



Factors Influencing Students' Choice of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Pathway in the Central Region of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the factors influencing Ghanaian students' choice of technical and vocational education (TVET) career pathway. The study was guided by the social cognitive career theory and the expectation-value theory. Cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used to explore the critical factors influencing students' technical and vocational education choices. Specifically, the study explored the demographic profile of TVET students, determined the factors that influenced their enrolment into TVET programmes, and their level of satisfaction with the choices they are pursuing. The targeted population were students enrolled in TVET programmes in two Technical Institutes in the Central Region. Using the census method, a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 245 respondents. Data collected were analysed and interpreted using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that parental influence, particularly from fathers, is the primary motivating factor. Other motivators included interest in practical skills, opportunity for self-employment, and job prospects. Respondents also reported that the negative perceptions about TVET, associating it with lower academic ability and prestige always affect their motivation. However, students expressed satisfaction with their decision and choice of programmes citing the practical aspects, teaching methods, availability of tools and equipment and overall school environment as factors driving their interest and satisfaction. Notwithstanding, some respondents saw the cost of programme and support for placement as factors that negate their decision. The study concludes that, engaging parents and school agents, promoting public awareness, enhancing TVET's image and aligning curricula with industry needs while offering assistance with internship, job placement and financial support could improve enrolment rates. It is therefore recommended that parents be engaged in career guidance programmes and teachers trained to offer balanced career advice to students. Additionally, efforts must be made to align TVET programme curricula with industry needs and improve school infrastructure to enhance the appeal of TVET programmes, while financial support is provided for students to help increase programme accessibility.

Keywords: Career, Career Choice, Employment, Parental Influence, Practical Skills, TVET

I. INTRODUCTION

The transition from Junior High School (JHS) to Senior High School (SHS) or Technical and Vocational Institute is very crucial in the life of many adolescents in Ghana, given that they are expected to make decisions regarding their education and career future that would have direct consequences not only for the individuals but also for the socio-economic development nation. The choices they make at this stage in their lives significantly affect the nation's socio-economic development. More often than not, many junior high school graduates lack accurate information about career opportunities, making it difficult to make informed decisions. Instead, many students are influenced by the preferences of parents, teachers, peers, or societal perceptions of prestige (Agbenyo & Collett, 2014). For these students, the primary options are to continue in senior high school (SHS) or technical institute. However, SHS is often preferred because it is seen as more prestigious and at the same time provides better access to tertiary education (Ackon, 2017).

Literature suggests that despite the vital role that TVET plays in reducing youth unemployment and poverty, globally, it has not been fully embraced by the youths (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, 2018), and those in Ghana are not an exception. The reluctance of young people to participate in TVET raises two main issues: first, more young people are opting for general secondary education with the dream of pursuing academic careers in higher education, without immediate employment prospects; and second, TVET is considered as last alternative to university education and so essential skills needed to support society's economic and social needs are not being adequately developed

(Wolf, 2016). Consequently, local universities are producing more graduates than the job market can absorb whereas many national industries, like the construction, and the emerging oil and gas sectors, have a real and growing demand for skilled workers. That is, the relevance of this all-important education system has not yet been fully embraced by students and parents regardless of the numerous reforms many countries are putting in place toward strengthening the TVET system (Wang, 2024; Okoye & Okwelle, 2013). In Ghana for instance enrolment in TVET programmes has remained below capacity despite efforts by the government to make that sub-sector of the education system attractive. This was highlighted in the Global Education Monitoring Report 2016. The report noted that only 1% of Ghanaians under 25 are enrolled in TVET. Similarly, Okae-Adjei (2017) also reported low enrolment in technical and vocational programmes in polytechnics and technical universities, urging immediate action.

Ghana TVET Report presented by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2023) suggests enrolment into TVET has improved significantly. The report indicated that enrolment in public pre-tertiary TVET institutions has steadily increased from 32,407 in the 2020/21 academic year to 50,049 in the 2022/23 academic year. Thus, 54% higher relative to the 2020/21 academic year. Despite this development, the enrolment levels compared to that of general education remain low. Thus, the challenge remains in attracting more students. It is therefore imperative to explore critical factors that affect students' choice of TVET-related programmes and TVET career pathways.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Studies have shown that students' inclination towards technical and vocational education is influenced by several factors: socio-cultural norms, economic factors, family and peer pressure, and perceptions of the labour market (UNESCO, 2015; Muriithi, 2013; Mursoi, 2013). Research that puts the family at the forefront of adolescents' career decision-making indicates that parents are often the most influential figures in guiding adolescents' educational decisions, with many students relying on their advice (Agbenyo & Collett, 2014). Agbenyo and Collette's study also found that parental influence is strong, often outweighing that of teachers or career counsellors. This was found to be true in both Western and non-Western contexts.

Again, investigating the factors affecting student's attitudes towards Technical Education and Vocational Training, Ayub (2015) also found a statistically significant relationship between parental influence and student decisions towards TVET. Similarly, Bae and Wickrama (2015) investigated the impact of family dynamics on adolescent career goals. The result of that study emphasised the significance of familial support and expectations in moulding students' professional choices. Even where parents have not directly influenced decisions, their profession, educational experience, socioeconomic status, and aspirations have significantly impacted their children's career decision-making, Ayub (2015) reported.

Teachers, counsellors and school administrators have also been found to have considerable influence on students' career choices. They guide, motivate, and shape students' perceptions of the world, and their opinions can sometimes be more influential than those of parents or peers (Quinlan & Corbin, 2023; Musset, 2019). Even though Ayub (2015) found teachers to play a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes toward technical and vocational education by sparking interest, providing guidance, and creating a positive learning environment to influence students' attitudes toward TVET, their influence was found to be statistically insignificant. Other studies have also indicated that peers play an important role in the attitudes of students toward career decisions – especially when peers belong to the same social class and tend to share the same values (Akosah-Twumasi, et al, 2018). The study indicated that observing friends' achievements can create a sense of competition or aspiration, particularly if the career seems rewarding or aligned with their skills and interests. This influence can help youth feel more confident in following similar pursuits. This report re-echoed an earlier report by The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2020) that positive feedback from peers regarding particular career paths can strengthen interest in similar fields, creating a shared focus on specific professional goals within the group. However, Ayub's findings showed that there is no significant impact of peers on student's attitudes towards technical and vocational education.

Literature also indicates that financial consideration is a significant factor when it comes to students' career decisions. (Nguyen et al., 2023) reported that financial constraints can limit students' choices by pushing them toward career paths perceived to be more economically secure. For instance, Daedalus' (2021) report suggested that students, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds, often prioritize fields with higher earning potential. Again, the World Bank, 2019 reported that students and families often weigh the potential earnings from a chosen career against the cost of training. That, many see TVET as offering a strong return on investment because graduates can earn competitive wages in certain skilled trades without the high debt associated with university degrees, reinforcing the economic advantage of TVET pathways. On the other hand, the cost of training is often a constraint to students who may lack the means to pursue any form of post-secondary education. Therefore, access to financial support and incentives often influences students' enrolment into TVET programmes, the World Bank report indicated.

Though students' attitudes towards technical and vocational education have engaged the interest and attention of researchers for some time now, many of these studies have maintained that influential factors vary from region to

region or country to country due to differences in socio-cultural, political and economic environment (Mwoleka, 2011). This study aims to investigate how these factors influence Ghanaian students' choice of vocational pathway and contribute to understanding the variables in the Ghanaian context.

1.2 Research Objectives

The study therefore seeks to determine the factors that are instigating the choice of the TVET educational pathway by JHS graduates. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. determine the demographic profile of students who enrol in TVET programmes
- ii. ascertain the factors that influenced students 'enrolment into Vocational and Technical Institutions
- iii. find out which people have influenced vocational and technical students in their decisions about enrolling in TVET Programmes
- iv. determine how satisfied are students regarding their choice to pursue TVET programmes

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is hinged on two key theories: the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), propounded by Lent, Brown, and Hackett in 1994, and the Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), developed by Eccles and Wigfield in the 1990s.

2.1.1 The Social Cognitive Career Theory.

Lent, Bron and Hackett (1994) proposed this career development theory that explains how personal and environmental factors influence an individual's career interests, goals, and actions. It states that career choices are not solely a result of internal motivations but are also shaped by external factors acting as support or barriers. According to Lent, Bron and Hacketts, the SCCT is organised around three central constructs: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and personal goals. Self-efficacy is described as the confidence an individual has in his or her ability to succeed on a task or goal. It influences how a person thinks, feels, and acts. It affects a person's motivation. Thus, in the career context, the higher the self-efficacy, the more confident an individual is in his/her career goals. On the other hand, lower self-efficacy means less confidence in one's ability to succeed and this can lead to avoidance of certain fields or professions. Outcome expectations are the beliefs about the likely outcomes of engaging in a particular activity. In career context, therefore, expectations such as employability, job prospects, job satisfaction, high salary, and personal fulfilment are all outcome expectations. The proponents of this theory suggest that students are more likely to pursue a career path if they expect favourable outcomes. According to the SCCT, personal goals are the aspirations or the targets individuals set for themselves that shape their long-term career path. These goals serve as motivation, pushing individuals to overcome obstacles and stay committed to their chosen career paths and can be influenced by both self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

The proponents of this theory postulate three key things. First, interests form when individuals feel confident in their abilities and expect positive outcomes. Thus, a student may develop a stronger interest in a career or profession if they believe they can succeed in it and anticipate job satisfaction. Second, an individual's decision to pursue certain career paths is often influenced by social, economic and cultural factors and expectations, personal interests and perceived outcomes. Lastly, self-efficacy and outcome expectations influence persistence in the face of challenges.

Since the study focuses on understanding the factors that have influenced students' choices of vocational and technical education, it is considered appropriate because it offers a stout model for exploring how individuals make career decisions, influenced by personal beliefs about their abilities, expected outcomes, and external support or barrier systems.

2.1.2 Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT)

Developed by Eccles and Wigfield in 1990, the theory seeks to explain why individuals choose certain tasks, persist in them, and perform them based on their expectations of success and the value they place on the task (Wigfield, & Eccles (2000)). This foundational article on Expectancy-Value Theory discusses how students' beliefs about their abilities and the perceived value of a task affect their motivation, choice, and persistence. This theory also has two constructs: expectancy for success and subjective task value. Expectancy refers to an individual's belief about how well they can perform a specific task or achieve a particular goal. The theory suggests that an individual's expectations are shaped by past experiences, perceived difficulty of the task, and one's self-concept of ability. So that a student considering taking a TVET programme for instance may assess how likely they are to succeed in that field based on their experiences with practical skills or their performance in the subjects they are learning and all the

activities they are participating in. Task value is the degree of importance or worth that an individual assigns to a given task, which can determine their motivation to engage in it.

Subjective task value is further divided into four categories: intrinsic value, referring to the enjoyment or interest one finds in the task itself; attainment value which is the personal importance of doing well, such as achieving mastery or aligning with one's identity; Utility value: which is the perceived usefulness of the task in achieving future goals, such as obtaining a good job or enhancing career prospects; and cost, the perceived drawbacks, including the time, effort, or potential for failure associated with the task, the proponents of the theory explains (Eccles & Wigfield 2002).

The EVT posits that individuals make decisions based on their beliefs about success and the perceived worth of the outcome. It highlights the role of individual beliefs and perceived benefits, which can influence the likelihood of pursuing a career or educational pathway, including in areas such as technical and vocational education. It is therefore relevant to analysing Ghanaian students' perceptions of TVET's worth.

2.2 Empirical Review

Research conducted by Roknuzzaman and Shahanaz, (2021) suggest a variety of factors impacting students' decision to pursue Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes. These factors could be generally grouped into socio-cultural influences, individual preferences, economic considerations, and perceived career opportunities.

2.2.1 Socio-Cultural Influences

Socio-cultural factors, particularly, the influence of family, teachers, and peers, are widely reported to have a significant influence on students' choices of educational pathways, including TVET. In a study conducted by Obwoye et al. (2019), it was found that parental encouragement and family background strongly impact students' decisions in Kenya. The significance of parental influence was particularly strong, especially when parents value practical skills over traditional academic paths. Similarly, Salim et al, (2021) in another study conducted in Malaysia indicated that students were more inclined towards TVET when their families and peers valued technical skills, suggesting a strong association between family perceptions and student choices. These findings reaffirmed earlier research conducted by (Ayub, 2015; Bae & Wickrama, 2015).

Additionally, teachers have been found to play a pivotal role in influencing their students' attitudes towards vocational education. Aboagye et al. (2018) noted that in Ghana, for example, teachers who view TVET positively endorse it and influence students to consider it as a viable career path. However, in cases where teachers view TVET as a less important option, students may be dissuaded from choosing it. This finding underscores the importance of teachers' attributes such as attitude and perception, in influencing students' educational choices.

Furthermore, studies have revealed that social factors such as class, gender, parental occupation and career expectations influence students' consideration of TVET as a career option. According to Smith & Jones, 2019, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more persuaded toward vocational education compared to those from higher-income families, mostly due to economic constraints and societal expectations. Again, Brown & Lee, 2020, reported that in societies where TVET is perceived as a "second-best" choice, students from lower-class families view TVET as a pragmatic route to secure employment without accruing much debt while students from higher social classes navigate toward academic pathways. Moreover, Zhao and Chen (2022) have also reported the influential role of family occupation in steering career choices toward TVET fields. They found that parents' occupational backgrounds significantly shape their children's aspirations and expectations. This creates a cycle where children of parents in TVET-related occupations are more inclined to choose vocational training pathways.

2.2.2 Individual Preference

Individual factors, such as personal interests and self-perception of academic abilities, also affect students' decisions to enter the TVET pathway. Studies have found that students with a practical orientation and those who prefer hands-on learning environments are more likely to choose TVET. For example, Dawes and Bradley (2020) revealed that students with high self-efficacy in practical skills were more likely to enrol in vocational programs, as they perceived these programs as better suited to their strengths.

Additionally, Mwaura and Muliro (2017) observed that students who experience lower academic achievement in traditional subjects tend to view TVET as an alternative path to success. This finding aligns with that of Essel et al. (2019), who noted that Ghanaian students with low academic self-concept often choose vocational training as a means to develop specific skills that may not require a high academic threshold.

Economic factors also play a critical role in career choice, as many families with lower economic backgrounds see TVET as an affordable and viable option to enter the workforce more quickly (Ahmed & El-Zoghbi, 2020). For instance, in another study conducted in Ghana, Osei and Ampofo (2023) reported that families with limited resources

tend to favour TVET pathways, which provide employable skills faster without the high cost of traditional university education.

2.2.3 Economic and Employment Considerations

Economic factors are another major influence on students' choice of the TVET pathway. Vocational education is often seen as a practical route to employment, especially in contexts where the job market is highly competitive. According to Dlamini and Vilakazi (2020), students in South Africa are motivated to enrol in TVET due to its perceived potential for rapid employment and opportunities for self-employment. This is consistent with findings by Chen et al. (2018), who noted that Chinese students, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, favoured TVET programs for their affordability and the quicker path to job security.

Financial constraints also play a crucial role in the decision-making process. Agyei and Agbeko (2022) found that, in Ghana, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to choose TVET due to its affordability compared to traditional higher education. This economic motivation aligns with the global trend where TVET is considered a cost-effective educational pathway with good employment prospects, especially for students unable to afford university education.

2.2.4 Perceived Career Opportunities

A critical factor in students' decision to enter TVET is the perception of job prospects and employability. In an era where the demand for specialized technical skills is rising, students often see TVET as a way to secure employment in competitive job markets. A study by Okeke and Eze (2021) highlighted that Nigerian students are increasingly recognizing the employability benefits associated with vocational skills, especially in industries like manufacturing and construction where such skills are in demand. Similarly, Eniola et al. (2020) found that the likelihood of employment upon graduation significantly influenced Nigerian students' decision to pursue TVET over general education.

Moreover, the practical nature of TVET programs is appealing to students who desire skill acquisition that directly aligns with job market needs. Hussain and Sajid (2021) showed that Pakistani students who prioritize practical skills and immediate job opportunities are inclined to select TVET. This finding was echoed in a study by Atu et al. (2022), who found that in Ghana, students are attracted to TVET due to its alignment with the growing demand for technical skills in the oil and gas industry.

An empirical review of factors influencing students' choice of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) pathways offers valuable insights into the motivational and sociocultural aspects shaping career decisions. Using Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) as frameworks, research over the past several years reveals both personal and contextual factors that impact students' vocational decisions.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

The Central Region of Ghana was chosen as the study area for this research due to its significant role in the country's educational and economic development. The Region hosts several prominent educational institutions, including notable technical and vocational schools. These schools form a vibrant educational hub within the region attracting students from various parts of the country and beyond. Asuansi Technical Institute is a front-runner in Technical Education in Ghana. Established in 1922 as a trade school, it is one of the well-established and managed rural TVET institutions in the country dedicated to providing demand-driven technical and vocational education and training to meet the dynamics of the labour market. Cape Coast Technical Institute, on the other hand, is in an urban setting. This school plays a vital role in nurturing a skilled workforce capable of contributing to the country's industrial and technological development. The two selected schools offer a variety of TVET programmes in fields such as construction, auto mechanics, electrical and electronics, carpentry, refrigeration, plumbing, catering, and fashion; making the region a suitable location for investigating factors influencing students' enrollment in TVET.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional descriptive survey as the research design to investigate the key factors influencing students' choice of technical and vocational education pathways. The cross-sectional descriptive survey design was considered most appropriate for this study for several reasons. Notable among them is that it provides a snapshot of students' current attitudes, motivations, and influencing factors. Additionally, the findings can be generalized to the wider population of TVET students in the Central Region, providing valuable insights to inform and improve institutional strategies and policy recommendations.

3.3 Target Population and Sample Size

The target population included all first-year students from two prominent technical institutes in the Central Region of Ghana: Cape Coast Technical Institute (urban, day school) and Asuansi Technical Institute (rural, boarding school). First-year students were chosen because they had recently transitioned from Junior High School, making them ideal candidates to explore what influenced their decision to pursue technical and vocational education. The total population was 273. However, 245 students were available during the sampling, and all participated in the study. This sample size was deemed appropriate, following Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) recommendation that a population of 273 requires a sample size of 242 for meaningful inferences and generalization of results.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire had four sections (A-D) with 34 items. The questionnaires were administered to two senior researchers to evaluate the validity of the items. The few items found to be unclear were revised. The instrument was later pilot-tested to ensure its reliability. Out of the 245 questionnaires distributed, 220 (90%) were usable. The remaining 25 (10) were incomplete; hence, were not included in the analysis. Data collected were analysed and interpreted using descriptive statistics.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study surveyed the personal information of the respondents which included: gender, age and BECE grade, father's qualification, father's employment status, mother's qualification, mother's employment status, and family income status. Table 1 presents the summary of results.

Table 1

Personal Information of the Respondents

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	196	88.9
	Female	24	11.1
Age	14–15 years	189	85.7
	16–17 years	28	12.7
	18+ years	3	1.6
BECE Grade	0–6	3	1.6
	07–10	11	4.8
	11–15	24	11.1
	16–20	70	31.7
	Above 20	112	50.8
Father's Qualification	Basic	88	40
	SHS	80	36.5
	TECH.	28	12.7
	Tertiary	24	11.1
Father's Employment	Private Servant	49	22.2
	Public Servant	56	25.5
	Self-Employed	98	44.4
	Unemployed	17	7.9
Mother's Qualification	Basic	133	60.3
	SHS	63	28.6
	TECH.	14	6.3
	Tertiary	10	4.8
Mother's Employment	Private Servant	38	17.5
	Public Servant	31	14.2
	Self-Employed	140	63.5
	Unemployed	11	4.8
Family Income	Hard Times	38	17.5
	Just Enough	73	33.3
	Few Problems	70	31.7
	No Problem	39	17.5

This study explored the demographic profiles of respondents, examining variables such as gender, age, academic performance, parental education and employment, and family income. Understanding these characteristics provides insight into how socio-economic and familial factors may impact students' choice of the TVET pathway.

Out of the respondents, 88.9% were male, and 11.1% were female. This significant disparity suggests a gender imbalance in the student population. However, this disparity is well-documented in Ghana with cultural expectations often influencing girls' career choices away from TVET. As reported by UNESCO (2018) the broader societal views in Ghana suggest male students are more likely to pursue technical and vocational roles. Respondents were also asked to indicate their ages at the time of study. The results pointed to the fact that 85.7% of respondents were aged 14-15, with 12.7% aged 16-17, and only 1.6% aged 18 or older. The concentration in the younger age bracket implies that most students transitioned directly to secondary education after completing junior high school, which is the common educational path in Ghana. The respondents' performance at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) was also inquired. The results revealed significantly varied performances. There were High achievers (0-6 grade range) comprising only 1.6%, average achievers (11-15 range) who were 11.1% while a large segment (50.8%) scored 21 and above. The high percentage of students with lower BECE grades in this study aligns with that of Owusu and Danso (2021) who found that in Ghana students with moderate to lower academic performance often consider TVET as a viable option, driven by its practicality and employability prospects, particularly in the Ghanaian job market.

Regarding the educational attainment of the father and mother, the results showed that most respondents' parents had limited formal education. About 60% of mothers have basic education and only 5% have education up to the tertiary level. In the case of fathers, 40% had basic and 11% had tertiary education.

Parent employment data also revealed that 44.4% of fathers and 63.5% of mothers were self-employed, reflecting the strong reliance on informal sector jobs among families. Only 25.5% of fathers and 14.2% of mothers held public servant positions, highlighting limited access to formal employment which might also impact family income stability. The respondents were asked about family income. The results indicate financial challenges, with 60.3% of families experiencing "hard times" and 28.6% managing "just enough." These economic constraints likely affect students' access to resources such as textbooks, tutoring, and stable study environments, impacting academic outcomes.

The lower parental educational attainment might mean limited awareness of career options, making TVET more appealing due to its accessibility and shorter educational timeline. Again, parents with less formal education might value the practical, employment-oriented nature of TVET, which could lead students to consider TVET as a viable option. Thus, financial limitations often steer students towards TVET due to shorter training periods and the potential for immediate employment. This finding conforms to research by King and Palmer (2010) that indicates that students from low-income backgrounds view TVET as a means to improve their financial situation quickly.

4.2 Determinants of Students' Choice of TVET Pathway

Figure 1 presents the responses from participants regarding whether enrolling in the TVET programme was the students' own decision or influenced by others. The results show a majority of the respondents (86%) were influenced, while 14% indicated that it was their personal decision.

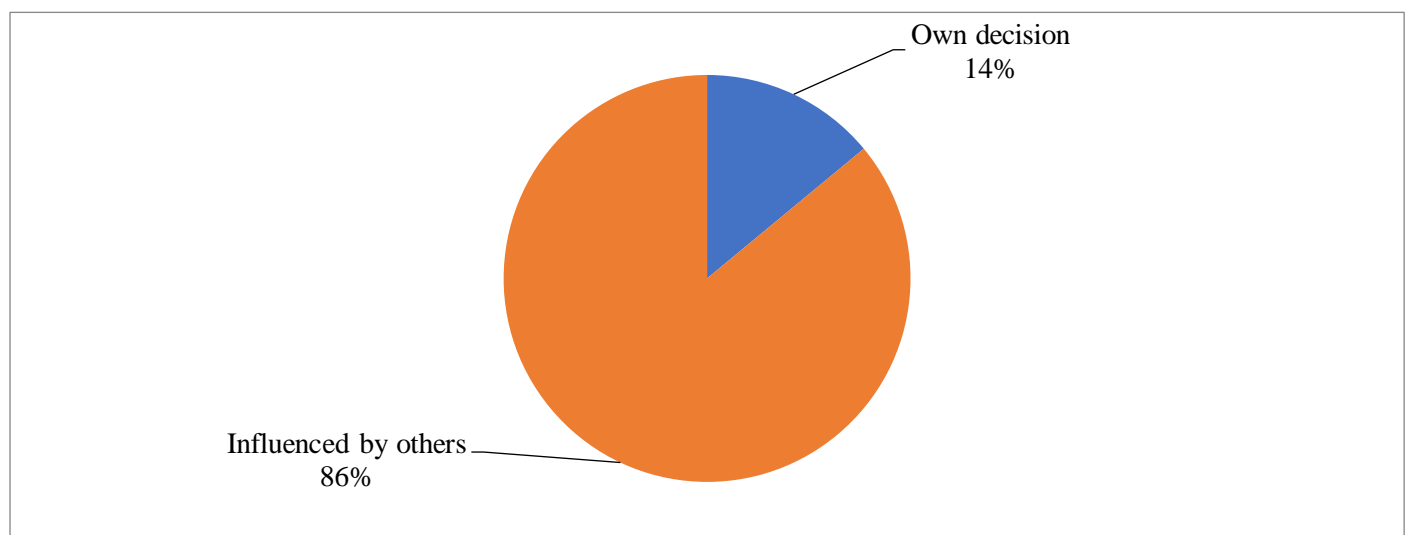


Figure 1
Determinants of Students' Choice of TVET Pathway

For those who were influenced, they were asked to identify who influenced their decision. As shown in Table 2, the main influencers were fathers (35.7%), mothers (15.7%), and Junior High School (JHS) teachers (13.8%). Other influencers included family relatives (7.9%), head teachers (7.9%), siblings (7.2%), friends (6.9%), religious leaders (2.9%), and the media (2.0%).

Table 2
Agents who Encouraged Respondents in the Choice of TVET

Agents	N	Percent Cases
Father	109	35.7
Mother	48	15.7
JHS Teacher	42	13.8
Family Relatives	24	7.9
JHS Headteacher	24	7.9
Siblings	22	7.2
Friends	21	6.9
Religious leader	09	2.9
Media	06	2.0
Total	305	100

Like other previous studies, this study demonstrated that parents, particularly fathers, were among the primary agents who encouraged students to pursue technical education. This confirms that parental influence plays a significant role in student's career decision-making making as highlighted by Agbenyo and Collett (2014) and Ayub (2015). Teacher influence, although recognized in the literature as significant, showed a mixed impact in this study. While some students acknowledged teachers as motivators, their influence was less dominant compared to parental guidance, a finding consistent with Ayub's (2015) conclusions that teacher influence on TVET choices can be statistically insignificant. This also aligns with the studies which suggest that parental guidance often outweighs the influence of teachers and peers in educational choices (European Commission, 2011; Agbenyo & Collett, 2014).

The students also reported the reasons provided by those who encouraged them to take the TVET pathway. Table 3 shows that the main reasons given them to enrol in TVET programmes were the potential for easy self-employment (28.9%), the availability of many job opportunities (23.1%), and the acquisition of practical skills (20.0%). Other reasons mentioned included the ease of finding a job after completing the programme (15.6%) and the ability to produce creative and innovative graduates (12.4%).

Table 3
Reasons for Encouraging People to Enrol on TVET Pathway

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Self-employment potential	65	28.9
Several opportunities in the job market	52	23.1
Acquisition of practical skills	45	20.0
Easy to get a job	35	15.6
TVET produces creative and innovative graduates	28	12.4
Total	225	100.0

The results of this study, showing that many students cited the potential for self-employment and the availability of job opportunities as key motivating factors reaffirm other reports that the direct link between TVET education and employment opportunities is particularly attractive to students and very crucial in shaping students' attitudes toward TVET (UNESCO, 2017). Again, this also aligns with literature suggesting that in various contexts, including Ghana, the TVET pathway is considered a faster route to employment and as educational cost rises globally, families may prefer TVET for its shorter, faster and more affordable programmes that also deliver quicker returns on their investment through earlier employment (UNESCO, 2024).

Table 4 outlines the key factors that motivated respondents to enrol in the specific TVET programme. The majority of the respondents indicated their interest in the program (98.6%) and a strong desire to become future entrepreneurs, (93.6%). Additional motivating factors included the desire to acquire practical skills (92.3%), the belief that those who study such programmes are never unemployed, (84.0%), and confidence that their certification will lead to high employability (82.7%). Respondents mentioned other reasons such as parents' educational background

(26.8%), performance in BECE (23.6%), and perceived ability to pursue general education (22.3%). These factors even though observed we not dominate.

Table 4

Reasons for Enrolling in the Programme in Technical Institute

Statement	Frequency	Percent Cases
I have an interest in the programme	217	98.6
I want to be an entrepreneur	206	93.6
I want to have the practical skills	203	92.3
People who have pursued this programme are never jobless	185	84
Graduates with such certification are highly employable	182	82.7
My father/mother/siblings attended Technical Institute	59	26.8
I did not do very well in BECE	52	23.6
I am academically weak to pursue academic education	49	22.3

These results suggest an improvement in the image recognition of TVET programmes. Participants have been drawn to their various programmes because of their belief that the programmes will offer them the benefits they seek; an opportunity to become entrepreneurs, a good choice for those who prefer a practical, hands-on approach to learning, access to the skills that are in demand so they get prepared to enter the workforce upon graduation, and those who prefer early attachment to employment. This is in line with recent findings that as the demand for skills grows, it is causing a cultural shift towards seeing TVET as a valuable, respected educational path rather than a second-choice option for people (UNESCO, 2022; Wolf, 2016).

4.3 Factors Militating against Students' Choice of the TVET Pathway

The study also sought to examine factors that militate against students' choice to enrol on TVET programmes. Respondents were asked to indicate if they were discouraged from choosing the TVET pathway. The result is as indicated in Figure 2.

The result indicates that 28% of the respondents were discouraged by someone. However, the majority of the respondents (72%) were not discouraged upon choosing the TVET pathway.

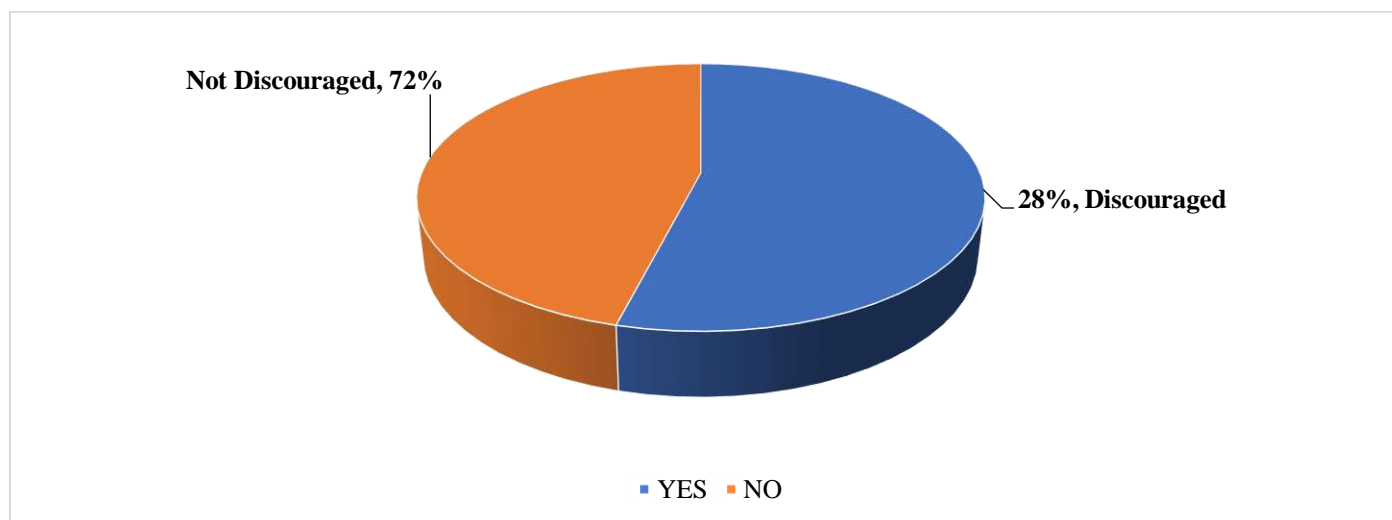


Figure 2

Showing whether Students were Discouraged

Respondents who indicated that they were discouraged in selecting the TVET pathway, were asked to further specify the agents who tried to discourage them. Table 5 shows that friends (45%) are the greatest agent in discouraging students from enrolling on the TVET pathway. Other agents who were mentioned included siblings (19%), JHS teachers (13%), other relatives (8 %), and other school agents (7%). The respondents further mentioned agents such as parents (4%), media (2. %), and religious leaders (2%).

Table 5*Agents who Discouraged Respondents in the Choice of TVET Pathway*

Agents of Discouragement	N	Percent
Friends	60	45
Siblings	25	19
JHS Teacher	18	13
Other relatives	11	8
Other school agents	09	7
Parent	05	4
Media	03	2
Religious leader	02	2

The respondents were further asked to report on the reasons given to them by these agents who discouraged them from pursuing TVET. Table 6 shows that prominent among the reasons was that TVET is for academically weak students (43.3%), TVET is not prestigious (23.3%), TVET schools' environments are not attractive (23.3%), TVET graduates do not earn on par with other academic qualifications (8.4%), and no clear career progression (4.7%).

Table 6*Reasons for Discouragement*

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
TVET is for academically weak students	46	43.3
TVET programme is not prestigious	24	23.3
TVET schools' environments are not attractive	24	23.3
TVET graduates do not earn on par with other academic qualifications	9	8.4
TVET has no clear career progression	5	4.7

This result highlights the negative perceptions about TVET programmes. These findings echo that of a previous report by Ackon (2017), which indicated that societal stigma remains a barrier to some students pursuing technical and vocational education, especially, among those who consider themselves to be academically inclined.

3.4 Satisfaction of Students with Their Choice of Programme

The respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the choice of programme they are studying. The items were measured on a dichotomous scale (yes or no). Table 7 suggests that the respondents were satisfied with the programmes they are offering. The majority of the students (95%) reported satisfaction with the subjects covered in the programme so far, 91% enjoyed the practical aspects of the programme, 86 % were satisfied with the teaching methods, 78% reported satisfaction with the availability of tools and equipment, with 76% expressing overall satisfaction with the school environment. However, only 38% of students were satisfied with the costs associated with the programme, and 32% satisfied with the support services they receive.

Table 7*Satisfaction of TVET Students with the Programme they were Offering*

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)
I am happy with the subjects taken so far	209 (95.0)	11 (5.0)
I like the practical aspect of the programme	199 (90.0)	21 (10.0)
I like the methods used in teaching	189 (85.0)	31 (15.0)
We have modern tools and equipment to support teaching and Learning	172 (78.0)	48 (22.0)
I like the school environment.	167 (75.0)	53 (25.0)
I am okay with the cost of the programme	84 (38.0)	136 (62.0)
I have support to find internship and work placement	72 (33.0)	148 (67.0)

This reflects a high level of satisfaction among the respondents, and aligns with the broader literature on factors contributing to student satisfaction in technical education. Various studies have emphasized the importance of practical skills acquisition and employability as major drivers of student satisfaction in TVET programmes. For instance, Miller and Imel (2017) noted that the opportunity for hands-on learning and immediate job prospects are key motivators that enhance the educational experience for students in technical and vocational training. The strong preference for practical aspects of learning, as reflected in the 91% satisfaction with practical work, is consistent with the findings World Bank (2019) which observed that the employability potential and the immediate application of

skills learned in vocational training are highly appreciated by TVET students. This suggests that students value vocational and technical education when it offers direct pathways to employment, particularly in fields where practical skills are critical.

However, the 38 % satisfaction rate with the programme's cost reflects a common assertion reported in the literature that cost is often a significant factor in student satisfaction with technical and vocational programmes. OECD (2020) reported that financial constraints often affect students' experiences in technical and vocational training, especially for those from lower-income families.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This study explored the factors influencing the choice of the TVET pathway among students in Ghana, as well as their satisfaction with their choice. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that family influence, particularly from parents, plays a major role in students' decisions to pursue TVET. In addition, personal interest and the perceived benefit of the programme such as opportunity for self-employment and employability are key motivating factors for students. Students would be content with their decision to pursue TVET when the content of the course they are studying is perceived as relevant to their aspiration to become entrepreneurs/ self-employed or their desire to gain employment faster. Students are very pleased when they see it as helping the practical aspects of the programme, teaching methods, and the availability of tools and equipment for training and are pleased with the overall school environment, reinforcing the importance of these factors to the enrollment prospects into TVET programmes.

Nevertheless, the financial difficulties and inadequate support services for TVET programmes remain a concern, suggesting the need for targeted financial support to improve student satisfaction and participation.

5.2 Recommendations

Since parents have a strong influence on students' educational decisions, it is recommended that career guidance programmes in schools include parent engagement. Schools should organise workshops and information sessions for parents to educate them about the benefits of TVET and the diverse career opportunities available in technical and vocational fields. Further, teachers should be trained to provide unbiased career guidance that includes information about the advantages of TVET. This will ensure that students receive comprehensive guidance on all available educational pathways. It is also recommended that TVET curriculum should continue to be aligned with industry needs, particularly in sectors where there is a shortage of skilled labour to ensure that graduates from these programmes are well-equipped for immediate employment. Also, effort should be made to improve the physical infrastructure of TVET institutions and promote them as centres of excellence in technical skills and innovation. This could include partnerships with industries to provide state-of-the-art equipment and facilities to further boosting the attractiveness of TVET programmes.

Other recommendations made are: a need for public education campaigns to combat the stigma associated with TVET and emphasize the practical, entrepreneurial, and employment benefits it offers. These campaigns should target students, parents, school agents, and the general public, utilising successful TVET graduates who have excelled in their careers as ambassadors of TVET programmes and, scholarships, grants, and financial incentives should be offered to students in TVET programmes. This financial support will help reduce students' stress and enhance their overall satisfaction with the programmes to help make these programmes more affordable, and accessible and boost enrolment.

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