

LANGUAGE COMPETENCE AS A CATALYST FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, EMPLOYABILITY, AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines the association between language competence and perceived vocational education outcomes, employability, and youth empowerment among students and recent graduates of selected Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in Nigeria. The study responds to the need for evidence on whether communication-related competencies are associated with how TVET participants perceive their learning, employment readiness, and empowerment. Guided by Human Capital Theory and Communicative Competence Theory, the study adopts a cross-sectional descriptive-correlational survey design. The reported sample comprises 200 respondents from selected technical and vocational institutions. Data were collected with a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings show positive associations between language competence and perceived vocational education outcomes ($r = .712$), perceived employability ($r = .756$), and youth empowerment ($r = .734$). A positive association was also found between language competence and respondents' perceived contribution to social cohesion and conflict mitigation ($r = .689$). Because the study uses a cross-sectional, self-report design and purposively selected sites, the findings should be interpreted as associations and perceptions rather than causal effects or nationally representative estimates. The study recommends stronger integration of functional communication training into TVET curricula and further research using longitudinal and objective labour-market and social-outcome measures.

Keywords: Language Competence, TVET, Perceived Employability, Youth Empowerment, Social Cohesion, Nigeria.

Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) occupies an important position in Nigeria's efforts to address unemployment, skills deficits, youth economic vulnerability and the changing demands of the labour market. Through occupational training, practical skills development and entrepreneurship education, TVET is expected to equip learners with competencies that can facilitate their transition into employment, self-employment and productive economic participation. However, the effectiveness of vocational education cannot be determined solely by the acquisition of technical skills. The ability of learners to understand instructions, interpret technical

information, communicate ideas, document work processes and interact appropriately in educational and workplace settings is equally important. Consequently, language competence constitutes an important complementary skill within vocational education and training.

In the Nigerian TVET environment, English serves as an important medium through which technical knowledge is taught, assessed and communicated. Learners encounter English in instructional materials, workshop and laboratory instructions, safety guidelines, examinations, technical manuals, business documents and interactions with instructors and colleagues. Beyond the classroom,

communication is central to job interviews, workplace interaction, customer relations, teamwork, entrepreneurship and the presentation of professional competence. A learner may therefore possess relevant technical knowledge but still encounter difficulty demonstrating or applying that knowledge when communication demands are not adequately met. Language competence should therefore be considered not merely as a general educational skill, but as a functional component of vocational competence and employability.

The importance of language competence is particularly evident in a labour market in which employers increasingly seek combinations of technical, interpersonal and transferable skills. Vocational graduates are expected not only to perform occupational tasks but also to communicate effectively, solve problems, work collaboratively, adapt to changing workplace environments and interact with clients and other stakeholders. Similarly, young people who pursue entrepreneurial activities require communication skills for preparing proposals, negotiating with suppliers and customers, marketing products and services, managing business relationships and participating in digital economic activities. The relationship between language competence and vocational education therefore extends beyond academic performance to issues of employability, entrepreneurship and youth empowerment.

Although studies on TVET and skills development have established the importance of vocational education for employment, entrepreneurship and youth development, language competence has received comparatively less attention as a distinct factor within these relationships. Existing Nigerian and African literature has examined areas such as technical and vocational education, youth employment, entrepreneurship education, skills development and graduate employability (Adeoti, 2024; Aina, 2022; Ayonmike et al., 2022; Okolie et al., 2023; Oviawe, 2022). However, these areas are frequently investigated separately. Consequently, there remains a need to examine how language competence relates specifically to vocational-learning experiences, perceived employability and empowerment among learners and recent graduates within TVET settings.

The relevance of language competence can also extend to broader questions of social participation and inclusion. Hence, effective communication facilitates interaction, understanding, civic participation and peaceful management of disagreements. For young people, it improve access to vocational learning, employability and entrepreneurial opportunities which strengthen participation in productive social and economic activities. However, the relationship between language competence and social cohesion should not be presented as evidence of a direct reduction in insecurity or youth violence. Rather, communication competence may provide a foundation for social interaction and inclusion, while any broader effects require separate empirical investigation.

Therefore, this study examines the association between language competence and selected outcomes of vocational education among students and recent graduates of selected Technical and Vocational Education and Training institutions in Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigates the relationship between language competence and perceived vocational education outcomes, perceived employability, perceived youth empowerment, and perceived social cohesion and conflict mitigation. The study is anchored in Human Capital Theory and Communicative Competence Theory. By bringing these dimensions together within a single empirical framework, the study seeks to contribute evidence on the place of functional language competence in vocational education and to provide a basis for strengthening communication-oriented components of TVET programmes in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the association between language competence and perceived vocational education outcomes, employability, youth empowerment, and social cohesion/conflict mitigation among participants in selected Nigerian TVET institutions.

1. Examine the relationship between language competence and vocational education in Nigeria.
2. Investigate the role of language competence in enhancing employability among youths.
3. Explore the contribution of

communication skills to entrepreneurship and youth empowerment.

4. Assess the implications of language competence for reducing unemployment, insecurity, and youth violence.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

1. What is the association between language competence and perceived vocational education outcomes among the sampled TVET participants?
2. What role does communication competence play in employability and workplace success?
3. How does language proficiency contribute to youth entrepreneurship and empowerment?
4. In what ways can language competence help reduce unemployment, insecurity, and youth violence?

Research Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between language competence and perceived vocational education outcomes among the sampled TVET participants.

H02: There is no significant relationship between language competence and perceived employability among the sampled TVET participants.

H03: There is no significant relationship between language competence and perceived youth empowerment.

H04: There is no significant relationship between language competence and perceived social cohesion and conflict mitigation.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory provides the first theoretical lens for the study. Becker (1993) conceptualises education and training as investments that develop productive capacities. Applied here, language competence is treated as a form of human capital that may increase the value participants derive from vocational instruction and may support their readiness for communication-intensive educational and

occupational tasks. The theory therefore provides the rationale for examining associations between language competence and perceived vocational outcomes and employability.

While Communicative Competence Theory, associated with Hymes (1972), provides the second lens. It emphasises that effective language use involves more than knowledge of grammatical forms; speakers need to use language appropriately in particular social contexts. Basically, this is relevant to TVET because learners and workers must communicate instructions, ask questions, negotiate meaning, interact with colleagues and customers, and adapt messages to different workplace situations. Together, the two theories suggest a mechanism in which language resources and context-appropriate communication may support learning and participation, while the survey tests whether these expectations are reflected in respondents' reported perceptions.

Empirical Synthesis and Research Gap

The Existing Nigerian and African scholarship generally supports the importance of vocational and transferable skills for employment and youth development. Aina (2022) discusses the relationship between TVET and youth employment in Nigeria, while Adeoti (2024) focuses on functional vocational education and youth empowerment. Ayonmike et al. (2022) emphasise entrepreneurship education and youth empowerment, and Okolie et al. (2023) examine skills development and graduate employability in Africa. Oviawe (2022) argues for repositioning TVET for sustainable development. These studies establish the wider relevance of vocational, employability and entrepreneurial competencies.

However, these studies do not directly answer the present study's specific question: whether language competence is associated with perceived vocational-learning outcomes, perceived employability and perceived youth empowerment within selected TVET settings. The present study therefore contributes a language-focused survey perspective. Its contribution is not to claim national causality, but to provide evidence from selected sites and to identify relationships that can be investigated

more rigorously in future longitudinal or multi-site research.

Vocational Education and Human Capital Development

Human Capital Theory posits that investments in education and training enhance productive capacity. Becker (1993) provides the economic rationale for treating education and skills as forms of human capital. In TVET, this perspective helps explain why communication competence may be valuable alongside occupational skills: learners who can understand technical information and communicate effectively may be better positioned to benefit from training and participate in work.

UNESCO (2024) and the World Bank (2024) emphasise the role of TVET and skills development in workforce readiness and economic transformation. However, institutional reports primarily provide policy and contextual evidence. Nigerian and African empirical studies add a more specific picture: Aina (2022) links TVET with youth employment, Adeoti (2024) focuses on functional vocational education and youth empowerment, and Okolie et al. (2023) examine skills development and employability in Africa. Taken together, these studies support the importance of vocational and transferable competencies, while leaving room for more explicit investigation of language competence as a distinct construct.

Language Competence and Educational Achievement

Language competence is widely recognized as a fundamental determinant of educational success. Cummins (2021) argues that language proficiency facilitates comprehension, critical thinking, and cognitive development. Learners with strong communication skills are generally better able to understand instructional materials, participate actively in learning activities, and apply acquired knowledge in practical situations. Within the vocational education contexts, language competence influences learners' ability to interpret technical manuals, understand safety procedures, and engage effectively in collaborative learning environments. Since most vocational instruction in Nigeria is delivered through English, language proficiency becomes a prerequisite for

successful participation in vocational programmes.

Communication Skills and Employability

The concept of employability has evolved beyond technical competence to include a range of transferable skills required for success in dynamic workplace environments. Thus, Communication competence is consistently identified as one of the most valued employability attributes across sectors. According to the World Economic Forum (2025), employers increasingly prioritize communication, analytical thinking, adaptability, leadership, and collaborative skills in recruitment decisions. Likewise, the OECD (2024) argues that employability depends on workers' ability to communicate effectively, solve problems, and adapt to changing workplace demands. The literature therefore suggests a plausible relationship between communication competence and employability, but perceived employability should not be equated with verified employment outcomes. The present study accordingly measures respondents' perceptions of employment opportunities, interview performance, workplace productivity and career advancement rather than jobs obtained, wages, job retention or business performance.

2.4 Language Competence and Entrepreneurship

Consequently, Entrepreneurship has become an important strategy for reducing unemployment and promoting youth empowerment in developing countries. Successful entrepreneurs require not only technical expertise but also communication skills that enable them to interact effectively with customers, suppliers, investors, and business partners. Language competence contributes to entrepreneurial success by facilitating business planning, proposal writing, negotiation, marketing, networking, and customer relationship management. In the digital economy, communication skills are increasingly important because business operations rely heavily on online platforms, digital marketing, and electronic communication systems.

However, research on skills-based hiring and workforce development indicates that employers increasingly value demonstrable

competencies, including communication and interpersonal skills, alongside formal qualifications.

3. Methodology Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive-correlational survey design. The descriptive component was used to summarise respondents' ratings of language competence and the selected outcomes, while the correlational component was used to determine the statistical relationships among the measured constructs. No variable was manipulated. Since data were collected at one point in time and through self-report responses, the design permits the examination of associations but does not establish causal relationships.

The study focused on the association between language competence and four perceived outcome domains: vocational education outcomes, employability, youth empowerment, and social cohesion/conflict mitigation. This alignment between the study variables, research questions, hypotheses and instrument provides the basis for the subsequent descriptive and correlational analyses.

Area of the Study

This study was conducted in selected Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions comprising technical colleges, vocational centres and polytechnics. The manuscript indicates that four institutions were purposively selected. The names, locations and relevant characteristics of the four institutions should be stated from the researcher's field records in the final version so that the study area is fully identifiable and reproducible.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised eligible students and recent graduates of the three purposively selected institutions: Technical Colleges, vocational centres, and Polytechnics. The study focused on 200 participants who met the established inclusion criteria and consented to participate. The accessible population consisted of all eligible students and recent graduates available within the selected institutions during the period of the study.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The reported achieved sample was 200 respondents. Because the original manuscript does not state the accessible population (N), the 200-person Yamane calculation cannot be independently reproduced. The final submitted version should insert the verified accessible population, the resulting calculation, the number distributed and the number of usable questionnaires returned. No new population value has been fabricated in this revision.

The original study states that Yamane's (1967) formula was used with a 0.05 margin of error. For transparency, the formula is retained below, but the accessible population (N) must be supplied from the actual sampling frame before the calculation can be presented as a reproducible basis for $n = 200$.

$$n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$$

where:

n = sample size

N = population size

e = margin of error (0.05)

A multistage sampling procedure was reported. First, four institutions were purposively selected. Second, eligible participants were stratified by programme area. Third, simple random sampling was reportedly used within the strata. Because institutions were purposively selected, probability sampling did not extend to all Nigerian TVET institutions; consequently, the findings should not be generalized to all Nigerian youths or all TVET institutions.

Stage One: Purposive selection of four TVET institutions, based on their offering of relevant vocational and entrepreneurial programmes.

Stage Two: Stratification of eligible respondents by programme area.

Stage Three: Simple random selection within the identified strata, subject to the available sampling frames.

The reported distribution by institution type was as follows.

S/N	Institutional types	Reported Respondents
1	Technical colleges	100
2	Vocational Centres	50
3	Polytechnics	50
	Total	200

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled:

Language Competence and Vocational Education Questionnaire (LCVEQ).

The questionnaire consisted of two sections and 20 substantive Likert-scale. The four clusters contained five items each. This revision corrects the item-count inconsistency in the supplied draft.

Section A: Demographic Information

This section obtained information on:

- Gender
- Age
- Educational qualification
- Vocational specialization
- Institution type

Section B: Study Variables

The section contained 20 items distributed across four clusters:

Cluster A: Language Competence

1. I can communicate effectively in English during vocational training.
2. I understand instructional materials easily.
3. I can write business-related documents effectively.
4. I communicate confidently during practical sessions.
5. My language skills help me understand technical concepts.

Cluster B: Vocational Education Outcomes

6. Communication skills improve my vocational learning.
7. Language competence enhances practical skill acquisition.
8. Effective communication improves classroom participation.
9. Communication skills improve workplace readiness.
10. Language competence supports digital learning.

Cluster C: Employability and Youth

Empowerment

11. Communication skills increase my chances of employment.
12. Employers value effective communication.
13. Language competence improves job interview performance.
14. Communication skills support entrepreneurship.
15. Effective communication improves leadership ability.

Cluster D: Perceived social cohesion and conflict mitigation

16. Employment opportunities reduce youth involvement in crime.
17. Communication skills promote peaceful conflict resolution.
18. Vocational education reduces social exclusion.
19. Language competence encourages civic participation.
20. Communication skills promote social cohesion.

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale:

Respondents option	Score
Strongly Agree	8
Agree	6
Undecided	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument underwent face and content validation by three experts in Language Education, Vocational Education, and Educational Measurement and Evaluation. The experts reviewed item clarity, relevance to the objectives, language appropriateness and content coverage, after which the researcher revised the items in response to their observations. The supplied manuscript does not report a formal content-validity index or factor-analytic evidence; therefore, no such statistics are claimed here. The experts examined the questionnaire for:

- Clarity of items
- Relevance to research objectives
- Language appropriateness
- Content coverage

Their observations and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents who were not included in the main study. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency. The supplied manuscript reports reliability coefficients for five labeled constructs, although the questionnaire itself contains four clusters and does not provide item-to-scale allocation for five separate scales. The coefficients are therefore reported as part of the original study record, but the final version should provide the exact item membership for each coefficient. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha.

The reliability coefficients obtained were:

Variable	Reliability Coefficient
Language Competence	0.84
Vocational Education	0.81
Employability	0.87
Youth Empowerment	0.83
Insecurity Reduction	0.79
Overall Reliability	0.83

The reported reliability coefficients were above .70. This indicates acceptable internal consistency for the reported scales, subject to verification of the item-to-scale allocation and pilot context in the original research records.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher administered the questionnaires personally with the assistance of trained research assistants. The original manuscript reports that 200 questionnaires were distributed and all 200 were retrieved. Because a 100% response rate is unusual, the final manuscript should document the administration conditions, treatment of incomplete questionnaires, non-response handling and quality-control checks. If electronic questionnaires were used at any site, the platform and procedure should be stated explicitly. The present revision does not infer a

collection mode that is not documented in the source.

Method of Data Analysis

Research Questions 1-4 were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The questionnaire item decision labels were revised to 'Agree' or 'Disagree' rather than 'Accepted' or 'Rejected', because acceptance/rejection applies to hypotheses, not individual questionnaire items.

- Mean
- Standard Deviation

The decision rule was:

Mean score of 3.00 and above = Agree

Mean score below 3.00 = Disagree

The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at the 0.05 level of significance. The summed Likert-scale scores were treated as approximately continuous for the correlational analysis. The analysis should include assumption checks for linearity and influential observations and should report degrees of freedom and confidence intervals in the final statistical output.

The statistical formula is:

$$r = [\sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)] / \sqrt{[(\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2)(\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2)]}$$

The decision rule was:

If $p < .05$, reject the null hypothesis.

If $p \geq .05$, fail to reject the null hypothesis.

The original draft included a regression model but reported only Pearson correlations. Because no regression coefficients, diagnostics or model-fit statistics were supplied, the regression model has been removed from the inferential method and is not used to interpret the results.

Results and Data Analysis

The following analysis is based on the reported responses from 200 respondents. Mean and standard deviation were used to summarise the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to examine associations among the measured constructs. Because all measures were collected through the same self-report questionnaire at one time, the correlations should be interpreted as associations that may be affected by common-method variance.

Analysis of Research Questions

Questions 1: How does language competence influence vocational education outcomes among Nigerian youths?

Table 4.1: Mean ratings on the influence of language competence on vocational education outcomes

S/N	Items	Mean	S D	D
1	Language competence improves understanding of vocational training instructions	4.42	0.71	Agree
2	Communication skills enhance practical skill acquisition.	4.35	0.76	Agree
3	Language competence improves classroom participation	4.28	0.82	Agree
4	Effective communication promotes understanding of technical manuals	4.47	0.69	Agree
5	Language competence supports digital learning activities	4.31	0.78	Agree
	Grand Mean	4.37	0.75	Agree

The results in Table 4.1 show mean scores above 3.00 for all five items. The grand mean of 4.37 indicates that respondents generally agreed that language competence is positively associated with vocational education outcomes. These are perceived outcomes rather than independently verified learning gains.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between language competence and perceived employability among the sampled TVET participants?

Table 4.2: Mean ratings on Language Competence and Employability

Items	Mean	S D	D
Communication skills improve employment opportunities	4.51	0.68	Agree
Employers value effective communication during recruitment	4.48	0.72	Agree
Language competence improves interview performance	4.39	0.81	Agree
Communication skills enhance workplace productivity	4.45	0.77	Agree
Language competence contributes to career advancement	4.40	0.08	Agree
Grand Mean	4.45	0.76	Agree

Table 4.2 shows a grand mean of 4.45, indicating that respondents generally agreed with statements linking communication competence to perceived employability. The result reflects perceived employment readiness and workplace relevance, not verified employment outcomes.

Research Question 3

What is the relationship between language competence and perceived youth empowerment?

Table 4.3: Means ratings on Language Competence and Youth Empowerment

S/N	Items	Mean	S D	D
1	Language competence increases entrepreneurial confidence	4.34	0.8	Agree
2	Communication skills enhances business growth opportunities	4.41	0.75	Agree
3	Language competence promotes leadership development	4.26	0.83	Agree
4	Communication skills facilitate access to economic opportunities	4.38	0.77	agree
5	Effective communication enhances self-confidence	4.44	0.71	Agree
	Grand mean	4.37	0.77	Agree

Table 4.3 produced a grand mean of 4.37. Respondents generally agreed that language competence is associated with entrepreneurial confidence, business opportunities, leadership development, access to economic opportunities and self-confidence. These responses represent perceived youth empowerment.

Research Question 4

What is the association between language competence and perceived contribution to social cohesion and conflict mitigation?

Table 4.4: Mean ratings on Language Competence and Perceived Social Cohesion Conflict Mitigation

S/N	Items	Mean	S D	D
1	Communication skills promote peaceful conflict resolution	4.47	0.73	Agree
2	Employability reduces youth involvement in crime	4.52	0.67	Agree
3	Vocational education promotes social inclusion	4.36	0.79	Agree
4	Language competence encourages civic participation	4.29	0.84	Agree
5	Communication skills strengthen social cohesion	4.40	0.76	Agree
	Grand Mean	4.41	0.76	Agree

The grand mean of 4.41 indicates strong agreement with statements about social cohesion and conflict mitigation. Because the items measure perceptions rather than crime, violence or insecurity outcomes, the result is interpreted as perceived contribution to social cohesion/conflict mitigation rather than actual reduction of insecurity or youth violence.

4.3 Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H01: There is no significant relationship between language competence and vocational education outcomes among Nigerian youths.

Table 4.5: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Language Competence and Perceived Vocational Education outcomes.

Variable 1	Variable 2	N	r	P –value	Decision
Language competence	Vocational education outcomes	200	0.712	<.001	Reject H01

The reported correlation is positive and statistically significant ($r = .712$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H01 is rejected. This indicates a positive association between language competence and perceived vocational education outcomes in the sampled respondents; it does not establish a causal effect.

Hypothesis Two

H02: There is no significant relationship between language competence and employability.

Table 4.6: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Language Competence and Perceived Employability.

Variable 1	Variable 2	N	r	P –value	Decision
Language competence	Employability	200	0.756	<.001	Reject H02

The reported correlation is positive and statistically significant ($r = .756$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H02 is rejected. The result indicates a positive association between language competence and perceived employability, not a verified increase in employment.

Hypothesis Three

H03: There is no significant relationship between language competence and youth empowerment.

Table 4.7: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Language Competence and Perceived Youth Empowerment.

Variable 1	Variable 2	N	r	P –value	Decision
Language competence	Youth Empowerment.	200	0.734	<.001	Reject H03

The reported correlation is positive and statistically significant ($r = .734, p < .001$). Therefore, H03 is rejected. The finding indicates a positive association between language competence and perceived youth empowerment.

Hypothesis Four

H04: There is no significant relationship between language competence and reduction of insecurity and youth violence.

Table 4.8: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Language Competence and Perceived Social Cohesion Conflicts Mitigation.

Variable 1	Variable 2	N	R	P –value	Decision
Language competence	Social Cohesion Conflicts Mitigation.	200	0.689	<.001	Reject H04

The reported correlation is positive and statistically significant ($r = .689, p < .001$). Therefore, H04 is rejected. The result indicates an association between language competence and respondents' perceived contribution to social cohesion/conflict mitigation. It should not be interpreted as evidence that language competence reduces insecurity or youth violence.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The first finding indicates a positive association between language competence and perceived vocational education outcomes ($r = .712, p < .001$). This is consistent with the Human Capital Theory perspective that skills which increase an individual's capacity to acquire and apply knowledge may have productive value (Becker, 1993). It is also consistent with the functional demands of TVET, where learners must interpret technical information, understand instructions and participate in practical communication. The finding should nevertheless be read as an association because the study did not directly test learning achievement or manipulate language instruction.

The second finding shows a strong positive association between language competence and perceived employability ($r = .756, p < .001$). This is compatible with literature that treats communication and other transferable skills as part of employability (Heckman & Kautz,

2021; Okolie et al., 2023). A plausible mechanism is that effective communication supports interview performance, workplace interaction, teamwork and the presentation of competencies. However, the questionnaire measures perceptions rather than verified jobs, wages, retention or productivity; therefore, the result should not be interpreted as proof that language competence causes employment.

The findings also demonstrated that language competence contributes significantly to youth empowerment. Respondents indicated that effective communication enhances entrepreneurial confidence, leadership development, and access to economic opportunities. These results support previous studies which argue that communication skills are essential for entrepreneurial success and sustainable youth development.

The fourth finding is a positive association between language competence and perceived social cohesion/conflict mitigation ($r = .689, p < .001$). The items concern peaceful conflict resolution, social inclusion, civic participation and social cohesion. These are relevant to social interaction, but they are not direct indicators of crime, violence or insecurity. The result therefore supports an exploratory social-inclusion proposition rather than a claim that language competence reduces youth violence. Future research should test this pathway with behavioural, longitudinal or administrative indicators.

Overall, the findings support the relevance of language competence within the sampled TVET context, particularly in relation to perceived vocational outcomes, employability, youth empowerment and social cohesion. They do not establish independent causal effects or national representativeness.

Summary of the Study

This study examined the association between language competence and perceived vocational education outcomes, employability, youth empowerment and social cohesion/conflict mitigation among participants in selected Nigerian TVET institutions. The study was motivated by the need to understand whether communication competence is related to how TVET participants perceive their learning, work readiness and empowerment. The study was anchored on Human Capital Theory and Communicative Competence Theory. Human Capital Theory provides the rationale for treating language competence as a productive skill investment, while Communicative Competence Theory explains the importance of context-appropriate language use in educational and occupational interaction.

Four research questions and four corresponding hypotheses guided the study. A cross-sectional descriptive-correlational survey design was adopted. The reported sample comprised 200 respondents from selected TVET institutions. Data were collected with the Language Competence and Vocational Education Questionnaire (LCVEQ) and analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings showed positive associations between language competence and perceived vocational education outcomes, perceived employability, and perceived youth empowerment. A positive association was also found with perceived social cohesion/conflict mitigation. The findings should be interpreted as respondents' perceptions and statistical associations. They do not demonstrate causal effects, actual employment outcomes or reductions in insecurity and youth violence.

Overall, the findings support the relevance of functional communication competence in TVET and justify further research on how

language skills interact with vocational learning and labour-market outcomes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, language competence is positively associated with perceived vocational education outcomes, perceived employability and perceived youth empowerment among the sampled respondents. The findings are consistent with the view that communication is an important complementary competence in vocational learning and work.

The reported associations suggest plausible mechanisms through which communication competence may support understanding of technical information, workplace interaction, entrepreneurial activity and access to economic opportunities. However, because the study is cross-sectional and based on self-report data, these relationships should not be described as causal effects or as evidence of verified employment gains.

The findings suggest that vocational training may benefit from a holistic approach that combines occupational skills with functional communication competence. The social-cohesion dimension should be regarded as a prospective policy rationale rather than evidence that language training directly reduces insecurity or youth violence.

Language competence should therefore be treated as an important complementary component of TVET policy and practice. Further studies should test the observed relationships with larger probability samples, longitudinal designs and objective indicators such as employment status, job retention, earnings, business performance and documented social outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the limitations of the evidence, the following prioritized recommendations are made:

- **Integration of Communication Skills into Vocational Curricula**

TVET curriculum planners should integrate

functional communication modules focused on workplace communication, business writing, oral presentation, interpersonal communication and digital communication. Implementation can be evaluated through pre/post language-performance tasks and learner feedback.

- **Capacity Building for Vocational Instructors**

TVET administrators should provide targeted professional development for instructors in communication-aware teaching. Indicators may include participation rates, lesson integration and student performance on communication tasks.

- **Strengthening Entrepreneurship Communication Training**

Entrepreneurship programmes should include practical modules in negotiation, proposal writing, customer relations, marketing communication and business pitching, with assessment through authentic business-communication tasks.

- **Enhancement of Digital Communication Competencies**

Institutions should strengthen digital communication training through access to appropriate devices, connectivity and learning platforms, with participation and task-completion rates used as implementation indicators.

- **Industry-Based Communication Training**

Institutions should strengthen industry partnerships that expose learners to authentic workplace communication through internships, industrial attachments and mentorship. Evaluation should include supervisor feedback on communication performance.

- **Provision of Adequate Learning Resources**

Government and institutional administrators should prioritize communication laboratories, language-learning technologies and relevant instructional materials, with usage and learner outcomes monitored.

- **Promotion of Youth Engagement Programmes**

Youth-engagement initiatives may incorporate dialogue, leadership, civic participation and conflict-resolution activities as a prospective social-inclusion strategy. Claims about reducing violence should be evaluated with direct behavioural or administrative indicators rather than inferred from questionnaire agreement.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing literature in a more delimited way.

First, it extends discussion of TVET beyond occupational skills by examining language competence as a distinct complementary construct.

Second, it brings language competence, perceived employability and youth empowerment into a single survey framework within selected Nigerian TVET settings.

Third, it applies Human Capital Theory and Communicative Competence Theory to explain why communication competence may matter in vocational learning and work.

Fourth, it provides correlational evidence that can inform further research, while avoiding the stronger claim that language competence independently causes employability or reduced insecurity.

Finally, it translates the observed associations into practical recommendations for curriculum planning, instructor development, entrepreneurship communication and digital communication, with explicit evaluation needs.

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