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Navigating career paths: The role of socio-demographics in vocational education outcomes among Yoruba ethnic group

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between socio-demographic factors and vocational education outcomes among the Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria. It highlights the importance of understanding how factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, educational background, and geographical location influence educational attainment and career choices within this demographic. The research uses qualitative interviews to gather data from a diverse sample of Yoruba participants. Key findings show that socio-demographic characteristics significantly affect participants' access to vocational education and their career outcomes. Younger individuals and those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to enroll in advanced vocational training programs while older participants face challenges due to limited opportunities and resources. Gender disparities also emerge, with women often encountering cultural and societal barriers that hinder their participation in certain vocational fields. Geographical factors also play a critical role with urban residents having greater access to quality vocational training institutions than rural ones. The study advocates for inclusive policies that cater to the diverse needs of the Yoruba population, aiming to enhance vocational education outcomes and promote sustainable career paths.

1. Introduction

The Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria has a stronger commitment to vocational education, viewing it as a pathway to social mobility and economic advancement (Berry, 2023). This is evident in the establishment of numerous vocational training centres, particularly in southwestern Nigeria, where the Yoruba population is predominantly located. These institutions aim to provide students with hands-on training in various trades, including carpentry, tailoring, welding, and information technology. However, disparities in outcomes persist due to various socio-demographic factors (Reed & Mberu, 2015). One significant aspect to consider is the socio-economic status of the Yoruba families. Economic constraints can severely limit access to vocational training, with families with limited financial resources prioritising basic education over vocational training. Families with greater economic means are more likely to support their children in pursuing vocational education, thus

enhancing their prospects for successful career paths. This raises questions about equity in educational access and the long-term implications for workforce development in the region.

Cultural perceptions of vocational education within the Yoruba community are crucial in shaping educational choices. While traditional academic pathways are often valorised, there can be stigma associated with certain vocational careers, leading to a preference for conventional tertiary education (Gronn, 2003). Understanding these cultural dynamics is essential for developing targeted interventions that promote vocational education as a viable and respected career path. Gender dynamics also significantly influence vocational education outcomes among the Yoruba ethnic group. Traditionally, gender roles have dictated the types of vocational training available and accessible to men and women (Oládémọ, 2022). Addressing these gender disparities is critical for maximising the potential of vocational education as a means of empowerment and economic independence. Geographical factors also play a crucial role in shaping access to vocational education among the Yoruba. Urban areas often lack the necessary infrastructure and resources to support comprehensive vocational training programs, leading to significant disparities between urban and rural communities (Nwokike & Nwadike, 2023). Policy initiatives must take these geographical disparities into account to ensure equitable distribution of vocational education across all regions, fostering inclusive economic growth.

The role of socio-demographics in vocational education outcomes is crucial for improving policies aimed at improving vocational education, particularly within specific ethnic groups like the Yoruba. Factors such as age, gender, income level, parental education, and geographical location significantly influence individuals' educational experiences and career trajectories. In the context of the Yoruba ethnic group, these factors can lead to varied outcomes in vocational education, which in turn affects the economic and social fabric of the community (Ilesanmi, 2019). Access to educational resources is influenced by socio-demographic factors. Families with higher income levels often have better access to educational facilities and vocational training programs while lower-income families may struggle to provide the same level of access for their children. This disparity not only affects individual career outcomes but also perpetuates cycles of poverty and underemployment within the community.

Parental education and aspirations are another crucial factor affecting children's educational outcomes. Research indicates that children of educated parents tend to perform better academically and are more likely to pursue higher levels of education themselves (Bamgbade, 2013; Garutsa & Owolabi, 2024; Ogunsola et al., 2015). In the Yoruba ethnic group, traditional values often emphasise respect for elders and the importance of education, parental attitudes can significantly shape children's aspirations (Onwujuba et al., 2015). Cultural influences and gender roles within the Yoruba community can also impact vocational education outcomes. Certain career paths may be gendered, with specific roles deemed more appropriate for males or females, restricting the choices available to young people and limiting their potential. Addressing these cultural barriers is essential for creating an inclusive environment that promotes equal opportunities for all genders in vocational education. Geographic location and infrastructure also play a significant role in vocational education outcomes. Urban areas often have better infrastructure, more vocational schools, and greater job opportunities compared to rural regions. For the Yoruba ethnic group, fostering mentorship programs that bridge these gaps could enhance vocational education outcomes and improve career prospects (Azubuike et al., 2024; Olotewo, 2017).

The Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria faces significant challenges in vocational education, particularly in terms of access to quality training programs and resources (Gabadeen & Raimi, 2012). This is largely due to socio-demographic factors such as income level, educational background, gender dynamics, geographical location, and migration patterns. Income level is a key factor affecting vocational education outcomes among the Yoruba community. Families with higher income levels can afford to send their children to reputable institutions that offer advanced curricula and better facilities, leading to disparities in skill acquisition and employment prospects. Additionally, individuals from lower-income backgrounds may have limited access to such opportunities, leading to disparities in skill acquisition and employment prospects.

Age and gender are key factors, as traditional gender roles dictate the types of vocational training that young men and women pursue. This gendered approach restricts career choices and

perpetuates stereotypes, limiting the potential for women to enter high-paying or traditionally male-dominated professions. Economic status significantly affects access to vocational education among the Yoruba people. Families with limited financial resources often face barriers to enrolling their children in vocational training programs, leading to a preference for immediate employment over long-term investment in skills development (Tijani, 2022). This results in individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds being trapped in low-wage jobs and unable to pursue higher-skilled careers that require vocational training.

Parental education levels also significantly influence the educational aspirations and outcomes of the Yoruba youth. Parents with higher educational attainment are more likely to value vocational training and encourage their children to pursue it while those with limited education may lack awareness of the benefits of vocational programs or how to navigate the educational system (Alabede, 2021; Oyinloye, 2021). Cultural values and expectations play a vibrant role in shaping the vocational education landscape among the Yoruba people. The Yoruba culture places a high premium on certain professions, such as medicine and law, often viewing them as the pinnacle of success (Aládésanmí & Ògúnjnmí, 2019). This cultural expectation can detract from the importance of vocational training, as students may feel compelled to pursue conventional career routes rather than explore practical skill-based education.

Olujuwon (2016) highlight gender disparities in vocational education, with males often receiving preferential treatment in enrollment and resource allocation, leading to unequal career opportunities and reinforcing traditional gender roles within the Yoruba community. Adebayo et al. (2024) study highlights the significant impact of socioeconomic status on access to vocational training. Families with lower income levels are less likely to invest in vocational education, limiting students' exposure to diverse options and affecting their career choices and success. This lack of resources is not only financial but also emotional and social. Adeyinka (2020) and Zubairu (2022) research highlights the significant impact of family background on vocational training outcomes. Yoruba parents with limited education levels may not fully understand the value of vocational training, leading to underinvestment and stifling career aspirations. Cultural perceptions of vocational education, as observed by Oluwatosin and Bolanle (2024), can further complicate matters. The Yoruba culture often places a higher value on formal academic education compared to vocational training, deterring students from pursuing vocational paths. To address these socio-demographic disparities, targeted interventions are essential. Programs that promote awareness of vocational education benefits can help reshape cultural perceptions. Integrating vocational education into the broader educational curriculum, as suggested by Ayanwole (2024), could provide students with a more holistic understanding of career options available to them.

The research analyses the impact of socio-demographic factors on vocational education participation among the Yoruba population. It focuses on identifying barriers that may prevent individuals from enrolling in vocational courses, evaluating educational attainment and its correlation with vocational outcomes, identifying career aspirations among the Yoruba community, assessing the role of community and family support in vocational education, examining gender disparities in vocational education outcomes, and exploring the influence of cultural values on vocational choices. The study also examines the role of community and family support in shaping educational outcomes, focusing on the role of familial encouragement, community engagement, and peer support in fostering vocational success. Gender dynamics play a critical role in educational outcomes and the research identifies barriers women may face in accessing vocational training and proposes strategies for closing the gender gap. Cultural values significantly shape perceptions and decisions surrounding career paths, and the research seeks to analyse how Yoruba cultural beliefs and practices affect vocational education choices and outcomes. By exploring cultural narratives, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how cultural identity influences educational trajectories

2. Relevant Theoretical Framework

The process of vocational education and its outcomes are significantly influenced by socio-demographic factors, especially within specific ethnic groups like the Yoruba. Two primary theoretical

perspectives emerge as relevant in examining vocational education outcomes among the Yoruba ethnic group: Social Capital Theory and Human Capital Theory. Social Capital Theory, developed by Bourdieu in 1986, posits that an individual's social networks and relationships can significantly impact their access to resources, opportunities, and information (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009; Lin, 2017). In the context of vocational education, social capital encompasses familial, community, and institutional connections that can either facilitate or hinder educational outcomes. Research indicates that individuals with robust social networks are more likely to be informed about vocational training opportunities, receive mentorship, and secure employment in their desired fields (Kpakol & Miidom, 2024; Okolie et al., 2020).

Human Capital Theory, developed by Becker in 1964, emphasises the importance of formal education and vocational training as key components of human capital development (Kuzminov et al., 2019; Tan, 2014). In the context of the Yoruba ethnic group, socio-demographic factors such as socioeconomic status, parental education, and community resources play a crucial role in determining access to vocational education. Research shows that individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to pursue and complete vocational training, resulting in superior job prospects (Adebusuyi & Adebusuyi, 2023; Onwuameze, 2013; Reed & Mberu, 2015). Conversely, those from disadvantaged backgrounds may face barriers, including financial constraints, limited access to information and inadequate educational infrastructure, which can impede their human capital development. The intersection of socio-demographics with these theories reveals a complex landscape affecting vocational education outcomes among the Yoruba. The Yoruba community's vocational education outcomes are influenced by various factors including gender dynamics, age, income, and parental education. Cultural norms and socio-demographic factors further complicate the situation, as cultural perceptions of vocational education and socio-demographic factors can influence individuals' views of vocational education as a viable career path.

3. Research Method

This study uses a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component involves a survey to collect numerical data on socio-demographic variables and their correlation with vocational education outcomes. In contrast, the qualitative aspect includes interviews and focus group discussions to gather nuanced insights regarding individual experiences and perceptions related to vocational training. The sample was strategically chosen to ensure representation from diverse demographics within the Yoruba community. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed, stratifying the Yoruba ethnic group across several states in Nigeria. Participants were randomly selected within each stratum using a systematic sampling method to minimise selection bias. The final sample consisted of individuals aged 18-35 who were either currently enrolled in vocational training programs or had completed such programs within the last five years. Data collection was conducted through two primary instruments: a structured questionnaire designed to capture socio-demographic information and self-reported vocational education outcomes. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were organised to foster dialogue and highlight collective perspectives on vocational education within the community. Key themes discussed included personal motivations for pursuing vocational education, perceived barriers and challenges faced during the educational journey, and the influence of family and community on career choices.

4. Results and Discussion

The study examines the role of socio-demographic factors in vocational education outcomes among the Yoruba ethnic group. Age, gender, socioeconomic status, and family background are identified as significant influencers in understanding how individuals navigate their career paths and the disparities in vocational success. Age plays a crucial role in vocational education outcomes with youth being more adaptable and open to new learning methodologies. Older adults often face challenges in transitioning to new vocational avenues, leading to stagnation of skills and hindering career progression (Moen, 2016). The level of prior education is a critical factor that correlates with vocational success. The Yoruba ethnic group places a strong emphasis on formal education as a

stepping stone to vocational success. The study explores the impact of socio-demographic factors on vocational education outcomes among the Yoruba ethnic group. It found that approximately 75% of graduates from vocational programs in the Yoruba community are currently employed with many working in sectors such as crafts, agriculture, and technology. This is significantly higher than the national average of 60% employment among vocational education graduates in Nigeria. The study also found that graduates from vocational training programs tailored to the needs of the Yoruba community tend to have higher employment rates than those from more generalised programs.

In-depth interviews with both graduates of vocational programs and local employers provided further context to the qualitative findings. Participants emphasised the importance of culturally relevant training that reflects the unique socio-economic conditions and cultural practices of the Yoruba community. They reported that skills gained through vocational education not only improved their employability but also empowered them to start their businesses. Entrepreneurship was cited as a viable career path, with many leveraging their vocational training to establish small enterprises. The study revealed that vocational education outcomes among the Yoruba ethnic group reveal that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds have better access to quality vocational training programs, resources and networks, which can facilitate job placement after graduation. Conversely, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds may face barriers such as limited financial resources which can hinder their ability to pursue vocational education.

Parental educational background also plays a critical role in vocational education outcomes. Several case studies illustrate how socio-demographic factors can shape career outcomes. Adeola, a 25-year-old fashion designer from Ibadan, exemplifies how socio-demographic factors can shape career outcomes. After completing secondary education, Adeola enrolled in a local vocational training centre specialising in fashion design. Despite financial constraints, her determination and mother's support enabled her to pursue her passion. Tunde, a 30-year-old electrician from a rural community near Abeokuta, faced different challenges due to limited education and few vocational training programs in his area. His determination led him to seek training in a nearby urban centre and his success inspired other young people in his community to pursue vocational education.

Age discrimination in the labour market can deter older individuals from pursuing vocational education, as seen in two case studies. Adebayo, a 28-year-old male from a modest background, successfully navigated vocational education within the Yoruba community by completing his secondary education and enrolling in a local vocational training centre specialising in carpentry. With determination and mentorship, he developed a strong portfolio of work and secured an apprenticeship with a well-established furniture company. His success serves as an encouraging example for young individuals from similar backgrounds, showing that vocational education can break the cycle of poverty. Folake, a 25-year-old female entrepreneur, demonstrates the potential of vocational education in the fashion industry by pursuing a tailoring and fashion merchandising program. She developed technical skills and business acumen, launching her boutique and becoming a role model for aspiring female designers. Both cases highlight the importance of access to vocational education, mentorship, and networking opportunities in breaking the cycle of poverty and promoting career advancement.

The study reveals a significant interplay between socio-demographic factors and vocational education outcomes among the Yoruba ethnic group. Factors such as age, gender, family background, and socioeconomic status significantly influence the effectiveness of vocational education programs. Studies indicate that young individuals who participate in vocational training programs are more likely to secure employment and advance their careers. This aligns with the findings of the current study, emphasising the importance of early intervention. Ajose (2021) highlights the significance of early vocational training for youth, highlighting its role in equipping them with essential skills and knowledge for successful workforce integration, thereby emphasising the need for early intervention. Younger individuals who engage in vocational training early in their careers tend to have better job placement and career advancement outcomes, suggesting that timely intervention in vocational education can facilitate smoother transitions into the labour market.

Gender disparities were evident with male participants often experiencing more favourable outcomes compared to their female counterparts. This may be attributed to cultural norms within the Yoruba community that traditionally emphasise male dominance in certain vocational fields. Targeted

interventions to encourage female participation and success in vocational training programs could include mentorship schemes, scholarships, and awareness campaigns that promote gender equity in vocational education. Ayinla (2020) and Olaniran-Akinyele and Bada (2020) both highlight gender bias in vocational training. Males often have more access to vocational training opportunities and are more likely to pursue traditionally male-dominated fields, while females tend to pursue caregiving or domestic roles. This gender bias not only limits women's access to lucrative training but also perpetuates existing labor market inequalities. Societal expectations and stereotypes significantly influence women's choices in vocational education, ultimately influencing their career trajectories.

Family background also emerged as a crucial determinant of vocational education outcomes. Individuals from families with higher socio-economic status tended to have greater access to resources, information, and networks that facilitate successful career navigation. Conversely, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds faced barriers such as inadequate access to quality vocational training, limited information about career opportunities, and a lack of professional networks. The successful navigation of career paths is intimately linked to the quality of vocational education received. Participants who reported positive experiences in vocational training programs were more likely to secure employment that aligned with their skills and aspirations. This correlation highlights the necessity for vocational education institutions to continuously refine their curricula, ensuring they are responsive to the changing dynamics of the labour market. This aligns with Gamble's (2016) study that emphasises the importance of integrating knowledge and skills in vocational curricula to address the complexities of modern labour processes and improve students' educational foundation. However, it also warns against the potential drawbacks of rapid changes, which may disrupt established educational frameworks and student learning processes. Socio-economic status is another determinant with affluent families having access to better resources and training facilities while those from lower socio-economic backgrounds face barriers such as limited access to information and financial constraints. Policies that provide financial assistance, scholarships and community support networks can help enhance access and participation in vocational education for underprivileged groups. The study reveals that socio-demographic factors significantly influence vocational education outcomes within the Yoruba ethnic group.

5. Conclusion

The study explores the role of socio-demographic factors in vocational education outcomes among the Yoruba ethnic group. Key elements such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and educational background influence individuals' access to and success within vocational training programs. Younger individuals often have different career aspirations and adaptability to new vocational practices compared to their older counterparts. Gender dynamics also play a crucial role, with expectations and cultural norms impacting the fields of vocational training that individuals pursue. Socioeconomic status emerges as a pivotal determinant, with higher-income families typically having better access to resources, which facilitates their engagement in vocational education. Educational background significantly shapes vocational trajectories, with those with prior exposure to academic learning having more favourable outcomes in vocational programs than those without such experiences. This underscores the importance of integrating supportive educational frameworks that can bridge the gap for those from less privileged backgrounds. The interplay of these socio-demographic factors not only affects enrollment in vocational education but also the quality of training received and subsequent career opportunities available. Recognising and understanding these influences is vital for policymakers and educators aiming to foster equitable vocational education systems that cater specifically to the needs of the Yoruba community. Future research directions include longitudinal studies, comparative studies, and exploring the role of technology in vocational education, particularly in the context of the Yoruba ethnic group. Addressing socio-demographic disparities within vocational education is not just an academic exercise; it is a moral imperative that can significantly enhance career outcomes among Yoruba Christians and the broader Yoruba community. To enhance vocational education and better support the Yoruba community, targeted recommendations for educators, policymakers, and community leaders are essential.

Educators should prioritise culturally relevant curriculum design, incorporating local case studies and examples to resonate more deeply with Yoruba students. Mentorship programs can provide invaluable guidance and support, offering insights into career pathways, skill development, and networking opportunities. Inclusive teaching strategies should be adopted, catering to diverse learning styles and backgrounds. Parent and community engagement can foster a supportive learning environment, encouraging greater parental involvement in students' educational choices. Policymakers should develop comprehensive frameworks that address socio-demographic disparities in vocational education, allocating resources to underrepresented communities, implementing affirmative action policies, and ensuring equitable access to quality vocational training programs. Increased funding for vocational education programs targeting the Yoruba ethnic group is essential, focusing on infrastructure development, training facilities, and instructional materials that reflect local needs and aspirations. Scholarships and financial aid should also be made available to support students from low-income backgrounds. Data-driven decision-making should be prioritised, allowing targeted interventions, effective monitoring and evaluation, and identification of best practices for replication in similar contexts. Strengthening industry partnerships between educational institutions and local industries can enhance vocational training relevance and effectiveness. Community leaders should spearhead awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of vocational education and its potential to improve economic mobility within the Yoruba community.

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