

Gender perception on the impact of vocational-technical education on the socio-economic development of Urbanizing Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria

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Article History

Received on 8 October 2021

1st Revision on 13 October 2021

2nd Revision on 14 October 2021

3rd Revision on 15 October 2021

4th Revision on 1 November 2021

5th Revision on 11 November 2021

Accepted on 18 March 2022

Abstract

Purpose: The study is aimed at determining the impact of vocational-technical education on youths' socio-economic development.

Methodology of Research: Descriptive design was adopted in carrying out the study, with 4 research questions and hypotheses, 6,003 students of the population from the 12 vocational-technical schools in the state, a sample of 400 students, reliability coefficient of 0.72. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions; z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 Alpha level of significance.

Results: The study revealed that vocational-technical education brings about economic development, skill acquisition, employment opportunities, aside from poverty reduction in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The study recommends the provision of infrastructure, adequate funding, and proper implementation of policies in vocational-technical schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Limitations: This study was limited to the 12 existing public technical-vocational schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Variables such as skills acquisition, economic development, employment opportunities, and poverty reduction were examined.

Contribution: The study will expose the youths to various opportunities and possibilities, helping them to channel their strength and energy to reasonable economic activities. By so doing, social vices will be controlled.

Keywords: Education, Metropolis, Socio-economic development, Technical, Urbanization, Vocational

How to cite: Echeonwu, C., and Abali, T. P. (2022). Gender perception on the impact of vocational-technical education on the socio-economic development of Urbanizing Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria. *Journal of Social, Humanity, and Education*, 2(3), 197-210.

1. Introduction

The increasing rate of unemployment among youths in Rivers State is alarming. This has resulted in increasing crime such as cultism, incessant killings, political thuggery, vandalization of oil installations, oil theft, and kidnapping (Baker & Hanafi, 2007; Asnul & Ruluzam, 2010; Adeniyi, 2016, Carlos, 2016; Echeonwu, 2018). These activities are majorly carried out by youths as an alternative means of economic survival (Olajide, 2015; RSMYD, 2016). In Rivers State, the situation has labeled the region as hostile and uncondusive for businesses and development as against the peace and sanity enjoyed by the residents before the escalation of this ugly trend. It is no longer news, but a reality that has placed the State on the frontlines of local, national, and international conversations on

a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. It is a situation that has created and planted fears of uncertainty in the minds of the residents. As such, any sudden fracas on the roads or streets stirs up the residents to run and seek protection. This situation is indeed a bad omen that needs a holistic approach as a control measure on social vices.

It has been observed that a relationship exists between increasing urbanization/population and criminality, especially among youths ([Beke, 2010](#); [Fayemi, 2012](#); [Anyaegbu, 2017](#); [Echeonwu, 2018](#)). The population of the youth is high and the opportunity for white-collar jobs in this era of the retrogressive economy is slim ([Bello, Danjuma, & Adamu, 2007](#); [Mohammad, 2014](#); [Hoffman, 2015](#)). Something has to be done in order to give the overgrowing youth population a sense of belonging. It is believed that most of the youths lack the requisite skills for employment in a few available industries, corporate organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and government agencies directions ([FRN 2001, 2014](#); [NBS 2017](#); [UNESCO, 2002, 2015](#); [World Bank, 2015](#)). If a road map for youth empowerment is not given attention, Rivers State might witness a more criminal atmosphere in the future. The ongoing relocation of industries from Rivers State is as a result of criminality among the youths such as kidnapping and armed robbery ([Beke, 2010](#)). If these mal behavioral activities in Rivers State are not adequately addressed, it will result in bad economic conditions to the State. Moreover, kidnapping, illegal oil refineries, cultism, murder, oil pipeline vandalism are condemnable ([Princewill, 2017](#)). Criminality should not be a means of socio-economic survival of some unemployed youths in Rivers State.

Being unemployed should not be an excusable reason for a group of individuals or youths on the streets of Rivers State to engage in criminal activities. On the other hand, most of the youths involved in social vices in Rivers State have no skills but want to live in luxury. There is huge unemployment in many parts of the world, especially in Nigeria, resulting in sleepless nights among many young people ([Anyaegbu, 2017](#)). This is one of the causes of crime in many parts of the world. Unemployment is indeed a cause for alarm in Rivers State because [NBS \(2017\)](#) reported that the state has the highest unemployment rate in Nigeria at 41.82 percent in the third quarter of 2017. Going by this report, it means that in every family in Rivers State, there are unemployed people, and because of this, some of them are engaged in activities leading to economic sabotage which disrupt the normal flow of economic indices ([Olajide, 2015](#)). It is on this basis, the researchers carried out this study on "Gender perception on the impact of vocational-technical education and the socio-economic development of urbanizing Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria". This is because if nothing is done to control the increasing youth population; there will be a state of incessant criminality.

From the foregoing, it has been revealed that empowerment can best be attained through the acquisition of practical skills. Therefore, technical and vocational education has a strong influence on the development of skills. In search of a solution for the empowerment of youths in Rivers State, the researchers strongly believe that the youths could borrow a new leaf by embracing skill acquisition. However, the study advocates for youth skills development driven by the technical and vocational schools in Rivers State because it believes that unlimited opportunities to be self-employed or employed by others have been justified. This kind of study is crucial in Rivers State owing to its experience of an alarming youth population and its negative effects in recent times. Moreover, local and foreign investigations that were reviewed in this study did not capture most of the variables in this present study as they were too scanty to provide answers as in the present study. In an attempt to bridge this gap, this research was undertaken to address "youths' gender perceptions on the impact of vocational-technical education on socio-economic development in the urbanizing Port Harcourt metropolis of Rivers-State"

Research questions

1. To what extent has vocational-technical education led to the skills acquisition of youths in Rivers State?
2. To what extent has vocational-technical education impacted the youths' economic development in Rivers State?

3. To what extent has vocational-technical education impacted the employment opportunities of youths in Rivers State?
4. To what extent has vocational-technical education led to poverty reduction among the youths in Rivers State?

Aim and objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate youths' gender perception on the impact of vocational-technical education on socio-economic development in the urbanizing Port Harcourt metropolis of Rivers State. Specific objectives include to:

1. determine the perception of male and female youths on the impact of vocational-technical education on skills acquisition in Rivers State.
2. investigate the perception of male and female youths on the influence of vocational-technical education on economic development in Rivers State.
3. find out the perception of male and female youths on the impact of vocational-technical education on employment opportunities in Rivers State.
4. ascertain the perception of male and female youths on the impact of vocational-technical education on poverty reduction in Rivers State.

Research hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female youths on the impact of vocational-technical education on skills acquisition among youths in Rivers State.
2. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of male and female youths in Rivers State on the influence of vocational-technical education on economic development among youths.
3. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of male and female youths on vocational-technical education and the impact of employment opportunities among Rivers State youths.
4. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female youths on the influence of vocational-technical education on poverty reduction among youths in Rivers State.

2. Literature review

The economic development of youth is critical, and it necessitates first-rate thought and driving force for its realization. The goal of economic development for youth is to change their negative mindset, reduce poverty, economically empower them, and control crime that stems from their idleness ([Uduak and Ekong, 2016](#); [Kimberly, 2017](#)) of unemployed youths in Rivers State are synonymous with crime. Youth economic development is increasingly important with more than 18 billion young people in the world today, changing demographics, the Arab spring, and to avoid violent extremism where many youths are unemployed and disaffected ([Hoffman, 2015](#)).

A global population of three billion young people is estimated to be under the age of 25. Of this figure, about 1.3 billion young people range between the 15 and 24 age brackets, making up a quarter of the world's working population, but representing half of the world's unemployed ([Ozohu, 2006](#); [Williams and Claudia, 2013](#)). The assertions pointed out the fact that helping young people to earn a living through skills acquisition can make a crucial contribution to poverty reduction. As a matter of fact, technical and vocational education will inculcate entrepreneurial values into young people and help them to grasp the economic opportunities around them. It asserts that, in this era of shrinking economic activity, governments should endeavour to provide the necessary infrastructure and policies that are required for skill acquisition among their citizenry. Without appropriate policy and technological skills, the entrepreneurial spirit that drives economic development and brings job creation will be lacking ([Ome-Egonu & Kinikanwo, 2014](#); [Adeniye, 2016](#)).

[Dike \(2005\)](#) noted that "Nigerian youths are facing unemployment challenges. This ought to be a concern that should draw the attention of the government." The government could advance their

unemployed state by generating jobs and increasing funding for vocational and technical education, from which they could acquire some skills and learn lifelong trade. In a similar view, the National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education (NCSEE) linked youth economic development to entrepreneurship education and described it as a key to drive of any economy. Accordingly, small businesses create wealth and the vast majority of jobs for entrepreneurially-minded individuals. According to their emphasis, entrepreneurship education was developed to prepare youths and adults to succeed in an entrepreneurial economy. The youth represent the economic future; if they are uneducated, the economy will become a deprived and unproductive economy. This will affect national development.

[Carlos \(2016\)](#) defines youth economic development in light of entrepreneurial education that ushers in the following benefits: employment creation, provision of local goods and services to the community, thereby revitalizing and raising the degree of competition. The idea is to enhance consumer goods and services by promoting ideas and flexibility through experience-based learning, promoting a strong social and cultural identity, and continuously creating and growing diverse employment opportunities different from the traditional fields available in a particular city.

From the foregoing, technical-vocational education has the capacity to empower individuals who pass through it. As such, adopting it in youth empowerment would yield landmark results, and economically, the youths would be viable in Rivers State. [Olajide \(2015\)](#) observed that unemployment in Nigeria, especially among youths, is alarming and noted that technical and vocational education needs to be repositioned towards eradicating unemployment in Nigeria. He further noted that the main aim of vocational and technical education is to equip students with necessary skills as preparation for employment opportunities or self-reliance. Hence, technical and vocational education (TVE) can be seen as a solution to unemployment in Nigeria.

[Mohammad \(2014\)](#) investigated the function of technical-vocational education. The population of the study consists of 430 alumni graduates from technical and vocational schools in Bushehr City. Data were obtained from 110 out of the 430 graduates. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to analyze the generated data. The result of the study indicated that technical and vocational education resulted in the advancement of alumni in securing good jobs and making them satisfied with their employment. From the findings of the study, technical and vocational have an effective function in employment opportunities that bring about youth empowerment.

[Fayemi \(2012\)](#) investigated youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Ogun State. The adopted descriptive research method for the investigation All the local governments in Ogun State constituted the population of the study. The results obtained were recorded and recommended to be included in the youth empowerment policy as a policy for the alleviation of poverty among youths. According to the study's findings, youth empowerment policies will go a long way toward alleviating the suffering of young people. Youths should be involved in the design and implementation of policies aimed at alleviating their poverty level. This empirical study is good in this study because it dealt with youth empowerment, which is part of what the current researcher is studying, and it would help with youth economic viability and would serve as a social control on criminality as well as joblessness among the youths.

[Baker and Hanafi \(2007\)](#) carried out a study on assessing the employability skills of technical-vocational students in Malaysia. In their study, a descriptive survey design was adopted. The findings of the study revealed that the mean score for the overall employability score was quite high. This empirical study is relevant to this current study because it sought to address youth unemployment through technical and vocational skills. Consequently, technical-vocational education can be used as a tool for youth empowerment.

Similarly, [Bello et al. \(2007\)](#) investigated the vocational training needs of 15-year-old school drop-out youths in the Bauchi State metropolis. This study revealed that vocational training has an impact on skills, knowledge, and abilities for employment. When a person is employed independently or

dependently, he or she is empowered. The propensity to indulge in crimes may not be there. Youth empowerment in Rivers State should be centered on the acquisition of skills through technical and vocational education.

The above shows that technical and vocational skills help in job independence and wealth creation, and their introduction in youth empowerment in Rivers State will enable the youths to be independent economically. From all indications, the theories, clarifications, and empirical studies show that education helps an individual to function worthwhile in different capacities in society. Without education, the selection of individuals for various roles in society remains complex. Since education gives guidance in role allocation, empowering youths in order to salvage them from unemployment that has pushed some of them into criminality is achievable because all the reviewed studies vehemently point to the fact that education through technical and vocational studies equips individuals with vital skills for economic activities. Understanding from the studies reviewed accounts for education as the basis of human and society's development. Based on the facts, technical and vocational education geared towards young people's skills development should be exclusively prioritized and highly encouraged. An enlightened population will build a resourceful society where the economic growth and prosperity of such a society will be a collective effort of all because each component of society plays a shared role as described by functionalist theory.

Education is highly paramount in the social development of individuals, and it is a guaranteed means of economic attainment and stability. The opportunities and possibilities that education brings are immense. However, the educational approach towards the all-round development of youths is a good omen for the realization of skills development of youths. The empirical studies in this research show that empowerment can best be attained through the acquisition of practical skills ([Amegayibor, 2021](#); [Mwesigwa, et al., 2021](#); [Olin, et al., 2021](#); [Zahedy et al., 2021](#)). Therefore, technical and vocational education has a strong influence on the development of skills. In search of a solution for the empowerment of youth in Rivers State, the researcher strongly believes that the youths could borrow a new leaf by embracing skill acquisition. However, the study advocates for youth skills development driven by the technical and vocational schools in Rivers State because it believes that unlimited opportunities to be self-employed or employed by others have been justified. Several related studies of this magnitude have been conducted in both local and international contexts, but such studies have not been conducted in Rivers State for youth empowerment. This kind of study is crucial in Rivers State owing to its experience of an alarming youth population and its negative effects in recent times. Several related studies of this magnitude have been conducted in both local ([FRN, 2001](#); [Beke, 2010](#); [Fayemi, 2012](#); [Mohammad, 2014](#); [Olajide, 2015](#); [Adeniye, 2016](#); [Anyaegebu, 2017](#); [NBS, 2017](#); [Princewill, 2017](#)) and international ([Asnul & Ruluzam, 2010](#); [Baker & Hanafi, 2007](#); [Carlos, 2016](#); [UNESCO, 2002, 2015](#); [World Bank, 2015](#); [Amegayibor, 2021](#); [Mwesigwa, et al., 2021](#); [Olin, et al., 2021](#); [Zahedy et al., 2021](#)) contexts. However, such youth empowerment studies have not been conducted in Rivers State of Nigeria. Moreover, local and foreign investigations that were reviewed in this study did not capture most of the variables in this present study as they were too scanty to provide answers as in the present study. Therefore, this study intends to bridge such a gap.

Study area

The area of this study is Rivers State, one of the 36 states in Nigeria. It is the Treasure Base of the nation of all Nigerian citizens and foreigners because of its economic status. It is among the oldest states created out of the Eastern region by General Yakubu Gowon's led military administration in May, 1967. Its environment is mostly covered and surrounded by oceans and rivers. Presently, there is a total of 23 Local Government Areas. They include Abua-Odual, Ahoada-East, Ahoada-West, Andoni, Akuku-Toru, Asari-Toru Degema and Bonny. Others are Etche, Emohua, Eleme, Ikwerre, Obio/Akpor, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Okrika, Gokana, Khana, Tai, Omuma, Ogu-Bolo, Oyigbo Opobo-Nkoro, and Port Harcourt and its administrative capital is Port Harcourt (Figure 1).

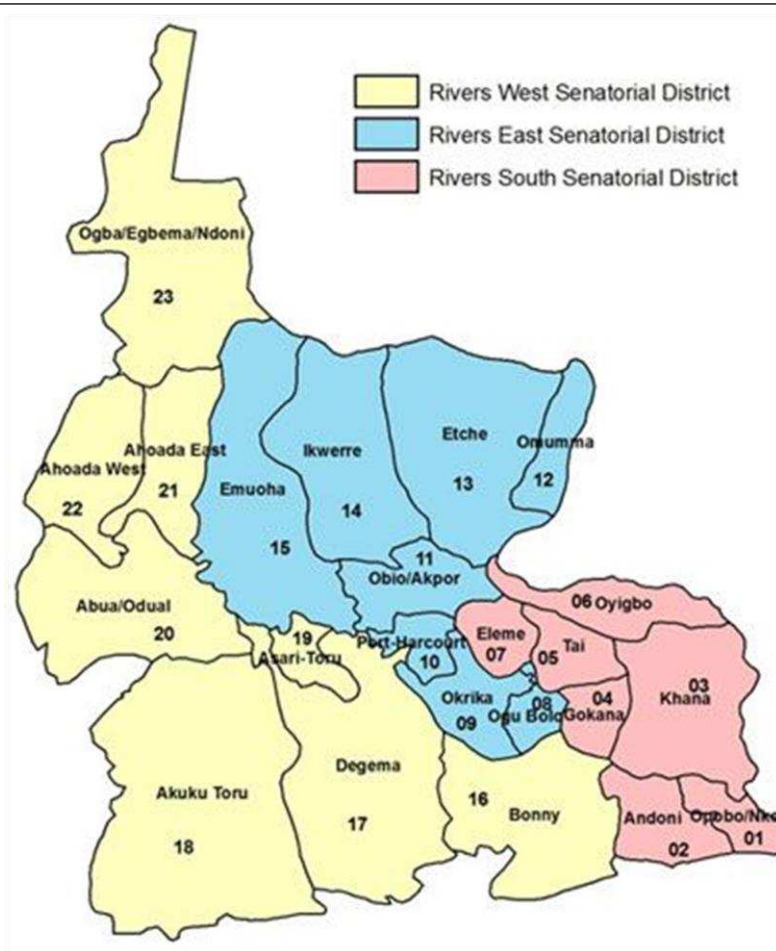


Figure 1. Study Area Showing Senatorial Zones

3. Methods and materials

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all the students in the 12 public vocational-technical schools in Rivers State. The population of students in the public Vocational-Technical Schools in Rivers-State is 6,003. A sample size of 400 students was used for the study. This is larger than the minimum sample size of 375, statistically estimated using Taro Yamene's formula. The non-proportional stratified random sampling technique was used for the study. The study area (Rivers State) was divided into four strata namely North, South, East, and West; 100 respondents were drawn from each stratum as representatives of the population.

A self-developed questionnaire titled "Vocational-Technical Education for Youth Empowerment Scale (VTEYES)" The VTEYES was used for data collection. This questionnaire consists of six sections: A, B, C, D, E, and F. Section A consists of bio-data. Section B contains items 1-5 that determine youth economic empowerment; Section C contains items 6-12 that determine skill acquisition; Section D contains items 13-22 that determine poverty reduction; Section E contains items 23-26 that determine employment opportunities; and Section F contains items 27-30 that determine illiteracy reduction. All the items were structured based on the modified four-point likert scale. They include Strongly Agree (SD), Agree = (A), Disagree = (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), with numerical values of 4,3,2 and 1 for positive keyed items and 1,2,3, and 4 for negatively keyed items to measure the VTEYES.

The validity of the questionnaire (VTEYES) was based on face and content validation. This was determined by the researcher's supervisor and two other experts in the Department of Educational Foundations. They vetted the items in terms of their relevance, appropriateness, and language level. The pilot testing with 40 respondents outside the target population in Government Secondary School Ozuzu in Etche was estimated to determine the reliability of the instrument using the Cronbach Alpha. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained and is high enough to ascertain the reliability of the said instrument.

Data analysis method

The 400 copies of the retrieved instrument retrieved were organized and analyzed. The calculated mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. A 0.05 alpha level was also used to test the hypotheses.

The weighted response was used to calculate the criterion mean as shown below:

Where the criterion mean (X) of the response = $4+3+2+14 = 10/4 = 2.5$.

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points

3 points for disagreement (A).

Strongly Disagree (DA) = 2 points.

1 point for disagreement (A).

The responses which received a mean equal to or greater than the criterion mean were considered positive, while those below the criterion mean were negative.

4. Results and discussions

Research Question 1: What is the extent of vocational-technical education's impact on the economic development of youths in Rivers-State?

On analyzing the instrument, the grand mean was calculated to be 6.04, which when compared to the criterion mean of 2.5, while the Standard Deviation was 1.40. As such, this was considered a positive impact since the grand mean was greater than the criterion mean. However, the extent to which vocational-technical education has impacted economic development was arrived at using the range below:

1.0- 1.9	Very Low Extent	(VLE)
2.0- 2.9	Low Extent	(LE)
3.0- 3.9	High Extent	(HE)

4.0 and above Very High Extent (VHE)

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation Rating of Vocational-Technical Education and Youths' Skills Acquisition in Rivers-State

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Remarks
1	It can help me to become a professional in my area of specialization	176	187	75	62	400	6.19	1.45	Positive
2	I will not be paid like unskilled worker	146	140	44	70	400	6.07	1.41	Positive
3	Jobs will be assigned to me as a specialist.	176	41	106	77	400	6.06	1.49	Positive
4	It will give me the opportunity to be self-employed.	105	179	70	46	400	5.89	1.21	Positive
5	It will help me to become a producer of goods and services.	81	233	67	19	400	3.93	1.44	Positive
	Grand Mean/ Standard Deviation						5.62	1.40	Very High Extent (VHE)

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork

Research Question 2: To what extent has Vocational-Technical Education led to youth economic development in Rivers-State?

On analyzing the instrument, the grand mean was calculated to be 6.04, which when compared to the criterion mean of 2.5, while the Standard Deviation was 1.51. As such, this was considered a positive impact since the grand mean was greater than the criterion mean. However, the extent to which Vocational-Technical Education has impacted Economic development was arrived at using the range below:

- 1.0- 1.9 Very Low Extent (VLE)
- 2.0- 2.9 Low Extent (LE)
- 3.0- 3.9 High Extent (HE)
- 4.0 and above Very High Extent (VHE)

Table 2. Mean & standard deviation scores of Vocational-Technical Education and economic development of the youths in Rivers-State

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Remarks
	Research Question one								
1.	It will help me to be outstanding in society.	145	129	54	72	400	6.03	1.56	Positive
2.	It will add value to my life and can help me to start a small-scale business	130	63	107	100	400	5.77	1.51	Positive
3.	It will bring about industrialization and help in nation-building.	104	120	110	66	400	5.92	1.4	Positive
4.	It can reduce the crime rate.	141	93	108	58	400	6.08	1.46	Positive

5	It can help me to responsible for family issues.	150	136	68	46	400	6.33	1.16	Positive
	Grand Mean/Standard deviation						6.04	1.51	Very High Extent (VHE)

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork

Research Question 3: To what extent has vocational-technical education helped youth employment opportunities in Rivers State?

On analyzing the instrument, the grand mean was calculated to be 5.78, which when compared to the criterion mean of 2.5, while the Standard Deviation was 1.41. As such, this was considered a positive impact since the grand mean was greater than the criterion mean. However, the extent to which vocational-technical education has impacted economic development was arrived at using the range below:

- 1.0- 1.9 Very Low Extent (VLE)
- 2.0- 2.9 Low Extent (LE)
- 3.0- 3.9 High Extent (HE)
- 4.0 and above Very High Extent (VHE)

Table 3. Mean & Standard deviation on how Vocation-Technical Education and employment opportunities for the youths in Rivers State

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Remarks
1	It will help me to discover opportunities around me.	160	113	74	53	400	6.30	1.28	Positive
2	I will not live a sub-standard life	28	16	271	75	400	3.92	1.91	Positive
3	My skills will sustain me and I will not be involved in kidnapping activities.	75	102	206	17	400	5.42	1.44	Positive
4	It will help me not to involve in political thuggery induced by financial gifts from politicians	162	103	93	42	400	6.32	1.27	Positive
5	I will not join cult group in order to survive.	240	140	12	8	400	6.98	1.18	Positive
	Grand Mean/Standard Deviation						5.78	1.41	Very High Extent (VHE)

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork

Research Question 4: How has vocational-technical education helped poverty reduction among the youths in Rivers State?

To answer research question 4, the mean and standard deviation were used. The analysis in Table 4.4 below reveals the results for the 5 items administered. The grand mean was calculated to be 5.31, which when compared to the criterion mean of 2.5, the standard deviation was 0.96. As such, this was considered a positive impact since the grand mean was greater than the criterion mean.

Table 4. Mean & Standard Deviation of Vocational-Technical Education and Poverty Reduction among the youths in Rivers-State

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Remarks
1	It will bring job opportunities.	146	140	44	70	400	6.07	1.26	Positive
2	I can be independent.	105	239	44	12	400	6.20	1.07	Positive
3	It can provide me the opportunity of working in any company that needs my skill.	110	269	5	16	400	3.00	0.79	Positive
4	It can help me to create jobs for others.	240	140	6	14	400	7.09	0.41	Positive
5	It will help me to have access to quality education	162	103	93	42	400	4.32	1.27	Positive
	Grand Mean/ Standard deviation						5.31	0.96	Very High Extent (VHE)

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork

Hypotheses testing:

The hypothesis was calculated using the grand means and standard deviations of the factors under study. The value obtained provides the z (calculated) which will be compared to the Z (tables) to form the basis of any decision concerning the hypothesis at 5% level of significance ($\alpha=0.05$) and a 95% level of confidence. Vocational-technical education has no significant relationship with youth skills acquisition in Rivers State.

The null hypothesis was tested using z-test analysis. The z-calculated from the analysis is presented in Table 4.5 and is 11.75. This is greater than the z-table value of 1.960. Since z-critical is greater than F tables ($11.75 > 1.960$), we reject the null hypothesis.

Table 5. The summary of results obtained in Table 1

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Alpha	Decision
Female	96	3.48	0.60	398	11.75	1.960	0.05	Reject
Male	304	2.54	0.91					Ho1

Source: Researchers' processed data

There is no significant relationship between vocational-technical education and the economic development of youths in Rivers State.

Answer: The null hypothesis was tested using z-test analysis. The z-calculated calculated from the analysis is presented in Table 4.6 is 6.00. This is greater than the z-table value of 1.960. Since z-critical is greater than F tables ($11.75 > 1.960$), we reject the null hypothesis.

Table 6. The summary of results obtained is presented in Table 2

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Alpha	Decision
Female	96	3.28	0.76	398	6.00	1.960	0.05	Reject
Male	304	2.76	0.96					Ho2

Source: Researchers' processed data

There is no significant relationship between Vocational-Technical education and youths' employment opportunities in Rivers-State.

The null hypothesis was tested using z-test analysis,). The z-critical calculated from the analysis as presented in Table 4.5 is 1.88. This is less than the z-table value of 1.960. Since z-critical is greater than F tables (1.88 1.960), we accept the null hypothesis.

Table 7. The summary of results obtained is presented in Table 3

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Alpha	Decision
Female	96	3.06	0.57	398	1.88	1.960	0.05	Accept Ho3
Male	304	2.91	0.88					

Source: Researchers' processed data

Vocational-Technical Education and Poverty Reduction have no significant relationship among the youths in Rivers State.

Answer: The null hypothesis was tested using the hypothesis was tested using z-test analysis,). The z-critical calculated from the analysis as presented in Table 4.8 is 11.75. This is greater than the Z-table value of 1.960. Since z-critical is greater than F tables (3.00 > 1.960), we reject the null hypothesis.

Table 8. The summary of results obtained is presented in Table 4

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Alpha	Decision
Female	96	3.33	0.54	398	3.00	1.960	0.05	Rejected Ho4
Male	304	3.12	0.71					

Source: Researchers' processed data

Summary of findings

This study arrived at the following findings:

1. There is a significant difference between female and male mean scores on vocational-technical education on economic empowerment among the youths in Rivers State.
2. There is a significant difference between female and male mean scores on vocational-technical education on skill acquisition among the youths in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference between female and male mean scores on vocational-technical education can lead to poverty reduction among the youths in Rivers State.
4. There is a significant difference between female and male mean scores on vocational-technical education on employment opportunities among the youths in Rivers State

Discussion of findings

Vocational -technical education and economic development

The answer to research question one shows that the mean value of 3.48 was gotten from female youths while 2.54 was the mean value for male youths on the role of vocational-technical education on youth empowerment in Rivers State. This means that the role of vocational-technical education affects female youth's empowerment more than how it affects male youths. It can be deduced that there is a significant difference between female and male mean value on the role of vocational-technical education on youth empowerment in Rivers State. This finding is supported by [Asnul and Ruluzam \(2010\)](#) who investigated the sustainable development in technical and vocational education subjects, and affirmed that technical-vocational education has the capacity to empower individuals who passed through it. As such, adopting it in youth empowerment would yield a landmark results economically in Rivers State.

Vocational-technical education on skills acquisition

The answer to research question two shows that the mean value of 3.28 was gotten from female youths while 2.76 was the mean value for male youths on the role of vocational-technical education on acquisition skills in Rivers State. This means that the role of vocational-technical education affects female skills acquisition more than how it affects male youths. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference between female and male mean values on the role of vocational-technical

education on skills acquisition in Rivers State. This finding is supported by [Olajide \(2015\)](#) who investigated the repositioning of technical and vocational education towards eradicating unemployment in Nigeria, and affirmed that the main aim of vocational and technical education is designed to equip students with necessary skills as preparation for employment opportunities or self-independent and reliance.

Vocational-technical education and poverty reduction

The answer to research question three shows that the mean value of 3.06 was gotten from female youths while 2.91 was the mean value for male youths on the role of vocational-technical education on poverty reduction in Rivers State. This means that the role of vocational-technical education assists female youth in poverty reduction than how it assists male youths. It can be concluded that there is no significant difference between female and male mean scores on the role of vocational-technical education in poverty reduction in Rivers State. The dreams of alleviating lack in Nigeria in the 21st century may not be possible if nothing is done to improve the provision of sufficient amenities and equipment relevant to the vocational education curriculum ([Obiefuna, 2003](#)). These facilities and equipment according to the author will assist the youths to acquire practical skills needed to be self-reliant and sufficiency in terms of food production and manpower development. The above assertion is against the finding of this study.

Vocational-technical education and employment opportunities

The answer to research question four shows that the mean value of 3.33 was gotten from female youths while 3.12 was the mean value for male youths on the role of vocational-technical education on employment opportunities in Rivers State. This means that vocational-technical education provides employment opportunities for female youths more than how it provides for male youths. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference between female and male scores on the role of vocational-technical education on employment opportunities in Rivers State. This finding is supported by [Fayemi \(2012\)](#) in his study on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Ogun State. He concluded that a youth empowerment policy will go a long way to alleviate suffering of the youths. To this end, the government needs to involve the youths in the design and implementation policies aimed at alleviating their poverty level. In the same vein, [Mohammad \(2014\)](#) investigated the function of technical-vocational education, the author affirmed that technical and vocational education resulted in advancement of alumni to secure good job and make them satisfied with their employment. From the findings of the study, technical-vocational education has an effective function in employment opportunities that brings about youth empowerment.

5. Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that vocational-technical education can bring about economic empowerment, skills acquisition, provision of employment opportunities, and reduction of illiteracy in Rivers State. However, it does not necessarily result in poverty reduction.

The government should establish vocational-technical schools in every community in Rivers State so as to enable the youths to assess the programs. Furthermore, government must ensure vocational-technical education is a compulsory system of education for the youths at all levels, a review of the National Policy on Vocational-technical Education in order to evaluate if its objectives have been achieved, government should ensure the provision of infrastructural facilities that will aid the in the teaching and learning of the vocational-technical studies, government should ensure adequate funding of vocational-technical educational system since it is the bedrock of the development of the youths and the nation at large, government should shift certificate-based education to practically-oriented education so as to make the youths economically viable after secondary school, government should make vocational-technical education as an alternative means of empowerment of the youths rather than cash gifts, government should partner with Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other concerned bodies to harness the potentials of the youths through vocational-technical education, the government can borrow a leaf from the developed countries by making vocational-technical education a fundamental educational system for every child in Rivers State, since the certificate-based education cannot be used as socio-economic livelihood of the youths, since statistics reveal that Rivers State has

the highest unemployment rate in Nigeria, it will be ideal to use vocational-technical education as a remedy towards unemployment.

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