

Perception of Undergraduate Accounting Students towards Professional Accounting Career in Nigeria

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Abstract

The shortage of professional accountants has been attributed to the perception accounting students hold about their intended professional careers and this affects their self-image, attitude towards the career and their confidence in the profession. Therefore, this paper critically appraises the perception of undergraduate accounting students towards professional accounting career in Nigeria. One hundred and fifty (150) accounting students from three universities in Nigeria participated in this study and data were elicited from the respondents with the aid of well-structured questionnaires. Descriptive Statistics and Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient were used for data analysis.

Findings showed that students are motivated to pursue professional accounting career by combination of prestige, extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Furthermore, results indicated that grit personality, prestige, extrinsic and intrinsic factors exhibited strong and positive correlation with student's intention to pursue accounting career. However, social and reference factors displayed positive but weak correlation. Additionally, students perceive professional examinations to be very tough, expensive, time-consuming and frightening. Thus, they refrain from writing professional examinations and that could be detrimental to the future of professional accounting career in Nigeria. Therefore, this research suggests that educational institutions, accounting professional bodies and career counselors play their roles to inspire, support and motivate accounting students to work towards professionalism.

Keywords: accounting, professional qualification, extrinsic factors, grit personality

1. Introduction

Professional services contribute significantly to the gross domestic product and employment of any nation. Among the most important and powerful professions in modern day calculative economy and society is Accounting. Accounting is basically an indispensable profession in contemporary economy and society at large. It shapes how organizations are governed and decisions are made in both private and public sectors. Accountants perform essential duties in major organizations and their decisions have significant and far-reaching financial and social implications. Owing to the significant position occupied by accounting profession in the Nigerian economy, enrollment of students in accounting continues to increase day by day in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

However, despite the significant interest in this profession, only just few accounting graduates are pursuing professional qualifications in Nigeria. This is confirmed by the low percentage of professional accountants registered with ICAN and ANAN. For instance, ICAN which is Africa's largest professional organization represents only 50000 chartered accountants in Nigeria (Chartered Accountants Worldwide, 2019). To further buttress this assertion, Emeyonu (2007) reported that the rate of production and educational development of accountants in Nigeria is very slow in comparison with developed nations. The shortage of professional accountants has significance for the profession and public because professional associations are to certify that accountants are highly knowledgeable and skillful to safeguard public interest (Johnson, 2003). This certification acts as a quality assurance tool for employers during employment and promotion of accountants (Snyder, 2004).

However, the short supply of professional accountants has been attributed to the perception accounting students hold about their intended professional careers in accounting which affect their self-image, attitude towards the career and

even their confidence in the profession (Dalci, Arasli, Tümer, & Baradarani, 2013). Germanou *et al.*, (2009) further asserted that a student would pursue professional accounting career, if he or she perceives accounting profession positively. Wrong perceptions generate inaccurate representations; therefore, it becomes crucial for accounting students to have a reasonable perception of what the accounting profession involves (Byrne & Willis, 2005).

Furthermore, perception of accounting by the society influences whether brilliant or intelligent students will be attracted to the profession or not". Marriott & Marriott (2003) asserted that parochial nature of accountants and other wrong perception some students have about the accounting profession may likely account for the general decrease in the number of students aspiring to become professional accountants.

In the United State of America, Albrecht and Sack (2000) highlighted five factors that may likely account for the general decrease in the number of students aspiring to become professional accountants: They are low starting salaries, availability of other fascinating career choices, eagerness to select risky majors, a misinterpretation of accountants and the accounting profession and the specification of the 150-hour rule. Three of the five highlighted factors justify how students perceive accounting profession.

Moreover, Lanson (2010) posited that just two to four percent of accounting graduates pursue professional qualification. The researcher further buttressed this assertion that the number of accounting graduates who fail to pursue professional qualification is increasingly alarming and has become worrisome. The significant marginalization of Nigerians in the accounting profession has raised anxiety amongst various stakeholders and as such the reasons for the shortage should be explored. The shortage of accountants thus necessitates accelerating the training of more accountants. In this regard, it becomes pertinent to investigate the perception of accounting students towards professional accounting career in Nigeria. Therefore, this study seeks:

- To examine the salient factors influencing student's choice of accounting career
- To determine the relationship between factors influencing student's career choice and student's intention to pursue accounting career
- To ascertain the perception of accounting students towards professional examination in Nigeria

2. Literature Review

2.1 Empirical Studies on Perception of Accounting Students towards Accounting Profession

Perception of accounting profession is an underlying factor in determining accounting student's intention in the pursuit of professional career. Prior researches discovered that some students recognised accountants as trustworthy and respectable people due to the requirements of the profession (Germanou, Hassall, & Tournas, 2009). Hartwell *et al.*, (2005) revealed affirmatively that students are of the belief that accounting degree would be beneficial to people who desire a career that is challenging. Sugahara & Boland (2006) discovered that Japanese accounting students are more favorably disposed towards their proposed profession compared to those of non-accounting business students. Also, Sugahara & Boland (2006) indicated that professional accountants are notable persons who can impact significantly on accounting students career choice.

In contrast, Coate *et al.*, 2003 investigated students' perceptions of the accounting profession and discovered that the nature of accounting work, work environment and absence of ingenuity influenced to a great extent student's decision not to pursue professional qualification. Wessels & Steenkamp (2009) further asserted that some accountants who are dishonest, untruthful, shrewd in financial reporting and often conceal vital materials in financial reports discourage students from pursuing their professional qualifications.

Moreover, previous studies confirmed that people perceived accountants as individuals who are highly organised and rigidly adhere to regulatory specifications (Parker, 2000; Hunt *et al.*, 2004). Chen, *et al.*, (2008) also discovered that students opined that accounting work is accurate and meticulous, forestalling interest and inhibiting creativity. Byrne and Willis (2005) buttressed this assertion that student's perceived accounting career as uninteresting, explicit and compliance-driven. This could be attributed to prevarication or lack of orientation about the roles played by accountants (Abrecht & Sack, 2000)

Although, professional accounting bodies are trying hard to erase the erroneous impression that students have about accounting; howbeit, it has yielded little or no results (Jackling & Calero, 2006). Byrne & Willis (2005) maintained that the negative perception that people have towards accountants might restrain students from pursuing professional qualification.

2.1.1 Factors Influencing Student's Pursuit of Professional Accounting Career in Nigeria

Intrinsic and extrinsic motives play significant roles as factors influencing student's pursuit of professional accounting career. Byrne & Flood (2005) and Arquero *et al.*, (2009) opined that extrinsic factors such as good salary, security of job and employment opportunities influenced student's pursuit of professional qualifications. Meanwhile, the researchers further asserted that intrinsic factors such as job specialization, job flexibility and job accomplishment makes students to be favorably disposed towards professional accounting career.

Moreover, the research conducted by Jackling *et al.*, (2012) on Australian and international students showed that for both groups, prestige factor constitutes a significant driving force that motivates them to pursue accounting profession. This report tallies with the findings of Germanou and Hasall (2009) that prestige factor remains the predominant force that propels accounting students in their quest for professionalism.

Furthermore, grit which means strong resolution and passion for long term goals form a prevalent factor that influence student's perception towards professional career. Bacanli (2006) stressed that personality characteristics impacts significantly on career indecisiveness. Gunkel, Schlaegel, Langella and Peluchette (2010) also opined that personality traits directly affect choice of student's career. Duckworth and Peterson (2007) buttressed this assertion that grit personality is one of the prominent qualities that influence student's perception towards professional qualifications.

Social factor is also a significant factor affecting student's pursuit of accounting career which shows clearly the perception of the society towards accounting profession. Byrne *et al.*, (2012), and Wells and Fieger, (2005) found that social status has a significant negative effect on students' pursuit of accounting career. The society viewed accounting as a profession with lesser social significance, having relatively easy entry specifications. They are of the opinion that accounting profession provides less challenging and less interesting career. They suggested that students with excellent communication skills would likely fit in perfectly to better professions other than accounting.

Furthermore, the significance of reference factors in student's pursuit of accounting profession cannot be overestimated. Pimpa (2007) confirmed that reference group such as parents, parents' occupation, instructors in high school and friends influence student's choice of career. However, Hardin *et al.*, (2000) asserted that some teachers and instructors have inadequate information about accounting and therefore find it difficult to guide the students through. The attributes, descriptions and categories of each factor are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Attributes, description, and categories of factors influencing student's choice of career

Attributes	Description	Category
Economic benefits	Large salary and other financial rewards from one's career	Extrinsic
Job security	Keeping one's job for a long period of time	Extrinsic
Work condition	Suitable physical environment	Extrinsic
Advancement	Having promotion as at when due	Prestige
Decision making	Being part of decision makers	Prestige
Social status	Being recognized in the society as a result of your profession	Prestige
Nature of the job	The profession may be interesting or boring	Intrinsic
Personal growth	The job allows for learning new things	Intrinsic
Achievement	New things are accomplishable easily with my profession	Intrinsic
Autonomy	Highly independent and free from imposed constraints in the work place	Intrinsic
Self esteem	I feel elated and fulfilled as a professional	Intrinsic
Contribution to society	I am able to contribute positively to the society	Social
Working with others	I can get along with other people and make friends easily	Social

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 The Theory of Reasoned Action

This theory was invented by Ajzen and Fishbein in the early 1980s. It states that a person’s behavior is a function of:

- a) The individuals’ attitude toward the behavior and
- b) His/her perception of social pressure to manifest that behavior

Attitude refers to the assumption that behavior will generate certain reactions and social pressure is the presumption that particular individuals or groups accept or reject the behavior

In relation to this study, this theory measures the perception of students towards professional accounting career in Nigeria.

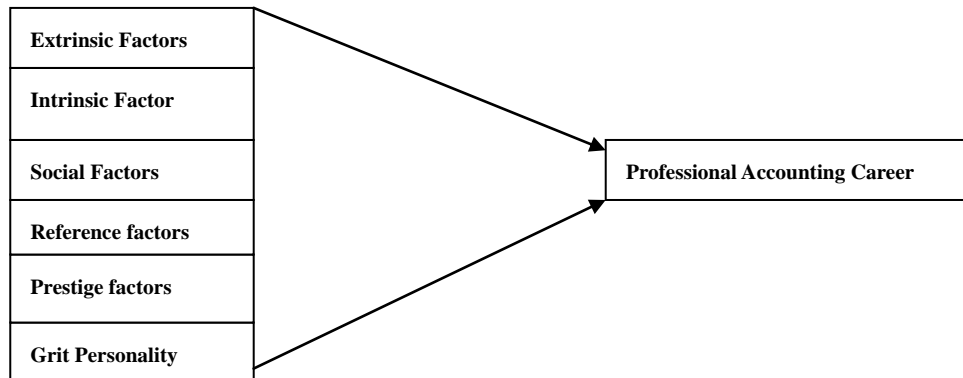


Figure1. Conceptual framework showing factors influencing student’s pursuit of accounting career in Nigeria
Source: Author’s compilation, 2020

3. Methodology

Three tertiary institutions were randomly selected to represent Private, State and Federal institutions in Nigeria. The selected tertiary institutions are Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Kwara State, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ogbomoso, Oyo State and University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State. The population of the study consists of 850 final year undergraduates’ regular students (400L) of accounting departments in the selected universities. Sample size of 150 final year students were selected using stratified random sampling. See Table 2

The students were selected for the study because they have been in their various institutions for more than three years, and are conversant with the relevant accounting courses thus; they have explicit comprehension and expectations of their career choices. Furthermore, well-structured questionnaires were distributed to the respondents to obtain essential information. Data was analyzed with frequency distribution and percentages while the stated hypotheses were statistically tested with Spearman’s Rank Correlation Co-efficient for hypothesis 1 and 2 respectively

Table 2. Sample size of the respondents

S/N	Institutions	No of students
1.	University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State	50
2.	Ladoke Akintola University, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	50
3.	Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Kwara State	50
	Total	150

Source: Author’s computation, 2020

4. Empirical Results and Discussion

Cronbach alpha test was conducted and findings in Table 3 showed that the variables have high internal consistency rate. Thus, the data are considered reliable, with the lowest alpha value being 0.73 and the highest being 0.83. Therefore, the test conducted on factors influencing student’s pursuit of professional accounting career in Nigeria is considered valid.

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha test on the reliability of instruments.

Factors	N of items	Cronbach alpha	Reliable items
Extrinsic factors	5	0.81	81%
Intrinsic factors	5	0.75	75%
Prestige factors	5	0.83	83%
Social factors	5	0.79	79%
Grit Personality	5	0.77	77%
Reference factors	5	0.73	73%

Source: Author's computation, 2020

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Students

The profiles of the students are presented in Table 4. Findings show that about 56.67 percent of the respondents are females while 43.33 percent are males. This showed that female accounting students are more than their male counterparts. This assertion is in tandem with the submission of Said *et al.*, (2004) that female students are more than male students in institutions of higher learning. Additionally, 60 percent of the respondents asserted that they obtained the information about the professional examination from their lecturers, about 37 percent got information from friends and family members, 27 percent from internet and websites of professional bodies while 17 percent were informed through workshops and accounting seminars which they attended.

Moreover, on responses to future plans after graduation, they were allowed to pick more than one option. Results showed that 47 percent of the students are willing to work immediately after graduation, 30 percent of the respondents are desirous to pursue post graduate studies after graduation, 33 percent would like to get married immediately while 32 percent desire to work towards earning professional certifications. Further findings revealed that only 30 percent of the respondents are interested in obtaining professional certification. 33 percent of the respondents indicate that the possibility of them taking the professional examination may only be probable while 37 percent of the students opined that they aren't interested in pursuing professional qualification. This result clearly shows that majority of the students are not really interested in following the path of professionalism and this may account for the shortage of professional accountants in the country

On the choice of professional programmes, respondents were allowed to pick more than one options and findings showed that if the respondents were to pursue professional qualification, most of them prefer ICAN, followed by ANAN and then ACCA. They have more preference for ICAN because they felt it is recognized both nationally and internationally.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of students

Description	Freq	%
Gender		
Male	65	43.33
Female	85	56.67
Total	150	100
Plans after graduation		
To start work immediately	70	46.67
To further my education	30	20.00
To get married	50	33.33
To pursue professional career	48	32.00
Choice of professional programmes		
ICAN	65	43.33
ANAN	25	16.67
ACCA	10	6.67
NONE	50	33.33
Total	150	100
Pursuit of professional Careers		
Certainly	45	30.00
Probably	50	33.33
Unlikely	55	36.67
Total	150	100
Awareness of professional programmes		
Lecturers	90	60.00
Workshops and seminars	25	16.67
Internet/ Association's Websites	40	26.67
Friends and family members	55	36.67
Others	20	13.33

Source: Author's computation, 2020

4.2 Factors Influencing Student's Choice of Accounting Career in Nigeria

A total of 30 items were chosen from research questionnaires in order to determine the factors influencing student's choice of accounting career. Data was analyzed to find their mean and standard deviation. The analysis from Table 5 on extrinsic factors shows that students have the highest agreement on Item 11 (mean of 4.55) "Professional certification offers higher salary and other financial incentives" and followed by Item 14 (mean of 4.35) "Professional certification offers various job opportunities". This indicates that students may choose accounting as a profession due to its high job opportunity especially during when the competition is tough. This finding is in line with reports of Mustapha & Abu Hassan (2012) that job stability and security, opportunities for advancement significantly influence students' decision to pursue professional accounting career.

Moreover, analysis for prestige factors showed that students have the highest agreement on item 2 (mean of 4.52) "Professional titles are highly and internationally recognized" and item 1 (mean of 4.45) "Professional accountants

are more respected than accountants with degree in accounting” This signifies that students are favorably disposed towards accounting career and that being a professional accountant will likely make them to be indispensable. This finding is buttressed with the reports of Ghani & Said (2009) who found that students perceived status and prestige as motivating factors in the choice of accounting career. Law (2010) also asserted that prestige factor is a driving force that propels students to become professional accountants.

On the contrary, the lowest mean score is item 6 (mean of 2.35) “my parents encouraged me to pursue accounting professional qualification”. This report showed that pursuit of accounting career is not usually under any parental influence. This report is supported by the findings of Tan & Laswad, (2009) and Uyar &Kuzay, (2011) that family influences do not affect students’ pursuit of an accounting career.

Table 5. Factors influencing student’s pursuit of professional accounting career

s/n	Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Prestige factors			
1.	Accountants with professional qualifications are more respected than accountants with degree in accounting	4.45	0.59
2.	Professional titles are highly and internationally recognized	4.52	0.50
3.	Being a professional accountant is highly prestigious, influential and enhances one’s confidence	4.35	0.62
4.	Accounting is a profession in par with medicine and law	3.85	0.72
5.	Professional accountants have better opportunity for promotions	4.25	0.68
Reference factors			
6.	My parents encouraged me to pursue professional qualification	2.35	1.12
7.	My performance in school influenced my decision to pursue professional career	3.58	0.86
8.	My friends and loved ones encouraged me to pursue professional career	2.98	1.02
9.	Successful accountants that have seen or heard about influenced my decision to be a professional accountant	2.75	1.07
10.	My lecturers and academic advisors encouraged me to pursue professional career	3.95	0.71
Extrinsic factors			
11.	Professional certification offers higher salary and other financial incentives	4.55	0.52
12.	The career of a professional accountant is highly secured	4.28	0.63
13.	Work environments for professional accountant is always superb	4.20	0.67
14.	Professional certification offers various job opportunities	4.35	0.62
15.	Professional certification provides substantial incomes and offers financial security	4.05	0.70
Intrinsic factors			
16.	Accounting profession provides better training opportunities	3.95	0.71
17.	Accounting field is very interesting and fun to be around	3.60	0.84
18.	Accounting field guarantees bright future opportunities and specialization	3.85	0.77
19.	Accounting profession is more flexible compared to other professional job.	3.66	0.82
20.	Accounting profession gives a sense of accomplishment	3.90	0.75
Grit personality			
21.	I usually overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.	3.70	0.81
22.	I usually finish whatever I begin	3.50	0.88
23.	I am highly determined and courageous towards the pursuit of professional exams	3.66	0.85

24.	I like the challenges when taking professional examination	2.95	1.04
25.	I hope to pass all the professional exam papers in one sitting	2.80	1.08
Social Factors			
26.	Professionalism allows me to contribute immensely to the society	3.20	0.92
27.	Being a certified accountant, I can work well with others	2.85	1.02
28.	Professional Accountants are reputable and well respected in the society	3.35	0.92
29.	Professional accountants are recognized as important in the society	2.95	1.02
30.	Professional accountants interacts with lots of people	3.22	0.90

Source: Authors computation, 2020

4.3 Relationship between Factors Influencing Student's Career Choice and Their Intention to Pursue Accounting Career

Spearman rank correlation was employed to analyze the relationship between factors influencing student's career choice and their pursuit of accounting career as displayed in Table 6. Six factors were considered in the model as determinants, these are grit personality, extrinsic, intrinsic, reference, prestige and social factors. The result of the study showed that strong and positive relationship exist between prestige factor and student's pursuit of professional accounting career (0.7280, $p < 0.05$). Some respondents suggested that accounting professional certification offers respectable position with authority:

"... I want to be at the helm of affairs. I like to make decision...sign the audit report... I want to be like a partner..... I want to be well respected in the society and stand tall among my peers".

This finding corroborates the assertions of Ghani *et al.* (2008) and Ghani and Said (2009) that Malaysian accounting undergraduates recognized status and prestige factors as major drivers in choosing accounting as a career path. Similarly, Law (2010) in Hong Kong found that prestige factor is a strong motivator for students to become professionally qualified. Mustapha *et al.*, (2012) revealed that students are eager to become professional accountants because they are highly valued in the society.

Aside this, extrinsic factors also correlated positively and significantly with pursuit of professional qualification (0.7006, $p < 0.05$). This may be due to the fact that professional qualification increases marketability and offers various job opportunities. Empirical evidence revealed that positive attitudes toward becoming professionally qualified are deeply rooted in extrinsic factors (Germanou & Hassall, 2009; Mustapha & Abu Hassan, 2012). One of the respondents clearly emphasized that employment opportunities, financial incentives and good salary motivates her to pursue professional certification.

"I am eager to become professionally qualified.....because of better employment opportunities.....and good salary, I must be a professional accountant... and also because I love learning new things in order to gain more knowledge

This result is in tandem with the report of Ghani *et al.*, (2008) that obtaining professional qualifications lead to better employment opportunities, good salary, and prestige. Also, Byrne & Flood (2005) found that employment opportunity is one of the cogent factors that propel students to become professional accountant.

Moreover, intrinsic factor also showed positive and significant correlation with student's pursuit of professional accounting career (0.6276, $p < 0.05$). This may be due to the fact that professional qualification guarantees job specialization, offers flexibility and provides job accomplishment. This report is in consonance with the findings of Jakling & Kenely (2007) and Zakaria, *et al.*, (2012) who asserted that professional qualification provides opportunity for advancement and job experience.

Grit personality also showed moderate and positive correlation with student's pursuit of professional accounting career (0.5457, $p < 0.05$). The respondents reported that only students that are strong-willed, passionate and determined can pursue professional qualifications effectively. This report tallies with the findings of Bacanli (2006) that personality characteristics influences career indecisiveness. This finding also suggests that the capability to persevere makes completion of professional examinations possible.

In addition to these, positive but weak correlation exists between social factors and pursuit of professional qualification (0.4182, $p < 0.05$). Also, reference factors exhibited very weak and positive correlation (0.3592, $p < 0.05$) with pursuit of professional qualification. To buttress this assertion, the findings of Tan and Laswad, (2009)

showed that family influence does not affect choice of accounting career. Also, Uyar & Kuzay, (2011) and Byrne, *et al.*, (2012) reported that family and relatives do not significantly affect the choice of accounting as a career. However, findings from this study showed that positive but weak correlation exist between referents and students pursuit of professional accounting career.

Table 6. Relationship between factors influencing student's career choice and student's intention to pursue accounting career.

Factors	Grit	Reference	Extrinsic	Prestige	Intrinsic	Social	Intention
Grit	0.0000						
Reference	0.1174	0.0000					
Extrinsic	0.1639	0.0224	0.0000				
Prestige	0.2100	0.2271	0.7768	0.0000			
Intrinsic	0.2214	0.3422	0.7480	0.5795	0.0000		
Social	0.3380	0.2915	0.3130	0.2114	0.3608	0.0000	
Intention	0.5457	0.3592	0.7006	0.7280	0.6276	0.4182	0.0000

Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Source: Author's computation, 2020

4.4 Perception of Accounting Students towards Professional Examinations in Nigeria

Table 7 shows item-by-item percentage analysis of the Students Self- Rating Attitudinal Inventory (SSAI) that was administered on the respondents. Findings showed that most of the students (83.33 percent) perceived that professional examinations are very tough and difficult, thus they may need to make several attempts to pass the examinations. This assertion is buttressed with the reports of Omar (2009) and Ossisioma (2001) that it is very easy for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a young Nigerian to excel in accounting professional examination.

Moreover, almost all the students (96.67 percent) asserted that professional examinations require considerable time and efforts. They felt professional examinations require rigorous reading and higher hours of workload. Also, 85.33 percent of the students are of the view that professional examinations are very expensive. Students opined that application, registration, and exam fees cost so much. More so, professional bodies have no coaching centers to prepare students ahead for these examinations therefore; they have no option but to register with private coaching centers that charge exorbitantly.

Furthermore, some students are also of the opinion that their curriculum is unattractive, fully loaded and filled with unnecessary topics. All these and many more are responsible for the negative perception that accounting students have towards professional examinations in Nigeria.

Table 7. Perception of accounting students towards professional examinations in Nigeria

s/n	Reasons	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Can't say (%)
1	Professional examinations are tough and very difficult to pass	125 (83.33)	10 (6.67)	15 (10.00)
2	Professional examinations require time and effort	145 (96.67)	2 (1.33)	3 (2.00)
3	Professional certification does not necessarily reflect my ability	55 (36.67)	50 (33.33)	45 (30.00)
4	Professional certification is very expensive	128 (85.33)	12 (8.00)	10 (6.67)
5	Being a certified accountant does not necessarily guarantee job provision	25 (16.67)	80 (53.33)	45 (30.00)
6	Aside professional examinations, additional skills are still needed	45 (30.00)	45 (30.00)	60 (40.00)
7	Their curriculum is unattractive and fully loaded	90 (60.00)	30 (20.00)	30 (20.00)
8	Postgraduate study in MBA, M.Sc/PhD Accounting is preferable to professional qualification	50 (33.33)	35 (23.33)	65 (43.34)
9	Many registered students are unable to complete the programme	80 (53.33)	25 (16.67)	45 (30.00)
10	Professional examinations scare me	100 (66.66)	10 (6.67)	40(26.67)

4.5 Summary of Findings

- i. Grit personality, prestige, extrinsic and intrinsic factors exhibited strong and positive correlation with student's intention to pursue accounting career.
- ii. Students intend to pursue accounting career because professionalism offers high salary, provides job opportunities and brings prestige, respect and recognition both locally and internationally.
- iii. However, students perceive professional examinations to be very expensive, tough and require considerable time and efforts

5. Conclusion

Findings indicated that good salary, financial incentives, recognition, prestige as well as opportunities for career advancement influence student's choice of accounting career in Nigeria. This study revealed that grit personality, prestige, extrinsic and intrinsic factors are significant forces that assist students in the pursuit of professional accounting career. Based on these findings, it is highly essential for lecturers and educators to focus on educational aspiration build personal characteristics in motivating students and stress the importance of professional accounting education in relation to intended accounting career.

Furthermore, findings indicated that that grit personality, prestige, extrinsic and intrinsic factors exhibited strong and positive correlation with student's pursuit of accounting career. However, social and reference factors displayed positive but weak correlation. Additionally, students perceive professional examinations to be very tough, expensive, time-consuming and frightening. Thus, they refrain from writing professional examinations and this could be detrimental to the future of accounting career in Nigeria.

5.1 Limitation

This study is limited by the small sample size as it only considered the graduating (400 level) accounting students of the three selected universities in Nigeria. Future research should be conducted on a larger sample. However, the research contributes to existing literature by providing information to Nigerian universities and professional bodies on the factors that motivates students in their pursuit of professional career. Also, findings of this study can assist professional bodies in mapping out strategies to attract outstanding students in order to produce graduates that are exceptionally talented. Other than accomplishing the country's motive of increasing the number of professional accountants, this study will also enhance the future viability of professional bodies.

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