

THE SIGNIFICANT OF FASHION ETHICS EDUCATION ON YOUNG FASHION DESIGNERS AND ENTREPRENEURS

Yoanita Kartika Sari Tahalele*

Fashion Product Design and Business Department; Faculty of Industry Creative, Universitas Ciputra
Citraland CBD Boulevard, Made, Surabaya, Jawa Timur 60219, Indonesia
yoanita.tahalele@ciputra.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to examine the relationship and understand the significance of ethical fashion education to young fashion designers and entrepreneurs' value systems and ethical behavior. The research applied a descriptive qualitative method based on focus group discussion using purposive sampling. Data were collected from six young fashion designers and entrepreneurs, who graduated from Fashion Design and Business at Universitas Ciputra Surabaya and had ever attended Fashion Ethics class on their seventh semester. The research result shows that Fashion Ethics education is important and gives a positive impact on participants' ethical values and behavior. Furthermore, some existing personal traits that came from family, as well as previous formal education, significantly influence people's value system and ethical behavior; which cause different impacts and results of the program among participants. Meanwhile, the religious background does not have a significant influence on the result. In conclusion, the Fashion Ethics program has a positive effect on young fashion designers and entrepreneurs' ethical values and behavior.

Keywords: *ethical fashion, fashion ethics education, young fashion designers, young entrepreneurs*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, the fashion industry's preference and the ideal concept has been shifted from fast fashion to slow fashion, which concerns more about sustainability and ethical fashion. Fast fashion, which has been the hot product and core business in fashion, gets many ethical and environmental critics these days (Aspers & Skov, 2006; Joy et al., 2012; Kaikobad et al., 2015). Abrahamson (2011) has argued that the fashion industry is problematic toward both environmental and labor issues, more than any other industry in the world. The use of energy and toxic chemicals, the amount of garment waste, and animal cruelty in the textile and fashion industries contribute to significant environmental damage. In addition to that, consumerism, body shaming, stereotyping, kids exploitation, labor exploitation, and bad social warfare in the industries give many social concerns and consequences.

In general, ethical fashion concerns the

environmental impact affected by the creation and production processes of fashion products and the wellbeing of people involved in the production line (Haug & Busch, 2016). Nowadays, fashion creators, companies, entrepreneurs, and consumers are starting to have a strong focus on the responsibility towards the ethical process of fashion products (Harvey, 2001; Manchiraju & Sadachar, 2014; Moisander & Pesonen, 2002; Pasricha & Kadolph, 2009). Thus, the capacity to create design and practice business with ethical values becomes important to study. It does not only examine in the industry and business sectors but also in the value changed and transferred process.

Fashion designers and entrepreneurs have a significant contribution and role to become a pioneer in the ethical paradigm of fashion. This day, the world requires fashion designers and entrepreneurs who can integrate a holistic approach towards their work and life (Radclyffe-Thomas, 2018). Having an ethical paradigm and behavior is one of the main concerns. However, many young designers and entrepreneurs

do not have a clear understanding of these issues and concepts. Even some are using ethical concepts just for marketing, boosting profit, or following the trend. To make a real change and impact in the fashion industry, designers and entrepreneurs need to have the right understanding and paradigm toward ethical fashion (Armstrong & LeHew, 2013; Faerm, 2012; Fletcher & Williams, 2013). The researcher believes those right paradigms could be thought. Therefore in the research, the researcher would like to analyze whether ethical fashion could be transferred well through education.

Ethics is a complex belief and value system influenced by many different elements such as family, culture, education, religion, peer, social media, and many more. Every human being is born and raised in a family and society with certain moral values and traditions. Most of the value has never been questioned and become a cultural heritage. As a result, people just follow the tradition and follow what people say right and wrong (Sudarminta 2013). That human behavior; right or wrong, good and bad, then become the object of ethical value. Finnis (1983) has discussed that ethics fundamentally define as the value system and moral norm that holds on human behavior as an individual and social person in society. So it is important to have the right ethical value first in order to have the right behavior. Once a person has been exposed and believed in certain ethical values, the researcher believes that they would act accordingly.

Socrates says that every human has the capacity and choices to decide their own value system and act upon what they believe. However, to create a better society, people need to have the right values and beliefs, understand right or wrong, and behave ethically. One effective way to pass and convey the right value system is through education (Williams, 2016). That is why ethics is necessary as a course in any educational system because it provides a better value system and creates a better life for the students (Gardelli, Alerby, & Persson, 2014; Gülcan, 2015). Those findings support the research's notion, where it is to discover the significance of ethical education towards its participants.

Over the decades, education is proven to be a way to improve humankind to make a better society (Lee & Choy, 2014). Plato, the founder of idealism, believes that the purpose of education is to develop human abilities on wisdom, courage, self-control, and justice (Carr, 2004). Meanwhile, Aristotle, the father of realism, has claimed that education aims to develop the body, mind, and soul (Carr, 2004; Noddings, 2012). So, in a general sense, education is a way to develop human civilization, morality, personality, culture, and intellect and maximize its potential for a better society. To achieve those, education not only includes intellectuals and knowledges, but also values, morality, and ethics.

The researcher believes that fashion ethical education will not create a perfect human being. However, it can be a start to change people's perspective, create a smarter and more ethical fashion

people. It helps to make young fashion designers and entrepreneurs understand, make appropriate choices or decisions on their creations and businesses, and be able to engage and contribute the ethical concepts into practice (Fletcher & Williams, 2013; Landgren & Pasricha, 2011).

At the moment, the research about fashion ethics is focusing more on the fashion industry practice, consumer, and its environment (Carey & Cervellon, 2014; Jung & Jin, 2016; Manchiraju & Sadachar, 2014; Shen et al., 2012). Inadequately, the studies are connected to education and its impact on shaping people's beliefs and behavior. It creates a gap in the industry as a certain question can not be answered. Therefore, the researcher is interested in filling the gap and studying the relationship and the significance of ethical fashion education on young fashion designers and entrepreneurs.

The research focuses on the result of ethical education in shaping young designers' or entrepreneurs' ethical value and behavior. The result of the program becomes the main interest of the research. Ethical education has never been a priority in previous years, so the researcher would like to understand whether this program is important and significant to young fashion designers and entrepreneurs. By analyzing deeper, the researcher also would like to examine the result differences varied among individuals. The participants could be affected by the level of knowing, understanding, or performing ethical value as their paradigm. Those differences are mostly influenced by their individual background and previous traits.

METHODS

The research aims to find the significance and impact of fashion ethics education among young fashion designers and entrepreneurs. The research purposes to answer how fashion ethics education conveys and carries it out by the participants up until they become fashion designers and entrepreneurs, how the result of the program differs among participants, and what causes those differences. To achieve a comprehensive result and able to answer those questions, the research uses descriptive qualitative research.

As an attempt to interpret the significance of the program, the researcher begins with assumptions and theoretical framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Examination toward the theory is needed using observation, documentation, and focus group discussion with purposive targeted sampling as a data collection method. Collective data collection conducts in a natural setting to specific people and places under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data are collected from six former fashion design and business students at Universitas Ciputra, Surabaya, who had attended the fashion ethics program and now become fashion designers and entrepreneurs. They are randomly picked from different backgrounds, cultures, religions, and previous education. It aims to report and analyze

the finding from the participants, display description and interpretation of the problem, and present its contribution to the literature and change (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A person's background and previous personal traits have a considerable influence in shaping their value. The researcher would like to study more specific individual backgrounds and personal traits, which are family values, religious beliefs, and former educational background. The researcher believes that personal backgrounds and traits have an important role in influencing and determining this program's outcome among participants. Thus, those specific individual's backgrounds are asked in the research to see whether it makes any differences in the program's outcome.

The fashion ethics program for fashion design and business students at Universitas Ciputra began in August 2017. It is a relatively new program added because of the necessity to make the Fashion students able to internalize and practice ethical values as young designers and entrepreneurs. The students have to take a fashion ethics class on their third year in the seventh semester for one semester (16 weeks). The students learn the theoretical concept and application of ethics in general and professional ethics in a specific setting as fashion designers and entrepreneurs. The goal of

this program is that the students able to internalize the concept of ethical fashion in developing creative fashion designs, products, and businesses.

Data are collected from young designers and entrepreneurs who have joined the fashion ethics program on September-December 2018. Six random participants are gathered in a focus group discussion. They are questioned about three main subjects; (1) The participant's understanding about ethics and ethical fashion before attending the fashion ethics program; (2) their understanding and the impact of fashion ethics education on their value and behavior as a professional; (3) their personal background, traits, value system prior to the program, as well as its changes and the effect of the program. They all have to answer and elaborate those three questions in turns, then discuss it with each other. The researcher analyzes participants' answers using a descriptive qualitative approach. It is necessary to conduct so that the program's significance, as well as the reason behind participants' points of view and behavior, could be analyzed and justified. This is essential to understand the effects, meanings, and possibilities of improvement on an ethical fashion education program. The focus group discussion questions can be seen in Table 1, while Table 2 shows the participants' backgrounds.

Table 1 Focus Group Discussion Questions

Topic	Question
The significant of ethical fashion education on young fashion designers and entrepreneurs' way of thinking, beliefs, and choices of action.	What do you know about ethics and fashion ethics before the program?
	What do you think about ethics and fashion ethics after joining the program?
	What is the effect of fashion ethics program to you? Do you understand the concept and value? Do you practice the ethical value as a professional? Explain!
	Before the program, who teach you about ethical value, is it your family, religion or school? What value do they teach you?
	Are your existing values in line with the value you were taught in the program? Do you agree or disagree? How does it affect you?

Table 2 Focus Group Discussion Participants

No	Name	Age	Job	Religion	Senior High School
1.	Elvira Rosalina	22	Fashion Designer & Entrepreneur	Catholic	St. Louis I
2.	Valencya Octory	23	Fashion Designer /Finance	Christian	Gloria I
3.	Natashia Poo	22	Fashion Designer/Project Manager	Catholic	Mater Amanilis
4.	Thalia Gracelynn	22	5 th Year Fashion Design Student	Christian	Gloria I
5.	Florencia	22	Fashion Designer/Tutor	Christian	YPPI I
6.	Maureen Amelia	21	Fashion Designer/Make-Up Artist	Christian	Gloria I

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Some findings have been identified that Fashion ethics program contributed to a positive impact on the young designers and entrepreneurs. However, looking closely toward the interviews, the participants have a different comprehension stage among one another. Some only understand the importance of ethical value but do not really implement it, while others perform it in their professional life. The differences are caused by their different backgrounds, personal traits, and value system they already believe in. Family and prior education background, including its culture and value they have learned from those agents, contribute a more significant effect on their comprehension of the program rather than the religious background.

First, before the program, all participants know about the ethical value in general. However, they do not know in detail and specific about the fashion industry's ethical value as an individual and as a professional.

"Before Fashion ethics class, I only knew ethical value in general. I didn't know about ethical value in detail. Moreover, I didn't know about ethical profession in fashion industry. I didn't realize how important it is in the work field." (Fashion Designer/Finance, 23, female)

"From junior high school and senior high school, we only know ethics in general; we have no specific idea about right or wrong. But now we know!" (5th Year Fashion Design Student, 22, female and Fashion Designer/Make-up Artist, 21, female)

"No one ever thought me about ethics and professional ethics in detail, I just know some basic value that my parent and school taught me." (Fashion Designer/Tutor, 22, female)

The lack of knowledge and understanding about ethics is in line with the previous study by Sudarminta (2013), saying that most human values come from family and society where they are born and lived. People follow those values like tradition and cultural heritage. So most of the people do not solely understand what is right and wrong, good or bad. Their behavior and judgement often come from their cultural values and norms. They carry through those values until they are told and learned otherwise. Accordingly, they may not clearly understand the ethical philosophy and value behind ethical fashion unless they are informed and thought properly. That is why fashion ethics education is important in order to transfer the right ethical values and create an ethical young designer and entrepreneur.

Second, after all participants join fashion ethics education, they learn, understand, and believe the importance of ethics as a professional. Furthermore, some of the participants practice those ethical value as a fashion designer and entrepreneur.

"After the program, I understand the importance of ethics and professional ethics. Now, as I work as an employee, I apply it in my workplace." (Fashion Designer/Finance, 23, female)

"I am more professional in my workplace now. I know what is right and what is wrong. For example, as a designer, I can't copy other designers' work, I know how to treat and deal with my staff." (Fashion Designer and Entrepreneur, 22, female)

"As a fashion designer, I think it is important to join a fashion ethics class. I understand the environmental issue, and being ethical as a designer, having environmental friendly designs and products." (Fashion Designer/Tutor, 22, female)

"I know how to be a good and ethical fashion designer and entrepreneur, be a good leader, behave professionally, and deal with my staff and people." (Fashion Designer/Project Manager, 22, female)

"The fashion ethics program enlightens me! I practice most value I learned in the program." (Fashion Designer/Make-Up Artist, 21, female)

Education is an important factor. Carr (2004) believes that education is a way to develop human civilization, morality, personality, and intellectual and maximizes human potentials for a better society. So in order to maximize all potentials and values, including ethical value, it is necessary to incorporate all those in any educational program. Besides skills and knowledge, the right values and attitudes could provide a better understanding and better quality of life to the students (Gardelli, Alerby, & Persson, 2014; Gülcan, 2015). The research shows that previous studies have an equivalent hypothesis with the research finding and data analysis. It shows that participants who join the program understand clearly about ethical fashion and act accordingly. Therefore, fashion ethics education is essential and significant in building young fashion designers' and entrepreneurs' ethical values and paradigms.

Third, after analyzing the participants' backgrounds and family traits, certain existing values come from family and former formal education that shows a significant affect on the result of fashion ethical education. Existing values that are in line with the values taught in the program show a more positive effect on participants rather than values that are not parallel.

"My parent taught me some values in life, such as honesty, work hard, and how to deal with people. Also, since high school, I got a lot of ethical values in general, such as being on time, discipline, and honesty. So I directly can relate with the program and belief that being ethical is

important. Now, as I work as a fashion designer, I apply those as a professional, responsible, work hard, discipline, and honest.” (Fashion Designer/Make-up Artist, 21, female)

“Before joining the ethical program, I know ethics in general from my parent. They taught me how to solve problems smartly without harming other people. It is in line with what the program taught me, so I believe it is the right thing to do.” (Fashion Designer and Entrepreneur, 22, female)

“I didn’t really know right or wrong from my previous education, and I am not really a religious person. My mom is the one who told me that we had to treat people right, but if they harmed us, we should not ignore it and treat them accordingly. After the ethics program, I learned a more specific and great deal of ethical values. I understand those values; however I still agree with what my mom taught me.” (Fashion Designer/Project Manager, 22, female)

“Before this program, I learned from my parents to treat our staff harshly. However, from the fashion ethics program, I learned to treat people well and fair. I think it is the right way to behave, to treat people well.” (Fashion Designer/Tutor, 22, female)

Before the program, the participants know slightly about ethics in general from family and former education. Those previous values affect their understanding and their acceptant toward the program. The result shows that family and previous formal education have a significant influence in shaping human values. This finding is in line with Sudarminta’s idea (2013), stating that every human being is born and raised in a family and society with certain moral values and traditions that the latter is adopted as their personal values.

All participants who previously learn identical values from their family and former education instantly understand and apply those ethical values in the program into their behavior in the professional world. However, those who learn different values from their family do not necessarily agree and apply the new values they have learned from the fashion ethics program into their everyday practice. One participant has said that she understands the ethical value she gets in the program is good; however, she learns and believes slightly different value comes from her parents. She does not feel the necessity to apply it in the professional world.

The data shows that personal background and previous personal beliefs play a significant role in determining the program’s result. Participants do not necessarily change their values and behaviors in just an instant. They take all the lesson, process, and behave according to what they believe is right. If it is contradicted with their previous values, most

certainly, they do not take the new values straight away. Meanwhile, those who have a parallel value set will straight away take the ideas and behave accordingly.

CONCLUSIONS

The research examines the various effects of fashion ethics programs on young fashion designers and entrepreneurs. It finds that the program has affected participants in various ways. The participants understand, believe, and some even exercise ethical value into their professional behavior. The research has proven that fashion ethics education is important to produce ethical young designers and entrepreneurs. Thus, the researcher believes that fashion ethics education is very important and has some significant roles and impacts developing more ethical young designers and entrepreneurs.

Positive effects are found in the research, even though each participant is affected differently. The different effects are produced due to different backgrounds that each participant has. Those backgrounds, such as family and previous education, have shaped their existing ethical values. Those participants, who have similar or identical existing values, would instantly believe and practice those ethical values in the program. However, those whom existing value are different, eventually understand and believe that it is the right thing to do, but not necessarily acted or behaved accordingly.

The research contributes to give a firm confirmation that ethics education is important and necessary to include in any college and university program. Particularly, to create a better and more ethical fashion people, it is necessary to include ethics education in Fashion Design and Business Program. Furthermore, the program’s various effects caused by participants’ background, personal traits, and values could be anticipated by putting emphasis and a more in-depth understanding of the basic and fundamental value of ethics to disrupt the existing value system.

The different effects of the fashion ethics program can be explored more in the future. To get a profound result of the research, qualitative research methods should later expand with extended sampling and various methods, such as in-depth interviews. Furthermore, to achieve a deeper understanding of the fashion ethics program’s effect and effectiveness, research objects will be expanded to a more significant number of sampling and participants. In addition, research subjects should also include other variables such as comparison with students who do not join the program, comparison of participants from different times joining the program, or comparison with ethics program from other departments.

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