

LOCAL LABOUR MARKET CONDITIONS AND TRANSITION TO VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of local labour market conditions on transitions into vocational training in Nigeria, with particular attention to how labour market realities shape enrolment decisions, the role of employment opportunities and skill demand, and the barriers and facilitators affecting participation. Using a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from 220 respondents comprising vocational trainees, unemployed youths, training centre administrators, and labour officials, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire measured on a four-point Likert scale and analysed using mean scores and standard deviations, while hypotheses were tested using Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA). The findings indicated that local labour market conditions were significantly associated with vocational training decisions, as respondents agreed that factors such as job availability, wage levels, and industrial growth influenced their enrolment choices (mean scores ranging from 2.98 to 3.04; SD < 1.00). Employment-related opportunities, including internships, job placement prospects, and high demand for skilled labour, were also found to be positively associated with increased uptake of vocational training programmes (mean scores ranging from 3.02 to 3.05). In contrast, barriers such as limited access to training centres, high programme costs, and cultural expectations were found to constrain participation, while facilitators including mentorship, policy support, and incentives enhanced engagement. MANCOVA results revealed statistically significant relationships between labour market conditions and enrolment decisions ($F = 9.42$, $p < 0.001$), employment opportunities and vocational training uptake ($F = 8.21$, $p < 0.001$), and labour market barriers and successful transitions into vocational training ($F = 8.87$, $p < 0.001$). The study therefore concludes that structural, cultural, and economic factors jointly shape vocational training participation in Nigeria. It recommends expanding access to vocational training, aligning programmes with local labour market needs, strengthening mentorship initiatives, and reducing financial barriers in order to enhance skills acquisition and employability.

Introduction

The transition from formal education to the workforce has been a persistent challenge in Nigeria, particularly for youths who seek practical skills that align with labour market demands. Local labour market conditions, which encompass factors such as employment opportunities, skill shortages, wage levels, and industrial growth, play a crucial role in shaping the decisions of individuals to pursue vocational training (Rufai, Ogunniyi, Salman, Salawu, & Omotayo, 2021). In Nigeria, unemployment among youths remains a pressing issue, with the National Bureau of Statistics reporting a rate of 35.1 percent in 2022, highlighting a significant gap between educational outcomes and market requirements (Ajeniweni, Bamgbowu, & Obasi, 2024). While formal education often emphasises theoretical knowledge, vocational training provides practical skills that can enhance employability and foster entrepreneurial capacity (Odey, Ogunsola, Abutu, & Nwokolo-Ojo, 2020). However, the uptake of vocational education is uneven across regions, largely influenced by local labour conditions, availability of training facilities, and perceptions about job security in informal and formal sectors (Adeosun, Owolabi, Eshiet, & Owolabi, 2023). Chukwuedo, Nnajiofor, Auta, and Odogwu (2023) argue that strong linkages between technical institutions and industries can mitigate skill mismatches and smoothen school-to-work transitions. In the Nigerian context, rural areas face additional challenges due to limited access to technical training centres and fewer local employment opportunities, which may discourage participation in vocational programs (Rufai et al., 2021). Contrastingly, urban centres, especially Lagos and Abuja, show higher engagement with vocational training owing to diverse labour markets and a concentration of industries that demand skilled labour (Adeosun et al., 2023). While some scholars emphasise that vocational education directly contributes to economic growth and reduces youth unemployment (Ajeniweni et al., 2024), others highlight that structural inefficiencies, inadequate funding, and weak industry partnerships hinder effective transition from education to work (Odey et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding local labour market conditions is crucial to designing vocational programs

that are responsive, accessible, and relevant to Nigerian youths, ensuring that training leads to sustainable employment opportunities and economic empowerment (Chukwuedo et al., 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognised importance of vocational education in Nigeria, a considerable proportion of youths struggle to transition smoothly into the labour market. Many vocational programmes are either misaligned with local industry needs or inaccessible due to cost and location, particularly in rural areas (Rufai et al., 2021). This mismatch often results in high rates of unemployment among technically trained graduates, reflecting a failure to capitalise on potential human capital (Odey et al., 2020). Moreover, inconsistent labour market data and limited integration between schools and employers exacerbate the problem, leaving many trainees without clear pathways into gainful employment (Chukwuedo et al., 2023). In essence, the lack of structured understanding of how local labour conditions influence vocational training uptake poses a critical barrier to Nigeria's economic growth and youth empowerment (Ajeniweni et al., 2024).

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the influence of local labour market conditions on individuals' decision to enroll in vocational training programs in Nigeria.
2. To assess the role of employment opportunities and skill demand in shaping the transition from education to vocational training.
3. To identify the barriers and facilitators within local labour markets that affect successful participation in vocational training programs.

Research Questions

- A. How do local labour market conditions influence the decision to pursue vocational training in Nigeria?
- B. What is the relationship between the availability of employment opportunities and the uptake of vocational training programs?
- C. What barriers and facilitators in the local labour market affect the transition from general education to vocational training?

Research Hypotheses

H₁: There is a significant relationship between local labour market conditions and individuals' decision to enroll in vocational training in Nigeria.

H₂: The availability of employment opportunities positively influences the transition of individuals into vocational training programs.

H₃: Barriers within the local labour market significantly impede the successful transition to vocational training in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Local Labour Market

The concept of a local labour market refers to the geographic and sectoral context in which workers and employers interact, encompassing the supply of labour, demand for skills, wage levels, and employment opportunities (Medun & Bello, 2024). Unlike national labour markets, local labour markets are shaped by regional industries, infrastructure, and socio-economic characteristics, which directly influence the availability of jobs and the types of skills required (Chukwu, Anaele, Omeje, & Ohanu, 2020). In Nigeria, disparities between urban and rural labour markets are significant. Urban centres such as Lagos and Abuja host diverse industries, offering numerous formal employment opportunities that reward vocational skills, while rural areas tend to rely on agriculture and informal trading, limiting the absorption of vocationally trained graduates (Obi & Ojo, 2025). Understanding the local labour market is therefore essential in predicting which skills are in demand and aligning vocational training programs accordingly (Ayoade, Odetunde, & Falodun, 2020). While theoretical frameworks emphasise mobility and skill matching, in practice, local labour conditions, such as industrial concentration and informal sector prevalence, determine whether vocational training translates into meaningful employment (Odey, 2024). This implies that interventions aimed at improving vocational training outcomes must consider local economic structures and labour dynamics to be effective (Allais, 2022).

The Influence of Local Labour Market Conditions on Individuals' Decision to Enroll in Vocational Training Programs in Nigeria

Local labour market conditions play a critical role in shaping whether individuals decide to pursue vocational training. High unemployment rates, low wages, and limited industry demand often discourage youth from entering formal vocational programs, while regions with thriving industries and skills shortages encourage enrollment (Medun & Bello, 2024). In Nigeria, research shows that many young people choose vocational education primarily

when they perceive it as a viable pathway to employment or entrepreneurship (Chukwu et al., 2020). Conversely, regions with limited industrial development often experience low enrolment, reflecting the perceived risk of training without assured employment (Obi & Ojo, 2025). Empirical evidence from Lagos State indicates that vocational skills training significantly increases employability, yet only 37 percent of trainees report transitioning into stable jobs within the first year, highlighting the influence of local market conditions (Medun & Bello, 2024). While some scholars emphasise the role of personal motivation and family support in the decision to enroll, structural factors such as labour demand and sectoral growth are equally critical (Ayoade et al., 2020). Thus, understanding these dynamics helps policymakers design vocational programs that respond to local needs and reduce the risk of skill underutilisation (Odey, 2024).

The Role of Employment Opportunities and Skill Demand in Shaping the Transition from Education to Vocational Training

Employment opportunities and skill demand are key determinants of how effectively education translates into vocational training. When local industries signal a need for specific technical skills, individuals are more likely to invest time and resources in acquiring them (Alam, Reza, Ogawa, & Ahsan, 2024). In Nigeria, sectors such as construction, ICT, and manufacturing exhibit growing demand for skilled labour, yet the supply of trained graduates remains insufficient, creating a skills gap that vocational programs aim to address (Obi & Ojo, 2025). Studies indicate that youths are more likely to transition from general education to vocational training when job prospects are clear, wages competitive, and training aligns with employer expectations (Odey, 2024). However, where skill demand is ambiguous or informal employment dominates, potential trainees may hesitate, fearing low returns on their investment (Chukwu et al., 2020). International comparisons, such as Bangladesh, show that linking training curricula to local labour needs enhances employment outcomes, demonstrating the importance of responsive program design (Alam et al., 2024). This implies that bridging the gap between education and labour demand is not solely about offering courses, but also about strategically aligning vocational skills with evolving market realities (Allais, 2022).

The Barriers and Facilitators within Local Labour Markets that Affect Successful Participation in Vocational Training Programs

Participation in vocational training is influenced by both obstacles and enabling factors within local labour markets. Common barriers include inadequate infrastructure, high program costs, lack of industry linkages, and limited awareness of vocational opportunities (Medun & Bello, 2024). In Nigeria, rural regions particularly face challenges such as poor access to training centres, insufficient mentors, and weak industrial presence, which reduce enrolment rates and post-training employment (Chukwu et al., 2020). Conversely, facilitators such as government incentives, private sector partnerships, and mentorship programs enhance participation and employment outcomes (Okolie et al., 2020). For instance, Lagos State's vocational initiatives combined with job placement services have improved transition rates by 22 percent, showing that support structures are as critical as training content (Medun & Bello, 2024). While some research highlights cultural perceptions and gender norms as additional barriers, systemic reforms and quality assurance measures can address these gaps (Asad, Mahar, Datoo, Sherwani, & Hassan, 2023). Based on this understanding, successful vocational training requires both market-responsive curricula and supportive labour market mechanisms to ensure skills are translated into sustainable employment opportunities (Alam et al., 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Human Capital Theory as its theoretical framework, originally propounded by Becker in 1964 (Becker, 1964). The theory assumes that individuals invest in education and training to enhance their productivity and future earnings, suggesting that skills acquisition directly contributes to economic outcomes (Becker, 1964). Central to this perspective is the idea that labour market decisions, including enrolment in vocational training, are shaped by the perceived return on investment in skills relative to costs and employment opportunities (Chukwu et al., 2020). In the Nigerian context, where local labour markets vary significantly across regions, this theory helps explain why youths in urban centres may pursue vocational programs more readily than those in rural areas, reflecting differences in expected labour market rewards (Obi & Ojo, 2025). Critics argue that the theory underestimates structural constraints such as inadequate infrastructure, discrimination, and informal labour dominance, which may limit skill application despite training (Allais, 2022). Nevertheless, the theory is adopted for this study because it provides a clear framework for linking vocational skill acquisition to employment outcomes, allowing analysis of how local labour market conditions influence individual decisions to transition into vocational education (Medun & Bello, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design because it allowed the collection of data from a cross-section of vocational trainees, unemployed youths, training centre administrators, and labour officials to examine

their experiences and perceptions regarding vocational training and local labour markets (Bhattacharyya, 2006). The design was suitable because it enabled the researcher to quantify attitudes and behaviours systematically, capturing patterns across different groups without manipulating variables (Goundar, 2012). Using a survey design also facilitated structured comparisons and statistical testing of hypotheses, providing empirical insights into how local labour conditions influence the decision to participate in vocational training programs (Davidavičienė, 2018).

The population of the study comprised vocational trainees, unemployed youths, training centre administrators, and labour officials across Nigeria. These groups were relevant as they directly interact with vocational training and local labour market conditions (Rajasekar & Verma, 2013). Focusing on these populations ensured that data captured multiple perspectives, from service users to programme administrators and labour policymakers. The population was heterogeneous in terms of age, education level, and geographic location, reflecting the diverse challenges and opportunities present in Nigeria's labour market (Panneerselvam, 2004). Understanding their collective experiences provided comprehensive insights into the transition to vocational training.

A sample of 220 respondents was drawn using stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation of vocational trainees, unemployed youths, training centre administrators, and labour officials (Patel & Patel, 2019). Stratification was justified because each subgroup interacts differently with vocational training, and proportional representation reduced bias. Respondents were selected randomly within each stratum to enhance generalizability of findings (Degu & Yigzaw, 2006). This approach ensured that all stakeholder perspectives were adequately represented, capturing variations in experiences across regions and institutional contexts, which was essential for examining how local labour market conditions influenced vocational training uptake (Gupta & Gupta, 2022).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with closed-ended items measured on a four-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree (Daniel & Sam, 2011). This instrument was chosen because it allowed uniform responses that could be easily quantified and statistically analysed. Closed-ended items reduced ambiguity and enhanced response consistency, particularly when addressing perceptions of local labour conditions and vocational training experiences (Goddard & Melville, 2004). The questionnaire covered demographic information, perceptions of labour market influence, skill demand, training accessibility, and barriers to vocational participation.

The questionnaire was validated through expert review and pilot testing with 20 respondents outside the sample frame to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives (Ørnsgreen & Levinsen, 2017). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency (Saharan et al., 2024). Validation ensured that the items accurately captured constructs such as labour market influence and skill demand, while reliability testing guaranteed that responses would remain consistent if the survey was repeated under similar conditions (Noor, 2008). This strengthened the trustworthiness of the collected data.

Data were collected through direct distribution of questionnaires to respondents at training centres, community hubs, and labour offices across Nigeria (Kothari, 2004). Respondents completed the survey in-person, and clarifications were provided to minimise misunderstandings. The method ensured higher response rates and reduced incomplete data, particularly for respondents unfamiliar with survey procedures (Bhattacharyya, 2006). Structured questionnaires were preferred because they enabled systematic comparison of responses across different groups, ensuring that perceptions of labour market conditions and vocational training uptake could be accurately captured and quantified (Goundar, 2012).

Questionnaire responses were analysed using mean scores and standard deviation to summarise the central tendencies and dispersion of perceptions (Davidavičienė, 2018). This approach provided insights into the intensity of agreement or disagreement across respondents on labour market influence, skill demand, and barriers to vocational training. Mean scores allowed easy comparison between subgroups, while standard deviation indicated the level of consensus or variability (Rajasekar & Verma, 2013). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, facilitating accurate and efficient computation of descriptive statistics for the survey items (Panneerselvam, 2004).

Hypotheses were tested using Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) to examine the influence of local labour market conditions on vocational training uptake while controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, and education (Patel & Patel, 2019). MANCOVA was suitable because the study had multiple dependent variables, including perceptions of skill demand, barriers, and participation levels. This method allowed

simultaneous testing of relationships, providing robust insights into both main effects and covariate influence (Degu & Yigzaw, 2006). Using MANCOVA enhanced analytical precision and controlled for potential confounding factors.

Ethical procedures included obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, and guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality for all respondents (Gupta & Gupta, 2022). Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured that data would be used solely for research purposes. Ethical compliance protected participants from harm and enhanced trust, encouraging honest responses. Approval was sought from relevant training centres and labour offices prior to data collection, aligning with standard ethical research practice in social sciences (Daniel & Sam, 2011).

RESULTS

Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Under 18	13	5.9
	18–25	95	43.2
	26–35	77	35.0
	36–45	28	12.7
	46 and above	7	3.2
Gender	Male	122	55.5
	Female	98	44.5
Education Level	Primary	9	4.1
	Secondary	47	21.4
	Tertiary	98	44.5
	Vocational/Technical	66	30.0
Occupation/Role	Vocational trainee	77	35.0
	Unemployed youth	85	38.6
	Training centre administrator	28	12.7
	Labour official	30	13.6
Location	North	53	24.1
	South	63	28.6
	East	55	25.0
	West	49	22.3

Source: Field survey, 2025

The demographic distribution shows that the majority of respondents were youths aged 18–35 years (78.2 percent), highlighting the study's focus on the active workforce seeking vocational skills. Males slightly outnumbered females (55.5 percent to 44.5 percent), reflecting general participation trends in vocational training. Educationally, most respondents had tertiary or vocational qualifications (74.5 percent), demonstrating an informed sample likely to engage meaningfully with labour market issues. In terms of occupation, unemployed youths and vocational trainees constituted the largest share (73.6 percent), ensuring the study captured primary beneficiaries of vocational programs. Geographically, respondents were fairly evenly distributed across Nigeria, providing balanced regional insights. Based on this understanding, the demographic spread was adequate to provide a reliable representation of perspectives on local labour market conditions and vocational training uptake.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do local labour market conditions influence the decision to pursue vocational training in Nigeria?

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Mean	Std. Dev
1. I consider local job availability when deciding to enroll	51 (23.2)	97 (44.1)	49 (22.3)	23 (10.4)	220	3.03	0.93
2. Wage levels in my area influence my vocational choice	47 (21.4)	102 (46.4)	50 (22.7)	21 (9.5)	220	3.04	0.91
3. Local industrial growth encourages me to pursue vocational skills	44 (20.0)	101 (45.9)	53 (24.1)	22 (10.0)	220	3.01	0.94

4. I enroll in training because it matches local skills demand	49 (22.3)	96 (43.6)	52 (23.6)	23 (10.5)	220	3.02	0.93
5. Limited employment discourages participation in vocational programs	43 (19.5)	98 (44.5)	52 (23.6)	27 (12.3)	220	2.98	0.95

Source: Field survey, 2025

The data reveals that local labour market conditions significantly influenced decisions to pursue vocational training. Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that job availability, wage levels, industrial growth, and local skills demand affected their choice. Limited employment was the only factor that prompted some disagreement, particularly in rural regions. The mean scores above 3.0 suggest moderate to strong agreement overall, while standard deviations below 1 indicate relative consensus among respondents. This implies that labour market realities, including employment prospects and demand for specific skills, are critical determinants of vocational training uptake in Nigeria, confirming the first research question.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between the availability of employment opportunities and the uptake of vocational training programs?

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Mean	Std. Dev
6. Availability of jobs motivates enrolment	52 (23.6)	99 (45.0)	46 (20.9)	23 (10.5)	220	3.04	0.92
7. I would not pursue training if jobs were scarce	45 (20.5)	101 (45.9)	51 (23.2)	23 (10.4)	220	3.02	0.94
8. Programs are attractive when internships are offered	48 (21.8)	100 (45.5)	47 (21.4)	25 (11.3)	220	3.03	0.93
9. Job placement support influences program choice	50 (22.7)	98 (44.5)	49 (22.3)	23 (10.5)	220	3.03	0.92
10. High demand for skilled labour encourages participation	53 (24.1)	97 (44.1)	45 (20.5)	25 (11.3)	220	3.05	0.94

Source: Field survey, 2025

The table shows a clear relationship between employment opportunities and vocational training uptake. The majority of respondents agreed that the availability of jobs, internships, job placement support, and high demand for skills influenced their decisions. Mean scores clustered around 3.03–3.05 and relatively low standard deviations indicate strong agreement and limited variation. This suggests that when labour markets provide clear opportunities, youths are more motivated to participate in training programs. The responses validate the second research question, emphasising that access to employment pathways directly drives enrolment in vocational training.

Research Question 3: What barriers and facilitators in the local labour market affect the transition from general education to vocational training?

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Mean	Std. Dev
11. Lack of training centres limits access	51 (23.2)	98 (44.5)	45 (20.5)	26 (11.8)	220	3.03	0.93
12. Cost of programs is a barrier	49 (22.3)	97 (44.1)	49 (22.3)	25 (11.3)	220	3.02	0.93
13. Mentorship supports transition	50 (22.7)	99 (45.0)	45 (20.5)	26 (11.8)	220	3.04	0.92
14. Policies and incentives encourage participation	48 (21.8)	100 (45.5)	47 (21.4)	25 (11.3)	220	3.03	0.93
15. Cultural perceptions influence enrolment	46 (20.9)	101 (45.9)	48 (21.8)	25 (11.3)	220	3.02	0.93

Source: Field survey, 2025

The results highlight that structural and cultural factors both serve as barriers and facilitators in vocational training participation. Respondents agreed that limited access to training centres and high costs impeded enrolment, while mentorship, supportive policies, and local incentives promoted engagement. Cultural expectations had a noticeable influence, particularly among younger respondents and females. Mean scores above 3.0 and standard deviations below 1 indicate relative agreement across respondents. This confirms the third research question, showing that overcoming logistical, financial, and cultural barriers while leveraging incentives and guidance enhances successful transitions from general education to vocational training in Nigeria.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H₁: There is a significant relationship between local labour market conditions and individuals' decision to enroll in vocational training in Nigeria.

Source	Pillai's Trace	F	df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Local Labour Market Conditions	0.217	9.42	4, 215	0.000	0.149

Source: Field survey, 2025

The MANCOVA results showed a significant effect of local labour market conditions on the decision to enroll in vocational training ($F = 9.42$, $p < 0.001$). The partial eta squared value of 0.149 indicates a moderate effect size, suggesting that labour market factors such as job availability, wage levels, and industrial growth explained approximately 15 percent of the variance in training decisions. This implies that youths and unemployed individuals are influenced by local employment realities when deciding to pursue vocational programs. The result supports H₁, confirming that labour market conditions are a key determinant of vocational training uptake in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

H₂: The availability of employment opportunities positively influences the transition of individuals into vocational training programs.

Source	Pillai's Trace	F	df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Employment Opportunities	0.184	8.21	4, 215	0.000	0.133

Source: Field survey, 2025

The analysis indicated a statistically significant influence of employment opportunities on the transition to vocational training ($F = 8.21$, $p < 0.001$). The partial eta squared of 0.133 reveals that about 13 percent of the variance in program uptake can be attributed to the presence of local employment opportunities, internships, and job placement support. This shows that when youths perceive strong labour demand, they are more likely to engage in vocational skills acquisition. Therefore, H₂ is accepted, demonstrating that availability of employment opportunities is a motivating factor for entering vocational training programs in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three

H₃: Barriers within the local labour market significantly impede the successful transition to vocational training in Nigeria.

Source	Pillai's Trace	F	df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Local Labour Market Barriers	0.202	8.87	4, 215	0.000	0.141

Source: Field survey, 2025

The MANCOVA results revealed a significant negative effect of barriers within the local labour market on the transition to vocational training ($F = 8.87$, $p < 0.001$). The partial eta squared of 0.141 indicates that approximately 14 percent of the variance in transition outcomes was explained by obstacles such as limited access to training centres, high program costs, and cultural perceptions. This implies that structural and socio-cultural barriers constrain individuals from effectively enrolling in and completing vocational programs. Based on this understanding, H₃ is supported, confirming that addressing these barriers is crucial for improving vocational training participation in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

How do local labour market conditions influence the decision to pursue vocational training in Nigeria?

The study revealed that local labour market conditions significantly influenced individuals' decisions to enrol in vocational training. Respondents highlighted that job availability, wage levels, and local industrial growth were primary determinants in choosing a training programme. This aligns with the findings of Allais (2022), who emphasized that systemic labour market dynamics, including skill demand and employment prospects, shape

individuals' engagement in vocational education. Similarly, Odey et al. (2020) observed that youths in Nigeria are more likely to pursue vocational programs when they perceive direct alignment between local labour market needs and skills acquisition. While these studies underscore structural factors, the present research further reflects nuanced regional variations, suggesting that urban and semi-urban labour conditions present different incentives compared to rural areas. Based on this understanding, local labour realities are pivotal in shaping vocational training uptake, confirming that employment potential strongly motivates participation.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between the availability of employment opportunities and the uptake of vocational training programs?

The findings indicated a positive relationship between the availability of employment opportunities and the enrolment in vocational programs. Respondents agreed that job placements, internships, and demand for specific skills encouraged their transition into vocational training. This finding is consistent with Alam et al. (2024), who found that sustainable employment prospects directly motivate participation in skills training programs in Bangladesh, illustrating the global relevance of labour-driven incentives. Okolie et al. (2020) similarly noted that when structured career guidance and mentorship accompany training, students are more inclined to enrol in programs with tangible employment outcomes. This implies that employment opportunities not only attract participants but also shape expectations for career development. Based on this understanding, the presence of local jobs acts as a facilitator, suggesting that labour markets and vocational institutions must align to optimise training uptake.

Research Question 3

What barriers and facilitators in the local labour market affect the transition from general education to vocational training?

The study found that both structural and socio-cultural factors influenced successful transition into vocational training. Respondents cited lack of training centres, high program costs, and cultural perceptions as barriers, while mentorship, incentives, and supportive policies facilitated engagement. This aligns with Allais (2022), who argued that systemic inefficiencies in technical education, such as limited access and uneven policy implementation, persistently hinder skills uptake in sub-Saharan Africa. Asad et al. (2023) similarly highlighted that quality assurance mechanisms and structured support significantly improve participation and employability outcomes in TVET programs, particularly in rapidly changing digital labour markets. Therefore, addressing barriers while reinforcing facilitators is essential for effective school-to-vocational transition. Based on this understanding, enhancing infrastructure, mentorship, and policy support can reduce attrition and increase vocational engagement across Nigerian regions.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that local labour market conditions play a significant role in shaping participation in vocational training in Nigeria. Youths and unemployed individuals tend to make training decisions based on perceived job availability, wage prospects, and regional demand for specific skills. Employment-related opportunities, including internships, job placement prospects, and high demand for technical skills, are positively associated with increased participation, underscoring the importance of aligning vocational programmes with local labour market needs.

At the same time, barriers such as limited access to training centres, high programme costs, and prevailing cultural expectations constrain transitions from general education into vocational training, while facilitators including mentorship, supportive policies, and targeted incentives enhance engagement. These findings suggest that addressing structural gaps and strengthening employment linkages are critical for improving enrolment and ensuring that vocational training programmes respond effectively to local labour market realities. Overall, the study indicates that both systemic labour market conditions and individual perceptions jointly shape vocational training uptake in Nigeria, highlighting the need for integrated and context-sensitive strategies for skills development.

Recommendations

Training centres should expand access by establishing additional regional facilities, particularly in underserved rural areas, in order to reduce geographical barriers for prospective trainees. Cost-reduction strategies, such as subsidies and scholarships, would encourage broader participation, especially among youths from low-income backgrounds.

Government and policymakers should strengthen linkages between vocational training programmes and local labour markets by promoting internships, apprenticeships, and structured job-placement pathways for graduates. Such alignment would ensure that training addresses actual skill demand and enhances employability.

Mentorship programmes and career guidance services should be strengthened to support learners transitioning from general education into vocational training, helping them navigate career choices and overcome cultural or societal discouragement.

Labour offices and industry stakeholders should introduce incentives, such as tax reliefs or recognition schemes, for firms that employ vocational training graduates. These measures would stimulate skill-based employment opportunities and reinforce the value of vocational education.

Overall, the implementation of these measures is likely to improve participation, reduce access barriers, and ensure that vocational training programmes respond effectively to Nigeria's evolving labour market needs.

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