

Vocational Choice Amongst Rural Technical College Female Students for Economic Empowerment in Nigeria Dwindling Economy

¹Francis Abutu,¹Ameh, G. G.,²Halima, T. K.,³El-Mahmud, M.,³Badamasi, S. & ¹Lawal, J.

¹ Department of Industrial & Technology Education,
Federal University of Technology, Minna.

² Federal College of Education (Technical),Gusau, Zamfara State.

³ Niger State College of Education, Minna.

⁴Government Secondary School, Kundu, Niger State.

* Correspondence Author: francisfutminna@gmail.com GSM: +2348067901229.

Abstract

The study determined the vocational choice amongst rural technical college female students for economic empowerment in Nigeria dwindling economy. The study was a survey research in which data was collected through a 30 item questionnaire on a population of 120 respondents randomly sampled from some selected rural areas in North Central Nigeria. The data was analyzed using Mean on a 4-point scale, Standard Deviation and t-test statistics. Findings of the study revealed among others that: personality factor, feminine role, teacher factor, personal interest and cultural factor. These were the factors that affect career choice among women. The findings also revealed that higher female earnings and bargaining power translate into greater investment in children's education, health and nutrition led to economic growth in the long term. Job segregation, gender inequality, poor guidance and counseling services in rural areas were also highlighted among the challenges affecting women in career making. The paper recommended among others that there is need for parents, teachers, guidance and counselor should endeavour to communicate relevant information about vocations in the technical fields through career advice , career guide ,seminars, career talk, and career exhibition among others.

Keywords: Vocational choice, rural area, economic empowerment, dwindling economy

Introduction

A dwindling economy can be referred to as an economy that is unstable and experiencing more of retrogressive growth economic activities and increasing hardship for citizens. A dwindling economy according to Prince and Odia (2010), is a sluggish economy or a situation or state in a countries' economy in which the growth is slow or declining. It is an economy that is characterized by weak economic growth. A dwindling economy can also be referred to as a recessed economy where the economy slows down, and the level of sales and production orders start declining (Onyenekenwa, 2010). An economic recession according to Paul (2017), is typically defined as a decline in gross domestic product (GDP) for two or more consecutive quarters. GDP is the market value of all goods and services produced within a country in a given period of time.

During economic recession, production facilities become underutilized and companies respond by reducing the work rate. Workers who had been hired on casual basis are laid off, and this reduces their disposable income. A protracted period of recession ushers in a depression. Demand for products and services decrease, forcing companies to shut down some production facilities. Closing of production means a company cannot sustain its work force, and it is forced to lay them off. Unemployment leaves the consumers with very little disposable income needed to buy necessities. The gross domestic production declines and standard of living of the people also declines thereby creating poverty and economic hardship for citizens. For an economy that is dwindling, it is vital for students to be able to make appropriate vocational choice to enhance their survival, employability and self reliance after graduation.

The choice of a vocation or career is very important to individuals' happiness, achievement and fulfillment in life. Vocational choice is one important decision that every human being makes sometimes in his/her life, it is a decision that nobody should make a mistake about since what a person does for a living affects him in the present, as well as for the rest of his life. One's career determines the kind of friends one keeps, where one stays, how one spends his spare time, where one works and other related variables. From the economic stand point, it is a well known fact that one's take home pay at the end of the month (or any time period) is determined by the nature of work one does appraising this situation, Denga (2001) disclosed that choosing an appropriate vocation is one of the most difficult or serious decision which a man or woman makes. In the same vein, Kinanee (2004) opined that the most complex problem confronting youths today involves choosing a realistic and appropriate occupation, preparing for it, liking it and keeping it. In the old traditional system in Nigeria according to Agbor (1990) in Kinanee (2004), occupational preference was not often a problem since an individual has to take up an occupation trusted on him or her by their fathers and mothers after a review of the situation surrounding the family. Boys were encouraged to take to their fathers' occupation while girls took to their mothers' occupation. In this modern era such practices are not in force, in the present day Nigeria. The practice of dictating careers by parents and elders to their young ones has ceased to be functional and effective. This is because the Nigeria economy has become so complex in nature to the extent that making occupational choice is a great problem and complicated issue among the youths. The difficulty in career decision making among the youths coupled with the confusion and helpless unrealistic expectations on the young ones faced with such

responsibilities has necessitated the formalized vocational counseling practices as introduced by the educational system (Denga 2001). Vocational counseling is aimed at equipping individual students with adequate and vital information about the world of work that can lead them into making appropriate career decision. Appropriate career decision is necessary in rural areas to enhance economic empowerment among rural women in Nigeria. The rural area refers to an under develop locality where activities are mostly carried out manually and in which farming is the major occupation. Enhancing the survival of women in rural areas in the era of economic recession calls for the need for women economic empowerment

Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth (Eyben , 2008). Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information. He added that women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and pro-poor growth. Achieving women's economic empowerment requires sound public policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment and gender-specific perspectives must be integrated at the design stage of policy and programming. Women must have more equitable access to assets and services; infrastructure programmes should be designed to benefit the poor, both men and women, and employment opportunities must be improved while increasing recognition of women's vast unpaid work (Chigbue,2005). Innovative approaches and partnerships include increased dialogue among development actors, improved co-ordination amongst donors and support for women organising at the national and global level.

Chigbue, further revealed that women's economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to strengthening women's rights and enabling women to have control over their lives and exert influence in society . It is about creating just and equitable societies. Women often face discrimination and persistent gender inequalities, with some women experiencing multiple discrimination and exclusion because of factors such as ethnicity or caste. The economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Gender equality and empowered women are catalysts for multiplying development efforts. Investments in gender

equality yield the highest returns of all development investments. According to the Department for International Development (DFID) (2010) report, women usually invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than men.

A DFID study in Nigeria in 2010 showed that the likelihood of a child's survival increased by 20% when the mother controlled household income. Increasing the role of women in the economy is part of the solution to the financial and economic crises and critical for economic resilience and growth. However, at the same time, we need to be mindful that women are in some contexts bearing the costs of recovering from the crisis, with the loss of jobs, poor working conditions and increasing precariousness. According to DFID (2010) report, the reasons why women's economic empowerment matters for pro-poor growth cannot be overemphasize, as : higher female earnings and bargaining power translate into greater investment in children's education, health and nutrition, which leads to economic growth in the long term. DFID also revealed that total agricultural outputs in Africa could increase by up to 20% if women's access to agricultural inputs was equal to men's. This calls for the need for women to embrace vocational agriculture programme which is component of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme in Nigeria.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) in her National Policy on Education described TVET as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Specifically the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) stated that the goals of TVET shall be to: provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical level; provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; and give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically.

TVET has long been considered as a crucial means of empowering rural women with skills for socio-economic development in rural areas. TVET is a form of education that focuses on empowering individuals with relevant skills needed for self employment or gainful employment in the world of work. In many cases, TVET is delivered mainly by the formal education system. However, various delivery patterns of TVET beyond formal education system also exist and

play an ever increasing supplementary role. However, the serious question centered on how TVET can best be delivered to successfully empower rural women economically. This is due to the fact that there are lots of features in rural areas which demand a different approach to delivering TVET. For example, distance, fuel cost, lack of public transport, lack of child care services & facilities, farm/work commitment, seasonal climatic change, inadequate electricity, supply and telecommunication devices are among the factors that influence access to quality TVET in rural areas. Since a women's occupation choice plays a vital role in her life, this study seeks to investigate the vocational choice amongst rural female technical college students for economic empowerment in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The world economy took a downward turn in early 2008 due to the global economic meltdown. Nigeria as a country was not insulated from the effect of this meltdown. There were job losses not only as a result of downsizing or rightsizing the workforce but also as a result of capacity underutilization in industries. There has been poverty increase, general unemployment and especially graduate unemployment which are high among rural women due to gender role and cultural influence that limit their job chances (Gendernet, 2012). However, there are numerous job opportunities for competent women who possess the relevant skills needed by many industries ranging from education, health to government and retail trade. Many women and female youths are unaware of the vast opportunities available in vocational trades. Unemployment is ravaging graduates from all levels of education yet the goldmine of Technical vocational education and training (TVET) records low enrolment and the few students who enrolled do not seem to see much worth in the course. Another major problem is, how to deliver TVET in an effective and efficient way in order to improve rural life and to facilitate the process of economic empowerment. Based on the sensitive nature of vocational choice to an individual's life, the researcher therefore investigated the vocational choice amongst rural female technical college students for economic empowerment in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated the vocational choice amongst rural female technical college students for economic empowerment in Nigeria. The specific purposes are as follows:

1. Identify the factors that influence vocational choice among rural female technical college students

2. Determine the need for female technical college students' economic empowerment in rural area.
3. Determine the challenges to female technical college students' economic empowerment in rural area.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the factors that influence vocational choice among rural technical college female student?
2. Why is rural technical college female students' economic empowerment necessary?
3. What are the challenges to technical college female student's economic empowerment in rural area?

Research Hypothesis

The null hypotheses below tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of TVET teachers and rural women on the factors that influence vocational choice among technical college female students.

Methodology

The study used a survey research design to investigate vocation choice amongst rural technical college students for economic empowerment in Nigeria. The study was carried out in selected technical colleges from the states in North Central region of Nigeria. The technical colleges specifically located in rural areas in each of the state was the main target. The respondents used for the research study was 120 persons comprising of 90 rural technical college female students and 30 TVET teachers in the technical colleges from North Central, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the numbers of technical colleges used for the study. The main instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire, which contained 30 items covering the research questions for the study. The questionnaire was structured on a four scale. The questionnaire was content validated by three experts chosen from Federal university of Technology, Minna. Corrections were made appropriately before it was administered. A total of 120 questionnaires were administered to the respondents by the researcher and research assistant and 114 was collected (ie 95% returns).

The responses on the questionnaire items were used to answer the research question and the mean scores rating of the items were computed and used as a guide in analyzing the responses of

the respondents. Therefore, the data collected for this study were analyzed using mean , standard deviation and t-test statistics. To determine acceptance level, mean of 2.50 was used as deciding point to accept or reject an item. Thus responses with a mean of 2.50 and above was considered accepted or agreed while responses below 2.50 was considered rejected or disagreed. The t-test inferential statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The t-critical (t-table) value for accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis was ± 1.96 .

Results

Research Question 1

What are the factors that influence vocational choice among rural technical college female student?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the respondents on the influence of vocational choice among technical college female student.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	\bar{X}_t	SD	REMARK
1	Personality factor and feminine role influence.	2.51	1.48	Accepted
2	Attractive characteristics associated with the career.	2.68	1.22	Accepted
3	Personal interest towards a career.	2.53	1.95	Accepted
4	Teacher factor .	3.11	1.12	Accepted
5	Influence from parents, family and peer group pressure.	3.31	1.1	Accepted
6	Guidance and counseling influence.	2.73	1.46	Accepted
7	Awareness of the world of work and orientation to occupational information.	3.10	1.12	Accepted
8	Understanding of one's strength and weaknesses.	2.78	1.86	Accepted
9	Cultural role and society influence.	3.55	1.24	Accepted
10	Environmental and socio-economic factor.	3.11	1.58	Accepted

Analysis on table 1 shows that all of the items presented had their weighted mean values ranged from 2.51-3.55. This values are above the cutoff point of 2.50 which implies that the respondents accepted the items as the factors that influence vocational choice among rural female student. The table revealed that vocational choice among rural technical college female student is influenced by personality trait as well as societal belief associated with feminine role.

Research Question 2

Why is rural technical college female student's economic empowerment necessary?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the respondents on why female student's economic empowerment is necessary.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	\bar{X}_t	SD	REMARK
11	Higher female earnings and bargaining power translate into greater investment in children's education, health and nutrition, which leads to economic growth in the long term.	2.62	1.91	Accepted
12	If women's access to agricultural inputs was equal to men's ,total agricultural outputs in rural areas would increase .	2.18	1.13	Rejected
13	Women's economic participation and empowerment strengthen women's rights and enable them to contribute to national development.	2.72	1.08	Accepted
14	It is about creating just and equitable societies.	3.52	1.98	Accepted
15	Women usually invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than men.	2.51	1.88	Accepted
16	The likelihood of a child's survival increased by 20% when the mother controlled household income.	2.60	1.51	Accepted
17	Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs and financial services.	2.50	1.12	Accepted
18	Women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development, and pro-poor growth .	2.59	1.11	Accepted
19	It helps to reduce poverty and the achievement of all the MDGs.	2.10	1.32	Rejected
20	It helps to improve health care system, and reduction of child and maternal mortality rate.	3.21	1.28	Accepted

The data analyzed in table 2 revealed that 8 of the items had their weighted mean values ranged from 2.50-3.52. Since the values are above the cutoff point of 2.50, it indicates that the respondents accepted the items as regards why women's economic empowerment is necessary. The respondents however rejected item 12 and 19 with weighted mean value of ranging from 2.10-2.18. This implies that both items do not form a good reason for women's economic empowerment. The table unveiled that rural technical college female student's economic empowerment is necessary because women's economic participation and empowerment strengthen women's rights and enable them to contribute to national development.

Research Question 3

What are the challenges to technical college female students' economic empowerment in rural area?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the respondents on the challenges to technical college female students' economic empowerment in rural area.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	\bar{X}_t	SD	REMARK
21	Job segregation according to gender that exist in rural areas.	2.54	1.36	Accepted
22	Gender inequality in job roles still exists in rural areas	2.77	1.12	Accepted
23	Poor guidance and counseling services in rural areas.	2.52	1.36	Accepted
24	Poor awareness on the relevance of TVET to sustainable development.	3.27	1.61	Accepted
25	Low status placed on TVET by the society.	3.24	1.11	Accepted
26	Poor awareness and research about occupational information and TVET prospects.	2.60	1.13	Accepted
27	Sex bias, stereotyping and greater vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse.	2.60	1.15	Accepted
28	Strong influence of culture, history and tradition on women folk.	3.59	1.27	Accepted
29	Lack of confidence among women in exploring technical field.	2.79	1.10	Accepted
30	Lack of encouragement from parent, family,peers and teacher.	3.22	1.00	Accepted

Table 3 shows that the items presented had their weighted mean values ranged from 2.52-3.59. These values are above 2.50 indicating that the respondents accepted the items concerning the challenges to women's economic empowerment in rural area. Table 3 revealed that the challenges to technical college female student's economic empowerment in rural area include job segregation, gender inequality, poor guidance and counseling services in rural areas as well as cultural and traditional barriers.

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁ : There is no significant difference in the mean responses of TVET teachers and rural technical college female students on the factors that influence vocational choice among rural females.

Table 4: t-test analysis of mean responses of respondents on the factors that influence vocational choice among rural female students.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	t-cal	t-tab	REM
1	Personality factor and feminine role influence.	2.50	0.60	2.52	0.40	0.34	1.96	NS
2	Attractive characteristics associated with the career.	2.60	0.30	2.76	0.10	0.88	1.96	NS
3	Personal interest towards a career.	2.50	1.20	2.56	0.30	0.62	1.96	NS
4	Teacher factor .	3.00	0.36	3.22	0.70	1.25	1.96	NS
5	Influence from parents, family and peer group pressure.	3.30	1.21	3.32	0.65	1.21	1.96	NS
6	Guidance and counseling influence.	2.71	0.83	2.75	1.27	0.60	1.96	NS
7	Awareness of the world of work and orientation to occupational information.	3.00	0.32	3.20	0.81	0.50	1.96	NS
8	Understanding of one's strength and weaknesses.	2.74	1.00	2.82	0.72	0.59	1.96	NS
9	Cultural role and society influence.	3.50	1.39	3.60	0.63	0.50	1.96	NS
10	Environmental and socio-economic factor.	3.01	1.29	3.21	0.74	0.21	1.96	NS

REM=Remark.

The t-test analysis from table 4 revealed that all the items had their t-calculated (t-cal) values less than the t-table (t-tab) value of ± 1.96 . This implies that there was no significant (NS) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on the factors that influence career choice among rural women. Hence the null hypothesis was accepted.

Findings of the Study

1. Vocational choice among rural technical college female students are influenced by personality trait, societal belief associated with feminine role.
2. Rural technical college female students economic empowerment is necessary because women's economic participation and empowerment strengthen women's rights and enable them.
3. The challenges to technical college female students' economic empowerment in rural area include ob segregation, gender inequality, poor guidance and counseling services in rural areas as well as cultural and traditional barriers.

4. There was no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on the factors that influence career choice among rural women.

Discussion

On the factors that influence vocational choice among rural technical college female students, the study revealed that vocational choice among rural technical college female students are mainly influenced by personality trait, societal belief associated with feminine role. Personality factor , feminine role , teacher factor, personal interest and culture influence ,attractive characteristics associated with the career, influence from parents, family and peer group pressure, guidance and counseling factor were rated high. The respondents also agreed that, awareness of the world of work and orientation to occupational information, and understanding of self, environmental and socio-economic factor were also among the major factors that affect career choice among rural women. The study also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on the factors that influence career choice among rural women.

To buttress these, Gesinde, (1986) in his study of some determinants of vocational preferences among Nigeria secondary school students, found sex differences to be a dominant factor. Boys proffered engineering, medicine and agriculture while girls preferred nursing and teaching. Other research findings which have supported sex differences in career preferences and choices includes the work of Vella (1993) who, in his study of some correlates of vocational orientations of some Nigerian secondary school students discovered that significantly more male students preferred realistic, investigative and enterprising careers than females.

Miller and Budd (1999) study also showed that boys were significantly more interested in outdoor, mechanical and persuasive occupations than girls while girls were more interested in computational, artistic, literary and clerical activities. The study in addition found out that poor-self-efficacy on the part of female workers made them to taking decisions into occupations. This study revealed a great need for career guidance and counseling to help the women identify and develop their talents as well as plan life goals which are commensurate to their male counterparts. Moreso, such a measure would enabled them shade of fertility and inferiority complex in their occupational preferences. Vella (1993) examined the effect of occupational choice upon the level of wages and investigated the determinant of occupational choice. The evidence supports earlier findings that the wage different is course by demand discrimination within occupations. The author

concluded that, if female had a less traditional attitude towards their roles in the labour market, they would generate an occupational distribution that would produce a higher wage.

Concerning why women's economic empowerment is necessary, the study revealed that rural technical college female student's economic empowerment is necessary because women's economic participation and empowerment strengthen women's rights and enable them. It was also unveiled that higher female earnings and bargaining power translate into greater investment in children's education, health and nutrition, which leads to economic growth in the long term; women's economic participation and empowerment strengthen women's rights and enable them to contribute to national development; women usually invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than men ; it helps to improve health care system, and reduction of child and maternal mortality rate; women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth, and the achievement of all the MDGs.

The was supported by Department for International Development (DFID) (2010) report which stress that: women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and pro-poor growth. Achieving women's economic empowerment requires sound public policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment and gender-specific perspectives must be integrated at the design stage of policy and programming. Women must have more equitable access to assets and services; infrastructure programmes should be designed to benefit the poor, both men and women, and employment opportunities must be improved while increasing recognition of women's vast unpaid work. Innovative approaches and partnerships include increased dialogue among development actors, improved co-ordination amongst donors and support for women organizing at the national and global level.

As regards the challenges to technical college female student's economic empowerment in rural area, the study revealed that the challenges to technical college female student's economic empowerment in rural area include ob segregation, gender inequality, poor guidance and counseling services in rural areas as well as cultural and traditional barriers. Poor awareness on the relevance of TVET to sustainable development for all and low status placed on TVET by the society; poor awareness and research about occupational information and TVET prospects for women folk; and lack of confidence among women in exploring technical field; lack of encouragement from parent, family, peers and teacher was also highlighted as possible challenges.

Presser and Kishor (1991) who studied about job segregation according to gender in Puerto Rico for the duration of 1950-1980 found that job segregation has decreased because women have shifted from working at home to working in the production and service industry. According to Cadogan (2001), the US Department of Labor found that non-traditional jobs where 25% or less labour are women. Non-traditional jobs include working in the construction industry, factories and in auto service. Shamsulbahriah (1989) found that gender inequality exists in the process of economic development of Malaysia. Majority of the women are still concentrated in the same type of job. She argued that gender ideology has played an important role in maintaining the inequality between women and men, particularly in the labour market. Noor (2005) stated that jobs that are suitable for women include teacher, doctor and clerk because of the personality characteristics in a woman such as patient, gentle, attentive and motherly.

Clerical work does not involve rough work and is considered easy, light and with a fixed working time. Other jobs are also suitable such as nurse, accountant, secretary, babysitter and tailor. Boserup (1987) who conducted studies in Latin America, Middle East, East and South Asia and Africa stated that there are three forms of occupation among women. Her study found that in industrial countries, primarily West Europe and North America, there is a high rate of women in clerical work and only a few in professional jobs. In Latin America, the pattern is different, where more women are in professional areas rather than clerical work. The distribution of female workers in Africa and Asia is at a low rate in both professional and clerical fields. Law (1991) found that male and female students in Form Four have a high aspiration towards careers which are traditionally classified according to their respective gender. Most females are found to portray themselves as adults, wives and mothers. The males on the other hand portray themselves in terms of their vocational interests. Females are interested in jobs that require direct relationship with the public such as nursing, taking care of children, teaching or doing social work. Males on the other hand, prefer mechanical area. According to Siti (2005), most women who are involved in the area of engineering are more interested in civil, electrical and chemical engineering. This is because these fields of engineering do not require physical strength and a more conducive working environment for women.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of the study it is concluded that gender is a great determinant of occupational preference of among women. It is therefore recommended that Parents, Teachers Family, Peers, Guidance counselors and significant others should continue to motivate girls from tender age by providing them with appropriate occupational information and materials that will help them in career decision making, so that they can achieve the self actualization and self fulfillment necessary for economic empowerment.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Schools should set up a high quality Career Guidance and Counseling Unit for students and must ensure that the operation and activities of the Unit are carried out professionally. School should hire a qualified Career Guidance teacher so that he or she can assist the students in making career choice..
2. Parents should encourage their daughters who are technically inclined to explore technical fields.
3. Teacher should facilitate the process of career making decision among the students. A teacher is a trusted source and could provide much information to their students.
4. In school, the Guidance and Counseling Unit should make effort in communicating relevant information about career in the technical fields through seminars, career talk, and career exhibition and so on.

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