

Assessing the Effectiveness of TVET Training in Enhancing Youth Employability: A Case Study of Kisumu County, Kenya

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Abstract: TVET offers opportunities to equip youth with industry-relevant skills, bridging the gap between education and employment. However, challenges such as inadequate funding, outdated curricula, limited access to modern equipment, and negative perceptions hinder its potential. This study assessed the effectiveness of TVET training in enhancing youth employability in Kisumu County, Kenya. Social learning theory and Human capital theory were adopted. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The study targeted a population of 20,857 consisting of 20,814 TVET students, 42 Heads of TVET institutions and 1 County Education Officer in Kisumu County Government. The sample size was 379 determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. Sampling was conducted by means of disproportionate stratified random sampling. Structured questionnaires and interview guide were used to collect data. Data analytical methods were content analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics. Linear relationships between variables were determined using Pearson's Correlation analysis method. The correlational coefficient for youth employment was 0.57 implying a moderate positive relationship between TVET training and youth employability. Government as policy-maker was recommended to institute regular reform for reviewing the existing TVET curricula in order to incorporate feedback from students and adapt to emerging dynamics of demographic dividends. The Government should increase funding, resources for TVET Institutions: The government should allocate more financial resources to TVET institutions to enhance infrastructure and support the development of industry-relevant programs and strengthen industry partnerships and collaborations between TVET institutions and industries to ensure that training programs are aligned with current labor market demands.

Keywords: TVET training, youth employability, Kisumu County, Kenya

I. Introduction

TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) is globally recognized in addressing youth unemployment by equipping them with practical and relevant skills to the industry. Aligning TVET programs with the rapidly evolving labor market needs and technology is crucial for ensuring that graduates possess the skills required by modern industries (ILO, 2021). Successful stories can be derived from countries like Germany, Switzerland, and Singapore that have successfully integrated TVET into their education systems leading to significant improvement of youth employability through robust industry partnerships and work-based learning opportunities. Nevertheless, attaining such aspirations in developing and undeveloped countries is often stalled by structural and institutional challenges. In Africa, the potential of TVET to reduce youth unemployment is widely recognized, given the continent's young population and growing need for practical, industry-relevant skills. However, TVET systems amongst African states face numerous challenges such as underfunding, outdated curricula and limited access to modern technologies (African Development Bank, 2023). Attempts by countries like Rwanda, Ethiopia and South Africa in incorporating TVET into national development strategies and emphasis on the importance of skills development for economic growth and poverty reduction is claimed to bear significant potentials (Hakizayezu & Maniraho, 2022). These countries have recognized that a skilled workforce is key to driving industrialization, fostering innovation, and creating job opportunities.

In Kenya, TVET remains a crucial avenue for young people seeking employment, especially in sectors like construction, manufacturing, agriculture, and ICT. The Kenyan government has identified TVET as potential driver for youth employability and socio-economic as envisaged in the Vision 2030 (Malechwani, 2022). To this realization, Kenyan government has been modernizing TVET sector through initiatives like establishment of new institutions and reforms to make vocational education more accessible to the County levels. Nevertheless, Kenya just like other African countries face challenges such as limited resources, inadequate facilities and outdated industry-relevant curricula which render TVET interventions ineffective (Mutebi & Kiplagat, 2022). In Kisumu County, TVET trainings seek to address the region's high youth unemployment rates by equipping young people with practical, industry-relevant skills. Whereas the county has several TVET institutions offering trainings in fields such as construction, ICT, automotive mechanics, hospitality and agriculture (County Government of Kisumu, 2023), effective administration of TVET training for youth employability is complicated by inadequate fundings, outdated curricula, negative perceptions and limited industry partnership. Addressing these issues can be better positioned to equip youth with the skills needed to contribute to economic development and poverty reduction in the region. This study sought explored the effects of TVET in promoting youth employability amongst the youths in Kisumu County, Kenya.

Odondi and Imani (2023) did an exploratory study focusing on employment transition of TVET learners for the case Safaricom Foundation Scholarship Program in Kenya and revealed that students had all the competences that met job market demands. But these findings were based on descriptive analysis that lowered inferencing of the findings. Inyagu (2019) did a related study exploring on the challenges facing TVET education in Nigeria found that failure to align the economic and industry needs resulted into ineffective TVET interventions which failed to reduce the burden of skill gaps, unemployment

and youth disempowerment. The findings from the reviewed studies faced contextual and geographical limitations thus lowering the confidence for generalization of the findings. However, this endeavor aimed to explore the effects of TVET in promoting youth employability in Kisumu County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

The Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2017 ranks Kenya 97th out of 283 countries, highlighting the country's lag in TVET skills development, with many graduates perceived to lack essential skills for driving economic productivity. In Kisumu County, 41% of youth remain unemployed despite having completed tertiary education, including TVET. This issue is expected to worsen, as 15,000-20,000 TVET graduates enter the job market annually (Republic of Kenya, 2022). Ineffective TVET has far-reaching consequences, including high unemployment, skills shortages, social exclusion, increased crime, and hampered economic growth, ultimately hindering Kenya's Vision 2030 goals. Literature suggests skill mismatches as a cause of low demographic dividends in Kenya, although studies from Nigeria and Rwanda, as well as works by Muchira et al. (2023), have limited contextual relevance. While TVET is claimed to foster entrepreneurship and job creation, contributing to economic development (Inyiagu, 2019; Muchira et al., 2023), but existing findings suffer from limited validity due to reliance on secondary data and qualitative methods. This research aimed to address these gaps by exploring the effects of TVET training in promoting youth employability among youth in Kisumu County, Kenya.

II. Literature Review

Empirical Review

A study was conducted by Hakizayezu and Manira (2022) on the relationship between TVET and employability of graduates in Rwanda whereby it was revealed that mismatch of TVET failed to match the industry needs with the acquired skills to promote employability of youths. Hakizayezu and Manira (2022) conducted a study using descriptive survey and randomly sampling 192 trainees and trainers, structured-questionnaires descriptive statistics and guided-interviews. However, the instruments were not pilot-tested and the generalization of the findings was limited to Rwandan geographical settings. This endeavour overcame the limitations by pilot-testing the instruments for reliability and validity in order to enhance the confidence for the results. Additionally, this endeavour explored the effects of TVET on youth employability of youths in Kisumu County which is Kenyan geographical settings.

Another related study was carried out by Nyongesa and Makokha (2022) exploring on the effects of TVET on youth employability of graduates in Kenya revealed controversial results whereby most of the TVET courses were found to be driven by market demand. The study by Nyongesa and Makokha (2022) adopted correlational research design, sample size of 60 heads of departments, purposive sampling, structured questionnaires, interview schedule, documentary analysis and descriptive analysis. Nevertheless, the study ignored responses from students leading to biased results. The use of purposive sampling was biased and constrained generalization of the findings. By depending on structured questionnaires and descriptive statistics limited inferencing. To overcome the limitation, this endeavour integrated interviews and questionnaires and collect data from the students, trainers and an official from the Ministry of Education for greater validity. Also, this endeavour used stratified random sampling and combined qualitative, descriptive and inferential analytical methods for greater generalization.

In Kenya, a related study exploring on the realignment of TVET for employment creation by Koros (2022a) found that employment creation depends on TVET alignment with industry needs. The study by Koros (2022a) adopted qualitative design, meta-analysis, purposive sampling of articles and content analysis. But reliance on qualitative methodology including purposive sampling, secondary sources of data and content analysis lowered the validity and generalizability of the findings. In overcoming the limitation, this endeavour adopted quantitative and qualitative primary sources of data so as to build on the validity of the findings. Also, this endeavor triangulated qualitative and also quantitative analytical techniques so as to increased confidence of concluding and generalizing the findings.

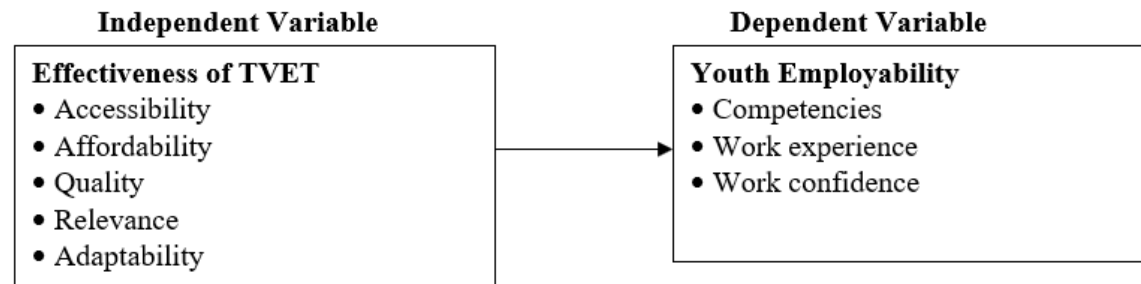
Further study was conducted by Odondi and Imani (2023) focusing on employment transition of TVET students under Safaricom foundation scholarship programme in Kenya whereby most TVET students were found to be employable per the job market demands. The study by Odondi and Imani (2023) relied on descriptive cross-sectional survey design, sample size of 1027 respondents, structured questionnaires, interviews, focused group discussion and descriptive statistics. However, instruments were not pilot-tested which lowered the validity and reliability. Also, the findings were not anchored on any theoretical framework. To overcome this limitation, this endeavor pilot-tested the instruments so as to improve reliability and validity. Additionally, the findings were supported by human capital theory, social learning theory and empowerment theory.

Another study was done by Ngulu et al. (2022) on the link between TVET and youth employability in Makueni County, Kenya whereby TVET trainings was found not to meet the job market requirements leasing hence unemployability. The study by Ngulu et al. (2022) used descriptive survey, stratified random sampling, 424 teachers and students as respondents, questionnaires, interviews and observation, descriptive and inferential analysis and T-test. Nonetheless, the data collection instruments were not pilot tested for validity and reliability. Additionally, the findings were supported by human capital theory only which lowered the construct validity. Furthermore, the generalization of the finding was limited to the context of Machakos County. In centrally, this endeavour intended to test the data collection instruments through pilot study in Kisumu County for the purposes of validity and reliability. Moreover, the findings were supported by three theories namely: human capital, social learning and empowerment theories in support of the findings. Finally, the endeavor took place in the settings of Kisumu County in Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

Human-capital theory and social-learning theory anchored the study. Human-capital theory was advanced by Gary Becker in 1964 and posits that investment in training and education enhance individual's competences for socioeconomic development (White, 2021). Gary's theory suggests that investing in people through education and training promotes learning and experience for greater economic returns. The principle of human capital theory is that investment in people through education and training promotes learning and experience leading to greater economic returns (Rajabhat, 2017). In this study, human-capital theory was instrumental in understanding the effectiveness of TVET interventions in addressing employment needs among youths. Social learning theory was developed in 1960s by Albert Bandura to emphasize on the role of cognitive processes in learning. Social learning theory states that behaviour is obtained by observing, modelling and imitation (Cilliers, 2020). It underscores the importance of combining theory, observation, and experience in learning. This theory helped explain how TVET fosters positive work values, behaviours, and skills by creating environments that promote employability.

Conceptual Framework



III. Methodology

Research Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive survey design. The target population consisted of 20,857 individuals, including 20,814 TVET students, 42 heads of TVET institutions, and 1 County Education Officer from the Kisumu County Government. A sample size of 379 was determined using the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formula, and disproportionate stratified random sampling was employed to select respondents. Data collection involved structured questionnaires and an interview guide. The reliability of the instruments was assessed using the split-half method, yielding an acceptable Cronbach's coefficient of 0.7. Qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis, while quantitative data was presented using standard deviation, mean, percentages, and frequencies. The relationship between variables was examined using Pearson's Correlation method, and the findings were displayed in frequency tables, percentages, and correlational tables.

IV. Key Findings and Discussions

Youth employability was indicated by competencies, experiences and confidence. Seven statements were created from the indicators of youth employability and subjected to respondents. The statements were rated based on a five-point Likert-scale ranging from "1" meaning "Strong-disagreement", "2" meaning "Disagreement", "3" means "None", "4" meaning "Agreement" and "5" meaning "Strong-agreement". The descriptive findings summarized in Table 1. In the brackets are the percentages.

Table 1: Effectiveness of TVET Training in Harnessing Youth Employability

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
TVET enhanced employability	0(0.0)	10(3.5)	17(6.0)	146(51.6)	110(38.9)	4.25	0.72
TVET imparted the right competencies for job	0(0.0)	7(2.4)	29(10.2)	149(52.8)	98(34.6)	4.18	0.74
TVET offered experiences for job	0(0.0)	13(4.6)	11(3.9)	139(49.1)	120(42.4)	4.29	0.75
TVET built confidence in preparation for job	5(1.8)	9(3.2)	12(4.2)	133(47.0)	124(43.8)	4.28	0.83
Most TVET graduates got employed	30(10.6)	15(5.3)	28(9.9)	283(41.7)	92(32.5)	3.80	1.24
Most employers preferred TVET graduates than degrees	15(5.3)	25(8.8)	24(8.5)	123(43.5)	96(33.9)	3.91	1.11
TVET programmes aligned well with job market	0(0.0)	9(3.2)	27(9.5)	156(55.1)	91(32.2)	4.16	0.72

Source: Research Data (2024)

Table 1 shows the descriptive findings for effectiveness of TVET training in harnessing youth employability in Kisumu County, Kenya. The first item stated that TVET enhanced employability whereby 10 (3.5%), 17 (6.0%) 146 (51.6%) and 110 (38.9%) respondents disagreed, were neutral, agreed and strongly agreed that TVET enhanced employability respectively. This statement had a mean and standard deviation 4.25 and 0.72 respectively. While the high mean of 4.25 indicated a positive response that TVET enhanced employability, the standard deviation of 0.72 suggested that most respondents' opinion had low variation about the mean. The respondents' opinion to the second item which stated that TVET imparted the right competencies for job was responded as follows: 7 (2.4%), 29 (10.2%), 149 (52.8%) and 98 (34.6%) implying disagreement, neutrality, agreement and strong agreement that TVET imparted the right competencies respectively. The mean score and standard deviation for this statement were 4.18 and 0.74 respectively. The mean of 4.18 indicated that participants agreed that the training significantly improved their employability. The data was deemed stable as indicated by the low standard deviation of 0.74.

The third item stated that TVET offered experiences for job and was answered as follows: 13 (4.6%), 11 (3.9%), 139 (49.1%) and 120 (42.4%) indicating that respondents disagreed, were neutral, agreed and strongly agreed that TVET offered experiences for job respectively. The mean score was 4.29 which suggested that respondents were positive as they strongly agreed that TVET offered experiences for job. The data was stable around the mean as indicated by the standard deviation of 0.75. The fourth statement focused on TVET building confidence in preparation for job amongst the youths and it was responded as follows: 5 (1.8%), 9 (3.2%), 12 (4.2%), 133 (47.0%) and 124 (43.8%) respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, were neutral, agreed and strongly agreed that TVET built confidence in preparation for job respectively. For the mean score of 4.28 it implied that respondents affirmed that TVET built confidence in preparation for job amongst the youths. The standard deviation of 0.83 showed low variability of opinions.

The fifth item stated that most TVET graduates got employed after school and the respondents answered it as follows: 30 (10.6%), 15 (5.3%), 28 (9.9%), 283 (41.7%) and 92(32.5%) respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, were neutral, agreed and strongly agreed that TVET graduates got employed respectively. However, the mean of 3.8 suggested that most of the respondents just agreed with this item. The standard deviation of 1.24 meant that respondents' opinions varied greatly about the mean. The sixth item stated that most employers preferred TVET graduates than degrees and the responses were: 15 (5.3%), 25 (8.8%), 24 (8.5%), 123 (43.5%) and 96 (33.9%) respondents were in strong disagreement, disagreement, neutral, agreement and strong agreement that most employers preferred TVET graduates than degrees respectively. This item scored a mean of 3.91 suggesting that respondents just agreed that most employers preferred TVET graduates than degrees. The standard deviation of 1.11 indicated a significant difference in opinions among the respondents.

The last item under this objective stated that TVET programmes aligned well with job market whereby: 9 (3.2%), 27 (9.5%), 156 (55.1%) and 91 (32.2%) respondents disagreed, were neutral, agreed and strongly agreed that TVET programmes aligned well with job market respectively. The mean score for this item was 4.16 which indicated that respondents generally agreed with the statement that TVET programmes aligned well with job market. For the standard deviation of 0.72, it meant that the data had low variability about the mean which implies commonness of opinions of the respondents.

The contribution of TVET training on youth employability in Kisumu County in Kenya was underscored by interviews with heads of TVET institutions. For instance, when asked to explain their views on how TVET trainings increased opportunities for youth to be employed, the heads of TVET institutions linked youth employability to the acquisition of the relevant competencies and skills, facilitation of industry connections through internships and work experience and supporting entrepreneurial ventures through confidence building. The responses were summarized as follows:

“The TVET institutions play a vital role in enhancing the employability of youth in the Kisumu County and the region at large. Firstly, TVET institutions offer nationally recognized certifications that enhance the employability of graduates by providing proof of their skills and training, making them more competitive in the job market. The training areas are so competitive that the needs are aligned with the market demand. TVET programs include attachments and internship components which allow students to gain real-world experience and network with potential employers. We (TVET institutions) provide career counseling, job placement services, and support in job search strategies. But one common issue faced by TVET graduates is the expectation of quick employment after graduation” (TVET Heads).

The findings from the TVET heads were consistent with the responses from the Director of Education in Kisumu County that while TVET trainings were designed to address skills needed to match employment requirements, expectations of getting employment immediately after graduation mismatched the market realities. To address these expectation mismatches, the Education Officer recommended TVET institutions to ensure that graduates are well-prepared for the realities of the job market and promoting stronger industry linkages, alumni networks and mentorship programs. The finding from the TVET Heads and Kisumu County Director of Education support the qualitative responses from the TVET students when asked to explain what other information they had with regard to effectiveness of TVET in promoting their employability that the students expected quick employment immediately after their course and failure to secure job is driving them to desperation. Students recommended for strong partnerships between TVET institutions with industry and employers to enhance the relevance to employment platforms.

The finding from both descriptive and correlational analysis indicated that TVET training was a significant contributor to youth employability. From the qualitative findings, the challenges of getting employment after completing TVET course were due to over expectations and lack of creativity in creating self-employment amongst the graduates. It implied a disconnect between the skills acquired through TVET training and the actual job market demands. Despite efforts to align curriculum

with industry needs, graduates often face challenges in securing immediate employment. This mismatch suggests that there are additional factors beyond skills training that influence employability, such as economic conditions, employer expectations and the availability of job opportunities in specific sectors. Addressing this issue requires collaboration between educational institutions and employers to ensure that TVET graduates are adequately prepared and supported in their transition to the workforce.

The finding that TVET training is an important factor for promoting youth employability is supported by the findings from a related study by Nyongesa and Makokha (2022) that TVET trainings are market driven and thus enhances employability of graduates in Kenya. Another research finding in support of the findings from this study was conducted by Odondi and Imani (2023) focusing on employment transition of TVET Students under Safaricom foundation in Kenya and found that students were more employable due to TVET Training. However, Hakizayezu and Manira (2022) in related empirical study contest that the acquired TVET skills are generally incongruity with employable skills and thus lower youth employability in Rwanda. But Koros (2022a) attribute this challenge to the content and context in which the TVET training courses are designed. Thus, one cannot overlook the environment in which TVET trainings are conducted.

The findings from this study are supported by Human Capital Theory which states that investment in training and education enhance individual's competences and abilities to contribute socioeconomic development and employment (White, 2021). The finding is further bolstered by Social Learning Theory that individuals acquire the skills, behaviors and attitudes necessary for success in the workplace (Cilliers, 2020). This is what Empowerment Theory refers to as outcome and process towards self-sufficiency.

The relationship between TVET training and skill development among the youths in Kisumu County was determined by use of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis. Table 2 provides the correlational results

V. Correlation Results

		Youth Employability
TVET Training	Pearson Correlation	0.57**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00
	n	80

The data shown in Table 2 shows correlation coefficient (r-values) for the strength and direction of the relationship between TVET training and youth employability in Kisumu County, Kenya. The coefficient for correlation for TVET training and youth employability was $r = 0.57$, indicating a moderate positive relationship. This suggests that as TVET training improves, there is a corresponding increase in youth employability. This moderate correlation implies that TVET training plays a significant role in enhancing employability as indicated by improved competencies, experiences and confidence

Youth employability, while positively correlated, has the weakest relationship among the three indicators with an r-value of 0.57. Whereas TVET graduates were found to be overambitious in securing job immediately after training, it suggests that while TVET training does improve employability, other factors might also play significant roles in determining employment outcomes. Building on the consensus, Nyongesa and Makokha (2022) and Odondi and Imani (2023) reinforces the idea that TVET trainings are market driven and thus enhances employability of graduates. The implication of this findings is that employability is influenced by other market dynamics like availability of job opportunities, economic conditions and industry demands. Moreover, supplementary factors like the work experience, networking and soft skills might also be critical in securing employment. It calls for promotion of policies promoting job creation and economic stability in order to complement TVET training in improving employability.

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study sought to determine the effectiveness of TVET training in harnessing youth employability in Kisumu County, Kenya. The findings from the descriptive analysis showed that TVET training was effective in harnessing youth employability in Kisumu County, Kenya. This was supported by the findings from correlational analysis that TVET training had a moderate positive relationship with youth employability in Kisumu County, Kenya ($r = 0.57$). Based on the findings from this study, it was demonstrated that TVET training is effective in enhancing youth employability in Kisumu County. Hence the conclusion that expansion of TVET programs would further support the employment prospects of young people in Kisumu County. However, it was found that TVET graduates tend to be overambitious in securing jobs immediately after completing their training.

Based on the findings that TVET training was effective in enhancing youth employability, the first recommendation goes to the Government as policy-maker to institute regular reform for reviewing the existing TVET curricula in order to incorporate feedback from students, graduates and stakeholders in order to adapt to emerging dynamics of demographic dividends. This can involve expanding and diversifying TVET programs to cover a broader range of skills and industries to ensure they meet the evolving needs of the dynamic economy. Practitioner like TVET institutions should improve strategic planning practices to further align training programs with labor market demands and enhance the employability of graduates. This would align with the findings that TVET training plays a crucial role in improving youth employability, skills development, and empowerment in Kisumu County, Kenya.

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