



The Influence of Students' Aptitude on Students' Career Choice in Technical Secondary Schools in the South West Region of Cameroon

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ARTICLE INFO

Article No.: 010725004

Type: Research

Full Text: [PDF](#), [PHP](#), [EPUB](#), [MP3](#)

DOI: [10.15580/gjpc.2025.1.010725004](https://doi.org/10.15580/gjpc.2025.1.010725004)

Accepted: 09/01/2025

Published: 27/01/2025

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Keywords: Students' aptitude, career choice

Article's QR code



ABSTRACT

The research examined the relationship between students' aptitude on students' career choice in Technical Secondary Schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. This study was predicated on the understanding that technical secondary school students face numerous challenges during making a career choice earlier in the academic ladder necessitating specific intervention to enhance a stable career choice. The researchers hypothesized that diagnosing and appropriately directing students' aptitude could serve as a fundamental framework for developing clarity and certainty among technical secondary schools students. Methodologically, the study employed a mixed-methods approach with a concurrent nested design, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative elements. The research sample comprised of 20 students and 45 guidance counsellors selected from the South West Region of Cameroon with selection criteria based on document analysis for students and the division with most populated guidance counsellors. Data collection was facilitated through questionnaires, and the analysis incorporated both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The Likelihood ratio test was used in testing the hypotheses from data collected from the guidance counsellors. Independent Sample T-test was also used to compare how students in both the control and experimental group at pre-test and post-test level differ in their mean score. The qualitative data derived from open ended questions were analysed using the thematic analysis approach with the aid of themes. Descriptive findings revealed compelling evidence that students' aptitude have a very strong and significant effect on students' career choice. A substantial majority of the guidance counsellors 90.8% with a high mean value of 3.45 on a scale of 1-4 were of the opinion that students' aptitude influence students' career choice as indicated by a high contingency value of 0.783 on a scale 0 to 1, p -value $0.000 < 0.05$. This suggest that career choice is stable when aptitude is diagnosed and appropriately directed. Based on these findings, the researchers proposed several recommendations emphasizing the critical role of students' aptitude. Career educators were advised to engage in producing an individualized aptitude enhancement plan for better management of students with inconsistent career choices, encourage students develop greater aptitude in careers within their trade

INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial, man's struggle is towards improvement and advancement. Arriving at a point of stability has been a force behinds man's evolution. In this regard, one must choose a career that should be continued throughout life. Career should be chosen according to one's interests and the demand of time. Career selection is one of the many important decisions students make in determining their future plans, meanwhile, trade selection in technical schools is the first step towards career selection. In technical secondary schools, subjects are grouped into trades and each trade is related to particular careers. Career choice is a critical decision in a student's life, shaping their future personal and professional trajectories. For students in technical secondary schools, this decision becomes even more significant as it involves aligning their aptitudes and interests with specialized technical pathways. Students' aptitude encompassing their natural talents, cognitive abilities, and skillsets plays a pivotal role in influencing their career preferences and long-term aspirations. A strong alignment between aptitude and career choice often leads to higher satisfaction, motivation and success in their professional endeavors. Nearly every information given to help the student can be regarded as guidance. Some of such information is not organized. What is labelled information service in school guidance programs exists to enable students become informed and thereby make better and appropriate choices among the educational and vocational opportunities available. When youth make unrealistic career choices, frustration, lack of interest, vocational maladjustment and misuse of talents would be the end result. This is linked to unrealistic career aspirations and misplacement of interest due to lack of appropriate career information on aptitude.

Statement of the Problem

The decision-making process regarding career choice is a critical developmental phase in the life of students, particularly at the secondary school level, where the foundation for future professional paths is often laid. In the context of technical secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon, the issue of inconsistent or fluctuating career choices among Form Three students has become a significant concern. Despite the availability of various career guidance programs, many students in these schools demonstrate indecision and lack of clarity when it comes to selecting a career that aligns with their aptitudes, interests and the demands of the rapidly evolving job market. Research suggests that career choices are heavily influenced by a variety of factors, including personal aptitude, parental influence, socioeconomic background, and the availability of vocational training opportunities. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how students' individual aptitudes defined as their natural abilities,

interests, and intellectual strengths impact their career choice in the context of technical education. The inconsistency in career choices among Form Three students may therefore indicate a mismatch between their aptitudes and their understanding or expectations of available career pathways within the technical and vocational sectors. This inconsistency not only hampers the effectiveness of educational and vocational training programs but also poses a long-term threat to the region's workforce preparedness and economic growth. This study aims to explore the influence of students' aptitude on their career choices, focusing on Form Three students in technical secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. By examining how aptitudes shape students' career choice, the study seeks to provide insights into how educational systems can better support students in making informed, consistent career choices that align with both their strengths and the demands of the labor market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The word aptitude is derived from the word "aptos" that means 'fitted for'. Hahn & Maclean (1955) points out aptitude as latent potentialities, undeveloped capacities to acquire abilities and skills and to demonstrate achievements. Traxler (1957) adds that, aptitude is a condition, a quality or a set of qualities, which is indicative of the probable extent to which an individual may be able to acquire, under suitable training, some knowledge, understanding or skill. Aptitude is a special potential in a certain field of performance. It indicates a special ability, acquired or innate, to learn or develop knowledge of a skill in some specific area. Most measures used in counseling are both ability and aptitude tests, in that they provide scores to estimate a person's current level of performance and potential (ability), as well as potential for future success in different occupations (aptitude). Unless specified otherwise, counselling use abilities and aptitudes interchangeably because assessment goals in counseling are both diagnostic, that is, assess current level of ability and potential; and predictive in other words, identify occupations in which a person will be successful in the future. Super (1957) describes the use of the word aptitude to convey the idea of a discrete, unitary characteristic which is important, in varying degrees, in a variety of occupations and activities.

Whether starting off as low-skilled in life or becoming low-skilled depends on many personal as well as structural factors, and this status can change over the life course (Maselli & Beblavý, 2014). This change can be made possible if only aptitudes are identified with the help of aptitude inventories and guided towards productive career channels. Because aptitude predict future possibilities in career, it therefore allows for an intervention to diagnose these aptitudes and develop it to blossom. Individuals with undeveloped aptitudes often

lack the cultural resources to reflexively play with their identities and actively reconstruct them (Barone, 2006). So, the way in which career information is delivered will play a significant role in the success of policies targeting this group.

Training is a valuable resource that can effectively decrease the risk of undeveloped aptitudes. Individuals with undeveloped aptitudes often inherit the belief that the school system or the provisional institutions for further learning do not offer a learning environment that caters for their learning needs, and that they are left to fend for themselves. Such a reaction could increase the likelihood that they begin to feel helpless in the face of transitions and this ultimately, could lead to social exclusion. Under these circumstances it is a challenge to motivate these individuals to participate in training and education to improve their aptitude. They have a considerable individual and social need for personal and/or collective support for completing relevant work-related training or education programmes. The main psychological problem occurring in this situation is an identity defence. There persists a more or less unconscious urge to cling to a professional identity (or another identity) that has formerly been the basis of their self-respect and dignity (Kirpal and Rauner, 2007). This eventually reflects the possibility of them becoming Low-skilled workers. Continuing education or retraining must be offered and conducted in ways that respect the existing identity at the same time as a new identity is gradually built up.

Gardner (1983) sort aptitude into linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily kinesthetic, visual-spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. The main indicator of linguistic talent was words and language. Activities that are able to do interpretation and explanation of ideas and information by using language, and understands relationship between communication and meaning. Professions that tend to be chosen include public relation, presenter, media consultants. Linguistic aptitude assists individuals in effortlessly learning languages. A student might find it simple to learn a new language's structure and rapidly memorize words. Also, have the ability to easily read and write in new languages. Communications and teamwork or cooperation is the main indicator of interpersonal talents. Activities that are able to be done includes the perception of peoples' behavior, ability to relate to others. Professions that tend to be done include human relation, therapists, counsellors, politicians, doctors, healers.

Aptitude is commonly inferred in two ways. In the first, attempt to identify other tasks that require similar cognitive processes and measure the individual's ability on those tasks. For example, dance instructors screen potential students by evaluating their body proportions, ability to turn their feet outwards, and ability to emulate physical movements (Subotnik & Jarvin, 2005). Although none of these characteristics require the performance of a dance routine, all are considered important aptitudes for acquiring dance skills. In the second way, aptitude is inferred from the speed with which the individual learns

the task itself. Aptitude for a task is inferred retrospectively when a student learns something from a few exposures to that task that other students learn only after much practice.

Understanding which characteristics of individuals are likely to function as aptitudes begins with a careful examination of the demands and affordances of target tasks and the contexts in which they must be performed. The affordances of an environment are what it offers or makes useful. Placing chairs in a circle affords discussion; placing them in rows affords attending to someone at the front of the room. Discovery learning often affords the use of reasoning abilities; direct instruction often does not. Aptitude is thus linked to context. Unless we define the context clearly, we are left with distal measures that capture only some of the aptitudes needed for success.

Measuring aptitude mainly depends on differential psychology and can be measured through test. Aptitude test attempts to determine and measure a person's ability to acquire, through future training, some specific set of skills, (intellectual, motor or interpersonal and so on). Different people possess different abilities and their future achievement can be predicted through the differences in ability. Aptitude test predicts the capacities that may be expected from individuals in a particular activity. In this connection, Bingham (2001) says that test ascertain what an individual actually does in certain standardized situations, and from these measurements, the estimate of capacity for future accomplishment is an inference or a statistical probability, not a certainty. Moreover, tests cannot sample all the important aspects of behavior nor plumb the depths of vocational purpose. Even with full data in hand, an enquirer's question regarding his/her aptitudes can rarely be answered precisely with positive assurance. So, the purpose of the aptitude test is predictive and their focus often is narrowed to singular ability or small collection of related abilities. Thus, an aptitude test measures the present performance which is indicative of one's ability for future accomplishment in a particular career.

Aptitude test tools like the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) and other standardized assessments help identify individuals' strengths in specific areas, guiding them toward suitable career options. Self-Assessment tools like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and Strong Interest Inventory enable individuals from age 13 to explore their interests and align them with potential career paths. The MBTI is a forced-choice instrument designed to determine how people see the world and how people make decisions (Myers, 2019). It was created by Katherine and Isabel Briggs following Carl Jung's personality theory (King & Mason, 2020). The MBTI consists of four opposite dichotomies (Myers and Myers, 2010), Extraversion-Introversion, that refers to where to focus attention and energy, introverts focus their energy inside of them and they are interested in the world of thoughts and reflections while extroverts focus their attention and energy outward, and they are

interested in the world of people and things; Intuition-Sensing, that refers to what kind of information people like and trust, sensitives prefer to take information using their five senses while intuitive people go beyond what is real or concrete and focus on meaning, associations, and relationships; Feeling-Thinking, that refers to the way people make decisions, feelers make their decisions with a person-centered, values-based process while thinkers make their decisions based on impersonal, objective logic, and finally Judgment-Perceiving, that relates to the way we orient ourselves to the external world, people who prefer judgment want the external world to be organized and orderly while people who prefer perceiving, seek to experience the world, not organize it (Choong and Varathan, 2021). When combining the four dichotomies, extroversion-introversion, intuition-sensing, feeling-thinking, judgment-perceiving, it results in sixteen types of personalities (ISTJ, ISTP, ISFJ, ISFP, INTJ, INTP, INFJ, INFP, ESTJ, ESTP, ESFJ, ESFP, ENTJ, ENTP, ENFJ, and ENFP) (King and Mason, 2020). The Myers-Briggs Model (MBTI) is the most widely used self-assessment instrument in the world. This instrument can show how someone makes decisions and determines their judgment on the world.

Meanwhile, that aptitude is innate ability to learn specific areas quickly and easily (Mukhopadhyay, 2013) does not mean successful people on a field are solely because of aptitude. In reality all successful people always make the effort. Gregory (2000) opine that aptitude tests are more specific and more limited. Single aptitude tests only measure a single domain capability, such as the mechanical aptitude test, aptitude test music, or a test of numerical aptitude. Multiple aptitude tests generate a score for some area of different capabilities, such as the Scholastics Aptitude Test (SAT), Differential Aptitude Test (DAT), and Multiple Intelligences Test-based on Howard Gardner Theory.

METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods approach. The aim was to benefit from both the detailed, contextualized insights of qualitative data and the generalizable, externally valid insights of quantitative data. The research designs used were the quasi-

experimental research design and the survey research designed. The quasi-experimental research design was used to measure the influence of students' aptitude on students' career choice. The survey research design was used for the sample of counsellors. This was because the researcher was interested in the practices and points of view of counsellors on the influence of career information on students' career choice in Technical schools.

The sample size constituted of 20 students and 45 guidance counsellors selected from the South West Region of Cameroon with selection criteria based on document analysis for students and the division with most populated guidance counsellors.

The purposive sampling technique was used to select the division, school, class, trade and participants in the quasi experiment. Purposive sampling was used to select Fako division from the accessible divisions in the South West Region because it had the highest student population likewise school counsellors in technical secondary schools within the South West Region of Cameroon in the 2022/2023 academic year. Likewise, Government Technical High School (GTHS) Molyko, Buea through purposive sampling was included as sample. Form three was selected for the sample because once a student has made a trade choice at this level any change before Ordinary Levels general examination is considered inappropriate. Students for the sample were obtained through document analysis. Through the study of form three counsellors' log books, registered cases were identified and included in the study. However, with the help of the pre-test only students who scored high in the test were included in the experimental group sample while students with low scores were included in the control group. This was because according to test modalities, high score indicates moderate to severe stage while low score indicates mild stage of the career choice challenge. Again, the pre-test confirmed the students were actually the right sample for the study. In this school, the criteria for selecting the trades included trades introduced to meet the recent trends in the world of work, highly populated trades and trades dominated by a particular gender

Table 1: Distribution of Sample for students

Division	Name of School	Trades	Number of Students		Total Sample
			Experimental Group	Control Group	
Fako	GTHS Molyko, Buea	Home economics	02	02	04
		Plumbing and installation system	02	02	04
		Electrical power system	02	02	04
		Bespoke	02	02	04
		Welding fabrication	02	02	04
		Total	10	10	20

Among the 20 students that were selected for the experiment, an equal number of them 20.0% (4) were studying Bespoke, Electrical Power System, Home Economics, Plumbing and Welding. Age wise, 60.0%

(12) were below 15 years and 40.0% (8) 15-17 years. Finally, by gender, 55.0% (11) were male and 45.0% (9) were female.

Table 2: *Distribution of Sample for counsellors*

DIVISION	Schools	Number of counsellors per school
FAKO	Government Technical High School Molyko	21
	Government Technical College Bova	04
	Government Bilingual Technical High School Limbe	07
	Government Technical College Bimbila	01
	Government Technical College Bakingili	02
	Government Technical High School Ombe	05
	Government Technical High School Tiko	05
TOTAL		45

n=45

Among the 45 guidance counsellors in some Government Technical Secondary schools sampled for the study, majority 66.7% (30) were female when compared to 33.3% (15) who were male. By age range, majority of the guidance counsellors 66.7% (30) fall within the age range of 30-35 years while 17.8% (8) were below 30 years, 6.7% (3) are 36-40 years and 8.9% (4) 40 years and above. Technically, close to 90.0% of the guidance were below 40 years of age. Finally, by longevity in service, 44.4% (20) have worked for 1-3 years, 33.3% (15) have worked for 4-6 years, while 13.3% (6) have worked for 7-9 years and 8.9% (4) for 10 years and above. Again, more than 91% of the guidance counsellors have worked for less than 10 years.

Method of data analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistical

tools used are frequency count, percentages, mean standard deviation and multiple responses set which aimed at calculating the summary of findings for each variable for a quick comprehension of the findings. With reference to inferential statistical tools, the Likelihood ratio test that works in association with the Chi-Square test was used in testing the hypotheses from the data collected from the guidance counsellors. The Likelihood ratio test was used over a Spearman's rho or Pearson correlation test because the test item for both the independent and dependent variable were link. The Independent Sample T-test was also used to compare how students in both the control and experimental group at pretest and posttest level differ in their mean score with reference to, and without information to their career choice.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 3: Guidance Counsellors Opinion on Students' Aptitude and their Career Choice

Concepts	Stretched				Collapsed		Mean	Std. deviation
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD		
Undeveloped aptitudes	19 (42.2%)	17 (37.8%)	9 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	36 (80.0%)	9 (20.0%)	3.2 2	.765
Testing aptitudes.	23 (51.1%)	22 (48.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	45 (100%)	0 (0.0%)	3.5 1	.506
Aptitude diagnosed	32 (71.1%)	11 (24.4%)	2 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%)	43 (95.6%)	2 (4.4%)	3.6 7	.564
Guiding students on consistency	26 (57.8%)	17 (37.8%)	2 (4.4%)	0 (0.0%)	43 (95.6%)	2 (4.4%)	3.5 3	.588
Appropriately directed aptitude	29 (64.4%)	12 (26.7%)	4 (8.9%)	0 (0.0%)	41 (91.1%)	4 (8.9%)	3.5 6	.659
Relating careers to particular aptitude	24 (53.3%)	17 (37.8%)	2 (4.4%)	2 (4.4%)	41 (91.1%)	4 (8.9%)	3.4 0	.780
Matching aptitudes to trades	30 (66.7%)	9 (20.0%)	4 (8.9%)	2 (4.4%)	39 (86.7%)	6 (13.3%)	3.4 9	.843
Referral services	18 (40.0%)	21 (46.7%)	4 (8.9%)	2 (4.4%)	39 (86.7%)	6 (13.3%)	3.2 2	.795
Multiple Responses Set (MRS)/ Mean/Std.D	201 (55.8%)	126 (35.0%)	27 (7.5%)	6 (1.7%)	327 (90.8%)	33 (9.2%)	3.4 5	0.687

Guidance counsellors all agreed 100% (45) that testing aptitudes will help students predict their future success in particular training. Again, majority of them 95.6% (43) accepted that every aptitude is relevant so students need to be guided on how to be consistent in their choices when compared to 4.4% (2) that disagreed. On a similar trend, majority of the counsellors 95.6% (43) also agreed that the type of aptitude diagnosed will help counselors provide better counselling for students to make stable trade choices while 4.4% (2) disagreed. Equally, more of guidance counsellors 91.1% (41) also accepted that students' aptitudes when appropriately directed ensure students make stable trade choices while 8.9% (4) disagreed.

To elucidate, another 91.1% (41) of guidance counsellors agreed that relating careers to particular

aptitude help student make stable choices while 8.9% (4) disagreed. Again, majority of the counsellors 86.7% (39) also agreed that matching students' aptitudes to trades help students make stable choices when compared to 13.3% (6) that disagreed. On the same weight, another 86.7% (39) of counsellors agreed that referral services employed to ensure students go to environments supporting their aptitude is crucial for stable trade choice while 13.3% (6) disagreed. Finally, 80.0% (36) of the guidance counsellors in their majority also accepted that creating awareness on students undeveloped capacities to acquire abilities will help them make consistent trade choice when compared to 20.0% (9) that disagreed. Therefore to adequately inform students on aptitudes, counsellors should test and diagnose aptitude and guide students on consistency.

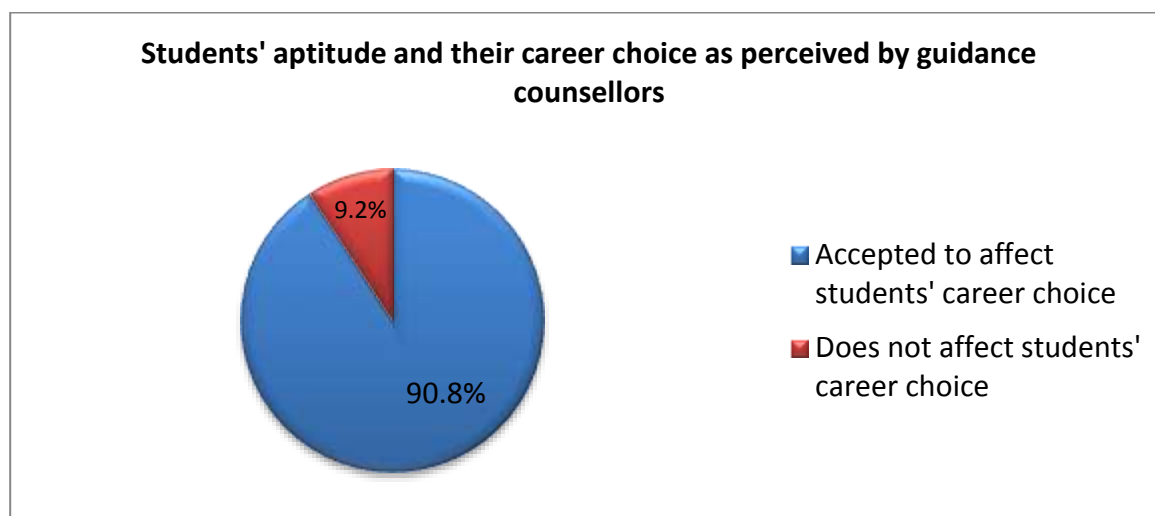


Figure 1: Guidance Counsellors Opinion on Students' Aptitude and their Career Choice

In summary, majority of the guidance counsellors 90.8% with a high mean value of 3.45 on a scale of 1-4 were of the opinion that students' aptitude will influence students' career choice when compared to 9.2% that disagreed.

The low standard deviation value of 0.687 implies that the guidance counsellors in their majority had the same belief.

Table 3: Likelihood Test Depicting Significant Relationship between Students' Aptitude and Students' Career Choice

Model	Model Fitting Information				Explanatory power of the model Cox and Snell (Pseudo R-Square)
	Model Fitting Criteria -2 Log Likelihood	Likelihood Ratio Tests Chi-Square	Contingency coefficient	p-value	
Intercept Only	94.660				.860
Final	6.177	88.483	.783	.000	

df=39

Statistically, the findings showed that students' aptitude have a very strong and significant effect on students' career choice as indicated by a high contingency value of 0.783 on a scale 0 to 1, p -value $0.000 < 0.05$. The

explanatory power of the model of 86.0% also revealed that students' aptitude will contribute greatly in guiding them to make their career choice. This was further proven using the experimental results below.

Table 4: Comparing Students' Decision to Career Choice after Information on Career Interest for One Group

Test level	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T-test value	p-value
Post test	Control	10	12.60	1.568	.459	6.741	.000
	Experimental	10	18.20	1.612	.512		

T-test value for equal variance not assumed, 5.118 greater than critical t-value of 2.101 at $df=18$, CI 0.05 level. Mean difference at posttest =5.6

In line with the findings derived from the guidance counsellors, the results from the experiment further revealed that the provision of information on aptitude only to students in the experimental group significantly improve decision to their career choice with mean score increasing from 12.70 to 18.20 on 20. (Calculated t-value 6.741 > critical value of 2.101, and p -value $=0.000 < 0.05$) when compared to those in the control group not given

information on aptitude with mean score almost remain statistic 12.50 to 12.60. The mean difference between the experimental and control group at posttest level is 5.6 which is much. Therefore, the hypothesis that states there is a significant relationship between students' aptitude and students' career choice in Technical Secondary Schools in the South West Region of Cameroon was accepted.

Table 5: Likelihood Test Depicting Significant Relationship between Students' Aptitude and Students' Career Choice

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Table 7: *Thematic analysis on Ways Guidance Counsellors Manage Students Who Have Chosen Trade not within their Aptitude*

Themes	Theme description	Quotations
Counselling	Group and individual sessions	'Have an individual counseling session with students to show them reasons why they need to go in for a trade within their aptitude' 'Provide orientation giving them more insides on the pros and cons of their decision' 'Advise them to switch to a more appropriate choice' 'Continue guiding them so they can see need for a change'
Right placement	Administering aptitude test	'Administer aptitude tests to determine student's career best fit' 'Create awareness on why option a or b is suitable for them and not option c or d' 'Diagnose if the trade is of the students' interest' 'Carry out an inventory or psychological test on them'
Appropriate choice direction	Educate on disadvantages of wrong career choice	'Orientate students on the disadvantages of choosing a wrong career choice'
Reinforcement	Gives encouragement	"Encourage them to study and acquire knowledge needed in that trade" "Encourage them to develop interest in the trade" 'By encouraging and helping such students at all levels of needs' "Provide career information and information about the socio-economic status of the country"
School and parent partnership	Encourage cooperation among parents and school administrative	"Ask for parental cooperation and advocate for choice remake to school administration"
Team work	Encourage internship	'Do referrals' "Recommend internship" "Encourage cooperative learning"

Asking the guidance counsellors how they manage students who have chosen a trade not within their aptitude, brought about responses such as they counsel the students to make the right career choice as depicted in some statements *"Have individual counseling session with students to show them reasons why they need to go in for a trade within their aptitude"*, *"Provide orientation giving them more insides on the pros and cons of their decision"*. Also, many of them also said they carried out test to do right placement of the students as narrated in the statements *"Administer aptitude tests to determine student's career best fit"*, *"Create awareness on why option a or b is suitable for them and not option c or d"*, *"Diagnose if the trade is of the students' interest"*. In addition, some of the counsellors said they educate the students on the disadvantages for choosing a wrong career as narrated in the statement *"Orientate students on the disadvantages of choosing a wrong career choice"*.

Furthermore, some counsellors said they encourage interest reinforcement by enhancing resilience, develop interest, and attend to career information. This was depicted in the statements

"Encourage them to study and acquire knowledge needed in that trade",

"Encourage them to develop interest in the trade", *"By encouraging and helping such students at all levels of needs"*, *"Provide career information and information about the socio-economic status of the country"*.

Most school counsellors encourage cooperation among parents and school administrative and remark from the school administration, encourage the students to go for internship, do referrals and encourage team work among the students. On the other hand, some of counsellors said they just encourage and help the students to study hard in their chosen career as depicted in the statements *'By encouraging and helping such students at all levels of needs'*, *"Encourage them to study and acquire knowledge needed in that trade. Work extra hard to be efficient in that field"*.

DISCUSSIONS

Students' aptitude and career choice

Findings revealed that students' aptitude have a very strong and significant effect on students' career choice. This implies that, when students gain awareness on what they can do best assisted and unassisted they would choose a career path consistent with their aptitude. Diagnosing students' aptitude and directing it appropriately actually serve as an apt technique to help students make stable career choices. This is in line with Balogun (2006) who argued that accurate career information and career talks on characteristics of careers and career seekers, promote stability in career choices. Making a career choice also require that individuals have a good knowledge of themselves in relation to specific careers is an advanced step of career decision readiness.

School counsellors were of the opinion that career information on undeveloped aptitudes influence students' career choice. Majority of them agreed that when undeveloped aptitudes of students is identified, a stable career choice is made. This provides a workable solution to the problem identified by Kirpal and Rauner (2007) who stated that individuals with undeveloped aptitudes turn to be faced with a psychological problem termed identity defence. This is a phenomenon whereby an individual is more or less having unconscious urge to cling to a professional identity or another identity that has formerly been the basis of their self-respect and dignity. Therefore, developing undeveloped aptitudes is a mechanism to bring about congruence between the individual and career.

A greater sample of school counsellors entirely lean towards the view that testing aptitudes is a workable mechanism of helping students make stable career choices. The purpose of testing aptitude is to diagnose potential abilities of an individual to acquire through future training some specific set of skills and predict future achievements. In counselling a psychological test is required to uncover what is beneath actual ability of the student. This is in line with Subotnik and Jarvin (2005) who opined that measuring aptitude is aimed at identifying other tasks that require similar cognitive processes and measure the individual's ability on those tasks. Although none of these characteristics require the performance of the exact career, all are considered important aptitudes for acquiring required skills for the a particular career and context. In this connection, Bingham (2001) says that test ascertain what an individual actually does in certain standardized situations, and from these measurements, the estimate of capacity for future accomplishment is an inference or a statistical probability. Therefore, career information further reinforces the strength of these predictions and place them very close to certainty in career choice.

Most counsellors were of the view that appropriately directed aptitude help students make steady career choice. Counsellors also revealed that

matching aptitude to particular trades and careers help students make steady career choice. Quality career information therefore better equip counsellors with strategies of determining the specific skill characteristics recent career environments require. Consequently, directing aptitudes to their best fit environments bring about stability in the career choice decides to settle on. Krane and Tirre (2012) further supports with the view that, different occupations require different knowledge, skills and aptitudes (KSAs) and individuals who show strengths in those KSAs are more likely to succeed and persist in a particular field. This implies that, without educators assisting students to understand what they have the potential to accomplish, many learners, especially the underserved, could be guided away from high-demand, high-wage careers for which they have a high ability. In addition, counsellors reported that guiding students on consistency help students make steady career choice. This is in congruence with the SCCT Performance Model which holds that, factors that affect career-related performance includes the level or quality of attainment individuals achieve in work tasks for instance measures of success and the degree to which they persist at particular choice path especially when they encounter obstacles.

Furthermore, asking the guidance counsellors on how they manage students who have chosen a trade not within their aptitude, many of them said they counsel the student to make the right career choice as depicted in some statements *"I will have an individual counseling session with them to show them reasons why they need to go in for a trade within their aptitude", 'Individual counseling'*. This is supported by Bullock-Yowell, McConnell and Schedin (2014) who argued that academic advising is one of the remedies to helping students struggling with career indecision. The earlier this advice and guidance is given, inconsistencies in career choice are better managed. This is in congruence with Kidd (2006) who observed that providing adequate information to individuals at the right time usually makes a big difference in their career planning. This knowledge goes beyond mere awareness but includes gaining a deep understanding of distinctive character and personality traits and how that relates to career preference. Considering that the outcome of this decision has a big influence on the essence of who students will turn out to become in later life, they must do so from a point of knowledge. It is therefore very important to put in place certain structures and systems that will help prepare students to be in a better position to make career decisions out of knowledge.

In addition, some of the counsellors said they provided orientation to the students as depicted in the statements *'Orientate them on factors of choosing career', "I will let them try it out, and if it does not work I will make them see reason that the trade in question is not made for them"*. Again, some of the counsellors said they educate the students on the disadvantages for choosing a wrong career as narrated in the statements *"I always orientated them on the disadvantages of*

choosing a wrong career choice". Moreso, some counsellors said they provide information about the chosen career to the students, demand for parental corporation and remark from the school administration, encourage the students to go for internship, do referrals and encourage team work among the students. On the other hand, some of counsellors said they encourage and help the students to study hard in their chosen career. Also, many counsellors said they carried out test to do right placement of the students as narrated in the statements "*By carrying out interest and aptitude tests to see exactly where they belong and make them see reasons why option a or b is suitable for them and not option c or d*", "*Diagnose if the trade is of the student's interest*". In this connection, the Learning theory of career counselling (LTCC) suggest that, the client is viewed as one who is exploring and experimenting and should be empowered to take actions that help to create a satisfying life.

In line with the findings derived from the guidance counsellors, the results from the experiment further revealed that the intervention mechanism of providing career information on aptitude to students in the experimental group significantly improve stability in career choice. At pre-test, students' career choice was drawn from the trade name. it was common to have students mention careers like caterer, dress maker, electrician. This is in congruence with the work of Bingham (2001) who concluded that aptitude is a measure of probabilities of success of an individual with training in certain type of situations. In the technical secondary school, the prevailing situations are choosing a trade and later choosing a career within that trade. When a student possesses the aptitude for a particular trade, he or she is highly differentiated for a particular career. This implies that, technical school students through gaining accurate information about their aptitude, they easily gain skills suitable for a particular career in the chosen trade

Furthermore, at the post test levels, students in the control group had very low scores indicating that, there is more certainty in made career choice. This finding is in line with the learning theory of career counselling by Krumboltz (1979) which explains that, through the concept of task approach skills which is the set of skills the individual has developed, such as problem-solving skills, work habits, mental sets, emotional responses, cognitive responses and obtaining occupational information, career choice is certain. This is further in congruence with Holland's (1997) prediction that people will tend to aspire to and choose work environments that are congruent with their personalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Career educators should encourage students develop greater aptitude in careers within their trade. Given that students in form three are in the exploratory stage of career development, it is important for counsellors to

help them carry out trade specific exploration. This will help students explore varied careers that are related to their trade thus minimizing inconsistency in career choice meanwhile expanding aptitude to relevant career choices. It is recommended that guidance counsellors in Technical Secondary Schools adopt a more personalized and aptitude-driven approach to career counseling. Counsellors should prioritize aptitude testing and career assessments as part of the early stages of career guidance to help students better understand their strengths and potential. Additionally, strategies such as career orientation, internships, and providing ongoing support through parental involvement and administrative backing can further enhance the effectiveness of aptitude-based counseling. Producing an individualized aptitude enhancement plan is necessary for better management of students with inconsistent career choices. Identifying and managing inherited qualities that may set limits on the student's career opportunity within the individualized aptitude plan is highly recommended. By aligning career choices with students' abilities, counsellors can empower students to make informed decisions, minimizing the risks associated with poor career choices and ensuring that students are well-prepared for success in their chosen fields.

CONCLUSION

The research investigation illuminated the significant influence of students' aptitude on students' career choice among. The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that students' aptitude plays a significant role in influencing their career choices in Technical Secondary Schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. The overwhelming consensus among guidance counsellors highlights the importance of aligning students' innate abilities with their career paths, as this alignment contributes to more informed and successful career decisions. The experimental results further reinforce this conclusion, showing that when students are provided with targeted information about their aptitude, their ability to make appropriate career choices is notably improved. This suggests that aptitude-based career guidance is not only effective but essential in helping students choose paths that align with their strengths, ensuring greater satisfaction and success in their professional lives.

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