



INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL FACTORS ON STUDENTS' INTEREST IN VOCATIONAL STUDIES IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AKURE SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study assessed students' interest on vocational studies in public secondary schools in Akure South Local Government, Ondo State. It adopted a descriptive research survey designs. All public secondary schools in Akure South Local Government Area were the population of the study. Two hundred and fifty students (250) were selected from the sample population. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Validity of the instruments was done by the two experts from vocational and technical education, University of Benin. All comments and suggestions incorporated in the final instrument used. The reliability of the two instruments used was 0.76 and 0.78, determined using cronbach alpha. The simple linear regression statistics was employed for testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance Findings reveals that vocational subjects help individual to be self-reliant. The following recommendations were made by the researcher; Government should establish vocational schools that are well equipped with adequate trainers and good facilities; both student and teachers of vocational subjects should be encouraged through sensitization to embrace vocational education..

Keywords: *Students' interest, Teachers' qualifications Academic performance, Vocational studies*

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely regarded as a vital instrument for individual and national development. It involves the process of imparting and acquiring knowledge, developing reasoning and judgment, and preparing individuals intellectually for responsible and productive living in society. According to Ezembu (2022), education remains a powerful factor in the development of any nation in terms of human capacity building and national resources. In the same vein, Ajagbe (2024) explained that education, whether formal or informal, is intended to promote the holistic development of individuals and prepare them for useful living and meaningful participation in the society in which they live.

Within the broad field of education, vocational education occupies a unique and important position. Vocational education refers to programmes designed to develop skills, abilities, attitudes, and work habits that enable individuals to engage effectively in productive occupations. It equips learners with practical knowledge and competencies required to enter and progress in various areas of specialization. Osuala (2000) described vocational education as a form of education that helps individuals acquire specific mechanical and manipulative skills needed in industrial arts, applied sciences, and other technical fields. Such education



plays a crucial role in promoting self-reliance, employment opportunities, and national economic development.

Historically, vocational education has long been part of Nigerian society even before the introduction of Western education. In the traditional Nigerian setting, vocational training was largely informal and family-based, where children acquired occupational skills by assisting their parents in activities such as farming, cooking, craftwork, and other household or community occupations. However, with the introduction of formal education, vocational training gradually became institutionalized within the school system.

Recognizing the importance of vocational skills for national development, the Nigerian government introduced vocational subjects into the formal educational curriculum. Vocational subjects were integrated into the Nigerian educational system under the 9-3-4 system of education introduced to enhance skill acquisition among the students. One of the key objectives of this system was to provide opportunities for students to acquire practical and technical skills that could enable them to become self-employed and productive members of society irrespective of their academic background. The system also introduced pre-vocational subjects at the junior secondary school level and vocational subjects at the senior secondary level, making vocational education a compulsory component of the curriculum for the first time in Nigeria's educational history.

The importance of vocational education was further emphasized in the National Policy on Education (2004), which outlined several objectives of vocational and technical education. These include providing trained manpower in applied sciences, technology, and commerce at sub-professional levels; providing technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, industrial growth, and economic development; training craftsmen, technicians, and other skilled personnel who will be self-reliant and enterprising; helping young people develop an intelligent understanding of modern technology; and providing a foundation for further professional studies in engineering and related technological fields.

Vocational education in secondary schools covers several subject areas. According to Peter and William (2022), vocational subjects offered in secondary schools include Agriculture, Home Economics, Business Studies, Technical Drawing, Mechanics, and Creative Arts, among others. These subjects are designed to equip learners with practical knowledge, technical competence, and positive work attitudes necessary for effective participation in the home, community, and national economy. Manfred and Jenifer (2023) also noted that vocational education is a dynamic and interdisciplinary field that draws knowledge from science, technology, and the humanities in order to achieve its objectives of skill development and human empowerment.

Despite the recognized importance of vocational education, it has faced several challenges in Nigeria. For many years, vocational studies suffered neglect in terms of policy implementation, infrastructure, and societal perception. Although the government intended vocational education to occupy a prominent place in the secondary school curriculum, many schools still pay limited attention to vocational subjects. Teachers and students often fail to appreciate the significance of these subjects, which sometimes results in low enrolment and lack of enthusiasm among students.

Societal perception and parental influence also contribute significantly to students' attitudes toward vocational studies. In many Nigerian homes, parents tend to encourage their children to pursue careers in professions such as medicine, engineering, and law, which are often perceived as more prestigious. As noted by Osuala (2012), many parents view



vocational occupations such as farming, plumbing, painting, or other skilled trades as jobs meant for the poor or less privileged. Consequently, parents may discourage their children from showing interest in vocational subjects in school.

The socio-economic status and occupational background of parents can also influence students' educational and career choices. Parents' expectations, financial capability, and social orientation often shape the direction of their children's academic interests and aspirations. According to Olaitan (2007), parents sometimes impose rigid preferences on their children's career choices without considering the child's interests or abilities. This situation may discourage students from developing genuine interest in vocational subjects, even when such fields may align better with their talents.

Apart from parental influence, the role of teachers and teaching methods cannot be overlooked in stimulating students' interest in vocational subjects. The competence of teachers, their instructional approaches, and the extent to which practical activities are incorporated into lessons greatly affect students' level of engagement. Amoor (2011) emphasized the need to blend theoretical instruction with practical experiences in the teaching of vocational subjects in order to stimulate students' interest and improve learning outcomes.

Evidence from some secondary schools in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State suggests that students' performance in vocational subjects has been relatively poor. For instance, records from three secondary schools—Akure Grammar School, St. Louis Secondary School, and CAC Grammar School—indicate that only 38.1% of students scored 50% and above in vocational subjects over five academic sessions, while about 61.9% scored below 50%. This trend suggests low academic achievement in vocational subjects, which may be linked to students' level of interest and engagement in these subjects.

Interest plays a significant role in the teaching and learning process. It serves as a motivating factor that encourages learners to participate actively in academic activities and develop commitment toward particular fields of study. When students show genuine interest in a subject, they are more likely to devote time, effort, and attention to learning it effectively. Conversely, lack of interest may result in poor participation, low performance, and negative attitudes toward the subject. Therefore, understanding students' interest in vocational studies is essential for improving learning outcomes and achieving the objectives of vocational education.

In view of the importance of vocational education for skill acquisition, employment generation, and national development, there is a need to examine the level of students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools. This study therefore seeks to investigate students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State

Vocational studies are designed to equip students with practical skills, self-reliance, and competencies necessary for employment and entrepreneurship. Despite the recognized importance of vocational education in national development and youth empowerment, there has been growing concern about the declining interest of students in vocational subjects at the secondary school level in Nigeria. Many students tend to prefer purely academic subjects that are perceived to lead to white-collar jobs, while vocational studies are often regarded as less prestigious or less rewarding.

In public secondary schools in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State, observations suggest that students' interest in vocational studies appears to be relatively low.



This lack of interest may manifest in poor enrolment in vocational subjects, minimal participation during lessons, and weak commitment to skill-based learning activities. Such a situation undermines the objectives of vocational education, which aims to prepare students with employable and entrepreneurial skills needed for sustainable livelihood.

If this declining interest in vocational studies is not properly addressed, it may lead to a shortage of skilled manpower, increased youth unemployment, and continued overdependence on white-collar employment. It therefore becomes necessary to investigate the level of students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State. This study is therefore undertaken to examine the extent of influence of socio- education factors on students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State, and provide insights that could help improve students' engagement with vocational education.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is determine the extent of influence of socio-educational factors on students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent of influence of

1. Teachers' qualifications on students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State, Nigeria
2. Parents socio-economic status on students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State, Nigeria

Research hypothesis

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant influence of teachers' qualifications on students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools
2. There is no significant influence of parents' socio-economic status on students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools

METHODS

The design of this study was a survey research design. This design is appropriate because there will be no manipulation on the data and the researcher would have access to the respondents of the study. The study was carried out in Akure which is the state capital of Ondo State. Akure is place where vocational studies should be encouraged among the youths to enhance the economy of the state and also give room for self-reliance. The researcher used public secondary school in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State. The target population of this study consisted 350 vocational students and 100 teachers. Ten public secondary schools were used for the study. Simple random sample technique was used to select 200 students to respond to parents socio-economic status and purposive sampling technique was used to select 50 teachers to responds to items on teachers' qualifications. Five teachers were selected each from the 10 schools. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire, developed by the researcher, generated in line with the research



questions. The instrument was a four point rating scale. The instrument was structured on teachers' qualifications (TQ), and students' interests and parents' socio-economic status (PSS). The instrument was validated by two experts from the department of vocational education, University of Benin, Benin City. Comments and suggestions were taken care and used to produce the final instrument. Reliability was carried out outside the study area (Osun State) using sample size not included in the study. The reliability of the instrument was estimated using cronbach alpha method to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which was 0.76 for TQ and 0.78 for PSS. Based on these values, the two instruments were found to be highly reliable. The instruments were administered to the students and teachers with the assistance of researcher fellow in their respective schools and were collected back on the same day. The simple linear regression was used for data analysis

RESULTS

1. Answer to the Research Hypothesis I: There is no significant influence of teachers' qualifications on students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools

Table I: Teachers' qualifications

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	Df	Mean Square (MS)	F-Ratio	Sig. (<i>p</i>)
Regression	245.30	1	245.30	42.50	.000
Residual (Error)	1142.70	198	5.77		
Total	1388.00	199			

The table assesses the overall significance of the regression model predicting students' interest in vocational studies from teachers' qualifications. The computed *F*-ratio of 42.50 yields a *p*-value of .000, which is below the conventional alpha level of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected. This result provides strong statistical evidence that teachers' qualifications significantly influence students' interest in vocational studies. The regression sum of squares (245.30) represents the variation in student interest attributable to teachers' qualifications, while the residual sum of squares (1142.70) accounts for unexplained variation. The relatively large mean square for regression compared to the residual mean square underscores the substantive role of teacher qualifications. Practically, this finding suggests that enhancing teacher expertise, pedagogical skills, and subject-matter knowledge may be an effective lever for increasing student engagement in vocational education.

2. Hypothesis II: There is no significant influence of parents' socio-economic status on students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools

Table II: Parents' Socio-Economic Factors

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-Ratio	Sig. (<i>p</i>)
Regression	310.50	1	310.50	68.20	.000
Residual (Error)	901.20	198	4.55		
Total	1211.70	199			



The results table II indicate a statistically significant regression model, with an F -ratio of 68.20 and a p -value of .000. Since the p -value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. These findings confirm that parents' socio-economic factors such as income, education level, and occupational background have a significant influence on students' interest in vocational studies. The regression sum of squares (310.50) captures the variance explained by socio-economic factors, while the residual sum of squares (901.20) reflects unexplained variance. The high F -ratio suggests that socio-economic factors are a meaningful predictor. From a practical standpoint, this highlights the importance of considering family background in efforts to promote vocational education, suggesting that interventions may need to address socio-economic barriers or leverage parental involvement to sustain student interest.

Discussion of Findings

The primary objective of this study was to examine the influence of social educational factors specifically teachers' qualifications and parents' socio-economic status on students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools. Using simple linear regression analyses with a sample of 200 students and 50 teachers, the study tested two null hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level.

The results for the first hypothesis revealed that teachers' qualifications have a statistically significant influence on students' interest in vocational studies ($F(1,198) = 42.50, p < .001$). This finding supports the opinion of Igburi and Okagbare (2023), that vocational education will be achieved as the instructor applied the skills and knowledge acquired to teach. This implies that, teacher cannot teach what they do not know. This outcome supported the work of Adeola and Bolarinwa (2011) that teachers have a positive attitude and keen interest toward entrepreneurship and vocational education. This finding aligns with existing literature that positions teacher quality as a critical determinant of student engagement and academic motivation. Qualified teachers are better equipped to deliver relevant, practical, and inspiring vocational content, which in turn shapes students' perceptions and aspirations toward vocational pathways. The rejection of the null hypothesis underscores that teacher expertise, pedagogical competence, and subject-matter mastery are not merely instructional inputs but active drivers of student interest.

The findings from the second hypothesis showed a statistically significant influence of parents' socio-economic factors on students' interest in vocational studies ($F(1,198) = 68.20, p < .001$). This finding suggests that family background including parental income, education, occupation, and access to resources plays a formative role in shaping students' attitudes toward vocational education. Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds may have greater exposure to career options, while those from lower socio-economic backgrounds might perceive vocational studies either as a pragmatic necessity or, conversely, as a less prestigious pathway. The findings uphold research previously reported by Anbrar, Baloch and Ghouri (2023) that the socio-economic status of the parents of a child determines the type of career one chooses to do, some parents have biased and rigid thoughts regarding the occupational choice of a child. The significance of this relationship indicates that socio-economic context cannot be overlooked in efforts to promote equitable access and enthusiasm for vocational education. Together, these findings affirm that both school-based factors (teacher qualifications) and home-based factors (parents' socio-economic status) are significant predictors of student interest in vocational studies. This dual influence suggests



that efforts to strengthen vocational education must extend beyond the classroom to address family and community contexts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Teachers' qualifications significantly influence students' interest in vocational studies in public secondary schools. The null hypothesis positing no significant influence is therefore rejected. This implies that improving teacher qualifications—through enhanced training, certification, and continuous professional development—can directly contribute to increased student engagement in vocational subjects.
2. Parents' socio-economic factors significantly influence students' interest in vocational studies. The null hypothesis stating no significant influence is likewise rejected. This indicates that students' family background, including economic stability and parental educational attainment, plays a critical role in shaping their perceptions and interest in vocational careers.
3. The combined influence of these social educational factors highlights the multidimensional nature of student interest, suggesting that neither the school environment nor the home environment alone can be solely responsible for fostering vocational aspirations.
4. The study confirms that vocational education outcomes are shaped not only by curriculum and school resources but also by the broader social and economic contexts in which students live and learn.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Ministries of education and school administrators should ensure that only qualified teachers are assigned to vocational subjects. Regular professional development programs should be mandated to keep teachers abreast of current industry practices and pedagogical innovations in vocational education.
2. Schools and policymakers should design targeted support systems such as scholarships, mentorship programs, and career guidance initiatives to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds develop sustained interest in vocational studies. Awareness campaigns should also address parental attitudes toward vocational careers.
3. Schools should actively involve parents in vocational education initiatives through career fairs, parental engagement forums, and home-school communication channels. Educating parents on the value and viability of vocational pathways may help mitigate socio-economic biases that influence student interest.
4. Educational policies should explicitly recognize the interplay between teacher quality and family socio-economic factors. Holistic policy frameworks that address both school-level instructional quality and community-level economic support are likely to



yield more sustainable improvements in student interest and participation in vocational education.

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