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PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF ATTITUDINAL ISSUES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This research work investigated the perceived influence of attitudinal issues on academic performance of technical education students in Rivers State University. The study was guided by four specific objectives and four corresponding research questions. The study adopted descriptive survey research design with a population of 34 students of Technical Education from the Department of Vocational and Technology Education, Rivers State University. The entire 34 students were recruited as sample for the study due to its manageable size. The instrument was questionnaire, titled, "Attitudinal Issues on Academic Performance Questionnaire (AIAPQ)" structured in likert type response format of Strongly Agree (5), A =Agree (4), U= Undecided (3), DA= Disagree (2), and SD =Strongly Disagree (1). The research questions were answered using the mean score. The findings showed that; attitudinal issues affected the academic performance of Students. The results showed that the students demonstrated various forms of attitudinal issues such as discouragements from other faculty students. The result also showed that attitudinal issues cause poor academic performance by students and it makes a student to have low self-esteem in educational activities. Based on the results, it was recommended among others that Department of Vocational and Technology Education should restructure the technical education programmes to incorporate more practical workshop experiences and implement comprehensive orientation programmes for new students to clearly communicate departmental expectations, career opportunities, and the practical value of technical education.

Keywords: Technical Education, Academic Performance, Students' Attitude, Challenges in Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

Introduction

Attitude refers to a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events, or symbols (Cherry, 2018). In educational contexts, attitude encompasses students' predispositions or tendencies to respond positively or negatively towards learning experiences, academic subjects, or the educational environment as a whole (Ajzen, 2020). Student attitude plays a pivotal role in effective learning as they significantly influence motivation, engagement, persistence, and ultimately, academic achievement. Research shows that positive attitudes toward learning contributes towards enhancement in academic performance, knowledge retention and participation in classroom activities (Chen, Bae, Battista, Qin, Chen, Evans & Menon, 2018; Melad, 2022). Within Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), student attitude is even more important. This is due to the practical nature of TVET, which demands not only cognitive understanding but also psychomotor skills development and affective commitment. Positive attitudes in the context of TVET can facilitate the development of practical competencies, adherence to safety protocols. It can further foster creative problem-solving, professional dispositions required in technical fields (Odhiambo, 2022). Consequently, understanding and addressing student attitudes in technical education is crucial for ensuring educational effectiveness and preparing competent graduates for the workforce.

Technical education as a programme of study in universities and other tertiary institutions often faces peculiar challenges. For example, it is a common experience for students to enroll in these programmes not by choice but as fallback options after failing to secure admission into their preferred courses (Samuel, 2024.; Yunus, Mohamad, Bahari, & Ngadimin, 2024). A preliminary survey by the author revealed that a significant proportion of technical education students in

the Department of Vocational and Technology Education, Rivers State University, initially aspired to study other disciplines but were redirected due to their inability to meet up admission requirements for their initial intended course of study by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). When eventually in the technical education programme, these students exhibit some form of problematic attitudinal dispositions. Such dispositions include apathy, low motivation, poor class attendance, minimal participation in practical sessions, and reluctance to engage with course materials. These attitudinal issues may vary considerably across levels of study, with first-year students typically displaying the most negative attitudes as they adjust to their unintended academic path. Final year students often demonstrate more positive attitudes after recognizing the practical value and employment opportunities associated with their training. Additionally, attitudinal variations also exist across different technical education specializations. For example, students who perceive their area of specialization to have more industry relevance may have more positive attitude than those who perceive their area of specialization to have less industry relevance. This survey findings corroborates the report from the study by Azeem, Omar, Rashid and Abdullah (2022) who found that students demonstrated negative attitude towards TVET programme.

The negative attitudinal dispositions among technical education students have detrimental effect on their educational experience. Students harboring unfavorable attitudes toward their programmes of study may typically exhibit reduced cognitive engagement as well as diminished attention during lectures. They may also invest insufficient time to independent study necessary to acquire desired practical skills (Ferrer, Ringer, Saville, Parris, & Kashi, 2022). These behaviours have the potential to negatively impact learning outcomes

which can negatively affect career readiness. From a study by Zulu and Mutereko (2020), it was reported that there exists a relationship between students' attitude and attrition in technical and vocation education and training programmes.

There are a number of factors which contribute to the attitudinal issues observed among technical and vocational education and training students (Boateng, Ackon & Nyarko, 2024). These can be classified as student-related factors, lecturer-related factors, peer influence and institutional factors. Student-related factors include preconceived notions about technical education being less prestigious than other disciplines, misconceptions about career prospects, inadequate pre-university preparation in science and mathematics, and personal frustration from not pursuing their preferred course (Zhi & Atan, 2021). Typical lecturer-related factors encompass teaching methodologies that fail to inspire interest, insufficient practical demonstrations and limited industry experience among some teachers (McPherson & Foncha, 2022; Ramongwane, Manto & Moses, 2022). Peer influence constitutes another significant factor, as negative attitudes can be contagious within student groups. For example, some dissatisfied students can potentially discourage others which can create a collective culture of disengagement (Zhi & Atan, 2021). Institutional factors further compound these issues. These comprise inadequate workshop facilities, outdated equipment, limited industry partnerships for practical exposure, and insufficient career counseling services to help students recognize the value and opportunities within technical and vocational education and training (Ayanwale, Molefi & Matsie, 2023).

The attitudinal issues prevalent among technical education students could in a way affect their academic activities and in turn their learning outcomes. Students with negative attitudes may typically display irregular attendance patterns, passive classroom participation, perfunctory

completion of assignments, and avoidance of challenging learning tasks (Teane & Gombwe, 2023). These behavioural manifestations could potentially affect learning outcomes such as skill development, problem-solving abilities, and professional identity formation among students (Teane & Gombwe, 2023).

Addressing the attitudinal challenges facing technical education students requires comprehensive, multi-faceted strategies. One of such strategies is engagement in an enhanced career guidance and counseling services at pre-university and early university stages to help students appreciate the value, opportunities, and societal contributions associated with technical and vocational education and training (Ayanwale, Molefi & Matsie, 2023; Billett, 2018). Another strategy is redesigning technical education curriculum to enhance its relevance to the labour market. This can be done by incorporating contemporary industry practices, emerging technologies, and entrepreneurship components that highlight the practical applications and career possibilities within TVET (Terblanche & Bitzer, 2018). Another strategy is utilizing innovative pedagogical methods in programme delivery. These include project-based learning, collaborative problem-solving exercises, gamification of technical concepts, and technology-enhanced instruction which can stimulate interest and engagement among students (Doherty & Olelewe, 2019). Still another strategy is strengthening industry partnerships through regular field trips, internships, guest lectures by successful professionals, and industry-sponsored projects to provide students with authentic exposure to potential career paths (Olorunfemi, Maryann & Adeleke, 2024). Furthermore, another strategy is institutional support mechanisms which include peer mentoring programmes which can be achieved by pairing new students with enthusiastic seniors, student-led technical clubs and competitions, recognition systems for outstanding achievements, and accessible

academic support services which can cultivate positive attitudes and commitment to technical education (Muhammad, 2023).

This study holds significance for different stakeholders in the field of TVET. For university administrators and policymakers, the findings would inform evidence-based decisions regarding admissions procedures, student support services, and resource allocation for technical programs. Technical education departments would benefit from insights that guide curriculum development, teaching methodologies, and strategies for fostering student engagement and commitment. Lecturers would gain valuable understanding of the attitudinal challenges facing their students. This could enable more responsive and effective instructional approaches. Students themselves would benefit from increased institutional awareness of their experiences and the subsequent implementation of supportive interventions. Additionally, industries employing technical graduates would ultimately benefit from a more enthusiastic, competent, and committed workforce emerging from programmes that effectively address attitudinal barriers to learning.

Statement of the Problem

The need for this study arises from the growing recognition that technical and vocational education plays a crucial role in national development, technological advancement, and addressing youth unemployment (Billett, 2018). Despite this importance, technical education programmes continue to face challenges related to student perceptions, engagement, and commitment, particularly when these programmes serve as alternative pathways rather than primary choices. As Tertiary institutions seek to produce competent technical professionals who will contribute to industrial and technological development, understanding and addressing the attitudinal dimensions of technical education is imperative. This research fills a critical gap in the literature by providing context-specific insights into the attitudinal issues surrounding students of technical education at Rivers State

University, their variations across levels and specializations, contributing factors, and potential strategies for resolving the issue. These insights would contribute to the broader educational objective of transforming technical education from a perceived "second choice" to a valued and desirable academic and career pathway.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper was to ascertain the different attitudinal issues and their perceived influence on students of technology education in Rivers State University.

Specifically, the study intended to:

1. Ascertain the different attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education among students in Rivers State University.
2. Determine the factors contributing to such attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education among students in Rivers State University.
3. Find out how these attitudinal issues affect the academic activities of students in technical education in Rivers State University.
4. Identify strategies that could be used to address such attitudinal issues among students in Rivers State University.

Research Questions

The following are the questions guided the study

1. What are the different attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education among students in Rivers State University.
2. What are the factors contributing to such attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education among students in Rivers State University?
3. How do these attitudinal issues affect the academic activities of students in technical education in Rivers State University?
4. What are the strategies that could be used to address such attitudinal issues among students in Rivers State University?

Methodology

The study used descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 34 students of technical education programme in the Department of Vocational and Technology Edcuation, Rivers State university, Port Harcourt. This number comprised 14 level 400, 14 level 300, 5 level 200 and 1 level 100 students (Source: Departmental Office of Vocational and Technology Education, Rivers State University, 2025). The entire 34 students were recruited as sample for the study. This is due to the manageable size of this population. Consequently, the study adopted a census sampling technique. The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire titled, "Attitudinal Issues on Academic Performance Questionnaire (AIAPQ)". The questionnaire was developed by the researcher from the available literature on the causes of attitudinal issues of student and their percieved inflence in vocational and technical education. The instrument contains a total of 28 items structured on a five-point Likert Scale**.** The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts: one from the field of measurement and evaluation and the other two from Vocational and Technology Education., The validators checked the items to ensure that they were required to assess the questionnaire in conditions of clarity, appropriateness, and relevance in addressing the problem of the study. Their suggestions and recommendations were taken into consideration in the final draft of the instrument. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using cronbach Alpha which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.74. The instrument was administered by the researcher through personal contacts. This technique was used to enhance return-rate of all the questionnaires administered. All the questionnaires were retrieved by the researcher directly from the respondents. Data gathered were analysed using mean.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the different attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education in rivers state university?

Table 1: Mean Response of Students on Attitudinal Issues

S/N	Items	M	S.D.	Decision
1	Absence from class due to lack of interest in the course	4.28	1.08	Agree
2	Lack of concentration due to friends from other faculties.	3.68	1.13	Agree
3	Discouragements from other faculty students.	3.67	1.28	Agree
4	Discouragements from other faculty lecturers.	3.80	1.12	Agree
5	Loss of focus due to lack of interest in the course	3.98	1.08	Agree
6	Inability to study due to lack of interest in the course	4.12	1.01	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.92		

Survey Data

Table 1 shows the responses of the students regarding the attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education in Rivers State University. The result from the table shows a grand mean response of 3.92. This is an indication that the respondents agreed that the items listed are all attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education in Rivers State University.

Research Question 2: What are the factors contributing to such attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education in Rivers State University?

Table 2: Mean Response of the Factors Contributing to Attitudinal Issues.

S/N	Items	M	S.D.	Decision
1	Lack of interest in the course	4.32	0.93	Agree
2	No proper assessment of student into the department before admission.	3.97	0.90	Agree
3	Loss of concentration in studying.	3.87	1.07	Agree
4	Admission to study a course out of students' will.	4.13	0.85	Agree
5	Peer pressure from parents and friends.	3.95	1.14	Agree
6	Unbalanced mind to study a vocational course	3.92	1.14	Agree
	Grand Mean	4.03		

Survey Data

Table 2 shows the responses of the students regarding factors contributing to such attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education in Rivers State University. The result from the table shows a grand mean response of 4.03. This is an indication that the respondents agreed that the items listed are all factors contributing to such attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education in Rivers State University.

Research Question 3: How do these attitudinal issues affect the academic activities of students in technical education in Rivers State University?

Table 3: Mean Response of how Attitudinal Issues affect the Academic Activities

S/N	Items	M	S.D.	Decision
1	Attitudinal issues cause poor academic performance by students	4.52	0.75	Agree
2	It makes a student to have low self-esteem in educational activities	3.88	0.94	Agree
3	Attitudinal issues discourage a student from learning	4.13	1.00	Agree
4	It results to students' withdrawal from the programme	3.67	1.20	Agree
5	Attitudinal issues disallow the student from putting his/her best in academics	3.95	0.95	Agree
6	It affects the students' reasoning ability (Affective).	4.05	0.98	Agree
7	It makes a student not to strive for the best academically	4.08	1.03	Agree
	Grand Mean	4.04		

Survey Data

Table 3 shows the responses of the students regarding how attitudinal issues affect the academic activities of students in technical education in Rivers State

University. The result from the table shows a grand mean response of 4.04. This is an indication that the respondents agreed that all the items listed are how attitudinal issues affect the academic activities of students in technical education in Rivers State University.

Research Question 4: What strategies could be used to address such attitudinal issues in Rivers State University?

Table 4: Mean Response on Strategies to address such Attitudinal Issues

S/N	Items	M	S.D.	Decision
1	Students with less grade should not be qualified for vocational department	3.92	1.46	Agree
2	Proper orientation to all intakes of vocation department students each year	4.55	0.67	Agree
3	Workshop practices to build vocational students' capacity should be adopted	4.55	0.77	Agree
4	A law with rules and regulation should be adopted and enforced in vocational department for students to be serious	4.22	0.98	Agree
5	Enforcing a discipline with high standard in vocational department	4.33	0.90	Agree
	Grand Mean	4.31		Agree

Survey Data

Table 4 shows the responses of the students regarding what strategies could be used to address such attitudinal issues in technical education in Rivers State University. The result from the table shows a grand mean response of 4.31. This is an indication that the respondents agreed that all the items listed are strategies that could be used to address such attitudinal issues in Rivers State University.

Discussion of Findings

Research question one focused on the attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education in Rivers State University. The result, showed that the respondents agreed that absence from class due to lack of interest in the course, lack of concentration due to friends from other faculties, discouragements from other faculty students, discouragements from other faculty lecturers, loss of focus due to lack of

interest in the course, inability to study due to lack of interest in the course are the attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education in Rivers State University. This finding is in agreement with Azeem, Omar, Rashid and Abdullah (2022) who found that students demonstrated negative attitude towards TVET programme as a result of public perception.

Research question two focused on the factors contributing to such attitudinal issues surrounding the study of technical education in Rivers State University. The result, shows that the respondents agreed that no proper assessment of student into the department before admission, loss of concentration in studying, admission to study a course out of students' will, peer pressure from parents and friends and unbalanced mind to study a vocational course. This finding is in agreement with the result obtained by other scholars including: Zhi and Atan (2021), McPherson and Foncha (2022), Ramongwane, Manto and Moses (2022) and Ayanwale, Molefi and Matsie (2023) who found peer influence, parental influence and institutional influence as factors responsible for students' attitude towards TVET programmes.

Research question three focused on how attitudinal issues affect the academic activities of students in technical education in Rivers State University. The result, shows that the respondents agreed that Attitudinal issues causes poor academic performance by students, It makes a student to have low self-esteem in educational activities, Attitudinal issues discourages a student from learning, It results to students' withdrawal from the programme, Attitudinal issues disallow the student from putting his/her best in academics, Attitudinal issues disallow the student from putting his/her best in academics, it affects the students' reasoning ability (Affective) and It makes a student not to strive for the best academically. This finding is in consonance with that of Zulu and Mutereko (2020) who found that there is a relationship between students' attitude and attrition from TVET programmes.

Research question four focused on strategies that could be used to address such attitudinal issues of technical education in Rivers State University. The result, showed that the respondents agreed that students with less grade should not be qualified for vocational department, proper orientation to all intakes of vocation department students each year, workshop practices to build vocational students' capacity should be adopted, a law with rules and regulation should be adopted and enforced in vocational department for students to be serious and enforcing a discipline with high standard in vocational department. This finding is in agreement with that of Ayanwale, Molefi and Matsie (2023) who found that awareness campaigns could be used to enhance the image of technical and vocation education and training programmes. Through such campaigns, students' attitude could be improved towards the programme in Rivers State University.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that attitudinal issues significantly influence students' interest, engagement, and performance in technical and vocational education. It was found that lack of interest in the course, peer influence from friends and lecturers in other faculties, and discouragement from external sources contribute to students' absenteeism, loss of focus, and inability to study effectively. Furthermore, improper assessment and admission procedures, as well as parental and peer pressure, were identified as major factors that lead students into studying courses outside their personal interest, thereby weakening their commitment to the programme. The study also established that these attitudinal challenges negatively impact students' academic performance and results in low self-esteem, poor learning outcomes, withdrawal from the programme as well as general decline in academic motivation. However, the respondents suggested that effective interventions such as proper orientation for new students,

enforcement of academic discipline, strengthening workshop practices, and establishing clear rules and regulations within vocational departments could help address these issues.

It was therefore concluded that fostering positive attitudes toward technical and vocational education requires a holistic approach that combines proper student assessment and placement, sustained motivation, and an enabling learning environment. By addressing attitudinal challenges and promoting discipline and skill-based engagement, institutions can enhance students' interest, performance, and overall success in vocational and technical education programmes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Department of Vocational and Technology Education should implement an integrated students' engagement program featuring regular career talks by industry professionals and successful alumni to address the widespread lack of interest in technical education courses and counteract negative influences from other faculties.
2. Department of Vocational and Technology Education should establish a pre-admission campaign system to ensure students are aware of the value of technical education programmes.
3. Departments of Vocational and Technology Education should develop an early intervention support system including academic counseling and peer mentoring specifically targeting students showing signs of disengagement.
4. Departments of Vocational and Technology Education should restructure technical education programmes to incorporate more practical workshop experiences and implement comprehensive orientation programmes for new

students to clearly communicate departmental expectations, career opportunities, and the practical value of technical education.

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