An Exploratory Study on Support Systems Available in Ghana for Fashion Skill Acquisition by the Visually Impaired

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Abstract

This study explored the views of respondents on systems available in Ghanaian institutions that support the acquisition of fashion skills by the visually impaired. The study was premised on the fact that the availability of these systems are not known to redirect and facilitate the skill development of the visually impaired in fashion. Specifically, the study assessed the experiences of visually impaired individuals concerning systems available to enable them to enroll and acquire fashion-related skills. The case study research design was adopted to select and report data qualitatively. Interview and Focus Group Discussion were used to collect data from twenty-seven visually impaired students and six Fashion and Special Education experts. The respondents were reached through the adoption of purposive, convenience and snowball sampling techniques. With the aid of Nvivo software version 14, thematic analysis

was carried out and presented as findings in this study. The study revealed that the Ghanaian educational system struggles to provide systems supportive for training the visually impaired with fashion skills. It was recommended that the government and institutions that provide aids for visually impaired education, implement the necessary support systems to train the visually impaired with fashion skills in order to develop and empower their creative abilities in fashion.

1. **Introduction**

Visual impairment, innate to human variability, has emerged as a significant disability category and a global societal concern (Stevens et al., 2013). Silva et al. (2014) specifically directed the concerns to education and the world of work (workplace) to support this emerging issue. Despite the prevalence of the visually impaired, society is still ill-prepared to meet the demands of those with visual impairments, including those related to accessibility, equity, employment opportunities and participation in sociopolitical life (Abdullahi, 2023). Lack of vision does not hinder intellectual or cognitive capacities. The fact that some individuals may be visually impaired does not preclude them from successful learning or other accomplishments.

Ghana is committed to enhancing the rights and well-being of people with disabilities (Karr et al. 2022) as these are recognized in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana article 12, 13 and 14. The provisions in the 1992 constitution of Ghana on human rights align with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). In addition to other human rights, the UNCRPD protects "the right of persons with disabilities to education" (Vashistha et al., 2014 cited the Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities, nd). Vashistha et al. (2014) further indicated that one hundred and fifty-eight (158) countries have ratified this treaty, yet there are currently few accessible educational resources for people with visual impairments in developing countries. Worlanyo (2012) emphasized the need to invest more resources in the visually impaired pupils who are the least advantaged in society to balance the scale that always favours the advantaged in society. Furthermore, the constitution of Ghana acknowledges the challenges people with disabilities face and stressed on the need for social and financial support (Grischow & Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2021).

Furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2019 reported that 1.3 billion individuals worldwide suffer from some vision impairment, and the majority are over 50 (WHO, 2019). While supporting inclusion as a global agenda item as crucial, each nation must be responsible for its growth and execution (Gyimah et al., 2009). To ensure such inclusion, visually impaired individuals need to receive the necessary resources and assistance to overcome any obstacles to their full inclusion (Terzi, 2010). If a person with visual impairments is appropriately supported on time, it can be helpful (van Munster et al., 2021), but if the support is not received on time, it can be a barrier to progression (Redd et al., 2023). Through leveraging their remaining natural senses, people with visual impairments may be able to access information that would often be obtained by vision.

The requirements of people with disabilities are not fully considered in Ghana's framework for social and economic development (Opoku et al., 2019). This situation extends into the fashion industry. Furthermore, the lack of a comprehensive policy on disabilities and inclusive education, the unwillingness to commit adequate resources, and the current lack of effective coordination between departments and agencies' efforts to address the issues cited collectively pose serious threats to any real advancement promoting successful inclusive opportunities or outcomes for individuals with visual impairment (Botts & Owusu, 2013).

The fashion industry is known for its visual-centric nature, posing challenges for visually impaired individuals to participate and pursue their passion within this field. Despite the inherent obstacles, there is a growing recognition of the potential of visually impaired individuals to contribute to the fashion industry through their unique skills, creativity, and innovative approaches. The exposure of the visually impaired to fashion-related skills would greatly benefit them as they study and apply basic methodologies, thus providing doors for the employment of people with visual impairments. Niveathita and Vinita (2021) believe individuals with visual impairments can learn about colour variations in addition to learning that it is a quality of things or scenes that differs from other sensory attributes.

Including the visually handicapped in learning, particularly in fields that use highly visual approaches like the fashion industries, presents the most significant challenge. These challenges hinder the full participation and integration of visually impaired individuals into the fashion industry. There is also relatively

limited study on the variables that have driven the creation of social networks and organizational frameworks that help visually impaired students (Johnson, 2010), particularly in enrolling in the fashion industry. Therefore, there is a need to identify and evaluate the systems available to address these barriers and promote inclusive education and training opportunities for visually impaired individuals in the realm of fashion. Hence, this research aims to assess existing systems that have been instituted in Ghanaian schools that support the provision of fashion skills for visually impaired students.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Visual Impairment in Today's World

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act defines visual impairment as any ailment that, despite treatment, has a negative impact on a person's academic performance (Dillard, 2023). Of the five senses that people use on a daily basis, sight is one of the most important. The lack of this sense affects so many aspects of the lives of visually impaired including social interactions and mobility and transportation issues (Levinson, 2004). In recent times, more light is being shed on the accessibility and availability of services and technologies for visually impaired people in developing countries (Oliveira et al., 2023).

In a developing country like Ghana where there is growing urbanization, it is essential to introduce these kind of technologies to aid in improving the lives of individuals with visual impairment (Budenz et al., 2013). This will go a long way in ensuring that all individuals are on track to realizing their right to an improved life. However, when considering the unique characteristics of visually impaired persons in developing nations, the scarcity and high cost of smart and inexpensive products and technologies significantly affect how visually impaired people are able to access them (Oliveira et al., 2023). Users in underdeveloped nations should be especially concerned about this problem since it impacts how easily persons with disabilities may get assistive devices due to their limited purchasing power (Pal et al., 2017). Consequently, to make assistive technologies more accessible, the social and economic variables of end users must be taken into account (Oliveira et al., 2023).

2.2   Visual Impairment and the Fashion Industry

Clothing and fashion are important means of communication that are integral to every lifestyle and culture (Burton et al., 2012). Fashion is largely a visual language. However, the visual language of fashion creates significant obstacles

(Williams et al., 2015). Both factual information (such colour and size) and subjective information are often difficult for visual impaired individuals to get (such as what constitutes a coordinated outfit). As a result, people with vision impairments are at a great disadvantage since they cannot determine what comprises the norms and extremes of other people's fashion subtleties, although almost everyone they come into contact with can do (Burton et al., 2012). In most cases, individuals with visual impairments, have need of the help of sighted friends or even total strangers, and in certain situations they restrict their wardrobes to make dressing easier (Williams et al., 2015). Williams et al. (2015) further indicated that intelligent clothing tag solutions may be able to assist vision-impaired people in overcoming issues with clothing choosing.

2.3 Supportive Systems for Visually Impaired Individuals

People with disabilities now have more independence and autonomy when doing daily duties thanks to assistive technology, especially those who are visually impaired (Oliveira et al., 2023). These have made it possible for people who are blind or visually impaired to live more productive and pleasant lives (Tillery, 2017). Even though there are many blind persons in the world, more accessible tools and resources are required to assist everyday activities at home. Various research teams are still looking towards integrated accessible resources to provide blind people freedom (Oliveira et al., 2023). Text-to-speech software turns digital material into audio and is used in talking systems like word processors or as part of imported text that is read out (Tillery, 2017). Voice commands are also now a feature of commercial smart home systems like Alexa, Echo, and Google Assistant, which assists the visually impaired (Oliveira et al., 2023). Furthermore, assistive technologies for the blind are available for television, print media, the internet, video games, and virtual reality (Tillery, 2017).

Given that education has the potential to improve a person's opportunities for the future, it is essential to ensure that critical attention to the education of people with visual impairment (Terzi, 2010). It is therefore important that inclusive education be adopted. As the name suggests, inclusive education is a kind of learning that involves all societal groups, with a focus on marginalized, minority, and disabled populations (Worlanyo, 2012). Worlanyo further indicated that inclusive education attempts to restore the voices of handicapped people and impaired children into spaces where they have historically been excluded (such as the fashion industry). Baria (2023) opined that inclusivity relates to accepting all students irrespective of their characteristics that place them at disadvantage

and encouraging their active and complete involvement in society. This implies that any form of disability, should not lead to exclusion.

It is worthy of note that although Bedi and Lafrance (2023) admitted there are still barriers that bother on inclusive education, this should not prevent individuals with impairments from realizing their potentials. Worlanyo (2012) earlier emphasized that it is important that teachers are sufficiently equipped with knowledge and skills through workshops and in-service training for inclusive education programmes, as well as policy directives and political will towards inclusive education. To avoid the failure of inclusion policies due to policy being imposed on teachers, teachers must actively participate in the process of designing and implementing inclusive education.

Similarly, it is impossible to overstate the value of educational resources. If there are teaching and learning resources available, most kids learn effectively. Both instructors and students can operate successfully and efficiently in the teaching and learning environment if there are enough resources available (Botts & Owusu, 2013). To make teaching and learning easier, it is crucial for the government and non-governmental organizations to appropriately support education through the purchase of teaching and learning resources (Gyimah et al., 2009). The possibility that existing levels of prejudice may be lessened, if not totally eradicated, is increased by these collaborative efforts on behalf of parents and children with impairments (Botts & Owusu, 2013). Sensitization through education on a regular basis is therefore influential to accomplish this goal of inclusivity (Worlanyo, 2012).

3. Materials and Methods

This study adopted the qualitative research approach with a case study design. Qualitative research focuses on exploring complex social realities (Lahiri, 2023) to sufficiently understand beliefs and perceptions people hold about phenomena (Alam, 2021; Greckhamer & Cilesiz, 2022). Research designs that utilize case studies are useful for in-depth investigations into specific phenomena within real-life (Khan, 2019). The population for the study comprised visually impaired students, Fashion Lecturers and Special Education Lecturers from University of Education, Winneba (UEW) and University of Cape Coast (UCC), Ghana. A total of one hundred and ninety-eight (198) respondents were involved in this study and these formed the population for the study. Specifically, one hundred and sixty-two (162) were visually impaired students whilst thirty-six (36) were experts Fashion/Clothing and Special Education from UEW and UCC. These tertiary

institutions were considered based on that fact that they lead with the training visually impaired students in Ghana. Additionally, they offer Fashion related courses in their programmes, thereby resorting to the purposive sampling technique. The convenience sampling was employed to reach out to twenty-one (21) visually impaired students from UEW whilst six (6) other visually impaired students drawn from UCC were reached via snowball sampling techniques. This was due to lack of official access to reaching the six respondents. Four (4) Fashion Lecturers (2 from UEW and 2 from UCC), two (2) Special Education Lecturers from UEW were conveniently reached by the researchers. In all, thirty-three (33) respondents were involved in this study. A self-designed interview guides were used to retrieve data from selected respondents through one on one interview for the Lecturers and Focus Group Discussion (five Groups) for the visually impaired. Data were collected through audio recording which were transferred to Otter.ai software to aid data transcription. Data transcribed was edited and ran in Nvivo software version 14 for further analysis. The results were thematically analysed, presented in quotes that line with each theme and these were discussed in line with literature.

4. Presentation of Results

A series of significant themes emerged from this study. These themes include diverse aspects of the support systems, including the availability of resource assistants, the absence of support systems, the absence of a specialised school for fashion education for visually impaired students, the preparedness of Ghanaian Fashion educational institutions to absorb visually impaired, the lack of fashion-related content in rehabilitation training, the broad scope of the school curriculum, the inadequate provision of practical skill training, the utilisation of technological aids and the availability of computer-based applications. These themes and sub-themes were graphically represented in Figure 1, generated through Nvivo map analysis.
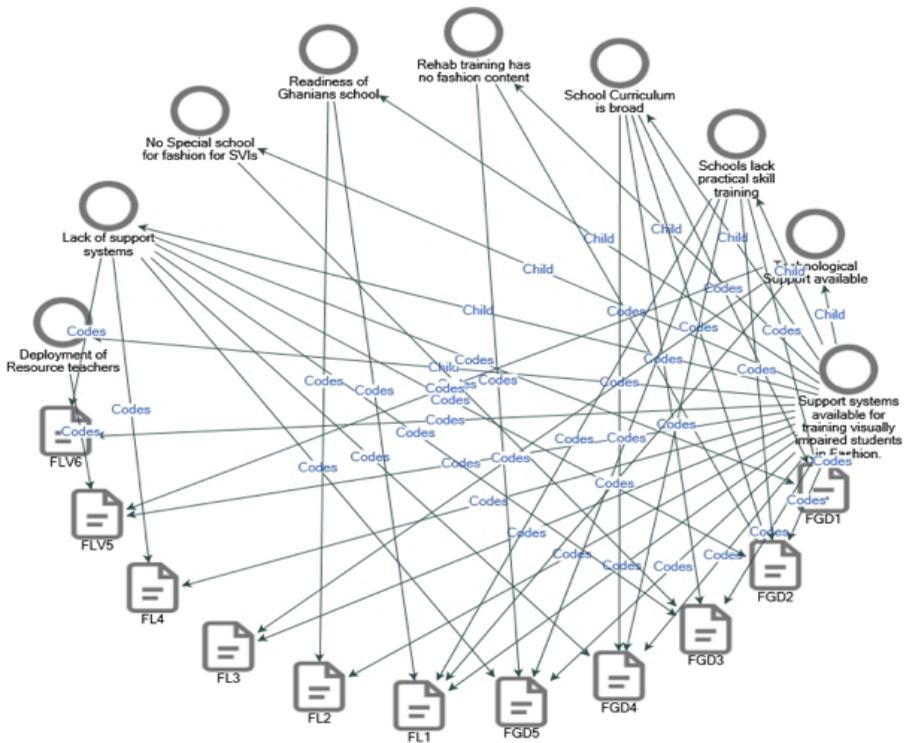
Figure 1: Support systems available for training visually impaired students in Fashion

Source: Field work, 2023

Figure 1 illustrates seven sub-themes stemming from the significant support systems available for training visually impaired students in Fashion. The figure's findings reveal that the sub-themes have been extracted from a total of eleven transcripts, specifically FLV 6, FLV 5, FL4, FL3, FL2, FL1, FGD5, FGD 4, FGD 3, FGD 2, FGD 2 and FGD1 "stands for Focus Group, while "FL" and "FLV" respectively denote individual interviews conducted with students with visual impairments and lecturers. These sub-themes are accompanied by the sources from which they have been derived. The sub-themes are expounded upon with supporting quotes. These quotes serve to provide additional context and insight into each sub-theme. By incorporating these quotes, the figure offers a comprehensive understanding of students with visual impairments' experience with reference to support systems available in pursuing fashion training. The themes are presented and discussed as follows.

4.1 Lack of Support System

The statements provided by respondents in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) shed light on the support systems available for visually impaired individuals seeking to acquire skills in fashion in Ghana. Their collective voice highlights a significant lack of support systems within the education system. These visually impaired students expressed their concerns on the absence of tailored programmes and practical experiences in fashion education for students with visual impairments. The absence of specialised schools or dedicated training for visually impaired fashion enthusiasts appears to be another significant concern. The VI respondents felt they are excluded from mainstream for providing Fashion education, with limited access to resources and materials necessary for skill development especially in fashion. The Lecturers also acknowledged the deficiencies in the regular educational system, admitting that limited resources and a lack of understanding contribute to the exclusion of visually impaired students from fashion education. Special schools are recognized as having some support systems in place, but their reach remains limited to fashion education.

Respondents made the following comments about their plight:

> There are no support systems for us as visually impaired to enable us acquired skills in fashion. For that I am not aware. **(FGD 1)**

> I don't think the systems available in Ghana here to support the visually impaired acquire skills in Fashion. At the JHS sewing was taught without any practical experience, so I will say there are no specific systems to help the visually impaired enroll into fashion related fields. **(FGD 2)**

> There are no support systems for us. Such systems are not readily available unless you go through Rehab and even there, I don't know if they have training in these fashion related skills for the visually impaired. **(FGD 3)**

> I don't know if there are any form of system to help the visually impaired enroll into fashion related fields. There are no proper structures or systems to allow us enroll into fashion programmes. It is only at the rehab centers that provide some form of training but even that is not in line with fashion things. (**FGD 3)**

> *The systems are not working as we expected. Materials for training are not available. There are no functional systems at both pre-tertiary and tertiary. We are always left out because the teachers think because we cannot see we cannot do any practical work.* (**FGD 5**)

A Lecturer admitted that in the regular schools such support systems are not available:

> *I think we haven't made provisions for them to be honest and for ones I think that is why they also have the special schools because they assume those things have been reserved for them. But for the regular systems we don't have the resources to help them.* **(FLV 4)**

Another Lecturer added that the system in the regular schools is not accommodating to factor in fashion skills acquisition for students with visual impairments (SVI), Special schools may have such support systems but she is not fully informed about that.

> *The systems are not accommodating. In the first place they seem not to understand them and believe that they can do something useful so they don't pay attention at helping them. Also, those who want to pay attention too, are confused at what strategies or approaches to use to educate them. But I will say that most of these individuals (VI) are educated in the special schools and in the special schools I think they are given these training and so if the context goes to the special schools then I will say that they system is helping them. I don't teach in a special school so I can't say if they do fashion there or not but I think place will be the best place to teach such skills.* **(FLV 2)**

4.2 Lack of Special Schools for Fashion for Visually Impaired Students
The respondents interviewed pointed out that no special schools in Ghana provide training in fashion-related skills for visually impaired students. Since, 'education for all' is the main objective of inclusive education (Kalyanpur, 2011), the absence of specialised education in the field of fashion poses a significant barrier for visually impaired individuals who may be interested in pursuing careers in this industry. According to the respondents interviewed, the schools for training visually impaired in Ghana primarily prioritise academic education

over practical skills like fashion design. This can result from the perception that academic education is more critical for visually impaired students in providing them with employable skills and be independent in managing their lives without being assisted. This could be one reason for the need for practical fashion training. Bornman and Louw (2021) believed that if the person with a visual impairment suitably receives appropriate support at an appropriate time, it can be a barrier if the necessary support is not timely provided.

Additionally, students may have no interest in learning fashion-related skills, which suggests that schools might need more resources to teach them. Notably, the absence of interest may stem from a lack of exposure to or knowledge of the prospects available in the fashion sector. Here are some testimonies shared by the respondents:

> There are no Special schools in Ghana that train visually impaired on the skills you mentioned in fashion. Although we have schools for the blind, they do not teach fashion related stuffs. **(FGD 3)**

> One of the problems we have is that, the special school do not teach much of practical skills like making floral arrangements, bouquet or any related to fashion. Although, I did not ask why but I think it could be because we students do not show interest in acquiring such skills and also because the schools do not have the resources to teach such skills, yeah. **(FDG 2)**

4.3 Lack of Fashion Content-Based Training for VI at Rehab Training Centers

The statements provided by respondents in the interviews suggest that there is a lack of training and education related to fashion within rehabilitation centers, particularly for individuals with visual impairments. The responses from respondents in the focus group discussions indicate that training in fashion-related skills is not readily available traditionally or regularly in schools. It appears that the rehabilitation centers primarily provide hands-on training in skills such as soap making and weaving of baskets but do not include fashion skills.

The respondents specifically mention that fashion-related training is not included in rehabilitation programmes. This raises questions about inclusivity and accessibility. It is essential to ensure that individuals with visual impairments are not excluded from opportunities in the fashion industry.

These are some claims made by respondents:

Such trainings are not readily available in the regular fashion school or even regular

schools unless you go through Rehabilitation centers and even there, I don't know if they have training in these fashion related skills for the visually impaired. **(FGD 2)**

I have been to rehab center before. They offer a lot of hands-on training for people with disabilities in the Ghana but the Rehab training does not cover fashion related field especially for people with visually impairment. **(FGD 3)**

At the Rehab, I was given training in soap making and weaving of baskets which was not yielding much market so I stopped. With fashion, no, there was no training given. **(FGD 5)**

4.4 Availability of Resource Assistants

Respondents pointed out the lack of resources and specialised facilitators for students with visual impairments in schools. The respondents shared their personal experience, explaining that teachers who typically handle sighted students are expected to guide visually impaired students as well. This situation poses challenges, as teachers may not have the necessary knowledge or skills to effectively support students with visual impairments in acquiring practical skills in fashion. Additionally, the respondent mentioned that they were placed in a General Art programme in the Senior High Schools where they focused on reading courses, indicating a need for opportunities for them to develop practical skills like fashion.

In contrast, some other respondents voiced that there are support systems for students with visual impairments, primarily centred around the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and braille. These support systems typically involve Resource Assistants and Special Education Coordinators in Basic Schools, who help students by providing additional assistance. The interviewees mentioned that they are still determining the existence of specialised resources for fashion education and that students may have been working on a subject called Basic Design and Technology, which may or may not be directly related to fashion.

This is captured in the quotes respondents shared:

> *We were not having facilitators so the same teacher who handled the sighted take us through. Teachers could not take me through any form of practical skills at the JHS. At the SHS 1 was placed in General Art where I read reading courses.* **(FL 4)**

In contrast, one Lecturer added that there supports system available for students with visual impairments but it is not related to fashion skills acquisition. This claimed is captured as:

> *So what happen is that, I'm not too sure about Fashion but the support systems we have as a country for individuals who are VI is that in the Basic Schools we have what we call Resource Teachers there who support them with the use of ICT, use of braille so that the teacher who may not necessarily know well will be able to teach them with the support of an itinerant teacher or a Resource Person. And so, support systems are there just that I just don't know what is specifically there for Fashion. They may have been doing a subject called Basic design and technology and I don't know if that forms part of Fashion. So, they use Resource Teachers and Special Education Coordinators who are there to help.* **(FLV 5)**

4.5 Lack of Technological Support in Fashion

Respondents in the study highlighted the gap in available technology to assist visually impaired individuals in fashion skills acquisition. They expressed their concern about the insufficient technological support. Respondents believed that there are not enough technologies available to support students with visual impairments develop their fashion skills.

> *I don't think we have enough technologies available to support the visually impaired in fashion skills acquisition.* **(FL 1)**

Respondent FL 3 echoes this sentiment by stating that there are currently no technologies available to help visually impaired students in this context.

> *Currently as we speak there are no technologies available to help students with visual Impairments.* **(FL 3)**

Another respondent (FLV 5), introduces the concept of assistive technology as a potential solution. They mention the existence of various assistive technologies, such as Google Talk Back, the Cash Reader app, and applications like Jawl. These tools are designed to aid visually impaired individuals in different aspects of their lives.

> The use of assistive technology is not in fashion now. Assistive technology is very broad. We have the computer-based and a lot of applications like Google Talk Back, the Cash Reader is a free App. They can use the computer. Whatever they type on the computer the software will say it so they don't need to see before they will be able to type. Apps like Jawl is also one of the software used by the VI and it helps them use the computer. The long cane helps them move around the environment to locate where they are going to. For fashion areas that will be purely computer based like computer navigations and Cash Reader. The computer navigation can help them find information for themselves, I think we need such technological devices specifically designed to help them acquire skills in fashion. **(FLV 5)**

4.6 Readiness of Ghanaian Fashion Schools to Absorb Visually Impaired
Respondents were asked about their views on the readiness of Ghanaian schools to absorb students with visual impairments in the fashion skills programme. Based on the views made by the respondents, it is clear that there are concerns and skepticism about the ability of schools, particularly secondary schools, to include visually impaired students in such programmes effectively. The respondents expressed several reasons for their doubts: They mentioned that the schools are already facing challenges with their existing facilities and resources. These challenges are not limited to visually impaired students but extend to students with sight. For example, they referred to the shortage of sewing machines and overcrowded classrooms for students reading Home Economics in Senior High Schools.

This overcrowding and lack of equipment make it difficult for teachers to provide adequate instruction to students, let alone those with visual impairments. Some teachers in these schools might need specialised training in clothing or fashion skills. The respondents expressed concerns about teachers' qualifications and ability to teach visually impaired students effectively. This raises questions about the quality of education these students would receive in a field where specialised knowledge is crucial. The respondents also highlighted the potential frustration

that teachers might experience when trying to accommodate visually impaired students. Teaching methods and resources would need to be adapted to meet the needs of visually impaired students, which can be perceived as an additional burden on teachers who may already feel overwhelmed. These assertions by respondents are noted as shared as follows:

> *I don't think we are ready to absorb them. The systems are already challenged with facilities and other issues so it will be difficult to adding on the visually impaired.* **(FL1)**

Another Lecturer also added:

> *For me I don't think the Secondary Schools are ready. In the first place, I don't think they have enough facilities for those 'normal' (sighted). When you go to some schools there are Clothing students numbering 50, 80s and 100s they don't even have sewing machines for their practical lessons. So, I feel it will be frustrating for a teacher to now render attention on individuals with Visual Impairment to learn practical skills in fashion. For if they come and their parents come with the facilities, I will teach them but if I have to rely on the institutions, I think it will be a problem. So, the Secondary Schools from the few researches we have done, there are some teachers who don't even have the skills, they didn't specialize in Clothing and they are teaching Clothing. They don't want to add the frustration of teaching somebody who is visually impaired.* **(FL 2)**

5. Discussion of Findings

This research focused on identifying and comprehending the support systems that assist SVIs in pursuing fashion-related studies. The research findings shed light on the state of support for SVIs in fashion education. One key sub-theme highlighted the deployment of resource assistants. Resource assistants are vital in providing specialised assistance and guidance to SVIs. These professionals offer tailored support to address the specific needs of SVIs, enabling them to cope with the challenges of fashion education more effectively. This finding aligns with previous studies conducted by Phutane et al. (2022) and Moodley (2015), which found that a lack of qualified teachers and tactile teaching materials significantly hinder the education of SVIs, particularly in acquiring practical skills.

Conversely, another sub-theme emphasised the absence of support systems. Some SVIs need help accessing adequate support, impeding their educational progress. This raises concerns about the inclusivity and accessibility of fashion education programmes for SVIs. Furthermore, the study identified the need for a specialised school for fashion education for SVIs as a major limitation in Ghana. This limitation underscores the lack of dedicated institutions that can cater to the unique needs of SVIs aspiring to excel in fashion-related fields.

The readiness of Ghanaian schools to absorb visually impaired students into fashion skills programmes is also questioned, with overcrowded classrooms and shortage of equipment being significant barriers. Hence, the need for Ghanaian educational institutions to be more prepared to admit SVIs into practical skills-oriented programmes like fashion. This is consistent with studies by Ayoung et al. (2021) and Simui (2018), which found that schools in many Sub-Saharan African countries need more education planning and programme implementation strategies to accommodate SVIs successfully. It highlights the need for educational institutions in Ghana to adapt and develop infrastructure and programmes that can accommodate SVIs, including incorporating fashion-related content into rehabilitation training programmes and making the school curriculum more inclusive.

Inadequate provision of practical skill training was another significant challenge. Fashion education often involves practical skills, and SVIs may need appropriate support to acquire these skills. The lack of specialized fashion-related training in special schools further exacerbates the issues faced by visually impaired students. Thus, increasing the feelings of exclusion and limited access to essential resources by visually impaired individuals. Ensuring that practical training is accessible to SVIs is crucial for their success in the field.

The use of technological aids was also recognised as a concern. The study also revealed a gap in technological support for visually impaired individuals pursuing fashion-related skills, with assistive technologies not being sufficiently integrated into the education landscape. According to Ahmed and Chao (2018) assistive technologies can significantly enhance the learning experience for SVIs, enabling them to access educational materials, interact with fashion design software, and create designs independently.

Lastly, respondents highlighted the need for more availability of computer-based applications that can provide SVI with tools to engage in various aspects of fashion design, from creating digital designs to accessing educational resources

in a format compatible with screen-reading software. According to Fatima et al. (2023), computer and mobile phone-based applications can enhance the learning experiences of SVIs. This should be incorporated into the teaching and learning process for SVIs in Ghanaian higher educational institutions to enhance their learning experiences, particularly those who want to acquire practical skills like fashion design.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study aimed at exploring respondents' views on support systems available for visually impaired in Ghanaian in their quest to acquire fashion skills. The findings revealed that the Ghanaian educational system faces significant challenges for visually impaired individuals aspiring to acquire fashion skills. The study concludes that structures and systems play important role in the provision of skill-oriented programmes for visually impaired. The findings also present significant information for policy makers and stakeholders on existing conditions for visually impaired who have interest in learning skills in fashion. Although, there exist issues that bother on assistive tools and technology, these should not be a barrier to enrolling into fashion programmes to acquire skills.

Additionally, the training of Facilitators who possess the requisite professional qualification is deemed necessary for skill acquisition in fashion. This implies that the development and implementation of effective support systems for VI in fashion-related training is deemed necessary for personal and national development. Stakeholders of education for VI are encouraged to actively support the training of VI with fashion skills to strengthen creative abilities and advance to earn a living out of skills in fashion they will acquire. It is envisaged that when issues that bother on support systems for visually impaired in their quest to experience practical skills in fashion is addressed these issues will empower visually impaired individuals and contribute to a more equitable and diversified fashion institutions in Ghana.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that stakeholders in education in Ghana call for institutional engagement to review the curriculum to provide relevant support to help the visually impaired experience fashion independently. Rehabilitation centres and Fashion Departments should collaborate to create curriculum that support individuals with visual impairments who have interest in acquiring fashion skills. Also, the government through the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), should support schools and institutions that train visually impaired with assistive tools, equipment

and other resources essential for use by visually impaired individuals to excel in fashion skills acquisition. Again, it is recommended that the government provides modern and disability-friendly University facilities that will promote the full inclusion and training of the visually impaired in acquiring practical skills in fashion.

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