

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLEDGE

Vocational Identity Statutes and Career Adaptability Skill among Technical and Vocational Education Students in Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study was aimed at investigating relationship between vocational identity statutes and career adaptability skill among technical and vocational education (TVE) students in colleges of education in Nigeria. A sample of 603 technical and vocational education (TVE) students selected from six colleges of education in Nigeria participated in this study. Survey design was adopted in this study with structured questionnaire for data collection. Bivariate and linear multiple regression were used for analyses, and the results indicated that the relationship between achievement statute of vocational identity and career adaptability skill among TVE students was positively significant, followed by moratorium statute. Achievement statute accounted for about 20% of variance explained in career adaptability skill, and moratorium accounted for 2.5%. However, the relationship between foreclosure and career adaptability skill among TVE students was negatively not significant. While that between diffusion and career adaptability skill among TVE students was negatively significant. The regression model fits the data at .001 level of significance. The predictor variables collectively accounted for about 22% of variance explained in career adaptability skill among TVE students in colleges of education in Nigeria. Limitations, implication and conclusion of the findings were discussed.

Keywords: *Career adaptability skill, Colleges of education, Nigeria, Technical and vocational education, Vocational identity statutes.*

1. Introduction

The world labor market of today is fast changing with corresponding demands for career adaptability skill that will enable the work force cope with the changing work structures. The situation is becoming more and more unpredictable to the majority of employees in different organizations in recent times (Savickas et al., 2009; Lent, 2013; Shahbazi, Yousefi, & Faramarzi, 2014). While a lot of attention of most research has been on the career adaptability skill among those who are already in employment (current workers), it seems a little attention is given to that among the prospective work force (students). Therefore, to prepare the students for the challenges of future career, there is a need to equip them with career adaptability skill. This study therefore aims at examining the relationship between the dimensional measures (statutes) of vocational identity and career adaptability skill among TVE students in colleges of education in Nigeria.

1.1. Vocational Identity

Vocational identity at adolescent stage of life is very crucial to the development of personality and career. Erikson's (1959) psychosocial development theory described the characteristic crises of identity that adolescents pass through in their process of growth, and referred to this stage as identity versus role confusion. Erikson later discovered that it was the inabilities of the adolescents to settle for an occupation that disturbs them, and he therefore identified vocational identity as the prime important factor in the development of an individual (Erikson, 1963). Vocational personality denotes an individual's career-related abilities, interests, values, and needs. These individual's characteristics form the bases for proper engagement in any vocation or career. Vocation provides a link between the inner self-world, and the outer society-world (Parker, 2002). To conceptualize vocational identity, Holland, Gottfredson, and Baker (1990), Holland, and Holland (1997), agreed with the definition given by Holland, Johnston, and Asama

(1993), of vocational identity as “the possession of a clear and stable picture of one’s goals, interests, and talents” (p.1191). Having a clear picture of one’s goals, interests and talents can aid the development of a sound career adaptability skill behavior. This is because career adaptability skill may be developed from an existing talent of an individual with defined personal career identity and goals.

Vocational identity derived status groups can be viewed from four dimensions, and these includes achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, and diffusion (Marcia, 1980; Hirschi, 2012). These four identity statutes were developed by Marcia (1980) from Erikson’s theory of ego development. Achievement status of vocational identity connotes a stage where an individual has successfully resolved identity crisis and is now committed to his chosen career goals; depicting high commitment and high exploration. Foreclosure status refers to premature identification with a role model without prior exploration, and crisis, therefore leading to high commitment, low exploration. Vocational identity moratorium status refers to an active on-going process of exploration and crisis, and an un-readiness or unwillingness to commit to a certain identity, depicting high exploration, but low commitment. Identity diffusion status of vocational identity means a lack of engagement in identity formation process leading to low exploration and low commitment. Persons with achievement status of vocational identity is likely to demonstrate high career adaptability skill behavior (Hirschi, 2012).

Studies have been conducted on vocational identity by other researchers, for example, Gushue, Clarke, Pantzer, and Scanlan (2006) found that high levels of career decision making self-efficacy were related to both a more differentiated vocational identity and a greater engagement with career exploration tasks among Latino high school students. Similar results were obtained among African American high school students by the same researchers Gushue et al(2006).A study on university students’ readiness for the national work force in Jordan indicated that the students had high sense of vocational identity and greater decidedness, but no significant differences were found of their vocational identity in relation to gender (Khasawneh, Khasawneh, Hailat, & Jawarneh, 2007).In another study, perceptions of family environment were not related to adolescents’ vocational identity, and perceptions of family-supported goals were not related to adolescents’ vocational identity either (Hargrove, Inman, & Crane, 2005). This finding shows that adolescents would like to form their own vocational identity independent of the opinions of their families. Adolescents usually want autonomy when it comes to personal vocational identity formation.

However, (Turner, Trotter, Lapan, Czajka, Yang, & Brissett, 2006) found that career exploration, person-environment fit, goal setting, social/pro-social/work readiness, self-regulated learning, and the utilization of social support predicted vocational identity among Native American adolescents. This results failed to support the earlier findings that perceptions of family environment, and family-supported goals not related to vocational identity of the adolescents. Perhaps, cultural or environmental influences could be responsible for such contradictions. Vocational identity was found to significantly correlate with ego identity, purpose in life, and sense of well-being, and that they all predicted significant variance in vocational identity (Jackman-Wheitner, 1994).In agreement with this findings, Hirschi (2012) discovered that vocational identity achievement was predicted by calling on German college students from different majors, and that vocational identity also served as a strong predictor of life satisfaction. Hirschi (2012) conducted a longitudinal study on patterns of vocational identity development in relation to personality and confirmed the existence of four identity statutes, which include achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, and diffusion. Vocational identity achievement and foreclosure students showed a relative increase in life satisfaction and those in a state of identity crisis showed a decrease in life satisfaction.

So far, none of the previous studies on vocational identity has examined relationship between the statutes of vocational identity and career adaptability skill among TVE students in colleges of education in Nigeria. The TVE students are adolescents who are within career exploration stage of life, therefore, insight into their vocational identity in regards to career adaptability skill is very crucial to their transition from school to work and overall career development. This present study therefore examines the relationship between achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion of vocational identity and career adaptability skill among TVE students in colleges of education in Nigeria, by hypothesizing as follows;

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the statutes of vocational identity and career adaptability skill among TVE students.
- Ho2: There is no significant combined effect of the statutes of vocational identity on career adaptability skill among TVE student.

1.2. Career Adaptability Skill

Career adaptability skill is generally an ability to change in order to fit into new career-related circumstances (Koen, Klehe, Van Vianen, Zikic, & Nauta, 2010).The drastic changing world of work, has indeed affected the overall structure of organizations, the kind of works available, and the ways they are performed (Super, 1990).To cope with the changes, and effectively participate in the work situations in these organizations, vocational educators, career counsellors, and researchers need to create the awareness of the importance of career adaptability skill among students and also prepare them with this essential career skill (career adaptability skill) for these challenges. Career adaptability skill emphasis among students is about assisting them to become career self-regulating, self-reliance, and healthy citizens, who will be able to cope with constant changes at workplace and also maintain balance between life and work roles (Savickas, 1997).

The conceptualization of career adaptability skill here is viewed from the postulation of the career development psychologist, Mark L. Savickas. After his proposal to replace “career maturity” of (Super, 1980) with “career adaptability”, Savickas (1997, p.254) defined career adaptability skill as individual’s “readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working situations”. Hirschi (2009) also conceptualized career adaptability skill as an aggregate model, where choice readiness, planning, exploration, and confidence jointly produce a high career

adaptability skill. Other career development theorists and researchers have viewed career adaptability from similar dimensions (Rottinghaus, Buelow, Matyja, & Schneider, 2011).

From the perspectives of career construction theory, Savickas (2005) offered the four Cs of career adaptability skill resources, which include concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Each of these features encompasses a set of other specific measurable attitudes, competences, beliefs, and coping behaviors that reflects adaptability skill. Career adaptability skill may be further viewed as a career development decision by which an individual prepares to adjust self to effectively cope with career transitions, changes in work structure or in work environment. This suggests that career adaptability skill requires that individual has adequate understanding of oneself and the work environment. Career adaptability skill demands conscious and proactive approach to exploring self, environment for opportunities, planning for the future, and making appropriate decision and networking with others that may be relevant and important to achieving the set career goals (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007; Cerdin, 2008).

2. Methodology

This study adopted quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between vocational identity statutes and career adaptability skill among TVE students in colleges of education in Nigeria. The study used cross-sectional survey design for data collection. A survey design is concerned about the opinions of a large population or a group of people about a particular topic or issues of interest (Huck, 2008; Fink, 2009; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012).

3. Participants

Participants were 603 TVE students in all levels of Agricultural, Business, and Technical Education programs selected from six colleges of education in Nigeria. Male participants were 353 representing 58.5%, and female were 250 representing 41.5% with an average age of 22 years. Agricultural education major represented 34.8%, business education major represented 36.0%, and technical education represented 29.2%. Participants from 100 level represented 33.3%, 200 level 34.2%, and 300 level represented 32.5%.

4. Instrument

Vocational Identity was measured by the use of Occupational Identity Scale (OIS) first published by Melgosa (1987) and complemented by Veiga and Moura (1999, 2005). The adapted instrument has 28 items sorted into four statutes of vocational identity, achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. Sample items include "After many doubts and considerations, I have it clearly in my mind what my occupation will be" and "It is too early for me to be concerned about my professional future" Participants responded on a 5 point Likert type scale format from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The initial Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients for internal consistency of the four statutes (dimensions) of the instrument achieved were; $\alpha = .81$ for achievement, $\alpha = .82$ for moratorium, $\alpha = .76$ for foreclosure, and $\alpha = .83$ for diffusion (Veiga & Moura, 2005). For the current study, $\alpha = .93$ for achievement, $\alpha = .94$ for moratorium, $\alpha = .93$ for foreclosure, and $\alpha = .92$ for diffusion. The composite reliability of the instrument for this study was .90.

Career adaptability skill was measured by the use of Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) South African Form designed by Maree (2012) from International Form 2.0 (Savickas, & Porfeli, 2012). The form is similar to Taiwan's form designed by Tien, Wang, Chu, and Huang (2012). South African Form adopted for this study consists of 24 items which are divided into four subscales to measure adaptability resources of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Participants responded on a 5 point Likert type scale format from 1 (not strong) to 5 (strongest). The reliability coefficient of CAAS- International Form 2.0 reported by Savickas, and Porfeli (2012) was .92, while the subscales had .83 for concern, .74 for control, .79 for curiosity, and .85 for confidence. For South African Form, Maree (2012) reported reliability coefficients were a little lower, the total score was .91 while the subscales were .77 for concern, .71 for control, .78 for curiosity, and .80 for confidence respectively. However, in this study, the composite reliability of the instrument was $\alpha = .95$, while the subscales were $\alpha = .92$ for concern, $\alpha = .91$ for control, $\alpha = .89$ for curiosity, and $\alpha = .90$ for confidence respectively.

5. Assumptions

Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure that violation of assumptions of normality, linearity, independent of observations, and homoscedasticity does not occur. Therefore, assumptions for correlational relationship were all met in this study.

6. Results

In order to answer the first research question and test the hypothesis, inter-relationships among the variables of the study were examined using SPSS software (Pallat, 2010). The results of the correlations between career adaptability skill (dependent variable) and vocational identity statutes (independent variables) respectively indicated that, achievement statute of vocational identity has a positive significant correlation with career adaptability, $r = .448$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). Since the direction of relationship is positive, it implies that TVE students in colleges of education in Nigeria who are high in achievement statute of vocational identity are likely to be high in career adaptability skill and vice versa. Applying Cohen's guideline (Cohen, 1988), the effect size, $r^2 = .2007$ (20.01%), which means about 20% of the variance in career adaptability skill among TVE students can be explained from achievement statute of vocational identity.

There was also a positive significant correlation between career adaptability skill and moratorium statutes of vocational identity, $r = .159$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). This implies also that TVE students who are high in moratorium statute of vocational identity are likely to be high in career adaptability skill and vice versa. It also means the effect size is $r^2 = .025$ (2.5%), which implies that 2.5% of the

variance in career adaptability skill among TVE students can be explained from moratorium statute of vocational identity. However, the relationship between career adaptability skill and foreclosure statute of vocational identity was statistically not significant, $r = .079$, and the relationship between career adaptability skill and diffusion statute of vocational identity was statistically not significant and also in negative direction, $r = -.054$. The details of the results are as presented in Table 1.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Career Adaptability Skill	82.461	18.085	-	.448**	.159**	.079	-.054
2. Vocational Identity Achievement	24.920	5.214			.248**	.329**	.065
3. Vocational Identity Moratorium	22.612	5.520				.222**	.329**
4. Vocational Identity Foreclosure	20.431	5.452					.444**
5. Vocational Identity Diffusion	17.655	5.898					-

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Career Adaptability Skill and Vocational Identity; $N = 603$

Furthermore, the combined effect of statutes of vocational identity on career adaptability skill among TVE students in colleges of education in Nigeria was examined using linear regression analysis to enable the researcher understand their predictive power. The regression results indicated that the model fits the data at .000 level of significance (two-tailed) which means a linear relationship. The result showed that, $F(4, 598) = 41.192$, $p = .000$, but specifically, achievement statute of vocational identity explained most of the variance in career adaptability skill among TVE students ($\beta_i = .448$, $p = .000$), followed by moratorium statute ($\beta_{ii} = .089$, $p = .024$). However, diffusion statute had a negative significant contribution to the variance in career adaptability skill among TVE students ($\beta_{iv} = -.091$, $p = .031$ at .05 level of significance). While foreclosure was negative and also did not significantly contribute to the variance in career adaptability skill among TVE students in colleges of education in Nigeria ($\beta_{iii} = -.048$, $p = .265$ at .05 level of significance). All tolerances are well over .57 which suggests a good model.

The model summary shows a moderate relationship between all the four predictors (achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion statutes of vocational identity), and career adaptability skill among TVE students in colleges of education in Nigeria, with $R = .465$ and $R^2 = .216$. This implies that about 22% variance in career adaptability skill among TVE students is explained by achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion of vocational identity.

7. Discussion

This study was aimed at assessing the relationship of vocational identity statutes with career adaptability skill among TVE students in colleges of education in Nigeria, and to also examine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Two research hypotheses were tested, i) there is no significant relationship between the statutes of vocational identity and career adaptability skill among TVE students, and ii) there is no significant combined effect of statutes of vocational identity on career adaptability skill among TVE students.

The findings indicated that majority of TVE students had done a lot of exploration on career choice and have settled for certain occupations of which they would not easily change their minds. Hence, achievement statute of vocational identity accounted for about 20% of the explained variance in career adaptability skill. This result is consonant with the findings of other similar studies, such as, Hirschi (2011), and Hirschi and Herrmann (2012b), who found that vocational identity achievement was predicted by calling on German college students, and that vocational identity was a strong predictor of life satisfaction. Career exploration, personal environment fit, goal setting and self-regulated learning were also found to predict vocational identity (Gayman, Turner, Cislo, & Eliassen, 2011). In another study, students with high vocational identity were found to be high in career decidedness (Khasawneh, 2011). Although high vocational identity achievement among adolescents like TVE students in colleges of education may be highly correlated with career adaptability skill, it does not really suggest that the individual is already equipped with career adaptability skill. It is just an indication that the individual or the TVE student has the capacity or potential to develop career adaptability skill.

The next significant correlation was between moratorium statute of vocational identity and career adaptability skill. The relationship was statistically significant but physically weak in the sense that an individual with a moratorium statute of vocational identity will find it difficult to settle for a specific profession. The characteristics of the measures of moratorium statute of vocational identity depict high sense of career exploration, but low commitment to any particular occupation, and if care is taken, students in this statute will end up being frustrated and confused career-wise, especially at the point of transiting from school to the labor market. TVE students who are in this category have the problem of implementing their self-concept (Super, 1969; Smart & Peterson, 1997; Savickas, 2002). Foreclosure statute of vocational identity has measures that makes it work in opposite direction to moratorium, and the result of this study indicated that it has negative and no significant relationship with career adaptability skill among TVE students. The measures of foreclosure showcased premature commitment to career lines without prior exploration, meaning, high commitment but low exploration (Hirschi, 2012b).

The diffusion statute of vocational identity lacks the sense of career engagement entirely, and the result of this study showed that it has a significant negative relationship with career adaptability skill among TVE students. This implies that TVE students who are high in diffusion statute of vocational identity, are likely to be low in career adaptability skill. Finally, the overall causal relationship tested was the combined effect of the four statutes of vocational identity on career adaptability skill. The result indicated a positive significant combined effect of achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion of vocational identity on career adaptability skill among TVE students. The result revealed that about 22% variance in career adaptability skill among TVE students is explained by the combined effect of achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion of vocational identity. However, the most significant

predictor variable of career adaptability skill was vocational identity achievement statute which accounted for more than 90% of the variance explained in career adaptability skill among TVE students in colleges in Nigeria. Other factors exterior to this study account for the 78% unexplained variance in career adaptability skill among TVE students.

8. Limitations

Limitations of this study can be identified from diverse perspectives, including the restricted participants, limited independent variables examined, and high percentage of unexplained variance in the dependent variable. This study had a focus only on TVE students in colleges of education in Nigeria, therefore, students in other disciplines as well as other tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria were not included. This implies that the generalization of the findings is limited to only the population from which the sample was drawn. Even though colleges of education were the population, caution should be exercised in generalizing the findings to all the colleges, because, only the technical and vocational education were used for this study.

Career adaptability skill is a multidimensional construct, and such, relating a very few independent variables to it in order to examine it, is like underscoring the construct. Use of more career-related variables to study career adaptability skill would perhaps, unveil more information about its relationship with those variables. This could not be achieved in this current study, and closely related to this limitation is the high percentage of residual value (unexplained variance). The high percentage of the unexplained variance of career adaptability skill suggests many variables other than those used for this study account for the unexplained variance. In a nutshell, studies relating to adolescent career development such as career adaptability skill would be more explicit and rewarding if more personal as well as situational career-related variables are used.

9. Implication and Conclusion

The results of this current study have revealed the aspects of vocational identity of the TVE students in colleges of education that need more attention in course of preparing them for smooth transition from school to work with career adaptability skill. These students need innovative vocational educators, career counselors, and the managers of TVE to activate the adaptability skill potentials in them. The measures of the various statutes of vocational identity, and those of career adaptability skill should guide the educators and counselors in preparing the TVE students for the transition.

On the part of government, enabling career counseling services and training environment need to be created for both trainers and TVE students to effectively interact on building career adaptability skill relevant to the development of the economy. In view of the need to equip TVE students with career adaptability skill before they graduate from school, no time should be wasted in ensuring that they are adequately prepared for the challenges of the rapidly changing world of work. Theoretically, the study has strengthened the relevance of Self-Concept Theory (Super, 1990) in career development of the adolescents, by revealing the need for implementing self-concept among TVE students whose vocational identity statutes are in doubts.

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