



Exploration of Teachers Perception on their Roles in Career Guidance among Secondary Schools Students Career Choices

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: The study aim to explore the perceptions of teachers on their roles as career guidance providers on the challenges and opportunities associated with guiding students towards career pathways

Study Design: Using qualitative methodology, Participants of this study were carefully chosen as experienced career guidance masters from the selected schools in Katsina State. The data was gathered through semi-structured interview and which is guided by a validated interview protocol linked with the research objective.

Place and Duration of Study: Secondary schools of Katsina State Nigeria between December 2023 and April 2024.

Methodology: We included 10 teachers (5 men, 5 women; age range 25-55 years) with teaching experience. The data collected was carefully analysed using ATLAS.ti 23 software to draw the schematic diagrams leading to discuss each theme and category based on existing literature.

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Results: From the findings, two main themes emerged from the analyses; “effectiveness of career guidance program and teachers' engagement”. From each of the two themes, three categories emerged with various quotations from the participants. These quotations were used to inform the development of more responsive and impactful career guidance initiatives within various educational institutions in Katsina state and beyond.

Conclusion: Ultimately, this study contributes to the on-going discourse on policy and the development of career guidance in schools as a realm of career development that fosters a more inclusive approach to student guidance and successful future professional. However, further research may be necessary, particularly in other geographical areas.

Keywords: Teachers' perceptions; career guidance; students career choice.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape, the journey towards a fulfilling and successful career is more intricate than ever before. As students navigate the myriad of career possibilities, the role of effective career guidance program in schools becomes increasingly pivotal. Central to this dynamic process are the perceptions and insights of teachers who serve as mentors, guides, and influencers in shaping students' career trajectories. This research endeavours to delve into the nuanced realm of teachers' perceptions regarding the indispensable role of career guidance and awareness in facilitating students' career decision-making processes. By exploring the perspectives of these educational stakeholders, this study aims to illuminate the intricate interplay between pedagogy, mentorship, and career development within the educational ecosystem.

Understanding the perceptions of teachers regarding career guidance and awareness is paramount for several reasons. Firstly, teachers often serve as frontline observers of students' interests, strengths, and aspirations, thereby wielding significant influence in guiding their vocational pathways. Secondly, teachers possess valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities students encounter as they navigate the complex terrain of career exploration. Thirdly, teachers play a crucial role in disseminating information about diverse career options, fostering career readiness skills, and nurturing students' self-efficacy in pursuing their chosen career paths.

Moreover, in the context of evolving societal and technological landscapes, the traditional paradigms of career guidance are being redefined. The emergence of new industries, the proliferation of digital technologies, and the evolving nature of work demand innovative

approaches to career guidance and awareness. Teachers, as key stakeholders in the educational ecosystem, are uniquely positioned to adapt and respond to these changing dynamics, thereby shaping the future workforce.

By examining teachers' perceptions, this research seeks to uncover valuable insights that can inform the development of more effective and responsive career guidance initiatives within educational institutions. Furthermore, by fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in guiding students' career choices, this study aspires to contribute to the on-going discourse surrounding educational policy, curriculum development, and teacher training in the realm of career development. In essence, this research embarks on a journey to explore the multifaceted role of teachers in nurturing students' career aspirations and equipping them with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of work and employment. Through an exploration of teachers' perceptions, this study endeavors to pave the way towards more inclusive, informed, and impactful career guidance practices, ultimately empowering students to realize their full potential and embark on fulfilling professional journeys.

2. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research Approach: Utilizing a qualitative research design allows for in-depth exploration of teachers' perceptions regarding career guidance Program in secondary schools. **Phenomenological Approach:** Employing a phenomenological framework enables the researcher to delve into the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to students' career choices. **Purposeful Sampling:** Selecting participants who have first-hand experience in providing career guidance and awareness to students ensures relevance and

depth in the data collected. **Criteria for Selection:** Participants may include teachers from diverse educational levels (e.g., primary, secondary, and tertiary), varying subject areas, and with different years of teaching experience to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives.

Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducting semi-structured interviews allows for flexibility while ensuring key topics related to teachers' perceptions of career guidance are addressed. **Interview Protocol Development:** Designing an interview protocol with open-ended questions to explore teachers' experiences, beliefs, challenges, and strategies regarding career guidance program in their respective schools. **Ethical Considerations:** Ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants to uphold ethical standards throughout the research process.

Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis: Employing thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and variations in teachers' perceptions across interviews. **Coding:** Iteratively coding interview transcripts to organize data into meaningful categories and themes. **Triangulation:** Utilizing multiple coders to enhance the rigor and credibility of the analysis process through consensus building and reflexivity. The data collected will be carefully analysed using ATLAS.ti 23 software to draw the schematic diagrams about the participant's coded responses.

Trustworthiness and Validity: Member Checking: Seeking feedback from participants on the accuracy and interpretation of their responses to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. **Reflexivity:** Maintaining reflexivity by documenting researcher biases, assumptions, and preconceptions throughout the research process to mitigate potential influences on data interpretation. **Peer debriefing:** Engaging in discussions with colleagues or peers familiar with qualitative research methodologies to validate interpretations and enhance the validity of the study.

Reporting Findings: Detailed Description: Providing a comprehensive overview of the themes, patterns, and insights derived from the analysis of teachers' perceptions on career guidance program. **Schematic diagrams** Incorporating verbatim quotes from interviews to enrich the narrative and provide context for the findings. **Implications and Recommendations:**

Discussing the implications of the findings for educational practice, policy development, and future research endeavors in the field of career guidance and awareness.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Theme 1: Effectiveness of Current Career Guidance Programs

The findings began with a discussion of the effectiveness of current career guidance programs. Therefore, in today's rapidly changing and competitive job market, career guidance programs play a crucial role in assisting individuals in making informed decisions about their future career paths. These programs provide valuable resources, support, and counselling to help individual students to explore career options, develop essential skills, and navigate in the complexities of the workforce. However, the effectiveness of these career guidance programs varies significantly depending on various factors such as their design, implementation, and accessibility.

This research has evaluated the effectiveness of current career guidance programs, with a focus on assessing their impact on individuals' students' career decision-making processes, in academic and professional outcomes, for their overall well-being. By examining the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement of existing career guidance initiatives, this research provided valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and practitioners in the field of career development.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of career guidance in supporting individuals' career development and enhancing their employability. However, despite the proliferation of career guidance programs in educational institutions and community organizations, questions remain about their efficacy and relevance in meeting the diverse needs of learners and job seekers.

This research finding addresses these questions by conducting a comprehensive evaluation of current career guidance programs. Through the surveys and interviews, in which data analysis reveals factors such as quality of career guidance services, the relevance of career exploration resources, and the accessibility of support mechanisms. Additionally, it examined the perceptions and experiences of individuals who have participated in the research to

understand the effectiveness from the perspective of the end-users. By identifying best practices, challenges, and opportunities for improvement, this research seeks to inform the development of more effective and responsive career guidance programs. The ultimate goal of career guidance is to empower individuals to make informed career choices, achieve professional aspirations, and thrive in the ever-evolving world of work experience.

Therefore, in contemporary education setting, effective career guidance programs are instrumental in shaping students' academic and professional trajectories, influencing their choices in education and careers [1,2]. This multidimensional intervention is assisting the students in making informed decisions about their future vocations, with the efficacy of these programs directly impacting students' chosen pathways [3]. Scholars consistently highlight the significance of robust career guidance in secondary schools, emphasizing its positive effects on academic success, career preparedness, and overall life satisfaction [4,5]. The effectiveness of current career guidance programs is a subject of critical scholarly inquiry, necessitating an in-depth evaluation. This evaluation considers various factors contributing to program complexity, such as the quality of resources, curriculum adaptability, and the active involvement of educators [6]. Research explores the influence of these factors on the success of career guidance initiatives, identifying areas of improvement and potential challenges.

Within these scholarly discussions, the effectiveness of career guidance programs is contextualized within educational policy and societal expectations. This involves examining alignment with national educational goals, integrating innovative approaches, and addressing potential disparities in program, and accessibility among diverse student populations [7,8]. However, engagements with such scholarly examination, many researchers have provided valuable insights that inform educational policy makers, administrators, and practitioners. These insights are indispensable for refining existing programs, overcoming challenges, and ensuring that career guidance remains a dynamic and impactful component of the educational experience in preparing students for successful and fulfilling [8,9]. Furthermore, from the interview session, there are three categories that arose under the theme of the effectiveness of current career guidance as Program Success,

Resource Allocation and Program Adaptability. The emerging codes and quotations are outlined using schematic diagrams in Fig. 1.

In analyzing teachers' perspectives on the perceived success of current career guidance initiatives, the qualitative responses shed light on various aspects of the program. Respondent 1's assertion is that "*the career guidance sessions have been successful in showcasing a variety of professions to our students*". This resonates with existing literature supporting the idea that exposing students to diverse career options enhances their career awareness and decision-making [10]. To build on this, respondent 2 emphasizes on the pivotal role of career guidance sessions in enabling students to "*explore options beyond traditional careers*". This aligns with contemporary literature advocating for the need to broaden students' perspectives beyond conventional professions [11,12]. The above emphasized the importance of fostering a comprehensive understanding of available career pathways.

Moreover, respondent 3 observed that "*the success rate of our graduates pursuing their chosen careers has notably increased post-guidance*". This introduces an outcome-oriented perspective. This finding supports the argument that effective career guidance positively correlates with improved career outcomes for students [13,14]. This also suggests that well-executed guidance programs contribute not only to awareness but also to tangible success in career pursuits. Respondent 4 commented on how "*career guidance initiatives have notably increased students' confidence in pursuing diverse careers*". It aligns with research it underscores the role of career guidance in enhancing students' self-efficacy and confidence in their career decision-making [15,16]. This emphasizes on the fact that the psychological impact of guidance programs on students' belief in their ability to navigate and succeed in their chosen career paths. Furthermore, respondent 5's hinted that "*success stories shared by professionals during sessions have inspired many students to explore new career paths*" echoed the argument in literature that exposure to real-world success narratives can be a powerful motivator for students [17,18]. It suggested that incorporating real-life examples in career guidance sessions can positively influence students' aspirations and decision-making.

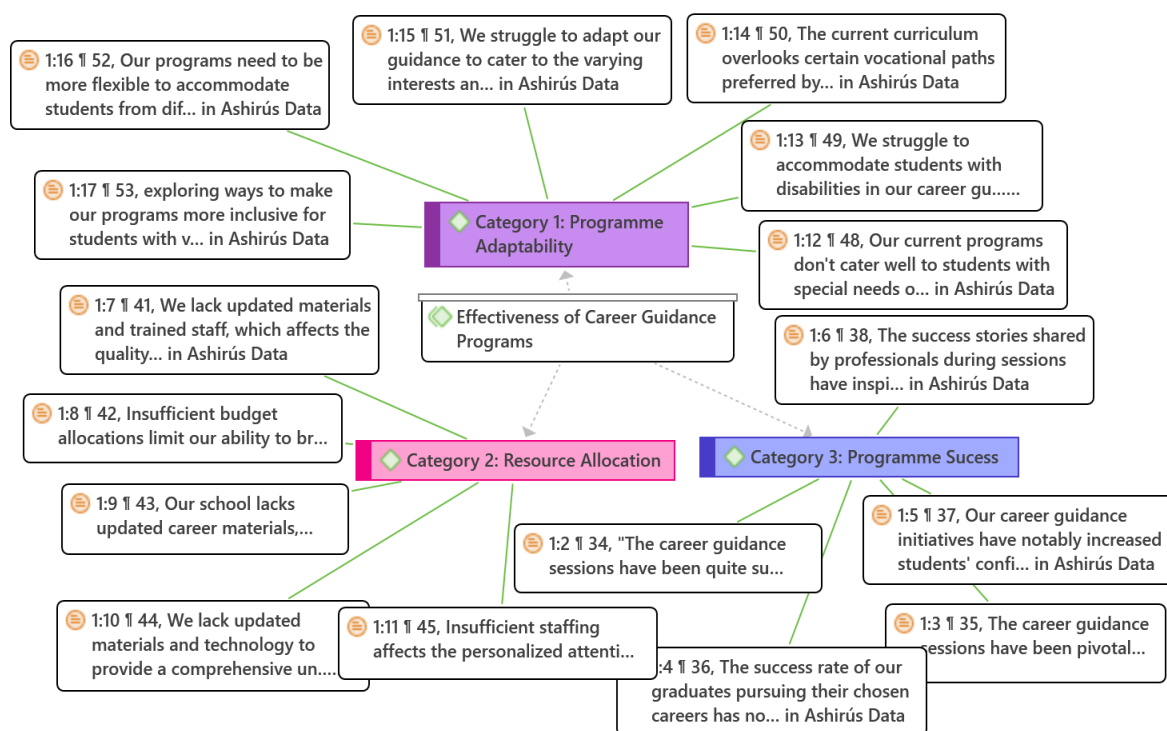


Fig. 1. Effectiveness of current career guidance programs

While these respondents' perspectives collectively paint a positive picture of the impact of career guidance programs, it is essential to acknowledge that challenges and varying outcomes may exist. Some scholars argued that the effectiveness of career guidance programs can be contingent on factors such as the quality of implementation, resources, and individual differences among students [19,18]. This highlighted the need for on-going evaluation and improvement to ensure the sustained positive impact of career guidance initiatives.

Examining the category of Resource Allocation, teachers' insights regarding the adequacy of resources for current career guidance initiatives revealed notable challenges. Respondent 1's observed that "we lack updated materials and trained staff, which affects the quality of career guidance we can provide" echoes concerns found in literature emphasizing the importance of up-to-date resources and well-trained personnel for effective career guidance [2,20]. The lack of these resources may hinder the ability to offer comprehensive and relevant guidance to students. Respondent 2 pointed out a financial constraint, stating, "Insufficient budget allocations limit our ability to bring in guest speakers or organize field trips." This aligns with existing literature indicating that budgetary

limitations can restrict the variety of experiences and exposure that students receive, potentially limiting the effectiveness of career guidance programs [21,22]. Financial constraints may impede the broadening of students' perspectives through interactions with professionals and real-world experiences.

Moreover, Respondent 3 highlighted the challenge of outdated career materials, stating, "Our school lacks updated career materials, making it challenging to provide diverse insights." The significance of current and diverse resources in shaping students' understanding of modern careers is acknowledged in the literature [2,20]. Out-dated materials may hinder the ability to provide relevant and comprehensive insights into the rapidly evolving job market. Respondent 4 reiterated that the need for updated materials and technology, stating, "We lack updated materials and technology to provide a comprehensive understanding of modern careers." This aligns with contemporary literature emphasizing the role of technology in modern career guidance [23,24]. The absence of updated materials and technology may impede efforts to expose students to the current trends and demands of various professions. Lastly, Respondent 5 points out the impact of insufficient staffing, stating, "Insufficient staffing affects the

personalized attention we can offer to students during career guidance." Literature supported the idea that adequate staffing is crucial for providing personalized guidance and support to students, addressing their unique needs [25,21]. Insufficient staffing may limit the ability to cater to individual student requirements effectively.

While these teachers' perspectives shed light on resource challenges, it is essential to acknowledge that resource limitations are common issues faced by educational institutions. Scholars argued that addressing these challenges requires strategic planning, advocacy for increased funding, and leveraging available resources efficiently [17]; This suggested that resource allocation is a critical aspect, which demands a holistic approach to ensure that career guidance programs can overcome constraints and effectively serve students' future needs.

On the exploration of the category of Program Adaptability, it revealed that the teachers' perspectives on the flexibility of current career guidance initiatives in meeting diverse student future needs. Respondent 1's remark that "*our current programs don't cater well to students with special needs or those from diverse backgrounds*" highlighted a crucial concern. Scholars argued that the adaptability of career guidance programs is essential for inclusivity, ensuring that students with diverse needs receive adequate support Santilli et al., [26]. The acknowledgement of this limitation suggests a potential gap in accommodating the unique requirements of students with special needs.

Building on this, respondent 2 underscored a specific challenge, stating that, "*We struggle to accommodate students with disabilities in our career guidance activities.*" This resonated with literature emphasizing the importance of creating accessible and inclusive career guidance experiences for students with disabilities [27,2]. Overcoming barriers to accessibility is crucial for ensuring equal opportunities for all students. Respondent 3 pointed out a limitation in the current curriculum, stating, "*The current curriculum overlooks certain vocational paths preferred by many students.*" Scholars argued for the importance of a flexible curriculum that caters to a wide array of vocational interests, as overlooking certain paths may limit students' exploration and choice [3,28].

Moreover, respondent 4 highlighted a broader challenge, stating, "*We struggle to adapt our*

guidance to cater to the varying interests and abilities of all students." This echoed the need for tailored guidance to meet the diverse interests and abilities of students, aligning with literature emphasizing the importance of personalized approaches in career counselling [29,30]. Respondent 5 recognized the need for increased flexibility, stating, "*Our programs need to be more flexible to accommodate students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.*" This perspective aligns with literature stressing the importance of socio-economic inclusivity in career guidance to address disparities in opportunities [31,32].

Additionally, respondent 6 expressed an ongoing effort, stating, "*We're exploring ways to make our programs more inclusive for students with varying abilities.*" This proactive approach aligns with recommendations in the literature that calls for continuous efforts to enhance inclusivity in career guidance programs [33,28].

While these teacher perspectives provided valuable insights into challenges and proactive efforts in program adaptability, it's important to acknowledge that achieving adaptability requires ongoing assessment and adjustment. Scholars argued that fostering program flexibility involves regular evaluation, collaboration with diverse stakeholders, and a commitment to inclusivity [34,35]. This emphasizes the dynamic nature of program adaptability, requiring continuous efforts to meet the evolving needs of a diverse student population.

3.2 Theme 2: Teachers' Engagement

Secondly, the discussion continued with the second theme that addresses the teachers' engagement in the dynamic landscape of secondary education, the role of teachers extends beyond conventional academic instruction. Teachers play a pivotal role in guiding and shaping the future trajectories of their students, particularly concerning career choices. The theme of "Teachers' Engagement in Career Guidance Programs" encompasses the multifaceted involvement of educators in facilitating the career development of secondary school students. Educational philosophy supports the idea that education should not only impart subject knowledge but also equip students with the skills and insights necessary for informed decision-making regarding their future careers Juvonen, J., Lessard, L.M., Rastogi, R., Schacter, H.L., & Smith, [36]. Research indicates

that the level of teacher involvement in career guidance significantly influences students' career decisions and academic success Bridgstock et al., [23]. Teachers, being mentors and role models, hold a unique position to provide valuable insights into various professions, instilling confidence and a sense of purpose in their students Banerjee-batist & Rocco, [37].

In the context of educational institutions, teacher engagement in career guidance programs aligns with the broader goals of preparing students for the challenges of the real world. By actively participating in career-related discussions and activities, teachers contribute to the cultivation of a future-ready and well-informed workforce Valverde et al., [38].

While the significance of teacher engagement is acknowledged, challenges such as limited resources, time constraints, and competing academic demands often impede the comprehensive integration of career guidance into the curriculum Bridgstock et al., [23]. Teachers' readiness and competence in providing effective career guidance may vary, highlighting the importance of ongoing professional development opportunities. Training

programs can empower educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of modern career landscapes Blokker et al., [39]. Collaboration among teachers, as well as partnerships with external career counselling professionals and industry experts, presents an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of career guidance programs. Collaborative efforts bring diverse perspectives, enriching students' exposure to various career possibilities Lent, [40].

As education continues to evolve, the theme of "Teachers' Engagement in Career Guidance Programs" emerges from the interview session; three categories that arose under this theme were teachers' roles, perception and collaboration as outlined using schematic diagrams in Fig. 2.

In exploring the dynamics of career guidance within secondary schools, the perspectives and actions of teachers are pivotal. This report explored three key categories derived from interviews: Teacher Roles, Teacher Perception, and Collaboration. Through these categories, the research aimed at understanding teachers' perceptions of their roles, the influence they

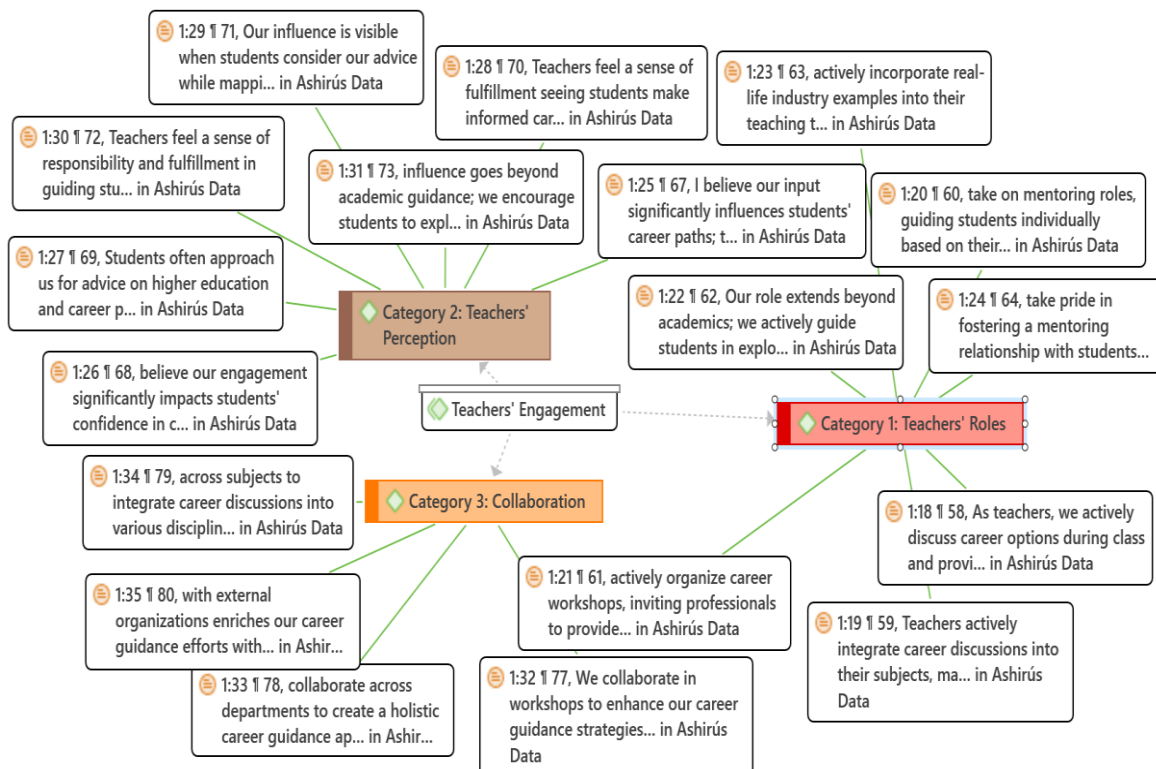


Fig. 2. Teachers' Engagement

believed they have on students' career decisions, and the extent of collaboration among teachers to enhance career guidance efforts.

The respondents highlighted their active involvement in guiding students' career paths, both within and outside the classroom. Respondent 1 stated, "*As teachers, we actively discuss career options during class and provide guidance where possible.*" This reflects the proactive approach teachers take in initiating career-related discussions. Additionally, respondents emphasized the integration of career discussions into their teaching, making it relevant and practical for students. As respondent 3 noted, "*Teachers actively integrate career discussions into their subjects, making it relevant for students.*" Such integration highlights the importance of embedding career guidance within the academic curriculum to enhance students' understanding of real-world applications.

Furthermore, teachers take on mentoring roles, providing individualized guidance to students based on their aspirations. This personalized approach fosters a supportive environment for students to explore and pursue their career goals. The collaborative efforts of teachers in organizing career workshops and inviting professionals to provide insights into different industries exemplify their dedication to enriching students' career awareness and understanding.

These findings resonated with existing literature emphasizing the multifaceted roles of teachers in career guidance (Jones & Wang, 2019). Research supported that the effectiveness of integrating career discussions into the curriculum, emphasizing its relevance for students' career development [23]. Additionally, the importance of personalized mentoring and collaborative initiatives in enhancing career guidance efforts aligns with previous studies highlighting the positive impact of such approaches [41].

On the teacher's perceived category, teachers' influence on students' career decisions is significant and fulfilling. They believed that their guidance plays a crucial role in shaping students' career paths. As respondent 2 expressed, "*I believe our input significantly influences students' career paths; they often seek our advice.*" This underlines the trust and confidence students place in their teachers' guidance. Furthermore, teachers derived a sense of fulfilment from

witnessing students make informed career choices based on their guidance. This feeling was captured by respondent 5 who mentioned, "*Teachers feel a sense of fulfilment seeing students make informed career choices based on our guidance.*" Such feelings of fulfilment highlight the intrinsic motivation teachers derive from contributing to students' career development. The findings align with literature emphasizing the influential role of teachers in students' career development [20]. Research suggests that students often turn to teachers for career advice, highlighting the importance of teacher-student relationships in the career decision-making process [39]. Furthermore, teachers' sense of fulfilment in guiding students towards fulfilling careers is in line with the studies emphasizing the intrinsic rewards associated with career guidance roles [4].

In this section, we explored the theme of collaboration among teachers to enhance career guidance efforts. The respondents provided valuable insights into the various ways in which collaboration is utilized to enrich career guidance strategies.

Respondent 1 emphasized the importance of collaboration in workshops to enhance career guidance strategies collectively. Similarly, Respondent 2 highlighted the collaborative efforts across departments to create a holistic career guidance approach. Moreover, Respondent 3 emphasized collaboration across subjects to integrate career discussions into various disciplines for a holistic approach. This interdisciplinary approach is supported by studies advocating for the integration of career education into the broader curriculum to enhance students' career readiness [42]. By embedding career discussions into subjects such as science, mathematics, and humanities, educators can demonstrate the real-world relevance of academic content and help students connect their learning to future career opportunities Smith et al., (2021). This finding aligns with existing literature that underscored the significance of collaborative efforts among educators in improving career guidance outcomes [43]. Collaborative workshops provide a platform for sharing best practices, exchanging ideas, and collectively addressing challenges, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of career guidance initiatives [44]. This interdisciplinary collaboration is consistent with recommendations from the research literature, which suggests that integrating career discussions into various

disciplines fosters a more comprehensive understanding of career options among students Jaya, [45]. By involving teachers from different subject areas, schools can offer students a multifaceted perspective on potential career pathways, catering to diverse interests and talents [19]. Finally, respondent 4 highlighted the value of collaborating with external organizations to enrich career guidance efforts with industry-specific insights. This finding underscores the importance of forging partnerships with industry stakeholders to provide students with first-hand knowledge of career pathways and emerging trends Bragg et al., [46]. By leveraging external expertise and resources, schools can offer students a more nuanced understanding of potential career trajectories and equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in their chosen fields Rajab, [47].

In summary, the respondents' quotes underscored the critical role of collaboration in enhancing career guidance efforts in secondary schools. By collaborating in workshops, across departments, across subjects, and with external organizations, educators can enrich career guidance strategies, provide students with diverse perspectives, and better prepare them for future career success.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has shed light on the comprehensive perceptions of teachers regarding their roles in career guidance among secondary school students. Through comprehensive analysis and interpretation of data, several key findings have emerged. Firstly, teachers recognize the significant influence they employ in shaping students' career choices and aspirations. Their perceptions often reflect a sense of responsibility and commitment towards guiding students towards meaningful career choices. However, challenges such as limited resources, time constraints, and inadequate training hinder their effectiveness in fulfilling this role to its fullest potential. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of enhancing teachers' capacity and support systems in career guidance. Professional development programs tailored to equip educators with the requisite knowledge, skills, and tools are imperative. Additionally, fostering collaboration between teachers, career counsellors, parents, and relevant stakeholders can create a more holistic approach to career guidance within secondary schools.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this research, the government is recommended to:

1. Implement comprehensive career guidance training programs for teachers to enhance their competency in guiding students effectively.
2. Develop and disseminate resources, such as career assessment tools and informational materials, to support teachers in their career guidance efforts.
3. Foster collaboration between teachers, career masters, and parents to create a supportive ecosystem for students' career exploration and decision-making.
4. Advocate for policy reforms that prioritize career guidance within secondary school curricula and allocate adequate resources to support its implementation.
5. Conduct further research to explore the impact of teachers' perceptions and practices on students' career choices longitudinally, to inform continuous improvement efforts.

By addressing these recommendations, stakeholders can work towards fostering a conducive environment that empowers teachers to fulfil their pivotal role in guiding secondary school students towards fulfilling and meaningful career exploration.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

As per international standards or university standards written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

CONSENT

As per international standards or university standards, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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