

Attitudes of Students towards Vocational Education with Reference to Chennai City

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ABSTRACT

Vocational education prepares the students pursue a group of vocations which has the employment capability instead of going to colleges and institutions of higher level for further education. The present study aims to understand the attitudes of secondary students towards vocational education in Chennai district of TamilNadu India. A sample of 158 students was selected from schools in Chennai city. The students were interviewed and their attitudes towards vocational education were measured using a five point Likert-type scale. The researcher developed the tool to measure the attitude of students towards vocational education. The reliability and validity of the tool was found. Thirteen attitude statements pertaining to vocational education were administered to the subjects and their agreement or disagreement was documented. From the results it was evident that the students had moderate (uncertain) attitudes towards vocational education. There exist a statistically significant difference among male and female in their attitude towards vocational education. Male students preferred vocational education program more than female students. Birth order, number of siblings, parents educational status, family type and maternal employment doesn't influence the attitude of students towards vocational education. It is reported that majority of the students weren't aware about the vocational courses, its scope, eligibility, opportunities and scholarships available. Hence it is suggested that Career guidance to be given to orient the students towards vocational courses at secondary level for successful career choices.

Keywords: Attitude, Chennai city, Gender, Secondary School Students, tool development, Vocational education.

Vocational Education otherwise called as skilled based education prepares people for specific trades, crafts and careers at various levels in all spheres of life. It covers education and skill development at all levels from post primary to tertiary education through both formal and non-formal programs. It is the need of the hour for our country to have strong vocational education system. The term Vocational Education is used synonymously with

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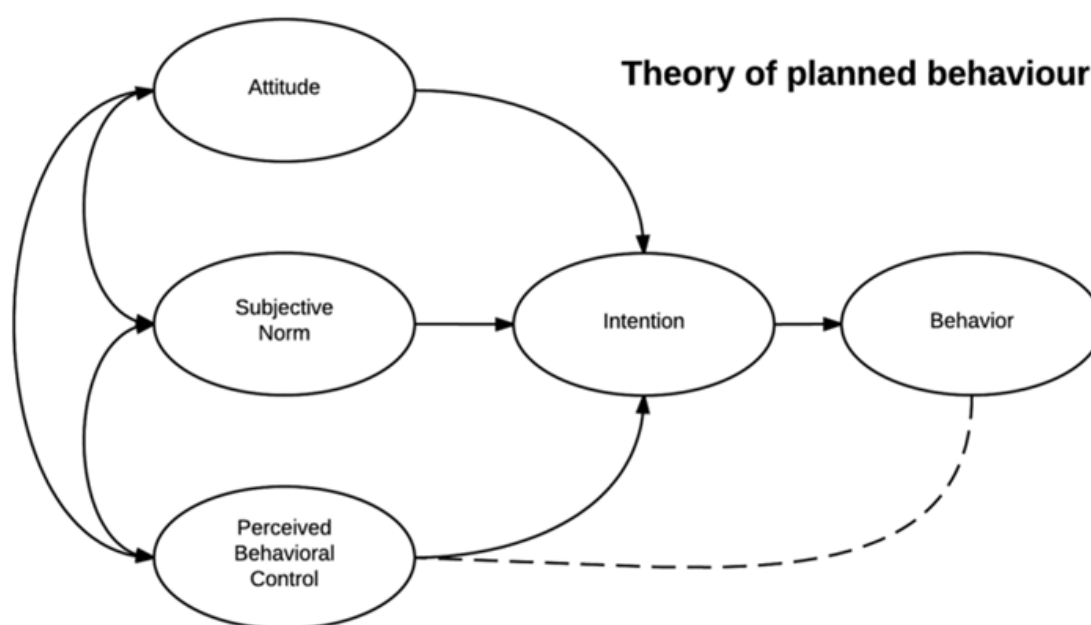
career and technical education (CTE) or technical and vocational education and training (TVET). It is also mentioned as technical education because the trainee directly develops technical skills through the traditional apprenticeship system of learning. In other words Vocational Education may be categorized as teaching procedural knowledge. Vocational Education helps in Economic growth of the country. In recognition of importance of Vocational Education, Government of India has set up National Council for Vocational Training, an advisory body for the implementation of Vocational Education. Students receiving vocational education can not only develop the right type of attitude towards different types of vocations, but contribute significantly to the development of the country. A central scheme on vocational for secondary education by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) provides for expansion of educational opportunities in order to enhance individual employability and experience directly linked to a career in future. It also reduces the mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower and serves as an alternative for those pursuing higher education.

Vocational training in India is delivered on a full-time as well as part-time basis. The technical and vocational education and training system (TVET) in India improves human resource through a multi layered system: • Graduate and post-graduate level specialists (e.g. IITs, NITs, and engineering colleges) trained as engineers and technologists. • Diploma-level graduates who are trained as technicians and supervisors at Polytechnic • Certificate-level for higher secondary students who enrolled in the vocational course and people trained in it is. • Skill development courses which focuses on technical expertise and practical delivery of work. As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned the vocational courses are so structured as to make it improvable and continuing. The system permits the students to secure further qualifications for vertical and horizontal mobility whenever they want.

Attitude

The term attitude refers to a hypothetical construct, namely a predisposition to evaluate some object in a favourable or unfavourable manner. This predisposition cannot be directly observed, but it can be inferred from individuals' responses to the attitude object, which can run from overt behaviour, such as approaching or avoiding the object and explicit verbal statements to covert responses, which may be outside of the individual's awareness, such as minute facial expressions (Oskamp, 1991). Vocational education has conventionally been considered as an poorer alternative for students who have been considered unable to benefit from further general or academic education. Societal attitudes, employment situation, school related reasons, selection process for higher education. Are the factors that determine students' attitudes towards vocational education?

Generally in our society high social prestige is connected with government jobs and white-collar occupations in the private sector. This is more understandable consideration for marriage and social celebrations. Prestige, Socioeconomic status, authority, and academic ability are often connected with white-collar occupations. It has been assumed that vocations like carpentry, mechanics, blacksmithing, welding and others belong to a low-level socioeconomic class. So, it is considered shameful for a person to work in such vocations. It is also associated with students' laziness, lower intelligence and low achievement at school. Attitude scales, used in the measurement of attitudes, have proved to be useful in a variety of research problems. A variety of methods is available for the measurement of attitudes. Schibeci (1982). The most popular of these methods has been the summated rating method generally known as the Likert scale.



THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is seen as an improvement to the Theory of reasoned action (TRA) which reinforces and adds to the assumptions in the TRA. The TPB maintains what TRA hypothesized about human behavior being governed by one's attitudes and behavioral intentions characterized by the presence of social norms and the exercise of volitional control. However, it incorporates several modifications that allows for greater accuracy and reliability in understanding one's attitudes and predicting his deliberate, planned, and resulting actual behavior.

Core Assumptions of TPB

It is based on the assumption that 1. Human beings are rational and make systematic use of information available to them 2. People consider their actions before they decide to engage or not engage in certain behaviors.

1. The **subjective norms** that the individual is exposed i.e approval (and disapproval) by family, friends, co-workers, or pretty much any person he trusts may largely influence the behavioral intentions.
2. Behavioral intentions were considered as being the immediate antecedents to behavior. **Intentions of the individual** largely reflect his personal attitudes, or their perception on the extent of favorability of an act. This will also be influenced by his perceived and cognitive beliefs about the act.
3. The intentions and the resulting behaviors of the individual are affected by their **perceived behavioral control**, or what they think and believe to be their ability to actually perform or engage in the said behaviors. The two clear flanks of this perceived behavioral control are i) **Internal control**: This is basically how the individual perceives his own control when it comes to performing the specific behavior in question For example, the sufficiency of his knowledge, skills and abilities, and the amount of discipline he employs while performing the behavior. ii) **External control**: Other external factors like the acceptance support or approval of family, friends, and peers is likely to influence a person into developing a positive

attitude toward a behavior. Time is also another external factor that impact one's level of behavioral control.

Problem of the Study

Vocational, or skills-based, education is becoming more and more important today, with many employers expecting new employees to have all the practical skills they need to start work. It plays a vital role for those who have to support their families immediately after senior secondary education. The training component, employment generation and sustainability are the benefits in vocational education. If the person is certain about their career which requires practical skills, then vocational learning is important. It could be hospitality and tourism, retail management, carpentry, farming, acting, programming or interior design. There are literally thousands of skills based training options available. In today's technical world, even an engineering graduate is supposed to have some technical skills apart from the degree possessed by him or her i.e. in the form of certification etc. However in India presently only 2% of the total workforce in India has undergone skills training. It has been estimated that about 90 per cent of employment openings require vocational skills. Only 20 per cent of our graduates get employed. The rest are unable to get suitable employment due to the lack of employable skills (Times of India - Mallapurkar, 2016). Finally this led to a huge gap in skill demand and supply. A study by BCG has estimated that by 2020 the world will have a shortage of 47 million working people, but India will have a surplus of 56 million people. However, in order to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend India will have to equip this manpower to meet the requirement of skilled manpower across the world. This could be handled by skilling more number of students through vocational education and skill based education. Hence the present study intended to develop a tool to study the attitude of secondary school students towards vocational education and their association with background variables like gender, order of birth, family type, parents educational status and employment.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

India has one of the largest technical manpower in the world but the importance was given to general education compared to vocational education. This has caused large number of educated people to remain unemployed. This event has now been recognized by the planners and the need for vocationalisation of education is emphasised. Moreover, the number of engineers graduating per year is more than the diploma holders creating an imbalance, as more workforces are required at the lower level. Therefore more polytechnics and Institute for Industrial Training (ITIs) are being opened now. Various Ministries are trying to impart vocational courses through innovative institutions and also maintain quality of these courses. Under the XIth Plan, more funds have been allocated for vocationalisation of education. Also ensured that the marginalized sections of the society, including women, get adequate participation in these courses. It can thus be anticipated that TVET will play a major role in improving the lives of the people of India (Goel 2009). Students have more favorable attitude towards TVET program. Significant gender and educational level differences in attitude towards TVET program were found. It was found that male students favored TVET program more than female students. Furthermore attitude was found to be rising as a student level of education is increasing (Devi& Chella 203). Students were lacking adequate parental advice and teachers' guidance regarding vocational education and training (Ngogog 2014) Moreover it was suggested that secondary schools have to work with TVET institutions to create positive attitude towards TVET among students and to integrate TVET in the secondary school curriculum (Sisay (2014)

Objectives of the Study

The study tries to achieve the following objectives:

1. To establish a reliable and valid tool to assess the attitude of students towards vocational education
2. To study and analyze the attitude of students towards Vocational Education at a secondary stage in relation to their gender, order of birth, family type, parents educational qualification and employment.

Hypotheses

The following Null hypotheses were formulated to find the relationship among the variables and difference between the groups statistically.

- Ho1. There is no significant difference in the attitude towards vocational education in relation to their gender
- Ho2. There is no significant difference in the attitude towards vocational education in relation to their order of birth
- Ho3. There is no significant difference in the attitude towards vocational education in relation to their family type.
- Ho4. There is no significant difference in the attitude towards vocational education in relation to their Father's educational qualification.
- Ho5. There is no significant difference in the attitude towards vocational education in relation to their maternal employment.

Sample

Descriptive research design was used in the study. Students studying in 9th and 10th standard were purposively selected for this study. By means of purposive sampling method, a total of 153 students in the age group of 13-15 years were selected for the study. Both male and female students were participated in the study. Both matriculation and Government school students were participated in the study. After the collection of data from the respondents, data were analysed.

Tools

1. Attitudes of Students towards Vocational Education – developed by the researcher. The scale was developed to measure the Attitudes of Students towards Vocational Education. The scale has 13 items to measure the attitude towards vocational education. The scale consist of 6 positive items and 7 negative items . The items are measured by using a 5 point Likert scale (1-Srongly disagree to 5-Strongly agree) . The internal reliability is 0.74 with a cronbach alpha of 0.73. The questionnaire was validated by presenting the questionnaire to group of researchers, faculties of industrial training institute for examination and interpretation. Based on their feedback the items in the questionnaire were reframed, eliminated and added.
2. Demographic sheet was used to collect the personal details of the students

Development and description of the tool

Before developing the items a group of college students were asked some open-ended questions in order to understand their attitudes towards vocational education. Interview focused on their opinion, beliefs, and feelings about vocational education. Based on their responses and review of literature, 40 statements were developed to measure the attitude of students towards vocational education. The content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by the experts in the field. The questionnaire was validated by presenting the questionnaire to group of researchers, faculties of industrial training institute for scrutiny and

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interpretation. Based on their feedback the items in the questionnaire were reframed, eliminated and added. As a result of the critiques by the experts, the number of the attitude statements was reduced from 40 to 24 statements. 24 items were developed of which 12 items measures favorable attitude and 12 items measures unfavorable attitude. A pilot study was conducted with 90 samples to test the questionnaire for appropriateness and smooth sequencing of questions. From the pilot study, differentiating attitude statements were obtained using the criterion of internal consistency method (Fishbein, 1967). The number of attitude statements was further reduced from 24 to 13 statements. 13 items were selected finally based on the reliability coefficient value <0.70 . Remaining 11 items were removed from the tool due to low reliability coefficient value and based on experts opinion. The coefficient alpha can be used to measure the internal consistency or reliability for questionnaire items (Oppenheim, 1992). The reliability coefficient for the tool was found to be 0.728 (Table 1). The Final questionnaire was administered to 153 students selected from five different schools of which 60 students were male and the remaining 93 students were females.

Table - 1 The value of cronbach alpha for the tool measuring attitude of the students towards vocational education

Tool	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Attitude of the students towards vocational education	.728	24

Research shows that using reliability alpha coefficient and factor analysis would improve questionnaire psychometric features and validity (Burton & Mazerolle, 2011). Although a factor analysis can help researchers in assessing the dimensionality of questionnaire items and purifying the questionnaire, it demands a large data set (Field, 2000).

Table 2 – representing mean , standard deviation of student's attitude towards vocational education

S.No	Attitude Towards VET	Mean	SD
1.	VET is designed for low performing students.	2.597	1.366
2.	VET is designed to admit students who fail in grade 10.	2.683	1.362
3.	Studying VET is wastage of time.	3.447	1.216
4.	I do not have a plan to join VET.	2.983	1.289
5.	VET is for industrial employee only.	3.277	1.316
6.	Vocational education training is for men only.	3.693	1.248
7.	In VET, people do not learn life skills such as communication or teamwork.	2.883	1.260
8.	VET offer good career opportunities.	3.930	1.179
9.	I think that VET is as useful as academic subjects.	3.787	1.235
10.	I believe that VET will make me successful in life.	3.590	1.304
11.	I believe VET is good for the future of India.	3.653	1.251
12.	VET leads to jobs which are well paid.	3.440	1.191
13.	The Indian society has high regards towards jobs such as carpenters, tailors, mechanics, or electricians.	3.503	1.279

Based on the mean score the following items VET offer good career opportunities (3.930) is the important factor in determining the attitude of students towards vocational education , followed by the items 'I think that VET is as useful as academic subjects (3.787), I believe VET is good for the future of India (3.653), I believe that VET will make me successful in

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life (3.590), The Indian society has high regards towards jobs such as carpenters, tailors, mechanics, or electricians (3.503). VET is designed for low performing students (2.597) and VET is designed to admit students who fail in grade 10 (2.683) were the least factors in determining their attitude.

Table 3 - Quartiles of attitude of students towards vocational education

	Percentile 25	Median	Percentile 75
Attitude Towards VET	39	43	48

From the data analysed it was found that scores lie below 39 were considered as unfavorable attitude ,above 48 was considered as favourable attitude and between 39-48 was considered as uncertain attitude towards vocational education. Based on this score, the above factors are converted into Low, Moderate and High level and are presented in the following tables

Table 4 representing the frequency distribution of Adolescents based on their attitude towards vocational education training.

Attitude towards vocational education training.	Frequency	Percent
Low	45	29.4
Moderate	69	45.1
High	39	25.5
Total	153	100.0

From the above table it was found that 29.4% of them low level of attitude towards vocational education, 45.1% of them were having moderate level and the remaining 25.5% of them were in high level of attitude towards vocational education.

RESULTS

Table 5- Representing frequency distribution of gender, no of siblings, family type parental education and employment

Variable	Group	N	Percentage
Gender	Male	60	39
	Female	93	61
Father's education	Non graduates	123	80
	Graduates	21	14
	Post graduates	9	6
Maternal employment	Working	37	24
	Not working	116	76
No of siblings	Single child	7	5
	One	110	72
	More than one	36	23
Family Type	Joint	68	44
	Nuclear	85	56

Table 6 't' test to find the attitude of students towards vocational education in relation to gender, order of birth, family type and maternal employment.

S.No			N	Mean	Std. Deviation	't' value	Sig (2 tailed)
1.	Gender	Boys	60	52.07	11.532	2.465	.015*
		Girls	93	56.05	8.442		
2.	Order of birth	First	104	58.68	8.69	0.7280	0.467 NS
		Others	49	54.08	12.22		

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S.No			N	Mean	Std. Deviation	't' value	Sig (2 tailed)
3.	Family Type	Joint	68	41.96	6.61	1.3209	0.1885 NS
		Nuclear	85	43.66	8.83		
4.	Maternal Employment	Working	116	43.54	7.27	1.4484	0.1496 NS
		Homemaker	37	41.34	9.64		

Table 7- Attitude of students towards vocational education in relation to number of siblings & Parents Qualification

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
No of Siblings	Between Groups	681.479	3	227.160	2.367	.073NS
	Within Groups	14300.756	149	95.978		
	Total	14982.235	152			
Parents Qualification	Between Groups	78.890	2	39.445	0.632	0.533NS
	Within Groups	9,360.398	150	62.403		
	Total	9,439.289	152			

DISCUSSION

Evans (1965) specified that the concepts of attitude and interest can be assorted, and they are sometimes interchangeable. Attitude is the comprehensive term, and an attitude signifies a general orientation of the individual. Interest, on the other hand, is more specific and is focused towards a particular object or activity. It is a response of liking or attraction, and it is an aspect of behaviour and not an entity in itself. Whereas an attitude is a general evaluative orientation toward an object, a belief or opinion is narrower in scope and generally more cognitive in nature (Oskamp & Schultz, 2005). The degree of congruence between attitude and behaviour on the theoretical level or between self-reported attitudes and overt behaviour has been an important issue in the history of attitude research (Wilson & Hodges, 1992). Studies reported that verbally expressed or self-reported attitudes do not relate perfectly with overt behaviour toward the attitudinal object (Krosnick, Judd & Wittenbrink, 2005).

Based on the analysis majority of the students were uncertain in their attitude towards vocations. Since the students have an uncertainty vocational education, behavior towards choosing a vocational course could be either strengthened or weekend based on the influence from parents, peers and prestige factor. The outcome behavior is influenced by both internal and external control of the person according to the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Negative attitude of Parents towards vocational education, setting high expectation on their children, prestige factor influences the students attitude towards vocational education which in turn impact their decision making ability to choose vocational education. Ayub (2015) also reported that parental influence, peers influence, socioeconomic status and career & job potential variables are statistical significant which has an impact on the student decision towards TVET.

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The finding that the attitude of the students was uncertain / moderate towards vocational education contradicts the generally held opinions that the students, especially from the academic schools have low opinions towards vocational education. Generally, students are found to be more interested to vocational education. Majority of the students disagreed that vocational education and training is designed for low performing students.

From the table 6, it was evident there exist a significant difference in the attitude towards vocational education in relation to their gender. Boys and Girls differ significantly in their Attitude towards vocational education. Supporting the results of the present study, Devi & challa (2013) also found that there exists a significant difference in the attitude of students towards vocational education in relation to their gender. Male students favored vocational education program more than female students. On examining the attitude of students towards vocational education in relation to their order of birth, family type and maternal employment it has been found that there exist no significant difference between them. Students from joint and nuclear family have a similar attitude towards vocational education. Furthermore in understanding the attitude of the students towards vocational education, order of birth doesn't play a significant role ($P > 0.05$). According to Stramiss, though the elder siblings act as a role model and provide guidance almost half of the older siblings are not seen as positive role models because their behaviour is against the principles of the younger sibling. It was observed that more than half of the relationships were not close if a sibling does not spend much time together. It was evident from the table 7 that there is no significant difference in the attitude towards vocational education in relation to their number of siblings ($p = 0.733$ which is greater than 0.05) and father's educational qualification ($p = 0.632$ which is greater than 0.05).

During the interview session, students reported that they were not aware about the vocational courses, opportunities, scholarships available in vocational education. During their elementary school education, students need to be oriented about the various fields in education, major frame work of employment. Furthermore it is suggested that career tour should be organized to various institutions, industries and workplace so that they have an exposure towards work settings. That will kindle their curiosity towards the various courses available and employability skills need for a particular job.

Limitations

The study was delimited to some selected private and government school schools of Chennai city. Moreover the students studying in 9th and 10th standard alone were taken for this study. According to the review of literature, students are not the only person to decide their career choice, parents, socioeconomic status, geographical location, interest areas, prestige factors area also play an important role in career choice of an individual. Only few demographic variables and its influence was studied, other factors like Parental attitude, prestige, interest areas, geographical location, socioeconomic status could also be studied. On Studying these factors would have given a clear picture of students attitude and their successive overt behavior in choosing vocational education. Moreover the study results can only be generalized to other populations with similar cultural and societal backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

Majority of the student's attitude towards vocational education was found to be uncertain. Students believe that vocational education and training offers good career opportunities. These courses are as useful as academic subjects, moreover they have confidence about VET is good for future of their self as well as nation. The General notion about VET i.e VET is for

low performing, academically weak, drop out students were changed. Hence the attitude of students towards vocational education had changed significantly from low level to uncertain / moderate level. There exist a statistically significant difference among male and female in their attitude towards vocational education. Male students preferred vocational education program more than female students. Birth order, number of siblings, parent's educational status, family type and maternal employment doesn't influence the attitude of students towards vocational education. It has been found that majority of the students weren't aware about the vocational courses, its scope, eligibility, duration, opportunities and scholarships available. Hence it is necessary to provide orientation about vocational education, skill development courses through technology, mass media and journalism which is considered to be the powerful change maker in the present era. Hence it was suggested that Career guidance to be given to orient the students towards vocational courses at elementary and secondary level for successful career choices.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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