic observation focused on material selection, preparation of bleaching agents, motif application methods, drying and finishing processes, and safety practices. Observations were recorded using field notes and photographic documentation to support reproducibility.

Studio Exploratory Procedure:

Studio experimentation involved the creation of textile samples using both traditional and contemporary materials (Table 1). The practical procedures taken are:

Step I: Materials like dyed 100% cotton, dyed plain *daviva*, dyed jean material, hydrogen, jik or hypo was gotten and taken to the dyeing centers were the practical works was done.

Step II: Different motifs were drawn on the fabric either with free hand, spraying or stenciling.

Step III: Reducing agents like hydrogen, jik, hypo was prepared in proportion of a liter of jik or hypo to five (5) liters of water.

Step IV: Application of the reducing agent to the motif drawn on the fabric, or by spraying the motif or by using stencil.

Step V: Allow fabric to dry in the sun for oxidation.

Step VI: Finished product of the discharged resist techniques of printing was sewn by the researcher.

Step VII: Showcasing all the contemporary discharged resist techniques of printing through exhibition.

Analytical Framework: Application of Feldman's Method

Feldman's (1970) method of art criticism was adopted as the analytical framework for evaluating the studio outputs. The method was applied in four stages: Description: Objective identification of visible elements such as motifs, colour contrast, texture, and fabric type. Formal Analysis:

Examination of elements and principles of design, including balance, rhythm, unity, contrast, and proportion. Interpretation: Analysis of cultural symbolism, aesthetic meaning, and communicative intent in relation to Yoruba heritage and contemporary fashion trends. Judgment: Assessment of overall effectiveness, innovation, and suitability for modern Nigerian fashion.

This structured framework ensured consistency, transparency, and reproducibility in the evaluation of both traditional and contemporary discharge resist outputs.

Table 1: The traditional and contemporary material used

S/N	TRADITIONAL MATERIALS	CONTEMPORARY MATERIALS
1	100% dyed cotton (coloured Guinea brocade)	100% dyed t-shirt (cotton) of different neck, shape and sizes, plain coloured *daviva,* coloured jean material.
2	Long and wide table to place fabric to draw motif and design	Long and wide table to place fabric to draw motif and design
3	Wide transparent nylon to spread fabrics on for discharge resist technique	Wide transparent nylon to spread fabrics on for discharge resist technique
4	Foam	Foam
5	Fresh household bleaching agent (jik)	Fresh household bleaching agent (hypo, hydrogen)
6	Plastic bucket	Plastic bucket
7	An empty plastic spray bottle with an adjustable nozzle	An empty plastic spray bottle with an adjustable nozzle
8	2 pairs of rubber gloves, apron, broom	2 pairs of rubber gloves, apron, brushes of different sizes and shapes.
9	Plastic bowl for rinsing the fabrics	Plastic bowl for rinsing the fabrics

Plate I: Coloured Guinea brocade used for traditional discharge resist technique (kokobilo). Source: Kolawole, C.Y (2022)

Plate II: Coloured T-shirts and Denim used for contemporary discharge resist technique (kokobilo). Source: Kolawole, C.Y

Plate III: A traditional discharger bleaching Guinea brocade spread on a table with the final design of the discharge resist, at Adire international market *Asero*, *Osiele* road along Ibadan express way (Skill Acquisition Center).

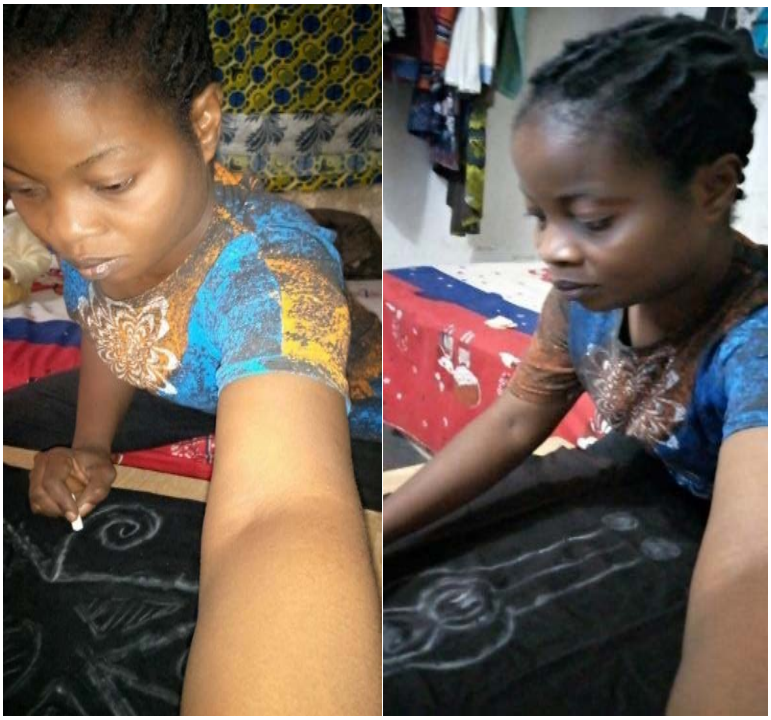

Plate IV: Researcher drawing motifs on the coloured T-shirt ready to be bleached. Source: Kolawole, C.Y

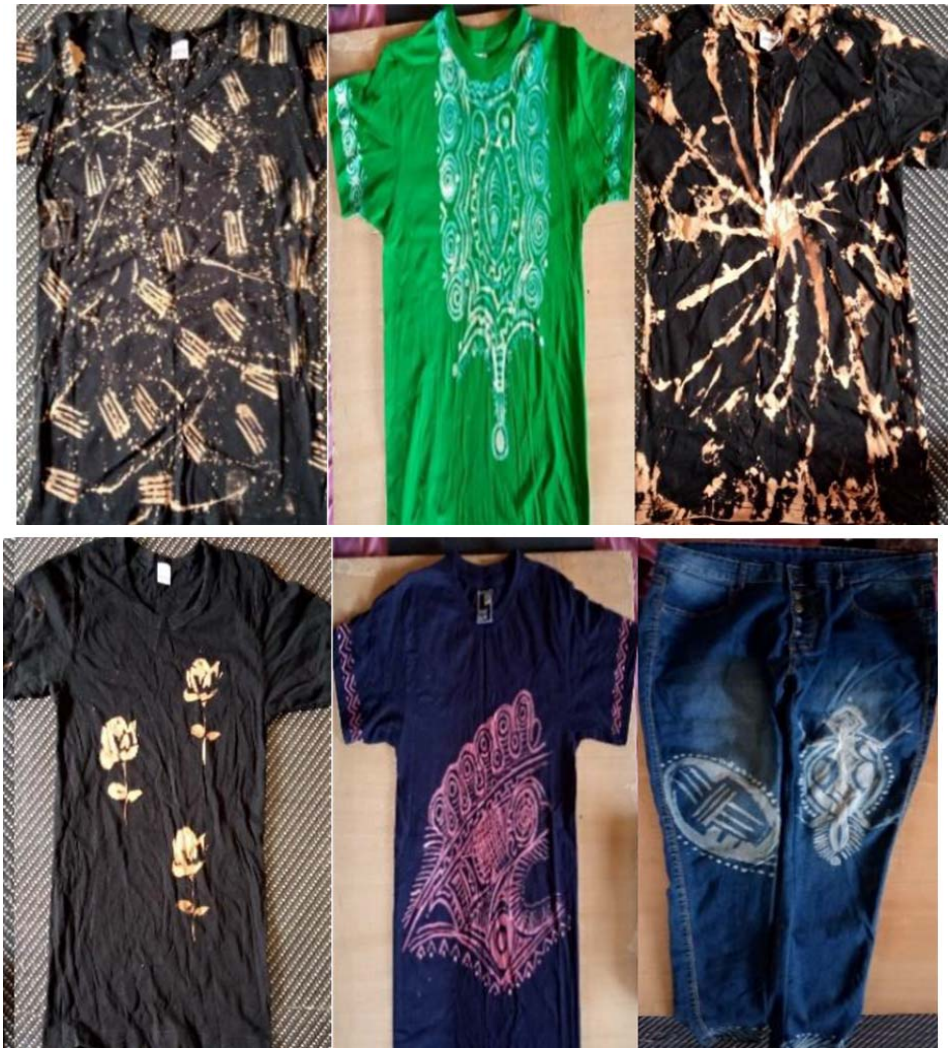

Plate V: Final design of the coloured T-shirts and Denim bleached for contemporary discharge resist technique (kokobilo). Source: Kolawole, C.Y

Validity and Reliability

Validity was enhanced through methodological triangulation involving interviews, observation, studio practice, and visual analysis. Reliability was ensured by clearly defined sampling criteria, standardised studio procedures, and the systematic application of Feldman's analytical method. Photographic documentation and detailed procedural descriptions further support replicability.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the study in relation to the research objectives. Data were generated through studio-based experimentation, direct field observation, and semi-structured interviews with traditional craftsmen, craftswomen, marketers, and buyers within Abeokuta dyeing centres. The results are organised thematically to demonstrate the status of traditional *kokobilo*, its market perception, and the technical and aesthetic outcomes of contemporary discharge resist adaptations. Visual outputs (Plates I–V) are actively analysed to substantiate the findings.

Field data revealed a significant decline in active traditional *kokobilo* practice. From an identified population of 20 craftsmen and 30 craftswomen, only 12 craftsmen and 10 craftswomen were actively engaged in *kokobilo* production during the study period. Interview responses consistently pointed to material scarcity, technical rigidity, and labour intensity as limiting factors. A male craftsman at *Adire* International Market stated: "We hardly do *kokobilo* again because Guinea brocade is difficult to get, and the work takes patience. People now prefer batik and tie-dye because they sell faster."

Similarly, a female craftswoman noted: "*Kokobilo* needs careful handling of bleach. Many younger people don't want to learn it because it spoils easily if you make mistakes."

These statements indicate declining practitioner interest, especially among younger generations, due to the high risk of fabric damage and slow production process.

Direct observation at *Adire* International Market and Itoku dyeing centres showed minimal engagement with *kokobilo* compared to other resist techniques. Plate iii documents limited *kokobilo* workspaces, with only a few tables dedicated to bleaching, contrasted with extensive batik and tie-dye operations. The visual evidence in Plate iii confirms interview claims that *kokobilo* production has become marginalised within communal dyeing spaces, reinforcing its declining status.

Results from marketer interviews further demonstrate *kokobilo*'s reduced market visibility. Six out of ten marketers reported that *kokobilo* fabrics were rarely stocked. One marketer stated: "Customers ask for batik or *adire eleko*. *Kokobilo* is not common anymore, so we don't stock it." This finding establishes a direct relationship between reduced production and weakened commercial circulation, indicating that *kokobilo*'s decline is both technical and market-driven.

Studio experimentation revealed clear contrasts between traditional and contemporary discharge resist techniques. Traditional *kokobilo* samples (Plates i and iii) were produced on fully dyed Guinea brocade, employing linear motifs and controlled bleach application. The results show strong contrast but limited tonal variation and motif complexity. In contrast, contemporary discharge resist outputs (Plates iv and v) utilised diverse fabrics such as dyed cotton T-shirts and denim. These fabrics allowed more flexible bleach penetration, resulting in layered effects, varied textures, and expanded motif possibilities.

Observation of the studio process (Plate iv) shows the use of spraying, stencilling, and freehand drawing in contemporary practice. These methods reduced production constraints and enabled faster execution compared to traditional techniques. The finished textiles were evaluated using Feldman's (1970) four-stage art criticism framework:

Description: Traditional *kokobilo* samples (Plates i, and iii) feature linear, repetitive motifs with high contrast between bleached areas and dark grounds. Contemporary samples (Plates iv and v) display layered motifs, textured surfaces, and varied scale on wearable garments.

Formal Analysis: Traditional works rely heavily on repetition and symmetry, with minimal exploration of balance or rhythm. Contemporary works demonstrate greater formal complexity through contrast, rhythm, and unity achieved by controlled bleach dispersion and fabric texture variation.

Interpretation: Traditional motifs reflect indigenous symbolism and continuity of cultural knowledge. Contemporary designs reinterpret these values into forms suitable for casual wear, youth fashion, and functional apparel.

Judgment: Based on innovation, aesthetic richness, and fashion applicability, contemporary discharge resist outputs were adjudged more effective for modern Nigerian fashion while retaining the visual identity of *kokobilo*.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that traditional *kokobilo* is endangered due to material rigidity, technical risk, and declining market relevance. The reliance on Guinea brocade, coupled with the irreversible nature of bleaching errors, discourages experimentation and youth participation. These findings align with broader craft sustainability debates that link innovation to survival. The comparative results demonstrate that contemporary discharge resist techniques expand *kokobilo's* material base, production speed, and aesthetic scope. The use of modern fabrics and application methods directly addresses the constraints identified in traditional practice.

Buyer interviews further support this claim. One buyer remarked: "I would wear this kind of design because it looks modern but still African." This response indicates that contemporary adaptation enhances cultural relevance without erasing indigenous identity. The transformation of discharge resist techniques into wearable garments such as T-shirts and denim outfits (Plates iv and v) situates *kokobilo* within everyday fashion contexts. This repositioning supports its integration into contemporary Nigerian fashion markets and reinforces the role of studio-based experimentation in revitalising indigenous textile traditions.

The study successfully identified materials, processes, and aesthetic differences between traditional and contemporary *kokobilo*. The systematic comparison demonstrates that innovation is central to the revival of indigenous textile practices. By combining interview evidence, visual analysis, and Feldman's evaluative framework, the findings provide empirical support for contemporary discharge resist techniques as viable tools for sustaining and enhancing modern Nigerian fashion.

Summary of Findings and Contribution to Knowledge

This study set out to comparatively examine traditional *kokobilo* and contemporary discharge resist techniques with the aim of exploring possibilities for the revival and repositioning of *kokobilo* within Nigerian fashion. The findings reveal that *kokobilo*, an indigenous Yoruba discharge resist technique practiced in Abeokuta, is currently endangered due to a combination of technical rigidity, material limitation, reduced practitioner interest, and declining market demand. Traditional *kokobilo* production was found to be heavily dependent on a narrow range of materials, principally dyed Guinea brocade and restricted motif structures, which limits experimentation and responsiveness to changing fashion contexts. These constraints contribute directly to the gradual withdrawal of younger designers and apprentices from the practice, thereby accelerating the risk of extinction.

The comparative analysis further shows that, despite differences in application and output, both traditional and contemporary discharge resist techniques share foundational similarities. In both cases, 100% cotton fabrics are preferred, the discharge process is applied to darker backgrounds, and similar bleaching agents; such as jik, hypo, and hydrogen, are employed. However, the study demonstrates that contemporary adaptations expand the material base to include T-shirts, denim, and plain cotton fabrics, thereby increasing functional versatility and aligning the technique with contemporary apparel forms. This expansion is significant because it reveals that the decline of *kokobilo* is not inherent to the discharge resist principle itself, but rather to the narrowness of its traditional material and design framework.

From a broader fashion and cultural perspective, the findings suggest that the extinction of *kokobilo* is linked not only to technical factors but also to shifts in fashion systems that prioritise adaptability, speed of production, and consumer relevance. Contemporary discharge resist techniques respond to these shifts by enabling faster processes, layered aesthetics, and compatibility with modern clothing types. In this sense, contemporary adaptation functions as a mediating space between tradition and innovation, allowing indigenous knowledge to be translated rather than replaced. However, the study also problematises this relationship by showing that excessive modernisation, if detached from cultural context, may risk aesthetic dilution or loss of symbolic depth traditionally embedded in *kokobilo* motifs.

The application of Feldman's (1970) analytical framework further confirms that contemporary discharge resist outputs demonstrate stronger engagement with design principles such as balance, contrast, rhythm, and unity, while traditional *kokobilo* emphasises continuity, restraint, and cultural familiarity. This contrast underscores the significance of comparison as a methodological tool: it reveals not a hierarchy between old and new, but a spectrum of

possibilities through which revival can occur. Revival, as demonstrated by the findings, is therefore not a return to static tradition but a negotiated process of transformation shaped by material choices, design strategies, and fashion contexts.

In terms of contribution to knowledge, this study provides a systematic visual, material, and procedural comparison between traditional *kokobilo* and contemporary discharge resist techniques, an area that has received limited scholarly attention in Nigerian textile studies. By integrating studio practice with field interviews and structured visual analysis, the research documents *kokobilo* not merely as a historical craft but as a technique with demonstrable adaptive capacity. The study contributes empirical evidence showing how contemporary discharge resist techniques can serve as practical tools for cultural revival while also identifying their limitations, particularly in relation to chemical safety, consistency of outcomes, and the need for contextual sensitivity.

Ultimately, the findings reaffirm the study's central argument: that the revival of *kokobilo* within Nigerian fashion is achievable through informed contemporary adaptation rather than preservation in isolation. The comparison undertaken in this research establishes a framework through which indigenous textile practices can be critically re-engaged, repositioned, and sustained within evolving fashion and cultural systems.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to comparatively examine traditional and contemporary discharge resist techniques (kokobilo) with the aim of determining their capacity to enhance Nigerian fashion. Based on field interviews, studio experimentation, and visual analysis, the findings demonstrate that traditional *kokobilo*, while culturally significant and aesthetically distinctive, is increasingly constrained by limited material availability, technical rigidity, low youth participation, and declining market demand. These factors collectively account for its reduced practice and the risk of gradual disappearance within its indigenous context in Abeokuta.

In contrast, the evidence shows that contemporary discharge resist adaptations significantly expand the functional and aesthetic scope of *kokobilo*. The use of diverse cotton-based fabrics such as T-shirts, denim, and plain textiles, alongside flexible application methods including spraying, stencilling, and freehand drawing, enabled faster production, greater design variation, and improved suitability for modern fashion forms. Visual analysis using Feldman's method further confirmed that contemporary outputs achieved stronger formal balance, textural richness, and fashion relevance while retaining the visual logic of traditional discharge resist aesthetics.

The comparative findings therefore establish that enhancement of Nigerian fashion is achieved not through the preservation of traditional *kokobilo* in its fixed form, but through its informed transformation. Contemporary discharge resist techniques function as a practical mechanism for reviving *kokobilo* by translating its core principles into adaptable, market-responsive fashion expressions. On this basis, the study concludes that contemporary discharge resist practice offers a viable pathway for sustaining *kokobilo* as a living textile tradition, ensuring its continued relevance, visibility, and contribution to Nigerian fashion.

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