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## **COUNSELLING INTERVENTIONS THROUGH WORK BENEFITS AND ITS EFFECTS ON CAREER CHOICE AMONG TECHNICAL SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE SOUTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated counselling interventions through work benefits and its effects on career choice among 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 when making a career choice earlier in the academic ladder, necessitating specific intervention to enhance a stable career choice. The objective was to investigate the extent to which orientation on work benefits affects students' career choice in Technical Secondary Schools. Methodologically, the study employed a mixed-method approach with a quasi-experimental design, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative elements. The research sample comprised 20 students and 45 guidance counselors selected from the South West Region of Cameroon, with selection criteria based on document analysis for students and the Division with the highest number of guidance counselors. 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 counselors. An Independent Sample T-test was also used to compare how students in both the control and experimental groups at the pretest and post-test levels differ in their mean scores. The qualitative data derived from open-ended questions were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, with the aid of identified themes. The research revealed a remarkably strong correlation between an individual's orientation toward work benefits and their ultimate career choices. This relationship was substantiated by an overwhelming 90.8% consensus among guidance counselors and further validated by a robust contingency value of 0.835 on a scale of 0 to 1, demonstrating statistical significance with a p-value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Based on these compelling results, the researchers proposed several actionable recommendations for guidance counselors. It was recommended that career educators pay close attention to training students on practical exercises for

evaluating work benefits. Also, schools and educational policymakers prioritize the integration of work benefits orientation into career guidance programs, ensuring that students are equipped with the knowledge to make well-informed and sustainable career choices. These recommendations reflect a holistic approach to career guidance that acknowledges the crucial role of sustained engagement and practical experience in shaping effective career choices

**KEYWORDS:** Orientation on work benefits, career choice

## **INTRODUCTION**

The transition from school to the world of work has become increasingly complex, particularly for students in technical secondary schools who must navigate a rapidly evolving labour market while making informed career decisions. In Cameroon, the South West Region presents a unique context where socio-economic challenges, limited career information, and fluctuating employment opportunities often influence how students perceive and choose their future careers. Within this environment, understanding orientation on work-related benefits such as job security, remuneration, professional growth, and social recognition plays a critical role in shaping students' career aspirations and decision-making processes.

In Cameroon, Technical Secondary Schools play a strategic role in preparing students with employable skills and practical knowledge that align with national development objectives. However, despite the efforts to promote technical and vocational education, many graduates face difficulties in aligning their training with viable career pathways and sustainable employment opportunities. One important factor influencing this mismatch is the nature of orientation provided to students during their technical training. Orientation is expected to expose learners to the range of professional opportunities available, the benefits associated with their chosen trades, and the skills needed to succeed in the job market. Unfortunately, in many educational contexts, including the South West Region of Cameroon, orientation programs are often underdeveloped, irregular, or absent. As a result, students may lack critical information about work benefits, such as job security, career growth, remuneration, and professional development, which are essential in shaping realistic career choices. Moreover, the limited or poor orientation often results in students selecting career paths based on chance, peer influence, or social stereotypes, rather than informed decision-making. This situation not only undermines the effectiveness of Technical Secondary Schools in meeting labor market demands but also contributes to unemployment, underemployment, and frustration among graduates. It becomes imperative, therefore, to critically examine the effects of orientation on students' understanding of work benefits and how this, in turn, affects their career choices in Technical Secondary Schools within the South West Region of Cameroon.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The main goal of Technical Secondary Schools in Cameroon is to provide learners with practical skills for employment and to support the nation's industrialization agenda. However, many students continue to struggle with poor career alignment. This disconnect suggests a gap between the educational goals of technical training and the realities of the labor market. One of the critical yet often overlooked intervention factors is the role of orientation in shaping students' perceptions of work benefits and career choices. In the South West Region of Cameroon, orientation programs are inconsistently implemented across Technical Secondary Schools. Many students enter technical trades without sufficient guidance about the benefits and challenges of various career options. Consequently, their career decisions are often uninformed, and they lack an understanding of the actual prospects of their chosen career. This inadequate orientation leads to mismatches between students' skills and labor market demands, dissatisfaction with chosen careers, and in some cases, abandonment of technical professions altogether. Furthermore, while existing studies have emphasized the importance of technical education in promoting employability, limited empirical research has specifically examined how orientation on work benefits impacts students' career choices in the Cameroonian context. Without such evidence, policymakers, school administrators, and career counselors lack the information needed to design effective orientation programs that could better align students' aspirations with labor market opportunities. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this knowledge gap by investigating the effects of orientation on work benefits and its influence on career choice among students in Technical Secondary Schools in the South West Region of Cameroon.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

New students, when admitted every new academic year in secondary schools, feel lost socially and psychologically in their new environment. This signifies that when a student is at a new level of schooling, they need to be oriented for easy adaptability, be it in decision-making or social choices. Mikaye (2012) affirms that the orientation service gives scope to make the students familiar with the unfamiliar situation. Providing orientation on work benefits will therefore involve giving scope to bring about familiarity between trade choice and career choice. Orientation on work benefits is highly needed due to reasons such as assisting students to be aware of the information on career compensations, rules and regulations, strengths, and weaknesses. Orientation makes individuals aware of the need to make career-related decisions and encourages participation in the career decision-making process.

Work benefits are all the compensation individuals gain from being workers. Employee compensation and benefits practices differ across employment units such as organizations, business units, and facilities, and on several dimensions (Gerhart, Milkovich & Murray 1992). Employee compensation and benefits can be considered of crucial importance to both employers and employees because they play a key role in being the essential heart of the employment relationship. Rivai (2011) revealed that compensation is something that employees receive as a substitute for their contribution to the company. Furthermore, according to

Dessler (2013), employee benefits include all forms of payments to employees arising from their work. Compensation has two main components: direct financial payments, such as wages, salaries, incentives, advancements, commissions, pensions, and bonuses, and indirect financial payments, such as insurance paid by employers and holiday pay and pensions. The overall purpose of compensation is to attract, retain, and motivate employees. Bonuses and incentives also include a host of benefits that protect and expand the lifestyle and help all workers and their families (Milkovich, Newman & Milkovich, 2001).

Salary is the most popular direct financial work benefit. Some forms of benefits talk in terms of what will be referred to in law as consideration and in simple terms, as wage or salary. Wage, when it is paid daily, and salary, when it is paid weekly, fortnightly, or monthly. Muo (2007) emphasized that workers entered into contractual relationships with organizations to offer their human endowments in exchange for some form of reward. These forms of reward could be in the form of financial and non-financial rewards. Heathfield (2013) explains that salary is a fixed amount of money paid to an employee in return for tasks accomplished by their employer in the organization. An employee paid a salary looks forward and is required to complete a job task given by their employers in return for the salary. Salary is one of the payment obligations by a company to the employee and affects the employee's short-term and long-term financial position for the company and individual (Wen, Yang, Bu, Diers & Wang, 2018). If there is any increase in pay and benefits given by an organization, the employers will target the financial reward towards the high performers. Good and adequate compensation is highlighted by Nwachukwu (2000) and Ngu (2005) as the key characteristic of a good salary or wage. A good salary must be the wage rates that prevail in the local market and the industry. A good salary ensures internal alignment of wages to ensure equity. A compensation scheme is considered good if it recognizes individual performance and takes care of individual incentives. Salaries vary according to careers; therefore, career decision-makers need to ensure that the salary scheme in their chosen careers depicts normality and is sustainable.

According to Lawler & Jenkins (1992), most organizations report using some form of pay in exchange for individual performance. A study by Jenkins, Mitra, Gupta, & Shaw (1998) supported this view by saying that financial compensation is an important influence, perhaps the most important influence on employees' behavior on the job. Compensation not only influences behavior on the job, but it also influences what job an individual decides to accept. For prospective members of an organization, pay is a signaling device for an organization's policy and character (Cable & Judge, 1994). In this sense, students will easily be attracted to careers whose salaries are high. Das (2002) adds that, for managers, pay is perceived as both a reinforcer or motivator and an indicator of performance. Salary level is interpreted as information about one's worth to the organization (Kuvaas, 2006) and a symbol of one's success (Das, 2002).

Also, work benefits serve as feedback mechanisms that signal to individuals how they are performing and meeting expectations. Equity theory of motivation says pay is perceived by the recipient as satisfactory

given a match between his or her input, such as time, effort, loyalty, adaptability, tolerance, personal sacrifice, skill, and received rewards. Inequalities in this formula lead to negative effects, such as reduced output quality. While pay can have numerous positive benefits for the worker, it can also function to increase competition among workers and reduce cooperative behaviors. Thus, pay, particularly pay tied to performance, increases behaviors that are rewarded with greater pay, and reduces behaviors that do not lead to greater increases in pay or that lead to decreases in pay (Das, 2002). In this regard, students must be informed about the difficulties involved in getting into high-paid jobs and the competition that prevails within this highly competitive work environment. This awareness can better enhance students' determination to get these jobs or choose jobs that match their aptitudes.

Work benefits relevant to career choice are continuity and change. Continuity means an individual may have a sense of connection to a career identity that extends beyond a particular role and exists over time. As careers evolve, career identities shift and even within a relatively stable career, there can still be a clear sense of a role adapting over time, as career identity moves through different stages, even without a formal change of role. However, people often have to deal with major discontinuities both in their education and work transitions (Heinz & Krüger, 2001) and within their working lives (Ashforth et al., 2008). As individuals seek to make sense of their evolving careers, they (re)interpret their past experiences and anticipate possible futures as a guide for their current actions and so the meaning they attach to their career evolves.

Incentives are also a form of work benefit. That people respond to incentives (Levitt & Dubner, 2009b) is a common belief. Core and Guay (2010) argue that contracts incorporating too many incentives and too little pay will lead to the effect that executives will either quit or act conservatively to avoid firm risk. If the contract includes too much pay and too few incentives, the executive's and the shareholders' interests will not sufficiently be aligned. Incentives are variable compensation elements whose payout depends on the company as well as individual performance. They can generally be differentiated into short-term incentives and long-term incentives. Short-term incentives generally have a vesting period of one year, and long-term incentives have a vesting duration of two or more years. Students are required to be aware of the incentive schemes of various careers, in case they exist, because this will be of help in making a career choice.

Promotions, an aspect of work benefits, are a natural consequence of the acquisition of skills that are more productive at higher-responsibility jobs. Gibbons and Waldman (1999b) consider the effective ability of workers as a complementary combination of individual ability learned progressively by all potential employers, and the human capital obtained at a decreasing rate through labour experience. Promotion schemes are contracts designed to provide incentives for human capital accumulation, rather than its consequence. Promotion prospects depend importantly on seniority, but also on job-related training

received, as long as it is of a firm-specific kind. A related stream of literature presents promotion systems as an incentive for workers to work hard (Fairburn and Malcomson 2001). Promotions are argued to be the benefit that leads workers to put effort into the workplace. Theories that remark on the institutional role of promotions in providing incentives either to effort or to obtain specific human capital, instead of being a mere question of market-induced efficient task assignment, are strongly related to the internal labour markets approach. In organizations with established internal labour markets, jobs are only open to market competition at the lowest levels, while the rest of the positions are reserved for promoted employees. Being their job out of the threat of outsiders, promotion prospects are the main sources of incentives for workers within these organizations.

The two incentive-oriented views of promotion systems are often used to discuss such male/female differentials. Lazear and Rosen (1990), for example, argued that female workers have poorer career prospects because of their higher non-market opportunities, which makes them less profitable to exert effort in learning their tasks in the search for a promotion. Likewise, stronger family commitments could make overtime work or participation in training courses relatively more costly for women, so that they would find themselves in a “mommy track”, with lower advancement prospects. Booth, Francesconi, and Frank (2003) showed that in the case that female workers suffered discrimination in the form of worse job market opportunities than males, they would have equal or higher promotion chances than men, but they would obtain lower wage increases upon promotion, and they would quit less for better jobs. All these theories assume that organizations’ promotion rules are equal for women and men. Therefore, job-related characteristics that may affect promotion prospects, such as overtime work and participation in training, should have similar effects for men and women. Moreover, any potential difference in promotion rates should disappear as long as one can effectively control for effort exerted or training carried out. Wage increases observed upon promotion, however, may be higher for women because of selection issues or lower because of discrimination (Booth et al., 2003).

There exists a phenomenon where some careers are in higher demand than others. The increase in automation is unlikely to destroy complete occupations but will rather change the types and number of tasks in most occupations. According to the World Bank, less than 20% of jobs are predicted to disappear completely (World Bank, 2016a). A study by McKinsey Global Institute estimated that by 2030, in about 60% of occupations, at least one-third of constituent activities could be automated (MGI, 2017). While this is likely to have a differential impact in different countries, the full-time equivalent of work potentially displaced by automation is estimated at a midpoint of 15 %. In addition, between 3 and 14% of the global workforce would need to switch occupational categories. This gives a clear picture of the demand for careers in recent times. Providing career information on the demands of careers in recent times will equip students to manage the instabilities that will arise within their careers. Careers are typically made up of both readily automatable and non-readily automatable tasks. This raises the question of whether the

automation of work processes will result in a reduction of the workforce or whether the remaining tasks might be shared among the existing workforce. The answer to this question depends on how work is organized in a given workplace and on the extent to which tasks that are not readily automatable can be bundled together to create a new job (Kucera, 2017).

Furthermore, work benefits may include medical, dental, and or disability insurance, vacation, paid sick leave and pension that are provided by the employer to their employees in addition to salary (Moy & Lee, 2002). There is a situation of medical benefits offered by organizations in the United States known as State Workers' Compensation (SWC) programs. It gives cash benefits and takes care of restorative expenses for laborers who are harmed or become sick at work (McInerney & Simon, 2012). Health and safety issues are essential components of business change, and research suggested that an administration that cannot oversee safety cannot manage other functions (Chai et. al., 2013). Every organization and company will have a department on safety and health to make sure that all their workers are working in safe conditions. Generally, most students and other adolescents have the impression that the only benefit of a career is salary. Students can only be aware of this useful career information if they are guided on how to do a fair comparison of career choice attributes for every career. At the same time, benefits may comprise Employment Insurance (EI) and Unemployment Insurance (UI) (Haslinah, 2016).

Work safety is another aspect of work benefits. A good working environment will lead to good decision-making in an organization, which results in job satisfaction among employees (Dejendran & Farid, 2013). The reduction of efficient communication between the management and employees will affect the increase in quitting intentions among employees in the organization (Simons & Jankowski, 2007). Other than that, working conditions can be characterized by the physical settings in an association, attributes of employment, organization features, and settings. Occupational safety and health constitutes a system that deals with the prevention of injuries and illnesses related to work, as well as the protection and improvement of the health of workers. It aims to improve the working conditions and the surrounding environment. Balance must be achieved in all areas of human activity between the benefits and costs of risk. But, in the case of occupational safety and health, this complex balance is influenced by many factors such as the speed of scientific and technological progress, the world of diverse and constantly changing work, and the economy. Various risks exist in caries, such as physical risks (heat, cold, lighting, noise, atmospheric pressure, ventilation, radiation, fire, dangers of electricity, first aid, transport), biological risks, and personal and psychological risks (harassment, work pressure, violence in the workplace). Safe job sites have mechanisms for addressing these risks to render the job environment safe.

Evaluating job risks involves three steps to follow. Firstly, the definition of the risk. There are multiple devices to define the risk in the institution by a specific team from the safety and occupational committee to survey all the dangers in any department in the career and know the number of workers who have been

affected by the danger. Secondly, assessing the degree of safety in the job, private problems in occupational health and safety, and legal demands matching with it. Occupational health and safety management systems for mechanics or biology, physics, chemistry, and fire danger must be assessed. Thirdly, risk control methods must be assessed. Risk control means reducing or preventing the risk to protect workers and improve the working environment conditions, and to ensure its effectiveness, five conditions have to be achieved. There needs to be sufficient risk control to eliminate or reduce risk whenever possible; protecting all workers who are more likely to be at risk; Risk control should not impose risk by itself; ensuring risk control does not impose an environmental hazard outside the facility; and this control should be applied after consultation and participation of workers in its making.

The African region is characterized by grossly inadequate or non-existent workplace health and safety legislation and regulations. The 2019 OSHAfrica conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, highlighted this as a key limitation to workplace health and safety growth in Africa. Occupational Safety and Health Africa (OSHAfrica) announced its ongoing efforts to review all existing legislation with the hope of working with the African Union for a One-Africa Workplace Health and Safety Protocol. This project was significantly slowed down by the COVID-19 Pandemic, but efforts are still on course, with legislation of over 40 countries already reviewed. The legislation in several African countries was found to be obsolete and ineffective for the protection of worker health and safety in this day and age.

According to Iden (2021), president of OSHAfrica, when you do not set a standard, everything you see will look like a standard. There is a clear need for the region to have defined standard training requirements. For example, what constitutes standard First Aid, what constitutes a standard Risk Assessment, what are the standard contents that must be found in these training modules and how many learning hours should be considered adequate? We do not currently have this in Africa and people offer different training programs, applying whatever standards they deem fit. This contributes to the lack of coherence in workplace health and safety practices in Africa. Students need to be well informed about standard job safety elements, so that they can quantify what will lead to stability in choice. Career information on job safety should provide what is standard job safety.

On the other hand, job security is another work benefit. Job security is the security of being employed in a job or occupation that justifies a worker's qualifications and skills. According to Moy and Lee (2002), job security is defined as a condition where an employee would worry less about being fired or sacked by their organization because they have protection against loss of employment. Job security is also defined as a condition where an employer offers assurance to employees that they will be protected from damages resulting from which would lead to dismissal by the organization (Gelinas, 2005)., Probst (2003) also defines job security as the degree of one's perceived level of stability and continuity of a job. Thus, individuals would look for organizations that will provide them with higher job security. In addition, job

security refers to providing stable and unthreatened jobs for employees to maintain the continuity of their employment. Job security generally refers to protection against unfair or unjustified dismissals. Another way of viewing job security, according to Stacks (2013) is through its reciprocal, job insecurity, which refers to an employee's negative reaction to the changes concerning their jobs. Workers are not simply satisfied with a job that provides satisfactory income and helps them to maintain a social status at par with people similar to them in education, age, and experience. They would like to be assured of a future income. The jobs involving high accident rates or those offering seasonal employment leave the employee insecure about future income. The jobs that offer pension or other post-retirement benefits will be preferred by those whose financial resources are limited to salaries.

The growing internationalization of economic activity has affected the nature and type of labour relations. It has rendered the regulation of employment and standards of employment more difficult. Markets are more competitive. Technology is changing rapidly, and with it, the organization of work. There are relatively more people engaged in service activities than in manufacturing and agriculture, and relatively more women in the workforce than in the past. Various kinds of employment that differ from full-time, protected, regular wage and salary employment have also emerged. Such employment can be temporary, informal, or external. An umbrella term, non-standard employment, is usually used to refer to such employment. There are more and more people in these kinds of non-standard work, more working with non-permanent contracts, and ever-increasing numbers of displaced workers. These changes in the labour market have been accompanied by a general decline in the security of employment. Overall, it is generally accepted that the trend towards increased labour market flexibility, or easier hiring and firing, has negatively affected employment security (Standing, 1999); non-standard employment which increases with flexible labour markets has tended to be less secure with lower wages on the average, and laws governing benefits have been increasingly de-linked from such employment (Houseman and Osawa, 2000).

In many developing countries, employment in low-income, unprotected informal activities has increased. Such employment amounts to over 60 percent of total employment in Africa and Latin America and around 40 to 50 percent of total employment in developing Asia (Du Jeu, 1998). Given that employment security is an important dimension of quality of employment and that secure employment is the main means to secure income, its importance to stable career choice cannot be overemphasised.

Most turn to worry less about job security in self-employment. This is because the 'self' is responsible for her/his employment and has voluntarily chosen it. The 'self' has control over her/his employment and cannot be dismissed by another. Yet, the statistical category termed self-employment may in reality include some categories of disguised wage work, such as sub-contractors, external workers, consultants, or home workers. Further, even if there is no control over one's employment by any single employer,

factors such as markets, credit availability and legal provisions, on which self-employed workers have little or no control, may result in their employment loss. Security of employment for self-employed workers is dependent on the availability of or access to credit to continue or expand business, on the marketability of their products and services, and on access to skill training to diversify to other work, in case markets for their existing products or services shrink. Employment security of these workers also depends on the availability of space where they can carry out their activity. In the absence of these, there may be an exit from self-employment to unemployment, or from one kind of self-employment activity to another. In some cases, a successful job search may lead to a move to wage or salary work.

Job security has both subjective and objective elements. An objective indicator of employment security is the proportion of the employed with stable or regular contracts of employment; a subjective indicator is the reported expression of belief that employment continuity is assured (Standing, 1999). Job security is the main means of income security. It enhances worker welfare. International human rights instruments broadly acknowledge the right to protection against employment loss. According to Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, it is the right of all persons “to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment”. Job security is especially important in developing economies that do not have a system of unemployment benefits. Loss of employment in such situations leads to loss of income and loss of livelihood. Job protection encourages stable job relationships that create an atmosphere of macroeconomic stability. Objective indicators of job security include behavioral elements such as rate of separation from job, length of present employment, skills, and transferability of skills. Contractual elements such as status of employment contract and governance indicators such as strictness of employment protection law, coverage of employment protection legislation, coverage by collective bargaining agreements, and institutional support for continuing employment. Subjective indicators of job security include the likelihood of losing the present job, the likelihood of finding an alternative job, the value of the present job, the expected value of a future job, or unemployment. The state of the economy, the rate of growth of GDP, the rate of growth of employment, and income distribution are all likely to determine the level of job security at the macro level. In general, people feel more insecure about their employment if there is a high rate of unemployment or underemployment.

Financial security is ensured through career advancement. In the traditional concept, career advancement took the pattern of an employee proceeding in the career ladder based on seniority. That is, the age and years spent in the company, which is based on unified criteria. The contemporary concept of career advancement is not defined based on seniority, but based on performance, results, or competencies. Onijigin (2009) stated that the motivation of an individual to get into a career is an economic reason because employment will give him and his family adequate resources and monetary compensation to meet social and economic needs.

## 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 design used was the quasi-experimental research design. The sample size consisted 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 the most guidance counsellors.

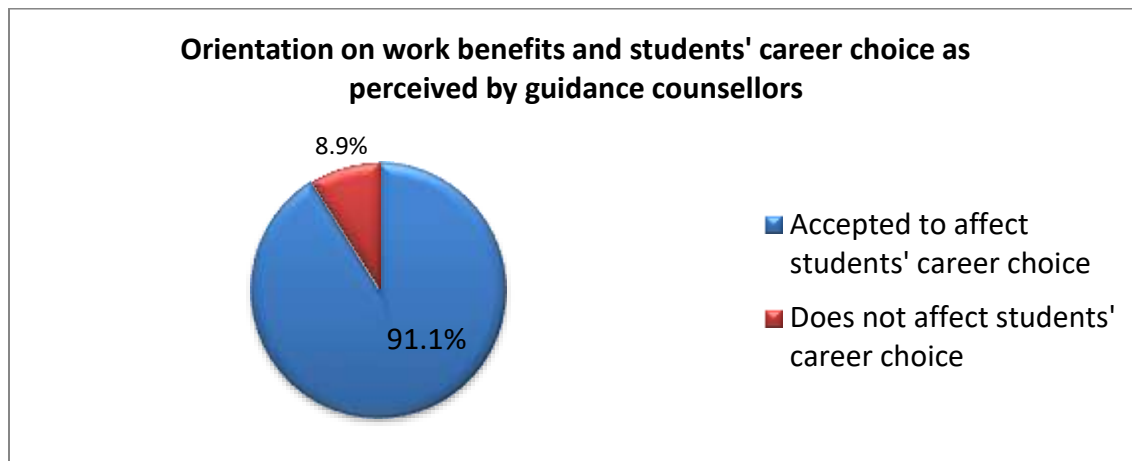
The purposive sampling technique was used to select the division, school, class, trade, and participants in the quasi-experiment. Purposive sampling was used to select the Fako division from the accessible divisions in the South West Region because it had the highest student population, likewise, school counsellors in technical secondary schools within the South West Region of Cameroon in the 2022/2023 academic year. Students for the sample were obtained through document 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 aim 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, which works in association with the Chi-Square test, was used in testing the hypotheses from the data collected from the guidance counsellors. The Independent Sample T-test was also used to compare how students in both the control and experimental group at pretest and posttest levels differ in their mean score with reference to, and without information to their career choice.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

*Figure 1:*

**Orientation on work benefits and students' career choice as perceived by guidance counsellors**



Overall, the majority of the guidance counsellors 91.1% were of the opinion that orienting students on work benefits will influence their career choice, while 8.9% of them disagreed. The overall mean value of 3.32 on a scale of 1-4 equally implies that many of the guidance counsellors had a high belief that orienting students on the benefits of a particular career will influence their career choice, and the low standard deviation value of 0.652 implies that the guidance counsellors in the majority had the same belief.

**Table 1:**  
**Comparing Students' Career Desire at Pretest Level in both Groups without Orientation on Work Benefits**

Pre test	Pretest control group	Pretest experimental group
N	10	10
Mean	14.50	14.40
Median	14.50	14.30
Minimum	13	12
Maximum	16	16
Std. Error of Mean	.401	.496
Std. Deviation	1.269	1.346

*Total mean score 20*

Results showed that at the pretest level, where students in both groups were not given orientation on work benefits, their reaction to career choice was almost the same, as revealed by an approximately equal mean score (Control group  $14.50 \pm 0.401$ ) and experimental group ( $14.40 \pm 0.496$ ) on 20. Again, the standard deviation of 1.269 in the control group and 1.346 in the experimental group implies that the students' reaction to career choice was almost the same.

**Table 2:**  
**Comparing Students' Career Desire at Posttest Level in both Groups after Orientation on Work Benefits**

Posttest	Posttest control group	Posttest experimental group
N	10	10
Mean	14.90	18.30
Median	14.70	18.00
Minimum	15	17

Maximum	17	19
Std. Error of Mean	.411	.213
Std. Deviation	1.243	1.468

*Total mean score= 20*

Results showed that at the posttest level, where students in the experimental group were given orientation on work benefits, their reaction to career choice improved as indicated by a higher mean value of  $18.30 \pm 0.213$  on 20 when compared to students in the control group not given orientation on work benefits, with a mean of  $14.90 \pm 0.411$ , almost the same as seen at the pretest level 14.50. By this, it was evident that there was much improvement in the students' decision to their career choice at the post-test level for those in the experimental group more than those in the control group. The minimum score is 15 for the control group and 17 for the experimental group and the maximum score is 17 for the control group and 19 for the experimental group on 20.

**Table 3:**

**Likelihood Test Depicting a Significant Relationship between Orientation on Work Benefits 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	Chi-Square	Likelihood Ratio Tests Contingency coefficient <i>p</i> -value	
Intercept Only	105.354			.900
Final	1.962	103.392	.835 .000	

*df=48*

Statistically, the findings showed that orientation on work benefits to students has a very strong and significant effect on students' career choice as indicated by a high contingency value of 0.835 on a scale 0 to 1, *p*-value  $0.000 < 0.05$ . The explanatory power of the model of 90.0% revealed that orientation on work benefits to students will contribute greatly to helping them make relevant career choices. This was further proven using the experimental results below.

**Table 4:**  
**Comparing Students’ Decision to Career Choice after Orientation on Work Benefits for One Group**

Test level	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T-test value	p-value
Post test	Control	10	14.90	1.243	.411	4.423	.000
	Experimental	10	18.30	1.468	.213		

*T-test value for equal variance not assumed, 4.423 greater than critical t-value of 2.101 at df=18, CI 0.05 level. Mean difference at posttest =3.4*

In line with the findings derived from the guidance counsellors, the results from the experiment further revealed that orientation on work benefits only to students in the experimental group significantly improved their decision to their career choice, with a mean score increasing from 14.40 to 18.30 on 20. (Calculated t-value 4.423 >critical value of 2.101, and p-value =0.000 < 0.05) when compared to those in the control group, who were not given orientation on work benefits, with a mean score of almost the same, 14.50 to 14.90. The mean difference between the experimental and control group at the posttest level is 3.4, which is much. Therefore, the hypothesis that states there is a significant relationship between orientation on work benefits and students’ career choice in Technical Secondary Schools in the South West Region of Cameroon was accepted.

**Table 5:**  
**Thematic analysis on ways guidance counsellors train students to evaluate work benefits**

Themes	Theme description	Quotations
Sensitization on career compensations	Creating awareness on financial and none financial benefits	‘Encourage students to read up other benefits that accompany the financial benefits’ ‘Check salary of available jobs, ‘Check payment intervals’ ‘Comparing career benefits with cost of living’
Safety assessment	Identify a safe work space	‘Visits to some training/work places’ ‘Internships’

Passion	Students should be able to identify, maintain and improve their likes	‘Teaching students values of fulfillment and passion’ ‘If it provides satisfaction then most likely that is the career of choice’
Observation and feedback	Community review about a career that will readily meet their needs	‘Students should go for careers that meet community needs’ ‘Need assessment feedback from the community’ ‘Personal need satisfaction’
Input versus output	Careers with growth opportunities	‘Flexibility of job in question if the career allows for professional development like promotion, appointments should be checked’  ‘Work hours, methods and days should be assessed’

Enquiring from guidance counsellors on ways they train their students to evaluate work benefits to make stable career choices, some of them said they sensitize students on financial benefits/salary of a job and its duration as depicted in the statements ‘*Check salary of available jobs, check payment intervals*’, ‘*Comparing benefits of careers with cost of living*’. Also, some counsellors said they train their students on identifying a safe work space, take students for workshop visits to see the nature of work for themselves as depicted in the statement “*Visits to some training/work places*”.

Furthermore, some counsellors added that they teach students values of fulfillment and passion and encourage students that, “*if it provides satisfaction, then most likely that is the career of choice*”. Furthermore, some guidance counsellors opined that “*students should go for careers that meet community needs, need assessment feedback from the community, and Personal need satisfaction*”. Therefore, careers are not in space; students are therefore assisted in assessing what their community needs and commit to choices that are in congruence with these needs. Finally, some guidance counsellors train their students to evaluate work benefits by guiding the students to evaluate their determination, advising them to gather information on job flexibility, that is, whether it gives room for professional development, educating the students to know the hours of work, working period, and finding out if they will actually derive satisfaction and security from the job.

## DISCUSSIONS

Findings showed that orientation on work benefits to students has a very strong and significant effect on students' career choices. This implies that students are more likely to make stable career choices when provided with orientation on financial and nonfinancial work benefits. This finding is supported by Mikaye (2012), who argued that the orientation service gives scope and familiarizes students with the unfamiliar situation. Therefore, during orientation, students are exposed to varied compensation practices and relevant facts pertaining to the world of work. As a result, students acquire skills in carrying out a comparative assessment exercise on work benefits for different yet related careers and settle on a career that is congruent with their desirable expectations. Still, in line with the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), Brown and Hackett (1994) revealed that outcome expectations, that is beliefs about the consequences of performing particular behaviors, influence which behavior an individual will gravitate towards and which to avoid. Brown and Hackett hold that in answering the question, 'If I try doing this, what will happen? An individual arrives at a point of certain choices. Therefore, counsellors during orientation on career work benefits should include key concepts such as salaries, information on high-in-demand careers, career information on expansion, comparative information on work benefits, post-career benefits, work safety benefits, awareness of job security, promotion and advancement.

Most counsellors thought that orienting students on work benefits such as salaries, incentives, advancements, commissions, and bonuses has a very strong and significant effect on students' career choices. This is in congruence with the empirical work of Robianto, Masdupi, and Syahrizal (2019), who found that compensation has a positive and significant effect on work engagement, likewise a choice. When students become aware that actual outcomes match expected outcomes, they become sure of their choice and, as a result, experience stability. This implies that work benefits are perceived by the recipient as satisfactory given a match between his or her input, such as time, efforts, loyalty, adaptability, tolerance, personal sacrifice, skill and received rewards. Another study by Jenkins, Mitra, Gupta, & Shaw (1998) further supports this view by saying that compensation is an important influence on the choice of career. This is so because the main reason why people work is to earn a living. Work benefits that readily ease the meeting of needs are a pull factor of career choice. Therefore, effective orientation on work benefits influences what career an individual decides to accept.

Again, findings from counsellors revealed that orienting students on careers in high demand and career expansion, such as promotion and advancement, helps students make stable career choices. This is in line with the World Bank (2016a), which predicted that less than 20% of jobs are to disappear completely due to automation. This implies that, with rapid evolution in careers such as automation, some careers undergo a fluctuation in demand. This view was further supported by McKinsey Global Institute (2017), which estimated that, by 2030, in about 60% of occupations, at least one-third of constituent activities could be automated. Through conditional statements, with the arrival of Artificial Intelligence, one can only

conclude that this prediction is accurate. As individuals seek to make sense of their evolving careers, they (re)interpret their past experiences and anticipate possible futures as a guide for their current actions, and so the meaning they attach to their career evolves. This information on the evolution of careers saves students from choosing careers with extremely rapid automation and this eliminates career abortion due to skills becoming obsolete. Therefore, during orientation, it is imperative to create awareness of the nature of career demand in recent times and the near future.

Findings further indicated that when students know post-career benefits such as pension schemes, they make consistent career choices. This is in line with Tripathi and Agrawal (2014), who suggested that career selection is not just the selection of a job; it includes preoccupation, occupation, and post-occupation during a person's life. The need to have a decent life after a career is important. Not all careers guarantee a good retirement. Therefore, students should have mastery of assessing post-career benefits. Counsellors further revealed that nonfinancial work benefits such as job security, insurance, and holiday pay are of great relevance to students' career choices. This confirms the empirical work of Duku, Bosu, Ekow, Achiaa, Afia, Kobina, & Arboh (2021), who concluded that high salary expectations and job opportunities are the most influential factors in a student's choice to choose or not to choose a career.

Also, counsellors confirmed that orientation on work safety benefits helps students make stable career choices. This is in line with Iden (2021), president of OSHAfrica, who opined that when you do not set a standard, everything you see will look like a standard. While orienting students on work safety, they become aware of the elements they need to assess and as such, set a standard of what they can consider safe. Counsellors were of the view that orientation on job security helps students make stable career choices. This is in congruence with International human rights instruments, which broadly acknowledge the right to protection against employment loss. According to Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, it is the right of all persons "to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment". Students during orientation gain knowledge of the objective and subjective elements of job security. Objective indicators of job security include the rate of separation from the job, the length of present employment, skills and transferability of skills, the status of the employment contract and governance, the strictness of employment protection law, coverage by collective bargaining agreements, and institutional support for continuing employment. Subjective indicators include the likelihood of losing a present job, the likelihood of finding an alternative job, the value of the present job, and the expected value of the future job, or unemployment. These career intervention elements serve as a screen through which to make a stable career choice.

To train students on assessing work benefits, counsellors explained that they carry out sensitization on career compensations, which is aimed at creating awareness of good financial and non-financial benefits. Counsellors highlighted that they encourage students to read up on other benefits that accompany financial

benefits, check the salary of a job, and compare benefits. This is in line with Nwachukwu (2000) and Ngu (2005), who opined that a compensation scheme is considered good if it recognizes individual performance, takes care of individual incentives and ensures equity. Compensation is considered good when it is the rate that prevails in the local market and avoids discrimination. Students, therefore, gain orientation in identifying good work benefits and consequently make stable career choices. Another aspect counsellors intervene in through orienting students on work benefits is to train students to carry out safety assessments by being able to identify a safe workspace. This is enhanced by taking students for workshop visits and sending them on internships. This is in line with evidence in Europe suggesting that vocational education and training in general is linked to higher confidence and self-esteem, improved health, higher citizen participation, and higher job satisfaction (CEDEFOP 2011).

Results from students, on the other hand, revealed that orientation on work benefits to students has a very strong and significant effect on their career choice. Most students at the pretest level had reflected through their high score on the pretest their state of career choice inconsistency. However, after the innovative intervention strategy in orientation on work benefits was carried out, the experimental group revealed a significant increase in choice stability, reflected by lower scores of participants. Drawing on the test criteria, this reflects certainty in career choice. Students in the experimental group were most especially unlikely at the level of post-test to make statements like, 'Aside from salaries, I have no idea what other work benefits exist for careers in my trade; choosing a trade confuses me because I do not have information on which career will benefit me the most. Eventually, they were likely to make statements like, 'I would like to choose a career that I cannot lose easily. This is in congruence with the Social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent & Brown, 1994) concept of outcome expectations, which explains that outcome expectations are the beliefs about the consequences of performing particular behaviors. Students in the treatment group gained skills that ascertain their knowledge of the consequences of particular courses of action, such as the benefits of choosing a particular career. This is also supported by Bandura (1986), who maintained that both self-efficacy and outcome expectations help to determine a number of important aspects of human behavior, such as the activities people choose to pursue and the ones they avoid. The SCCT's Interest Model (Lent et al., 1999) further adds that career choice is preceded by a host of sub-processes such as the development of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interests, and skills in different performance domains that over time will leave open and make attractive certain choice paths for a given individual and render other options much less appealing or likely to be considered further.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study establishes that orienting students on work-related benefits has a strong and significant influence on their career choices in Technical Secondary Schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. Guidance counsellors overwhelmingly agreed that work benefits orientation covering aspects such as job security, job satisfaction, work safety, careers in high demand, and career flexibility plays a crucial role

in shaping students' career decisions. This consensus reflects the central importance of counsellors in guiding students toward informed and realistic career pathways.

Statistical analyses reinforce this conclusion, with high contingency values demonstrating a strong and significant relationship between work benefits orientation and students' career choices. These findings confirm that when students understand the advantages associated with different occupations, they are more likely to make stable, well-reasoned career decisions. Experimental results further validate the impact of counselling interventions. Students who received structured orientation on work benefits showed notable improvement in their career decision-making compared to those who did not. This demonstrates the practical effectiveness of career orientation programs in enhancing students' readiness for the workforce. Overall, the study concludes that work benefits orientation is a vital component of career counselling, significantly contributing to students' ability to choose careers that align with their interests, strengths, and long-term goals. The findings underscore the need to institutionalize structured career guidance programs in technical secondary schools to promote students' career readiness and long-term professional stability.

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