

DETERMINANTS OF MISCONCEPTION OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AMONG CANDIDATES OF UNIFIED TERTIARY MATRICULATION EXAMINATION (UTME) IN YOBE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the determinants of misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among candidates of Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) in Yobe state, Nigeria. The study was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses. The design of the study was correlational survey with sample of 342 from the population of 3419 UTME candidates in Yobe state. A 4-point scale structured questionnaire titled Determinants of Misconception of Vocational and Technical Education Questionnaire (DMTEQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts and subjected to pilot test using test-retest approach. A Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained. The instrument was administered with the help of four research assistants for the period of four weeks. The data collected for the study were analysed using Simple Linear Regression to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that family, peer group and teacher significantly influenced the misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that, the general misconception of people on vocational and technical education programme has negative effect on attitude and interest of UTME candidate towards the programme in Nigeria. The study recommended among others that parents should be educated on the importance of vocational and technical education programmes and Yobe state government should initiate orientation programmes that would educate potentials UTME candidates on the importance of vocational and technical education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Misconception, Vocational, Technical, Education.

Introduction

Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) is a form of education that focuses on providing individuals with practical skills and knowledge related to a specific trade or profession. Experts and national education policy emphasize the importance of VTE in preparing students for the workforce, focusing on learning and applying skills. The goals of VTE, as stated by experts and national policy on education, include reducing the number of unemployed, addressing the lack of skills in various industries, and developing the economy through skilled workers. VTE equips students with the necessary knowledge and skills to address the shortage of essential human resources in the job market (Allaie, 2022). Ayonmike, Okwelle, and Okeke (2015) opined that VTE is concerned with the provision of knowledge and skills for the world of work to increase opportunities for productive empowerment and socio-economic development in knowledge, economics and rapidly changing work environment. Likewise, VTE emphasizes practical skills and knowledge for self-employment. The programmes under VTE are designed to equip young people with skills, knowledge and competencies for the workforce for national development (Mitchell & Buntic, 2022). VTE plays a significant role in supporting economic development, necessitating the urgent use of information technology to enhance teaching quality and meet the demands of a rapidly growing global economy. Thus, VTE has a significant role in providing learners with technical skills, knowledge and awareness needed for meaningful participation in work and daily life.

Most secondary schools' graduates exhibited higher competencies and vocational maturity in academic and technical skills, qualifying them for university education. For instance, secondary school students who participate in vocational education programmes experience early interest in their chosen profession, leading to increased personal well-being. The secondary school students' positive academic and professional outcomes outside Nigeria, as demonstrated by VTE programmes focused on areas that assessed their motivation and satisfaction with their career choices and perception (Amiruddin & Baharuddin, 2023; Quiroga-Garza et al., 2020). Therefore, VTE helps secondary school students develop careers, fostering motivation, creativity, innovation, improved performance, productivity, and competitiveness in the labour market, thereby addressing the high rates of underemployment and unemployment among young people. With these, it is expected to see many students should opt for Vocational and Technical Education programme during Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) registering.

Despite the laudable objectives of vocational and technical education, there exists a prevalent misconception among secondary school students. This misperception often associates VTE with education for less privileged individuals, school dropouts, and those with low academic achievements, implying limited future prospects for participants. Diverse perceptions of technical vocational education influence its image and status, with a common misconception in society that it is only for dropouts and underachievers, impacting its reputation (Ambag & Bernarte, 2015). Adamu and Abdul (2015) reported that, in Nigeria, society, school counsellors, peers, parents and even teachers discourage career training in vocational education as the term the programme to be mean for students with low academic achievement that cannot study science and social science related programmes (Adamu & Markus, 2017).

The consequence of this stigma attributed to VTE is multifaceted and extends to students, affecting their stigmatization, enrolment rates, and overall interest in vocational and technical programmes. Tsehay (2014) stated that lack of understanding of the importance of vocational education and skills can lead to lack of investment and support from policy makers. Anthony (2013) reported that the lack of understanding that vocational education is inferior to traditional education methods can lead to a lack of empathy for skilled workers. UNESCO-UNEVOC (2019), James & David (2019) reports that the lack of understanding of VTE can affect its support and resource allocation. Therefore, this may face the pressure of society to follow traditional educational methods, even if their skills and interests are in line with professional and technical fields. Similarly, in Nigeria, Akanbi (2017) announced that there was less than three per cent of overall enrolment in technical and vocational education programs as of 2016. The societal stigma attached to VTE can lead to a sense of inferiority among students pursuing such education, potentially discouraging them from fully engaging in the learning process which can lead to a mismatch between students' skills and career choices, leading to dissatisfaction and underutilization of talents.

Addressing these misconceptions requires a comprehensive understanding of factors that causes it. Numerous factors responsible for misconception of VTE among students. For instance, Stone and Lewis (2013) opined that parents may contribute to their children misconceptions about vocational and technical education due to traditional biases favouring traditional academic paths as the perceived vocational education as a less prestigious option. The role of peer group on misconception was documented by Riegle-Crumb and King (2010) who reported that the peer influence plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of their friends towards a career. Based on forgoing, Adamu and Markus (2017), Kura and Mukhtar (2019) suggests for continue research work on causes of stigmata of vocational and technical education among students. The assertions urge the researchers to: (1) examine the influence of family on misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria; (2) assess the influence of the peer group on misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria; and (3) examine the influence of the class teacher on misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

In line with research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the significant level of 0.05:

1. Family has no significant influence on the misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria.
2. Peer group perception has no significant influence on the misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria.
3. Class teacher has no significant influence on the misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a correlational survey research design used for this study. Creswell (2012) defined correlational survey research design as a design which provides an opportunity for researcher(s) to predict scores and explain the relationship among variables, in correlational research design, investigators use the correlation statistical test to describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores. Based on these submission, a correlational survey research design is considered suitable for the study since the study intends to use questionnaire to determine the career decision of secondary school students among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria.

The population for this study was 3419 students that registered for UTME in 2022/2023 from 49 public secondary schools in Yobe State. The researchers used a multiple sampling techniques to sample 10% of the entire population for the study. This is in agreement with the view of Abiola (2012) who suggested that for a correlational survey research, a minimum sample size of 10% of the population is enough. Based on this, the sample size was 342 UTME candidates.

The instrument used for data collection in this study was a questionnaire titled: Determinants of Misconception of Vocational and Technical Education Questionnaire (DMTEQ). The questionnaire items were adapted from previous studies. Assessment of attitudes of secondary school students towards vocational education questionnaire (Joel, 2014), family influences on career decision-making self-efficacy of Chinese secondary vocational students questionnaire (Xue and Jay, 2018), perceptions and factors influencing students' choice on vocational education questionnaire (Remelyn, Germma, & Lois 2016) and factors influencing the choice of career among high school students (Jeofrey, 2017). The instrument contains 40 questionnaire items and each construct has 10 items each. The instrument is a 4-point rating scale structured questionnaire structured as follows: Strongly Agree (SA), 4-points; Agree (A), 3-points; Disagree (DA), 2-points; and Strongly Disagree (SD), 1-point. Appendix II for details.

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity. Three experts validated the instrument from the Department of Vocational and Technology Education, Faculty of Technology Education, ATBU, Bauchi. The inputs of the experts guided the researchers in making necessary adjustments and modifications into the final production of the instrument. The validated instrument was pilot tested at using 40 UTME candidates in Jigawa State, Nigeria. The data collected from pilot test was analyzed and a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained. The instrument was found to be valid based on suggestion of Hair et al (2017) who opined that the minimum reliability coefficient of survey instrument to stand 0.70, hence the instrument was considered suitable for the study.

The researchers assisted by two research assistants collected the data from the respondents. Before the administration of the questionnaire, the researchers created a very good working relationship with the target respondents. Respondents that need clarification or have inquiring were attended to before administration of the instrument. The data collection exercise lasted for four weeks.

The data collected for this study were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version, 25. The package was employed to Simple Linear Regression to test the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. In the analysis, when the p-value is found to be less than the alpha value ($P<0.05$), the hypothesis was rejected. On the other hand, when the p-value is found to be greater than the alpha value ($p>0.05$), the hypothesis was retained.

Results

The Linear Regression Analysis (LRA) for the test of research hypotheses were as seen in Tables 1 to 3.

Hypothesis one

Family has no significant influence on misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria.

The linear regression analysis for the test of null hypothesis one is documented in Table 1. The result revealed the Standardized Coefficients Beta value of $-.127$ with the t-value of -2.197 . The $R=.127$ with R^2 of $.016$. The result indicated that the independent variable (Family) had 1.6% influence on the misconception of vocational and technical education programme among the UTME candidates in Yobe state. The $p=.029$ was less than the alpha value (0.05). The result therefore indicated that the family had significant influence on the misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria. The hypothesis was rejected.

Table 1: Regression analysis on Family influence on misconception of Vocational and Technical Education Programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state

Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	p-value	Rmk
$-.127$	-2.197	$.127^a$	$.016$	$.013$	$.029$	Rejected

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Hypothesis two

Peer group has no significant influence on misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria.

The outcome of the analysis of data used for the test of null hypothesis two is presented in Table 2. From the Table, the Standardized Coefficients Beta was $-.122$ and the $t=-2.102$. The R-value stood at $.122$ and R Square of $.015$. The obtained R Square suggested that peer group perception had 1.5% influence on misconception of vocational and technical education programme among UTME candidates. This was also applicable with the p-value which was less than the level of significance ($.036<0.05$). The result suggested that the influence of peer group significantly determine the misconception of

Vocational and Technical Education Programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state was significance. The hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 2: Regression analysis on peer group influence on misconception of Vocational and Technical Education Programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state

Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	p-value	Rmk
-.122	-2.102	.122 ^a	.015	.011	.036	Rejected

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Hypothesis three

Class teacherhas no significant influence on misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria.

The finding of the test of null hypothesis three in Table 3 revealed the value of -.132 for Standardized Coefficients Beta with t=-2.282. The R-value was .132and the RSquare stood at .017. The R Square suggested class teachers’ misconception had 1.7% influence on misconception of vocational and technical education programme among UTME candidates in Yobe state. The p-value obtained was less than the alpha value (.023<0.05), the result therefore indicated that teachers had significant influence on misconception of vocational and technical education programme UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria. The hypothesis was therefore not upheld.

Table 3: Regression analysis on class teachers influence on misconception of Vocational and Technical Education Programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state

Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	p-value	Rmk
-.132	-2.282	.132	.017	.014	.023	Rejected

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Discussion of the Findings

The result of research hypothesis one indicated that family significantly influenced themisconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria. The outcome agrees with the submission of Bollu-steve and Sanni (2013) who argued that. a child is affected by a number of family-related factors such as the marital relationship of the parents. Parental education was referred to as a determining factor in the selection of careers by British students (Dustman, 2014).Eccles (2017) also revealed that, in America, parents’ education and occupation were associated with academic achievement. Also the study conducted by Fisher and Padmawidjaja (2019) affirmed that parents who were college educated were able to instil in their children the desire to have experiences and accomplishments that would enable them to surpass their parents’ educational and occupational levels.

The outcome of research hypothesis two revealed that peer group had significant influenced the misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria. The result concurred with that of Odirile (2016) who reported that peer influence cannot be underestimated as it was influential in misconception of students towards a career. The author maintained thatpeer counselling plays a significant role of students thinking and career belief. The study of Okiror and

Otabong, (2015) also reported that peer interactions influence students career belief and choose. Kiuru (2018) purports that, in Finland, peer group members who are closely related are likely to end up in similar educational trajectories as they are likely to accept opinions from members who are similar to themselves. Kiuru further states that peer group members resembled each other, not only in their educational expectations, but also their subsequent educational trajectories. In a Nigerian study by Bankole and Ogunsakin (2015), peer relationships were revealed as a significant factor in helping students choose careers.

The result of hypothesis three disclosed that there was significant influence of class teacher on the misconception of vocational and technical education programmes among UTME candidates in Yobe state, Nigeria. The result was in line with that of Bright, Pryor, Wilkenfeld and Earl (2015) who reiterated the importance of teachers in career guidance when they purport that teachers were second most important grouping in directing students. According to Kniveton (2014), British school teachers can identify aptitudes and abilities and encourage students to take certain subject options, take part in work experience or employment visits. The quality of teaching, student participation in school activities, school practices and policies and learning materials for the students were found to impact on students perception of Vocational and Technical Education Programmes among learners (Shumba & Naong, 2018).

Conclusion

The outcome of the study with regards to the misconceptions of the three independent variables (family, peer group and class teacher) significantly influenced the misconception of vocational and technical education programme among the UTME candidates in Yobe state. Thus, this suggests internal and external forces determine the misconception of UTME candidates towards vocational and technical education programme in the state. The study concluded that, the role of external factors towards vocational and technical education programme influences UTME candidates' misconception of the programme.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome and the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made: -

- i. The federal and state government should educate parents on the importance of vocational and technical education programme to students.
- ii. Principals of secondary schools should organize career awareness that would educate potential UTME candidates on the prominence of vocational and technical education programme.
- iii. Ministry of education through quality assurance division should provide counselling service to teachers that would enable them to understand the status vocational and technical education programme in Nigeria.

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