

Stereotypes and Its Influence on the Course of Study Choice and Communication Skills of First-Year Students of Christopher University



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Abstract

Career choice has become an important aspect of an individual's life because it determines the blueprint that the individual will follow in the future. However, these choices are shaped by multiple factors, one of which is stereotypes. Stereotypes can lead to limited opportunities, biased perceptions, and ineffective communication, ultimately affecting students' academic performance and professional development. Against this backdrop, this study examined stereotypes and their influence on the choice of course of study and communication skills of first-year students at Christopher University. The study was grounded in social learning theory as well as communication skills theory. Using a descriptive survey, the study sampled the opinions of 100 first-year students at Christopher University. A convenience sampling technique was employed in selecting respondents for the study, and data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), where descriptive statistics, frequencies, and percentages were used to analyse and present data. Some common forms of stereotypes were identified in the findings. About 26% of the respondents admitted to experiencing academic stereotypes, 30% reported gender stereotypes, 26% acknowledged social class stereotypes, while 12% indicated career and success stereotypes. While parental and family expectations emerged as a major determinant of career choice, most first-year students indicated that stereotypes did not significantly shape their decisions. Furthermore, the findings revealed that most students (68%) did not exhibit an inferiority complex and were able to confidently articulate their opinions about their chosen course of study. Although 54% of respondents noted that they were sometimes perceived as less intelligent based on their

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chosen course, these assumptions were often corrected once meaningful conversations were initiated. This further highlights the role of communication skills in challenging and reshaping stereotypes. With an average weighted mean of ($\bar{x} = 3.53$) and a standard deviation of ($SD = 1.30$), the study concluded that stereotypes may not be the most influential factor affecting students' career choices. Given that stereotypes were not found to be the predominant influence on course of study choices among first-year students at Christopher University, it is recommended that institutional focus should shift toward strengthening career guidance frameworks that prioritize individual aptitudes, interests, and long-term professional goals. While the influence of family expectations remains significant, structured interventions such as career counseling programs and mentorship initiatives should be implemented to foster autonomous decision-making among students, particularly before they select their course of study.

Keywords: *Stereotypes, Course, Career choice, Communication skills, First year students.*

Introduction

The decision regarding a course of study in tertiary institutions remains a critical concern for many Nigerian students and their parents. Career choice is a foundational step in shaping one's professional and personal future, as it often determines opportunities, satisfaction, and overall life trajectory. A career choice may be defined as selecting one profession over others (Ooro *et al.*, 2017). The selection of an appropriate career not only influences students' long-term goals but also has significant implications for their emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Consequently, students at higher education institutions are actively engaged in a process that requires critical thinking and the assessment of several elements prior to selecting, planning, and pursuing a certain profession.

Uwaifo (2017) asserts that focused contemplation and evaluation of all pertinent aspects are essential for several reasons. Initially, pursuing an inappropriate vocation might negatively impact one's emotional and mental well-being due to discontent and unmet aspirations. Secondly, an erroneous career decision may result in persistent employment uncertainty, and ultimately, it may lead to poor planning and an inappropriate entry into a field. This might tarnish one's enjoyment of life due to the ensuing maladjustment, which may also directly result in emotional instability. In recent decades, students have had difficulties in selecting their careers upon completing their education. The decision-making process is influenced by several significant individuals and institutions whose views may be crucial to the prospective student. The prospective student's evaluation of these criteria, together with other constraints, may influence the decision to accept or decline certain courses, one of which is stereotypes. According to Lamb (1999) cited in Temilola and Mashau (2024), stereotypes are widely accepted and unchallenged misconceptions or exaggerated views of a group, prevalent in verbal, written, and visual societal settings. Generalisations and assumptions exist on the behaviour and experiences of individuals at or above a specific age, sometimes neglecting individual differences and unique circumstances (Herman & Bugental, 2015). According to Taylor and Walton (2011), stereotypes can significantly impact students' academic experiences and career trajectories. So also does Rydell and Boucher (2017), affirm that stereotype threat can undermine learning. This implies that students across tertiary institutions may encounter societal, cultural, or institutional stereotypes

that influence how certain fields of study are perceived, often associating specific courses with intelligence, gender roles, financial success, or social prestige. These stereotypes can place pressure on students to pursue courses that align with social expectations rather than personal passion or aptitude. Moreover, beyond influencing course selection, such stereotypes may also affect students' communication skills, and these stereotypes can lead to limited opportunities, biased perceptions, and ineffective communication. The fallout of this is that it may end up undermining their confidence, limiting classroom participation, or affecting their ability to articulate ideas freely, especially when they feel judged or marginalized based on their course choice, ultimately affecting students' academic performance and professional development. According to the Corporate Finance Institute (2015), communication skills play a pivotal role in both professional and personal life, impacting various aspects in between. Despite the importance of addressing these issues, there is limited research focusing specifically on how stereotypes influence both academic choices and communication development among university students in the Nigerian context. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to examine the stereotypes faced by first-year students at Christopher University, in relation to their course choices, and the extent to which they impact students' communication skills and self-expression within academic settings.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the common stereotypes experienced by first-year students at Christopher University related to their course of study.
2. To examine the influence of these stereotypes on the decisions of first-year students when choosing their course of study.
3. To assess the impact of stereotypes on the communication skills of first-year students of Christopher University.
4. To explore the relationship between the demographic background of first-year students of Christopher University and the stereotypes they experience.

Conceptual Clarification

Stereotypes

The name "stereotype" originates from two Greek words: "stereos," meaning "hard, solid, rigid," and "typos," signifying "solid form, characteristic imprint." In 1798, the printer Firmin Didot used this word to characterise printing using fixed characters. Lippman, an American writer and political scientist, first used the phrase as a singular word in 1922, characterising stereotypes as mental images. They are misconceptions often held by individuals in direct but unempirical ways, significantly influencing and shaping their collective life. Neuliep (2020) defines stereotypes as the categorisation of individuals based on certain traits, thereafter attributing to them characteristics presumed to be representative of that group. Stereotyping is attributing both favourable and unfavourable characteristics to individuals within a group. Stereotypes are components of social categories and are often linked to characteristics, behaviours, and attitudes.

Mindiola *et. al* (2002) assert that stereotypes may represent either favourable or unfavourable perceptions of individuals or groups. Moreover, these sensations might differ markedly in their precision. The process of stereotyping, therefore, manifests as a propensity to ascribe generalised and simplified traits to groups of individuals at the

language level. When you conclude that a group of individuals has certain characteristics based on the behaviour of a few, you are participating in stereotyping. Stereotyping has characteristics akin to the mistake of overgeneralisation. Psychologists describe overgeneralisation as a cognitive fallacy in which an individual draws an expansive inference from a singular event. Lippman (1922), cited by Litterer (1933), asserts that humans do not first see and then define; rather, we first define and thereafter perceive. Amidst the overwhelming chaos of the external world, we discern what our culture has predetermined for us. There are different kinds of stereotypes, ranging from ethnic stereotypes, gender stereotypes, and academic ability stereotypes which highlight oversimplified or inaccurate assumptions about individuals' or groups' intellectual capabilities, academic potential, or performance based on certain characteristics such as field of study, academic backgrounds, socioeconomic status, or cultural or ethnic background. Career prestige and success stereotype, social class stereotypes, among others. Multitudes of social and academic research have examined gender stereotypes across many cultures. Additionally, concepts such as patriarchy and hegemony have been used to analyse gender stereotypes. Bamgbose and Ladele (2023), also address female complicity as an additional aspect of gender norms. Social-class stereotypes pertain to hierarchies among individuals based on their power and wealth. Debates about the perception of working-class individuals as unclean, ignorant, and aggressive, alongside the view of affluent people as pretentious, haughty, and indifferent, pertain to social-class stereotypes. Recently, there has been a misconception about disabilities. Individuals with impairments have historically been marginalised from societal engagement. For instance, someone with speech impairments or absent hands may be deemed incapable of doing a profession that, in fact, they are fully competent to execute. Ultimately, there exists an ethnic stereotype. An ethnic, racial, or cultural stereotype comprises a component of a belief system on the usual traits of individuals of a certain ethnic group, their standing, and their society and cultural conventions. In Nigeria, the Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo populations have been subject to corresponding stereotypes. The Yoruba are characterised as individuals with a strong affinity for celebration, the Igbo are portrayed as enthusiasts of wealth and commerce, known for their extravagant wedding customs, while the Hausa are sometimes represented as lacking intelligence. Thiele (2015), affirmed that in contemporary culture, the primary medium for the dissemination of stereotypes is via various forms of media, including television, radio, films, newspapers, books, pamphlets, stickers, and, since the 1990s, digital media.

Career Choice

Michael (2002), observed that career selection is a process facilitating the examination of occupational, intellectual, and social pursuits to fulfil personal, financial, and educational objectives. The author emphasises that these professions are chosen in a way that facilitates the achievement of personal objectives. The selection of a career includes the choice of optional topics, specialised courses, and ensuing professions (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Operationally, career choice is a decision process about which vocation to pursue among several choices. Work-leisure decisions are made throughout the career selection process. The selection of a career is a challenging decision, particularly when one's life will depend upon it. Stebleton et al. (2018), said that a career encompasses the whole of experiences through which an individual acquires knowledge and prepares to participate in work as a component of their lifestyle. Splete, Weaver, and Atiyyah (2009),

emphasised that a profession is a gratifying journey that unfolds throughout one's life and encompasses households, educational institutions, and the community. Every individual must engage in a profession to add their worth to the nation's progress. The selection of a career is a significant impediment that presents challenges in a student's life. Numerous interrelated elements are involved in this process (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). This indicates that the profession selection process is complex and entails challenging decision-making. Today, selecting a profession requires not only the formulation of strategic goals but also comprehensive career counselling to navigate the always-evolving socio-economic landscape. Olawole, Olugbemi, and Maleeq (2024), assert that career choice involves the capacity to recognise and pick an employment or calling that facilitates the attainment of life goals. People use self-awareness, knowledge of the labour market, and environmental possibilities to make professional selections.

Literature Review

The selection of a career has emerged as a significant facet of one's existence, as it establishes the framework that will guide the individual's future endeavours. According to Etaga, Ngonadi, Aforika and Etaga (2023), in contemporary society, education equips individuals with essential knowledge, a pragmatic outlook, and the capacity to strategically navigate their future career paths in the most appropriate way. Therefore, it is crucial to select an appropriate career path early on to prevent future regrets. Consequently, an individual needs to engage in thorough contemplation regarding their career selection. A number of university students perceive their future as an extraordinary journey. Many hold the belief that they will be able to engage in the market upon the completion of their studies. The selection of a career profoundly influences an individual's life, as a failure to make an informed choice often results in the inability to secure employment. Uwaifo (2017), asserts that the necessity for a judicious selection cannot be overstated. Nevertheless, the challenge related to decision-making concerning occupational choices among university undergraduates is a significant concern in contemporary discourse. It seems that as a result of these challenges, numerous students in Nigerian universities find themselves pursuing fields of study that diverge from their true preferences under typical conditions.

Review of Empirical Studies

Chindo, Adamu and Mohammed (2021), in their study, examined factors affecting career choice and aspiration among secondary school students in Nigeria. Findings from their study reveal that there were marked parental and peer group constraints in the career choice of secondary school students in Nigeria. It also stresses that gender disparity was among the factors affecting career decisions and aspirations of students; girls tend to aspire to more feminine occupations, while boys tend to aspire more masculine careers. In a comparable study, Justina (2022), investigated the determinants of career choice among secondary school students in the Enugu East Education Zone. The findings indicate a significant impact of social factors on career choice, which has implications for the development of school libraries. The subject of profession choice considerations is a complex phenomenon that needs comprehension from teachers, parents, school officials, and all parties involved. Uwaifo (2017), investigated the determinants affecting career selection among students at Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. The study's findings indicated that the prestige associated with the occupation, academic disciplines pursued

in schools, and high compensation are the most significant determinants in students' career choices. Etaga et. al (2023), examined the factors that actually influence the choice of the course of study by science students. In order of influence, findings from the study showed that the most influential factor considered as a factor that influences the choice of course of study is Bright Future in the chosen career. This might be so due to the current global economic inflation, as everyone is now interested in a bright future that guarantees food security and a better life.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory posits that individuals learn behaviors, attitudes, and social norms through observation, imitation, and modeling, particularly of influential role models such as parents, teachers, peers, or media figures. According to his social learning theory, children's behaviour in the future is greatly influenced by what they see adults do and how that behaviour is rewarded or penalized. Children see a range of people in their lives, and this can have an impact on how they behave, grow, and change. These individuals, who include parents, siblings, friends, and instructors, have the power to define a child by their actions. This learning occurs within a social context and is reinforced through rewards, punishments, or vicarious experiences. According to Nwachukwu, Azuka & Ikechukwu (2024), reinforcement plays an important part in learning, according to the social learning theory. Bandura, therefore, believes that individuals are more likely to repeat behaviours that are rewarded than those that are punished. This suggests that positive reinforcement can be used to encourage and reinforce a positive mindset in children.

In relation to stereotypes, the theory suggests that individuals, especially children and adolescents, can internalize stereotypical beliefs and expectations by observing how certain roles, professions, or behaviors are associated with specific social groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status). For example, a young girl repeatedly exposed to media or social environments where engineering is portrayed as a "male-dominated" field may internalize the stereotype that women are less suited for technical careers. Such learned stereotypes can influence academic interests, self-efficacy beliefs, and ultimately, career choices. Bandura emphasizes the role of self-efficacy, one's belief in their own ability to succeed, as central to decision-making. If stereotypes negatively affect a student's self-efficacy in a particular domain (e.g., math, science, leadership), they may avoid pursuing courses or careers in those areas, regardless of their actual potential. Thus, Social Learning Theory explains how stereotypes are transmitted, reinforced, and acted upon, often unconsciously, through social interaction and observation, shaping not only personal identity but also educational and professional trajectories.

Communication Skills Theory

The theory was proposed by British social psychologist Michael Argyle in the 1970s. Central to Michael Argyle's thesis is the notion that communication extends beyond spoken language, including a diverse range of verbal and non-verbal signals that together form the fabric of human connection. This theory asserts that effective communication is a cyclical process consisting of several essential stages: idea

formulation, message encoding, transmission via the selected communication channel, decoding by the recipient, and ultimately, the recipient's response, which subsequently serves as a new communication stimulus.

Nke and Ntamu (2021), assert that communication abilities develop trust among those engaged in the interaction. Successfully traversing communication barriers requires a sophisticated comprehension and implementation of Argyle's communication theory. This theory elucidates the methods to successfully overcome challenges such as preconceptions, cultural differences, and personal biases that often impede efficient communication. Utilising the insights from Argyle, professionals may formulate and convey ideas that are both lucid and impactful across varied audiences.

Oroka & Igberaharha (2024), affirm that communication is one of the main skills students should focus on developing, especially before they graduate. Having weak communication skills will make it difficult for them to find employment. Therefore, applying Argyle's theory helps highlight how stereotypes disrupt each stage of communication by causing biases in message creation, interpretation, and feedback. By recognizing this, individuals can work to improve their communication skills by actively challenging stereotypes and engaging more empathetically and consciously with others.

Methodology

This study used a survey research design; the population for this study comprised 154 first-year students of Christopher University. Using the Taro Yamane formula (1967), a sample size of one hundred and eleven (111) was derived. The instrument of data collection for the study was a questionnaire. After utilizing a proportional technique to establish the number of respondents (students) from the first year students of Christopher University, convenience sampling was used to pick respondents across various departments in the school. One hundred and eleven (111) copies of the questionnaire were distributed, while one hundred (100) copies were retrieved from the respondents and validated for further studies, resulting in an approximately 90% per cent response rate.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Student Perceptions of Stereotypes and Course Selection

Items	Never Freq. (%)	A little Freq. (%)	Indifferent Freq. (%)	A lot Freq. (%)	Completely (%)	\bar{x} SD
To what extent did family expectations influence your choice of study?	40 (40)	28 (28)	6 (6)	24 (24)	2 (2)	2.20 1.26
Items	Yes Freq. (%)	No Freq. (%)	Not sure Freq. (%)			\bar{x} SD
Have you ever felt pressured to pursue or avoid a subject based on cultural, gender or racial stereotypes?	16 (16)	64 (64)	20 (20)			2.04 0.60

Items	Family Expectations Freq. (%)	Media Portrayal of careers Freq. (%)	Secondary School teachers Freq. (%)	Personal Interest Freq. (%)	Financial Prospect Freq. (%)	\bar{x}	SD
Which of the following influenced your course of selection the most?	20 (20)	18 (18)	6 (6)	52 (52)	4 (4)	3.82	1.67
Items	Yes Freq. (%)	No Freq. (%)	Not sure Freq. (%)			\bar{x}	SD
Do you feel your academic program reflects your true interest and passion?	62 (62)	10 (10)	28 (28)			1.76	1.25
Items	Yes Freq. (%)	No Freq. (%)			\bar{x}	SD	
Have you ever changed your academic path due to advice rooted stereotypes?	34 (34.0)	66 (66.0)			1.66	0.47	
Average Mean						2.29	1.05

Source: Field Survey 2025

With an average mean of 2.29 and a standard deviation of 1.05, Table 1 shows that even though 40% of the respondents were not influenced to pick their chosen course of study based on family expectations, majority may have been influenced to a large extent in picking their chosen course of study, although in varying degrees as only 26% of the respondents agreed to this a lot and completely, while 28% of the respondents said they were influenced by family expectations a little, representing a combined 54%.

Table 2: Common stereotypes experienced by first year students at Christopher University related to their course of study

Items	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	N Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	\bar{x}	SD
People assume I choose my course of study because it is easy and less academically challenging.	10 (10.0)	16 (16.0)	4 (4.0)	26 (26.0)	44 (44.0)	3.78	1.41
People feel my course is considered more appropriate for a certain gender.	10 (10.0)	20 (20.0)	24 (24.0)	22 (22.0)	24 (24.0)	3.30	1.31
There is a growing sense of believe that my course of study is less prestigious than others.	16 (16.0)	10 (10.0)	18 (18.0)	18 (18.0)	38 (38.0)	3.52	1.48
There is a perception that only wealthy or privileged students that select my chosen course of study.	14 (14.0)	18 (18.0)	36 (36.0)	18 (18.0)	14 (14.0)	3.00	1.22

I have been told my course is not serious or lacks job prospects.	4 (4.0)	8 (8.0)	10 (10.0)	34 (34.0)	44 (44.0)	4.06	1.11
Average weighted Mean						3.53	1.30

Source: Field Survey 2025

KEY: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, N=Neutral
*****Decision Rule if mean is 1 to 1.49 =Neutral; 1.5 to 2.49 = Strongly Disagree; 2.5 to 3.49 = Disagree; 3.5 to 4.49= Agree; 4.5 to 5.00= Strongly Agree**

Table 2 above shows the common stereotypes experienced by students at Christopher University related to their course of study. With an average weighted mean of ($\bar{x} = 3.53$) and standard deviation ($SD = 1.30$), many of the respondents are not affected by stereotypes.

Table 3: Influence of stereotypes on first year students' decisions when choosing their course of study

Items	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	N Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	\bar{x}	SD
I was discouraged from choosing a particular course because of how it is viewed in the society.	12 (12.0)	22 (22.0)	20 (20.0)	30 (30.0)	16 (16.0)	3.16	1.28
I would have chosen a different course if there were no social or cultural biases.	2 (2.0)	10 (10.0)	18 (18.0)	42 (42.0)	28 (28.0)	3.84	1.01
Stereotypes about certain courses being easy or hard influenced my decision.	8 (8.0)	12 (12.0)	24 (24.0)	24 (24.0)	32 (32.0)	3.60	1.27
I would have chosen a different course if there were no social or cultural biases.	4 (4.0)	8 (8.0)	22 (22.0)	38 (38.0)	28 (28.0)	3.78	1.07
My parents/sponsors opinion largely influenced my chosen course of study.	8 (8.0)	24 (24.0)	18 (18.0)	18 (18.0)	32 (32.0)	3.42	1.37
Average Mean						3.56	1.20

Source: Field Survey 2025

From the parameters shown in Table 3 used in measuring the influence of stereotypes on students' decisions when choosing their course of study, many of the respondents were not influenced by stereotypes in choosing their course of study.

Table 4: Impact of stereotypes on the communication skills of first year students of Christopher University

Items	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	N Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	\bar{x}	SD
I feel less confident expressing my opinions because of how others view my course of study.	2 (2.0)	10 (10.0)	20 (20.0)	34 (34.0)	34 (34.0)	3.88	1.06
I often feel the need to prove my intelligence during conversations due to	18 (18.0)	36 (36.0)	26 (26.0)	6 (6.0)	14 (14.0)	2.62	1.25

course related stereotype.								
Classmates have treated my contributions as less valuable because of my field of study.	4 (4.0)	2 (2.0)	18 (18.0)	38 (38.0)	38 (38.0)	4.04	1.00	
I find it difficult to make friends and interact freely with other departments and faculties.	2 (2.0)	10 (10.0)	22 (22.0)	28 (28.0)	38 (38.0)	3.90	1.09	
I am more cautious about how I speak or present myself around students from prestigious courses.	10 (10.0)	14 (14.0)	16 (16.0)	22 (22.0)	38 (38.0)	3.64	1.38	
Average Mean						3.61	1.15	

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 4 as shown above was to assess the impact of stereotypes on the communication skills of students. With an average mean of 3.61 and standard deviation of 1.15, the study revealed that the communication skills of the respondents are not influenced by stereotypes.

Table 5: Relationship between the demographic background of first year students of Christopher University and the stereotypes they experience

Items	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	N Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	\bar{x}	SD
People often assume my course is more suited to the opposite gender.	6 (6.0)	14 (14.0)	24 (24.0)	32 (32.0)	24 (24.0)	3.88	1.06
Students from wealthier backgrounds are treated more seriously when they pursue certain courses.	8 (8.0)	20 (20.0)	42 (42.0)	14 (14.0)	16 (16.0)	2.62	1.25
I have experienced course-related discrimination because of my ethnic/cultural background.	2 (2.0)	10 (10.0)	12 (12.0)	40 (40.0)	36 (36.0)	4.04	1.00
I have experienced course-related discrimination because of my religious background.	- -	2 (2.0)	18 (18.0)	42 (42.0)	38 (38.0)	3.90	1.09
Students like me are often assumed to belong in specific academics fields.	4 (4.0)	22 (22.0)	30 (30.0)	20 (20.0)	24 (24.0)	3.64	1.38
Average Mean						3.62	1.07

Source: Field Survey 2025

Responses from Table 5 show that many of the respondents believe that their course is suited to their gender and not the opposite. However, responses are evenly distributed on whether students from wealthier backgrounds are treated more seriously when they pursue certain courses, 28% agree, 30% disagree while 42% are neutral. Findings from the study however show that majority of the respondents (76%) have not ethnic related stereotypes based on their cultural or ethnic background, neither have they experienced based on their religious background.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of the study was to identify the common stereotypes experienced by first year students at Christopher University in relation to their course of study. Findings from the study revealed that respondents generally do not think that their course of

study choice was influenced by level of difficulty, neither do they think it is meant for a particular gender as only 30% of the respondents collectively agree and strongly agree to that. A greater percentage of the respondents (56%) do not also think that their course is less prestigious than others. However, responses on whether there is a perception that only wealthy students choose a course in their field shows is evenly distributed as 32% of the respondents believe so, while another 32% do not believe so and 36% are neutral. Many of the respondents (78%) also do not think that their course lacks job prospects. Although many of the respondents are not faced by stereotypes, the few ones who claimed to have experienced one form of stereotype or the other identified stereotypes such as academic, gender, social class, career and success stereotypes as well as stigma and negative perceptions as the most common type of stereotype that they encounter in relation their course of study. Students who internalize societal expectations may prioritize status-driven disciplines over those aligned with their personal skills and interests. This is at variance with the position of Dunlap and Barth (2023), that in many academic environments and tertiary institutions, students' choices of course and their ability to express themselves are often shaped not only by personal interests and abilities but also by prevailing stereotypes.

Concerning the second objective, findings from the study shows that opinions were evenly divided by respondents on whether they were discouraged from choosing a particular course because of how it is viewed in the society, while 34% of the respondents seemed to agree, 36% did not. However, majority of the respondents (70%) feel fulfilled with their chosen course of study. The responses also show that many of the respondents were not particularly influenced by stereotypes. This is also at variance with the findings of Taylor & Walton (2011), who affirms that stereotypes can significantly impact students' academic experiences and career trajectories.

The third objective of the study was to assess the impact of stereotypes on the communication skills of students. Findings from the study shows that majority of the students (68%) are not having inferiority complex expressing their opinions as a result of their course of study. Even though a combined 54% of the respondents think they might have been considered less intelligent based on their course of study until they were engaged in conversations. However, 76% of the respondents do not think this has affected their estimation among their peers, likewise their social skills.

The fourth objective of the study was to explore the relationship between students' demographic background and the stereotypes they experience. Findings from the study reveal that by and large, there is no strong nexus between the demographic background of students and any form of stereotypes which they may be experiencing. This is a deviation from the core assumptions of the social learning theory which posits that individuals learn behaviors, attitudes, and social norms through observation, imitation, and modeling, particularly of influential role models such as parents, teachers, peers, or media figures. According to Sanaa (2021), influences of familial context, encompassing the contributions of parents, siblings, and peers, significantly shaped the academic decisions of the students involved in the study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study concludes that there might be a changing trend regarding assumptions surrounding the strong and pervasive influence of stereotypes on the choice of study and communication skills of Christopher University

first year students. Even though the findings reveal family expectations as key in influencing students towards their chosen course of study, these choices were not affected by stereotypes.

Given that stereotypes were not found to be the predominant influence on students' course of study choices at Christopher University, it is recommended that institutional focus should shift towards strengthening career guidance frameworks that prioritize individual aptitudes, interests, and long-term professional goals. While the influence of family expectations remains significant, structured interventions such as career counseling programs and mentorship initiatives should be implemented to foster autonomous decision-making among students. Further research into the nuanced interplay of sociocultural factors influencing career choices is encouraged, to ensure that educational policies and support services remain evidence-based and student-centered.

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Individual contribution of authors to the study

Philip Teniola David initiated the idea to carry out this study based on personal experiences. He therefore provided the background to the study, identified the knowledge gap, research objectives, collected data from the respondents used for this study, and also contributed to the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

Ayoola Olalekan Ajasa, Ph.D conducted the data interpretation and analysis of this study based on data collected from the field using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). He also worked on the discussion of findings for the study.

Adejoke Adekanmbi, Ph.D is a scholar and public health expert. She helped in fine-tuning the knowledge gap and justification for this study. She also identified and provided relevant literature and theoretical underpinnings used for this study as well as the references.

Aderinola Babatunde has a background in English Language and also an English educator. She edited and proof-read the manuscript critically by identifying the spellings, grammatical errors, coherence overall logical flow of the manuscript.