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CAREER ASPIRATION OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS: THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION, SENSE-OF-SELF AND INTEREST

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Abstract
This study explored the relationship between three independent variables (interest, motivation, and sense of self) and career aspiration of Vocational and Technical Education Students. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Correlational survey design was adopted for the study. Students from all the eight technical colleges in Ogun State constituted the population for the study. A total of 100 technical college students, selected through simple random sampling, eventually participated in the study. Sense of self scale, Jackson Vocational interest inventory, Motivation for occupational preference scale, and Career Aspiration Scale - Revised were used for data collection. Cronbach Alpha was used to estimate the reliability of the instruments, the four instruments yielded reliability coefficients of 0.73, 0.81, 0.83 and 0.79 respectively. The questionnaires were collected immediately after administration. Mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to analyse the data. The study showed that there is a significant relationship between sense of self and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students. There is a significant relationship between motivation and career aspiration of Vocational and technical education students. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between interest and career aspiration of Vocational and technical education students. Based on these findings, it was recommended that measures should be taken to improve sense of self of students in vocational and technical colleges to enable them understand their strengths, weaknesses, values, and beliefs. Also, efforts should be made towards increasing students' motivation to excel in their vocational and technical education program and set high career aspirations. Furthermore, vocational counselling and guidance services should be provided and strengthened in all schools to ascertain students' vocational interest and also improve their sense of self.

Keywords. Career aspiration, vocational and technical education, motivation, sense-of-self, interest.

Introduction

Vocational and technical education as a field of study is aimed at equipping the individuals with requisite skills which will enhance their relevance and functionality in the society. It is aimed at developing not only practical skills but also attitudes and habits that makes the recipient a creative, innovative and resourceful person. According to Ntegwung and Iyagbaye (2022), vocational and technical education is geared towards the production of the educated man who can effectively work with his head, heart and hands. Vocational and technical education enables an individual earn a living.

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According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), the objective of vocational and technical education includes acquisition of vocational and technical skills, and stimulating creativity and exposing students to career awareness by exploring usable options in the world of work.

Vocational and technical education students aspire to pursue careers in skilled trades. This includes occupations such as electrical installation and maintenance works, plumbing, carpentry, welding, and automotive technicians (Agbongiasede, 2012). These students often develop practical skills and knowledge in their respective trades and aim to work in industries that require hands-on expertise. Vocational and technical education students with a passion for culinary arts and hospitality may aspire to work in the foodservice industry, hotels, resorts, or event management. Some vocational and technical education students have aspirations to start their own businesses. They may aspire to become entrepreneurs or small business owners.

Career aspiration refers to an individual's desired career goals, ambitions, and objectives for their professional life (Arhin, 2018). It reflects the specific positions, roles, or achievements that individuals strive to attain in their chosen field or industry. Career aspirations can encompass various aspects, including job titles, levels of responsibility, salary expectations, professional development, and personal fulfillment (Akosah-Twumasi, Emeto, Lindsay, Tsey, and Malau-Aduli, 2018). Career aspiration provide individuals with a sense of direction and purpose in an individual's career journeys, guiding their decisions and actions as they work towards their desired outcomes. Career aspirations involve setting goals that include milestones and targets that individuals aim to achieve at different stages of their career, such as securing a certain job position, obtaining a specific certification, or reaching a leadership role. Various factors may shape career aspirations, including societal expectations, family influences, educational experiences, cultural norms, Peer networks, role models, mentors, availability of resources and opportunities, motivation, interest, and sense of self (Tang, Pan, & Newmeyer, 2018).

The concept of sense of self encompasses an individual's perception, beliefs, and understanding of themselves. It involves how individuals define and understand their own unique characteristics, qualities, values, and roles in relation to others and the world around them (Ylvisaker, 2006). Sense of self plays a fundamental role in shaping one's thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and interactions with others. Sense of self involves being aware of one's own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It encompasses understanding one's strengths, weaknesses, values, and beliefs. Sense of self influences an individual's self-esteem and self-worth (Raypole, 2020). A student's sense of self may influence his/her career aspirations. Students who have a strong sense of self and believe in their abilities are more likely to set ambitious career goals. Conversely, those with low sense of self may limit their aspirations or choose careers that they perceive as safer or easier.

Moreover, interest is another factor that can shape career aspiration. The concept of interest refers to a person's curiosity, attraction, or enjoyment in a particular subject, activity, or topic (Donnellan, Aslan, & Fastrich, 2022) It involves a positive emotional or cognitive inclination towards something, which drives individuals to engage, explore, and invest their time and effort in that specific area (McIntyre, Gundlach, & Graziano, 2021). Interests can influence choices, preferences, and engagement in various aspects of life. Interests reflect an individual's personal preferences and inclinations. Interest can play a crucial role in shaping career aspirations. When vocational and technical education students have a genuine interest in a particular field or industry, they are more likely to aspire to pursue a career in that area. For example, a student with a strong interest in automotive technology may aspire to become an automotive engineer.

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Motivation is another factor that can be a driving force behind career aspirations. Motivation refers to the psychological and physiological processes that activate, guide, and sustain behavior towards achieving a desired goal or outcome (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It involves the internal and external factors that drive individuals to take action, expend effort, and persevere in their pursuits (Fishbach, & Touré-Tillery, 2023). Motivation provides the energy, direction, and focus necessary to initiate and maintain behavior (Cherry, 2023). Motivation can stem from various sources, such as the desire for personal growth, financial stability, or the opportunity to make a positive impact in their chosen field (Mitchell, 1982). Students who are motivated to excel in their vocational and technical education program are more likely to set high career aspirations and be willing to put in the necessary effort and perseverance to achieve them.

Considering the present situation in the Nigeria society, many students no longer aspire to learn vocational subjects or even consider building a meaningful career in vocational and technical education (Okoye & Udoudo, 2015). Dwindling enrolment in vocational schools and programmes (Onwumere & Modebelu, 2020) attest to the fact that few students aspire to build careers along occupations like electrical installation and maintenance works, plumbing, carpentry, culinary arts and hospitality. These, in spite of the place of vocational and technical education in facilitating self-reliance and self-sustainability of individuals and economic development of the nation. In an effort geared at addressing students' poor aspiration towards careers in vocational and technical education, this study attempted to establish the relationship that exists between career aspiration and plausible factors that shape it. Therefore this study focused on establishing the relationship that exist between three independent variables (interest, motivation, and sense of self) and career aspiration of Vocational and Technical Education Students. The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between sense of self and career aspiration of Vocational and technical education students.
2. There is no significant relationship between motivation and career aspiration of Vocational and technical education students.
3. There is no significant relationship between interest and career aspiration of Vocational and technical education students.

Methods

Correlational survey design was adopted for the study. Students from all the eight technical colleges in Ogun State constituted the population for the study. Simple random sampling was used to select five (5) technical colleges among the eight (8) technical colleges in Ogun State. Also, twenty (20) technical college students were selected from each of the technical colleges using random sampling technique, making a total of 100 technical college students that participated in the study. Sense of self scale (Asai et al., 2016), Jackson Vocational interest inventory (Sigma Assessment Systems, 2000), Motivation for occupational preference scale (Bakare, 1971), and Career Aspiration Scale - Revised (Gregor & O'Brien, 2015) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by three experts in the field of vocational and technical education. Cronbach Alpha was used to estimate the reliability of the instruments, the four instruments yielded reliability coefficients of 0.73, 0.81, 0.83 and 0.79 respectively. Permission was requested from the school management of all concerned technical colleges in order to administer the questionnaires to the sampled students. The questionnaires were collected immediately after administration. Mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to analyse the data. The decision rule for

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establishing correlation analyses was based on strength of correlation coefficients (*r*) ranging between ±0.00 to 0.19 for very weak relationship; ±0.20 to 0.39 for weak relationship; ±0.40 to 0.59 for moderate relationship; ±0.60 to 0.79 for strong relationship; and ±0.80 to 1.00 for very strong relationship. The positive or negative signs explain the direction of relationship.

Results

The results are presented in the order of the research questions.

***Research Question 1*:** What is the relationship between sense of self and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students?

Table 1

Bivariate correlation of sense of self and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2
1. Sense of self	2.79	0.38	1	
2. Career aspiration	3.04	0.39	.263**	1

Note. M= Mean, *SD*= Standard Deviation

Vocational and technical education students were surveyed about their sense of self (*M* = 2.79, *SD* = 0.38) and career aspiration (*M* = 3.04, *SD* = 0.39). A bivariate correlation analysis presented in Table 1 revealed a significant weak positive correlation, *r* =.263. This means that, in general, vocational and technical education students who have a positive sense of self will tend to have high career aspiration. Also, there is a significant relationship between sense of self and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students.

***Research Question 2*:** What is the relationship between motivation and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students?

Table 2

Bivariate correlation of motivation and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2
1. Motivation	3.13	0.47	1	
2. Career aspiration	3.04	0.39	.514**	1

Note. M= Mean, *SD*= Standard Deviation

To investigate the relationship between motivation (*M* = 3.13, *SD* = 0.47) and career aspiration (*M* = 3.04, *SD* = 0.39) of vocational and technical education students, a bivariate correlation was computed. As shown in Table 2, the direction of the correlation was positive and significant, *r* =.514. This means that, in general, vocational and technical education students who are highly motivated to study vocational and technical education tend to show high career aspiration, while on the other hand, students who are not motivated tend to show low career aspiration. Also, there is a significant relationship between motivation and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students.

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***Research Question 3*:** What is the relationship between interest and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students?

Table 3
Bivariate correlation of interest and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2
1. Interest	3.57	0.13	1	
2. Career aspiration	3.04	0.39	.530**	1

Note. *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation

Vocational and technical education students were surveyed about their interest (*M* = 3.57, *SD* = 0.13) and career aspiration (*M* = 3.04, *SD* = 0.39). A bivariate correlation analysis presented in Table 3 revealed a significant moderate positive correlation, *r* =.530. The positive correlation means that, in general, vocational and technical education students who have high interest in vocational and technical education tend to have high career aspiration. Also, there is a significant relationship between interest and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students.

Findings of the Study

1. Vocational and technical education students who have a positive sense of self will tend to have high career aspiration.
2. Vocational and technical education students who are highly motivated to study vocational and technical education tend to show high career aspiration, while on the other hand, students who are not motivated tend to show low career aspiration.
3. Vocational and technical education students who have high interest in vocational and technical education tend to have high career aspiration.
4. There is a significant relationship between sense of self and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students.
5. There is a significant relationship between motivation and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students.
6. There is a significant relationship between interest and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant relationship between sense of self and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students. Thus, agreeing with Shumba and Naong (2012) who stated that the sense of self of students can influence career aspiration of students. They added that sense of self of many secondary schools students which include their abilities, belief systems and other personality traits have huge influence on the learning interest and their career decision in certain careers especially vocational and technical education. Additionally, Issa and Nwalo (2008) concurred that the sense of self of students has impact on career aspiration of students. Furthermore, the scholar added that sense of self which include sense of their ability in vocational or technical related activities influences their interest in having a career. Also, the belief system of students in certain careers has tremendous influence on the learning interest as well as career decision in vocational and technical education.

Findings on hypothesis two stated that there is a significant relationship between motivation and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students. The result revealed a correlation

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coefficient, r=0.514 and this denotes that students who are highly motivated to study vocational and technical education tend to show positive career aspiration. This is in line with Akcakanat and Uzunbacak (2019) who concurs that the motivation of students has significant impact on career aspiration of students. The result was also supported by the report of Okwong (2014) who submitted that the motivation of students has significant impact on career aspiration of students. Still, the scholars added that the students are not only motivated by teachers and the school environment but are also motivated by parents, role models and people living around; as their motivation is easily stimulated positively or affected negatively based on the circumstances surrounding them which in turn influence their career decision.

Findings on hypothesis three revealed that there is a significant relationship between interest and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students. The table reveals a correlation coefficient, r=0.609 and this denotes that students who have high interest in vocational and technical education tend to have positive career aspiration. This is in consonance with Nwamadi, (2014) who submitted that the interest of senior secondary school students has significant impact on their career aspirations. The author further pointed out that students' interest being another factor that affects students' career decision is very significant in the successful learning of vocational subjects which in turn affects their career decision on vocational and technical education. The finding is also aligned with Kochung (2012) who pointed out that the interest of students has significant impact on their career aspirations. Additionally, Adetola and Ohwofasa (2023) admitted that interest has significant impact on career aspiration of Vocational and technical education students. Furthermore, the scholar added that students' interest in understanding the concepts of some technical subjects can significantly stimulate the interest of students in those subjects and possibly building a career in vocational and technical education. On the other hand, students' lack of interest in technical or vocational activities in schools significantly influence their interest in learning these vocational subjects as well as having making a career decision in vocational and technical education.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that vocational and technical education students who have a positive sense of self will tend to have high career aspiration. Also, vocational and technical education students who are highly motivated to study vocational and technical education tend to show high career aspiration, while on the other hand, students who are not motivated tend to show low career aspiration. Additionally, vocational and technical education students who have high interest in vocational and technical education tend to have high career aspiration. Moreso, there is a significant relationship between sense of self and career aspiration of vocational and technical education students. There is a significant relationship between motivation and career aspiration of Vocational and technical education students. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between interest and career aspiration of Vocational and technical education students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made from the study:

1. Sense of self is critical in career decision making among vocational and technical education students in Nigeria. Therefore, measure should be taken to improve sense of self of students in vocational and technical colleges to enable them understand their strengths, weaknesses, values, and beliefs.

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2. There is need to pay attention to the increasing students' motivation to excel in their vocational and technical education program and set high career aspirations.
3. Vocational counselling should be strengthened at the vocational and technical college to ascertain students' vocational interest and also improve their sense of self. Furthermore, Guidance services should be provided in all secondary schools in the state.
4. Facilities for counselling especially for vocational counselling should be provided in vocational and technical colleges in the country.

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