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Evaluation of the Effects of Vocational Home Economics Education on Graduates Career Choice in Edo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Graduate unemployment and underemployment are major setbacks to socio-economic development as well as hindrances towards the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Goal of zero poverty. In Nigeria, graduates unemployment and underemployment are compounding the complex problems of insecurity, drug abuse, and agitation for resource control. One way to address the above problem is to evaluate the influence university courses have on graduates' future choice of careers. Hence the present study aimed to investigate the influence of the choice of technical education course on graduates' future careers. A total of 200 graduates of the vocational Home Economics department from the University of Benin and Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma were surveyed. The majority of the respondents (27% -32%) reported that teaching aids during their undergraduate days boasted their interest in Vocational Home Economics. This was followed by another 21% to 34% who reported that family background was an encouraging factor. On the effects of Vocational Home Education on graduates future career choice, most of the surveyed graduates 31% - 34% agreed that their career after graduation was influenced by vocational home economics studied at the university, while 18% to 27% reported their knowledge of VHE did not influence their career choice after graduation. The study found that fashion stylists (18% - 20%), including tailoring and hairdressing, were the predominant occupations of graduates, followed by catering and restaurant owners (16% -17%). Of the surveyed graduates, over 50% agreed that they can meet their livelihood needs after graduation.

Keywords
Career choice
Graduates unemployment
University education
Vocational home economics

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Introduction

Graduate unemployment has become a cause for serious concern in the world especially in developing countries most of whom are facing the complex problems of declining GDP, political instability, security challenges, climate change impact, etc. Studies have shown that among 10 million graduates who are supplied by 668 universities in Africa, half of these graduates failed to get and secure jobs and this indicates that graduate unemployment is one of the foremost critical developmental problems facing the African continent [1]. Hence, countries lose active human power, bridle economic growth, cause poverty, and their family to economic bankruptcy to cover the basic needs expense of their kids until they secure jobs [2]. Due to the rise in educational attainment among youth and the limited economic opportunities for skilled labor, unemployment is widespread among educated young people, and unemployed graduates are subject to social and economic challenges [3]. In Nigeria in particular, graduate unemployment is a very daunting challenge in the labour market [4]. Sadly enough, Balogun [2] hinted that almost half of the 10 million graduates, churned out of the over 668 universities in Africa yearly, do not get jobs. Graduates' unemployment is perceived as a falling return on a country's investment in higher education [5].

To be more specific, according to Ref. [6], unemployment causes individuals to suffer from financial hardship that impacts families, relationships, and communities. When they happen, consumer spending, which is one of the economy's key drivers of growth, goes down, leading to a recession or even a depression when left unaddressed [7]. Such problems reduce demand, consumption, and purchasing power, resulting in lower profits for businesses and the need for budget cuts and workforce reductions [1]. It creates a cycle that goes on and on that is difficult to reverse without some type of intervention [8]. Persons who face unemployment most often find themselves in long-term earnings losses and complicated psychosocial matters onward [9]. Different authors have attributed graduate unemployment to different factors such as demographic characteristics such as income inequalities, gender, etc [10-12], graduate characteristics such as academic achievement, technical skills, communication skills, personality, leadership and motivating abilities, and teamwork and problem-solving skills are regarded as independent variables that influence the unemployment rates, according to Ref.

[13], institutional characteristics such as the meaningful partnership between universities and labor companies [14], academic achievement such as the acquisition of essential skill [15,16], economic and labor market conditions [17,18], methods of teaching and learning such as integration of work-related generic skills into their teaching methods [19], higher education curriculum [20]. On the impact of educational curriculum, a study has found that high-quality higher education, especially with a focus on soft skills and internships, improves graduates' chances of landing their first job following graduation [20]. In some cases, duplication of courses in institutions with less demand may produce graduates with similar courses that are not needed at all regarding higher education curriculum [21]-[23]. In addressing the effect of educational curriculum on graduate employability, few studies have been done on the effects of the choice of course as an important factor of graduate employability, especially concerning vocational home economics being an important factor of graduates' career choice.

Home economics has been defined as knowledge, skills, and competencies associated with running a household, including cooking, nutrition, clothing, childcare, and other aspects of homemaking [24]. Home Economics is a profession and a disciplinary field of study that deals with the careful management of both human and material resources to enhance the lives of individuals and families in an ever-changing world [25]. Home management for Anyakoha [26], equips the students with knowledge, and skills that are necessary for effective management of the home and to wisely use those things which the family has, to obtain things needed by the family. It also provides students with Home management-related jobs. Home Economics helps in preparing students for future careers to adapt to changing economic times and technological situations [27]. Hence, given the importance of vocational home economics education to livelihood and economic development, the present study investigates the influence of the choice of technical education course on graduates' future careers.

Material and Methods

The study adopts a quantitative research approach. According to Borrego et al., [28] quantitative research is useful when quantifying opinions, attitudes, and behaviors and aims to find out how the whole population feels about a certain issue. Since the current study sought to investigate the influence of vocational home economics courses on graduates' choices of careers, a quantitative approach was best suited as it allowed the researchers to compare the results between graduates at different types of universities in different locations.

A. Research Design

The survey research method was used in this study and the method was the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions. It is an efficient method for systematically collecting data from a broad spectrum of individuals and educational

settings [29]. Graduates of two main universities in Edo state, the University of Benin, and Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma participated in the present study.

B. Participants

A total of 200 university graduates participated in the study. The participants were selected through a purposive sampling technique. A purposive sampling method was adopted in the study to select graduates of vocational Home economics. McMillan and Schumacher [30] describe purposive sampling as "selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth" when one wants to understand something about those cases without needing or desiring to generalize to all cases. In this technique, the researcher chooses the sample based on appropriateness for the study. The choice of this method is based on the fact that sample units have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study" [31].

C. Data collection instruments and Analysis

The study employed a questionnaire to collect data. Ref. [32] shows that a questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured information, and often numerical data that is administered without the presence of the researcher and is often comparatively straightforward to analyze. Since the researcher did not intend to engage research assistants, the questionnaires were the best instruments since they could be administered without the presence of the researcher and were clear and precise [33]. Descriptive statistics were used in this study. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 19 was adopted to analyze the data. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for easier interpretation and their results were presented in charts and tables.

Results

In Fig. 1, the mode of admission entry into the university is presented. Most of the respondents surveyed reported that they were relocated to study vocational Home Economics as the cut-off marks for their preferred courses of choice were not met. This was followed by direct entry admission. Only a very few graduates originally applied to study vocational home economics.

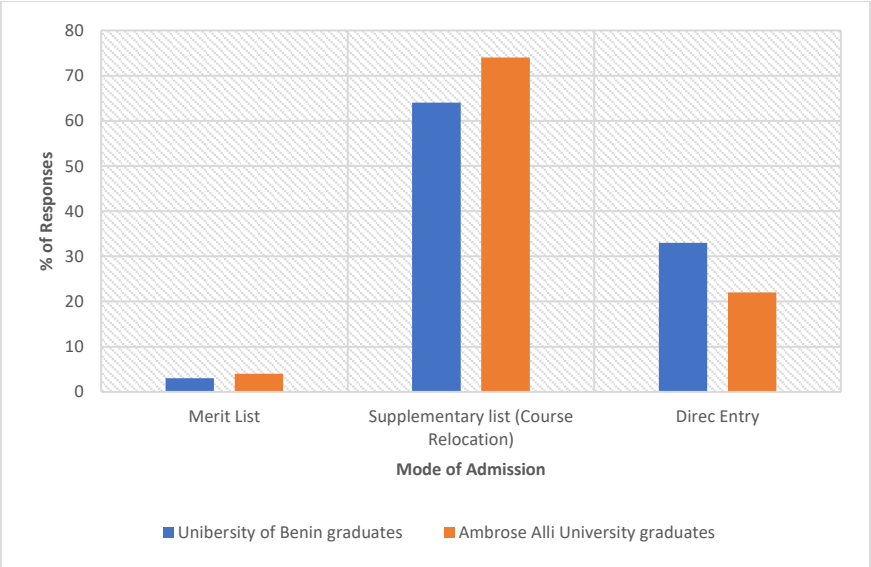


Fig. 1. Mode of admission entry of sampled graduates

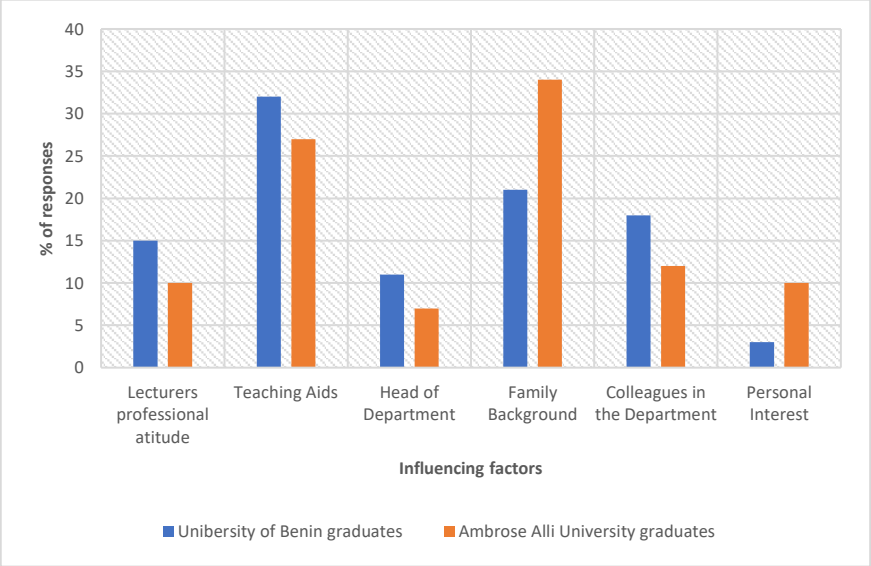


Fig. 2. Factors that influenced graduate's interest in vocational Home Economics

In Fig. 2, factors that encouraged graduates' interest in vocational Home economics while in school are presented. Teaching aids ranked highest (32%-27% for the University of Benin and Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma respectively), indicating that students learn more with adequate teaching and practical materials. This was followed by respondents who attributed their success in school to family background ((21%-34% for the University of Benin and Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma respectively) such as encouragement and support from home etc. In Fig. 3, it can be seen that most of the surveyed graduates agreed that studying vocational home economics influenced their career choice after graduation (31%-34% for the University of Benin and Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma respectively). On the contrary, another 18% (University of Benin) - 27% (Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma) disagreed.

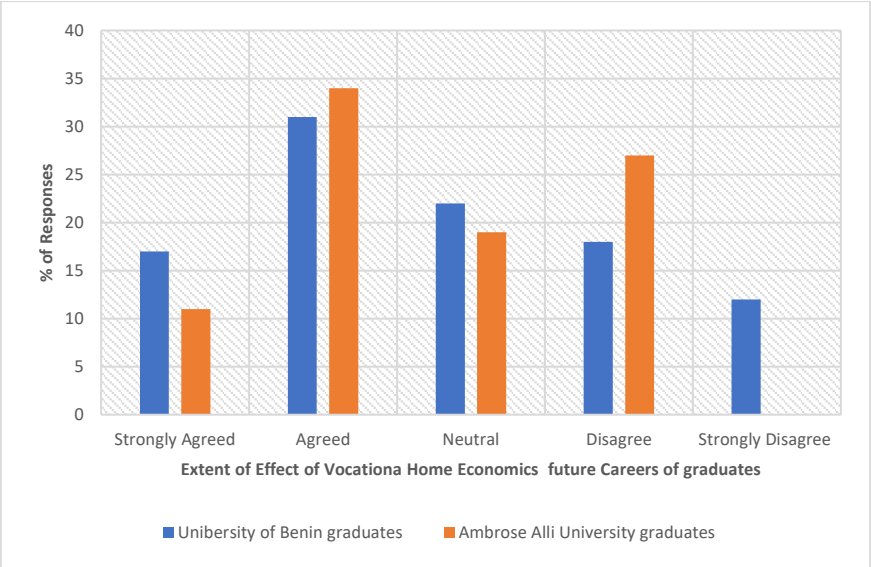


Fig. 3. Effects of Vocational Home Economics on graduates' choice future Career

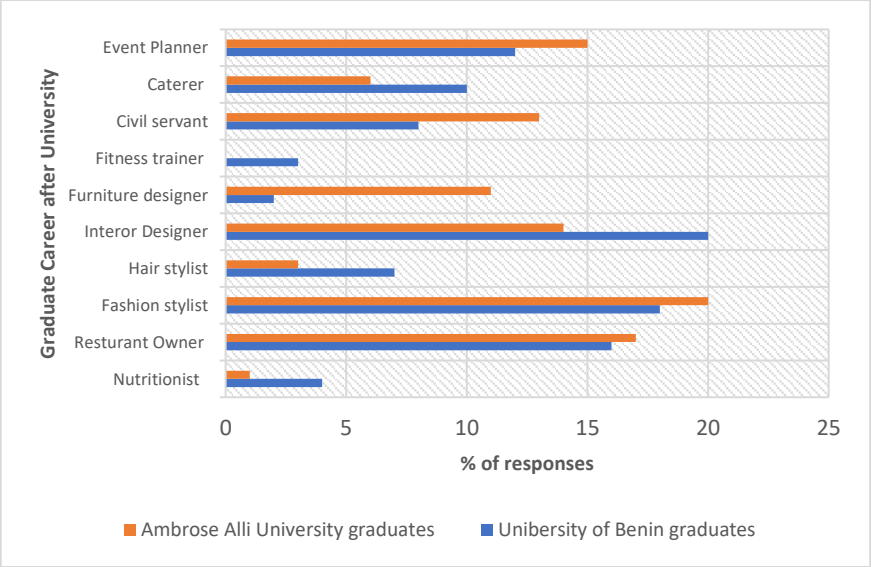


Fig. 4. Graduates career after graduation from sampled Universities

The study found that fashion stylists (18% - 20%), including tailoring and hairdressing, were the predominant occupations of graduates, followed by catering and restaurant owners (16% -17%) (Fig. 4). More so, the surveyed graduates, over 50% agreed that they can meet their livelihood needs after graduation (Fig 5).

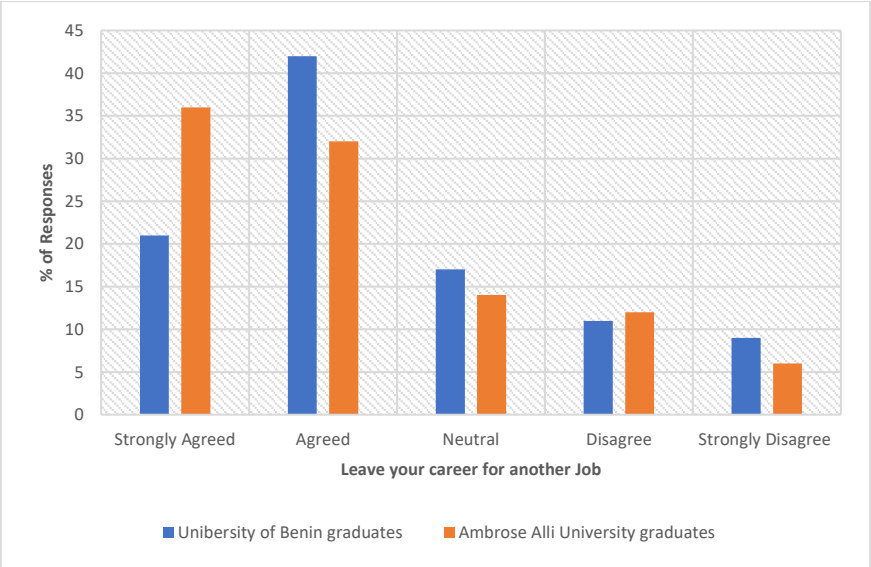


Fig. 5. Respondents 'views on leaving a career for other jobs

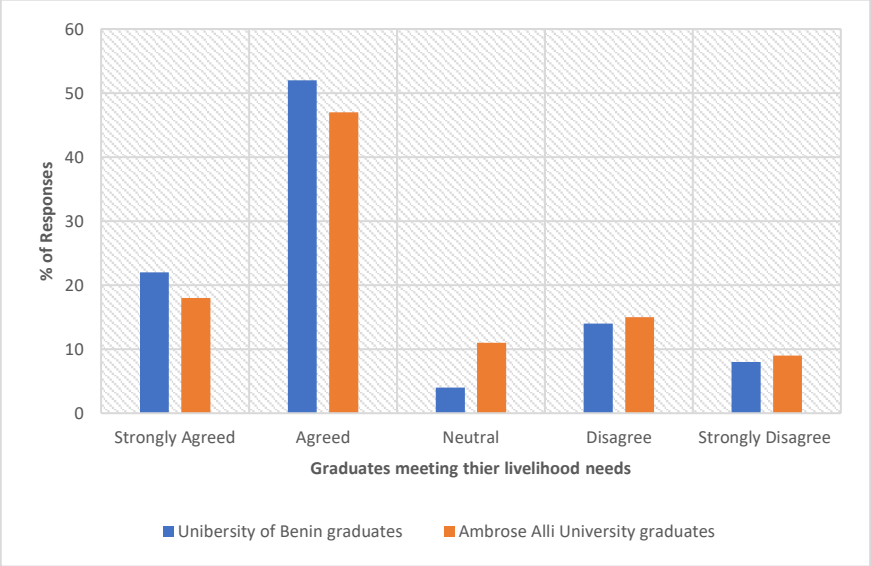


Fig. 6. Graduates of VHE being able to meet their livelihood needs

Discussions

In Fig. 1, the majority of the graduates surveyed gained admission through the supplementary list (relocation of course) 67% (graduates from the University of Benin) and 74% (graduates from Ambrose Alli University), suggesting that Vocational Home Economics was not their choice course. This was followed by admission through direct entry. Only a handful of surveyed graduates responded to have applied to study Home Economics at the university level. The factors that influenced students' interest in vocational Home Economics as undergraduates teaching aids and family background were seen to be predominant. This was followed by the positive attitudes of lecturers and peer influence. Ref. [34] defined teaching aids as those materials used for practical and demonstration in class

situations by students and teachers. Ref. [35] saw instructional materials as objects or devices that assist the teacher in presenting a lesson to the learners in a logical manner. In his perspective, Ref. [36] saw instructional materials as visual and audio-visual aids, concrete or non-concrete, used by teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning activities in Social Studies. Ref. [37] defines instructional materials as things that assist the teacher in performing well in the classroom, thereby helping students to learn effectively.

According to Ref. [38], teachers' credible performance in the classrooms using instructional materials can make students record better academic achievement in the school. Ref. [39] submitted that both teacher's effectiveness and proper use of instructional materials add to students' academic performance in the English language as a compulsory subject in schools. Ref. [40] acknowledged that instructional materials are used by teachers to aid explanations and make the learning of subject matter understandable to students during teaching teaching-learning process.

On the influence of parental background on the student's performance, Ref. [41] attributed the cause of poor academic performance of children to a combination of personal and institutional factors. Personal factors include the level of an individual's intelligence, knowledge, and ability, while institutional factors are family or parental influence. The family background of students determines how the child views themselves and the way they view others [42]. Society is a function of these two factors. In other words, the environment of the child at home determines his/her behavior as well as how he relates with others. However, the essential factors inherent in a home or family are the socio-economic, cultural, and psychological factors. Family background refers to all the conditions and circumstances in the family that influence the child physically, intellectually, and emotionally [43].

Section 10 of the National Policy on Education highlighted the objectives of instructional materials as to; enhance teaching and improve the competence of teachers, make learning more meaningful to students, and develop the effective use of innovative materials in schools [37]. This is to show that, the teacher alone cannot provide all the necessary conditions for effective teaching and learning to occur [38].

Ref. [44] emphasized that the size of the family determines to a great extent the relative amount of physical attention and time that each child gets from his parents. Large families are more common among the lower class of the society. Children in large families may suffer poverty and lack parental encouragement and stimulus which motivate their academic performance [44]. Family environment affects children intellectually because a child from a small family (nuclear) would be different from a child from a large family (polygamous) intellectually and vice-versa. The implication is that a properly stimulating family environment

with intellectual potential and appropriate teaching methods will enhance the maximum performance of the child [42]. The economic implication of large family size is better explained in Ref. [45] who observed from his study that as families get larger, parents cannot give their children the same amount of individual attention. They could not afford to provide them with so many of the things which will help them to make the best possible use of their years at school such as educational aids, quiet comfortable rooms in which to do home-work undisturbed by the television, outings to places of interest, leisure time pursuits, and opportunities for traveling [42]. On the influence of peer pressure, Ref. [46] showed, that peer groups have an important role in kids' social, emotional, and academic development. Peer pressure is defined as when individuals your age encourage or pressure you to do something or refrain from doing something, regardless of whether you want to do it or not [47]. Peer influence is a more subtle form of peer pressure that involves modifying one's conduct to fit others' perceived expectations. Peer group impact begins at a young age and grows throughout adolescence [48].

Friendships, according to Ref. [49], are "essential interpersonal vehicles that drive pupils toward psychological growth and maturity, permitting social compassion that promotes the development of self-evaluation". Their strong shows that peer group has an unparalleled impact on practically every aspect of teenage development. Such an effect can be seen in young people's social and emotional lives, which doesn't stop there; it can also be shown in their attitudes toward educational activities, and careful analysis of these factors has demonstrated that they have an impact on students' academic achievement [46]. There has been a lot of research on the influence of peer groups on students' academic achievement, with the majority of these studies focusing on the impact of peer pressure on academic accomplishment [50-52]. On the effects of the professional attitude of lecturers, multiple studies have established a strong correlation between attitude and the teaching profession [53-57]. Al Harthy [55], for example, contends that teachers' attitudes toward their profession affect their teaching practice. In a similar study, Ref. [58] reported that the attitude of a teacher, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly affects students' academic performance. According to Ref. [59], despite major advances in technology in all areas of the teaching and learning process, a teacher's efficacy is still a necessary and significant factor in transmitting knowledge to learners at all levels of education. According to Ref. [60], learners who are repeatedly assigned to ineffective teachers have worse learning and academic accomplishment than students who are repeatedly assigned to highly competent teachers. Teachers with a strong sense of effectiveness, as well as high efficacy, have an easier time creating cognitive improvement in their students [61]. Ref. [62] conducted a correlational study of teacher effectiveness variables and students' academic achievement in economics. The study revealed that instructional activities (lesson planning, lesson delivery, communication, use of questions, use of praise and

reward, classroom management, use of instructional materials, knowledge of subject matter, evaluation techniques, and assignment), teacher personality traits, and attitudes and co-curricular activities all make a relative and composite contribution to the student's academic achievement in Economics as well as can predict the students' success in the subject [62].

There is a consensus among respondents that studying vocational Home Economics influenced their choice of career after graduation. Home economics has been defined as knowledge, skills, and competencies associated with running a household, including cooking, nutrition, clothing, childcare, and other aspects of homemaking [24]. Hence the findings of this study are expected as the course has prepared graduates to be employable. Most of the surveyed graduates mostly caterers/ restaurant owners, fashion and hair stylists, event planners, or teaching in secondary schools. The respondents also show that they can meet their livelihood needs through their vocational home economics-oriented careers. On whether respondents are willing to abandon their current job for another, the majority of the sampled graduates indicated they are willing to take on another job if presented with such opportunities. These respondents cited inadequacy of power to run their daily operations, high cost of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), dollar instability, high cost of materials and food items, etc.

Conclusion and Recommendations

With the increasing rate of unemployment and non-employability of graduates, the need to investigate educational curricula, especially how these curricula can effectively and efficiently equip students with the necessary skills to become employers of labor has become important. Hence the present study aims to evaluate how vocational home economics courses at the University level influenced graduates' choice of career after graduation. Two Universities in Edo State, the University of Benin and Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, were used as the survey population. The study showed graduates' interest in Vocational home economics during their undergraduate days was greatly influenced by teaching aids at the departments and family background. The professional attitude of lecturers was also an important factor that influenced learning. The respondents also generally that studying vocational Home Economics influenced their choice of career after graduation as they can meet their livelihood needs. Most of the surveyed graduates mostly caterers/ restaurant owners, fashion and hair stylists, event planners, or teaching in secondary schools. Finally, the majority of the sampled graduates indicated they are willing to take on another job if presented with such opportunities, citing, the inadequacy of power to run their daily operations, the high cost of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), dollar instability, high cost of materials and food items etc. Given the above findings, it is recommended that the career guidance staff of the university be trained to enhance their effectiveness in instilling confidence and imparting proper knowledge on students' careers.

The study further recommended that field trips be well planned for students to have a bearing on students' career decisions. Finally, programs such as engaging former students who are doing well career-wise should be invited to share their experiences during career days.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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