Occupational Choice Made Easy With Career Counselling

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ABSTRACT

In this article an attempt has been made to expound the concept of Career counselling in simple and lucid manner.The rudemantary fundamentals of the career counselling field including the prominent perspectives with their efficacy have been discussed.Career counseling is on going face-to-face interaction performed by individuals who have specialized training in the field to assist people in obtaining a clear understanding of themselves (e.g., interests, skills, values, personality traits) and to obtain an equally clear picture of the world of work so as to make choices that lead to satisfying work lives. Career counselors help clients within the context of a psychological relationship with issues such as making career choices and adjustments, dealing with career transitions, overcoming career barriers, and optimizing clients' work lives across the life span. Career counselors are cognizant of the many contextual factors present in the lives of their clients and of the ways in which social and emotional issues interplay with career issues. The emerging trends of Career counselling with certain reflections have been presented as well.

Key word:*Career Counselling, Career Development, Riasec, Work Adjustment, ,Vocational Personality, Occupational Choice, Career satisfaction*

1. Introduction

Career counseling is ongoing face-to-face interaction performed by individuals who have specialized training in the field to assist people in obtaining a clear understanding of themselves (e.g., interests, skills, values, personality traits) and to obtain an equally clear picture of the world of work so as to make choices that lead to satisfying work lives. Career counselors help clients within the context of a psychological relationship with issues such as making career choices and adjustments, dealing with career transitions, overcoming career barriers, and optimizing clients' work lives across the life span. Career counselors are cognizant of the many contextual factors present in the lives of their clients and of the ways in which social and emotional issues interplay with career issues. Career development theories provide foundational knowledge from which to draw useful concepts to explain behavior. They offer a framework within which individual career behavior can be explained and hypotheses can be formed about the possible

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meaning of behavior. As such, they help career counselors to identify and understand clients' goals and problems within a theoretical framework.

Since the inception of the field, career theory has been an important guiding force for the practice of career counseling. Early theories, such as those of Ginzberg, Bordin, Roe, and Super, all helped to provide theoretical approaches to career development. Ginzberg conceptualized the process of career development as being lifelong and subject to compromise, Bordin's conceptualization of career development was informed by a psychoanalytic view of human behavior. Roe built a theory based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and personality types. Super conceptualized career development as a developmental process and not a one-time choice. All of these early theoretical contributions still have impacts on the way in which career counselors understand human behavior today. Arguably, the theory that has spurred the most research, and has been used the most in practice, is that of Holland. Holland articulated his comprehensive trait– factor theory in his book Choosing a Vocation, which was published in 1973 and revised in 1985 and 1997. Holland's theory proposed that individuals' personalities and work environments can be categorized into one of six types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional. This RIASEC theory of career development maintains that individuals will search for environments that best fit their personalities and will derive more satisfaction in finding this fit. Holland's theory has been used extensively in the United States and abroad to provide a framework for career counseling. More recently, a number of additional theories of career development have been proposed, including Lofquist and Dawis's theory of work adjustment, Krumboltz's social learning theory of career decision making, Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise in career choice, and Lent Brown and Hackett's social–cognitive theory.

2. History of the Field of Career Counseling

The origins of career counseling, broadly defined, can be found during early Greek and Roman times, but the roots of the field as is practiced today can be traced to the last half of the 1800s and the early 1900s in the United States. This was a time when the origins of the human sciences were forming, particularly in experimental psychology, with the work of Wilhelm Wundt. It was also a time when ''mental testing'' was born, with James Cattell first using this term in an article in the journal Mind. Cattell was most interested in using mental tests to examine individual differences, particularly in measuring student achievement. Economically, this was a time of great turmoil and demographic change because the industrial revolution was under way and the country was moving from a primarily agrarian economy to an industrial-based economy. At this time, there was also an influx of immigrants, primarily from Europe, entering the country. Often, these individuals faced a host of social and employment problems in finding employment.

Even once they secured jobs, they often faced unhealthy working conditions, overt discrimination, and physical and psychological abuse. There was a strong need for services to help these new workers find their place in the employment structure and to provide a range of social services and social advocacy on their behalf. The need for a strong social advocate for these immigrants was found in the person of Frank Parsons, who is often referred to as the "Father of Career Development." Parsons developed what was termed the Breadwinners Institute under the Civic Service House in Boston. The institute was designed to provide a range of educational services for immigrants. It was in this context that Parsons developed a systematic way of helping individuals to find appropriate work that still has much influence on the way in which career counseling is conducted today. Parsons' book Choosing a Vocation, which outlined his decision-making process, was published in 1909 after his death. Parsons theorized that there were three broad decision-making factors: (a) a clear understanding of oneself, including one's aptitudes, abilities, interests, and limitations; (b) a knowledge of the requirements, advantages, disadvantages, and prospects of jobs; and (c) the ability to reason regarding the relation of these two sets of facts. These three factors have had an enormous impact on how career counseling has been practiced during the century since it was originally published.

3. Career Theories

Since the early 1900s, scholars have studied occupational choice and career decision making. They focused first on improving personal satisfaction, and later on increasing performance and lowering turnover, through informed occupational choices. Several theories have emerged that identify the variables important to the process of occupational choice and work adjustment. The theory of work adjustment focuses on the congruence between the abilities and needs of the individual and the requirements and rewards of the job, Super's life span theory focuses on the developmental process of occupational choice, and Holland's theory of vocational personality type focuses on prediction of the types of work that people will choose. These three theories complement one another and offer a framework for understanding occupational choice and adjustment. Career theories also provide a mechanism for conceptualizing career concerns and client goals. For example, the theory of work adjustment can guide conceptualizing clients with adjustment problems in the workplace, Super's theory can lend understanding to the influence of developmental stages in occupational choice, and Holland's theory can provide a model for describing the world of work.

3.1. Theory of Work Adjustment

The theory of work adjustment, stemming from the Work Adjustment Project at the University of Minnesota, first appeared during the mid-1960s and has subsequently been revised and extended a number of times. The theory describes the dynamic interaction between persons and their work environments that influences work adjustment and occupational choice. According to Dawis and

Lofquist, the architects of the theory of work adjustment, individuals ''inherently seek to achieve and maintain correspondence with their environment,'' where correspondence is defined as a well-balanced relationship between the characteristics of the individual and the requirements of the environment. Indeed, much of the emphasis of the theory concerns the matching of the abilities and values of an employee with the abilities required by a job and the reinforcers provided by the job. Consequently, the theory provides a model for career counseling that is designed to help individuals achieve (a) a clear understanding of their own abilities, values, personalities, and interests; (b) a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success in a work environment; and (c) a true understanding of the interaction between these two groups. Dawis and Lofquist maintained that abilities are general dimensions that underlie groupings of required skills, including general learning ability, verbal ability, numerical ability, spatial ability, form perception, clerical ability, eye–hand coordination, finger dexterity, and manual dexterity. Similarly, values are seen as representing a grouping of needs and are defined as achievement, comfort, status, altruism, safety, and autonomy. Two additional components to the prediction of work adjustment and occupational choice are satisfaction (i.e., a perception of satisfaction from the perspective of the employee) and satisfactoriness (i.e., a perception of satisfaction from the perspective of the employer). Put another way, satisfaction refers to the extent to which employees' needs are fulfilled by the work they do, whereas satisfactoriness concerns the appraisal by others, usually employers, of the extent to which the employees adequately complete the work that is assigned to them. The theory of work adjustment is heavily based on the premise that individuals differ in their abilities, needs, values, and interests, among other variables. This principle views people as complex individuals who differ on a number of dimensions and suggests that counseling needs to be individualized to allow everyone to make a personalized occupational choice. Although the theory is broader than many career theories and has important implications for career adjustment and occupational choice, it focuses on only one point in time. Super's life span theory, on the other hand, focuses on the developmental process of occupational choice.

3.2. Super's Life Span Theory s0015

Probably no one has written as extensively about career development or influenced the study of the topic as much as has Super. His earliest theoretical statements were influenced by researchers in various areas of psychology, sociology, and personality theory. In fact, Super described his theory of career development as a ''segmental'' theory or one that includes the work of many other theorists such as Freud, Maslow, and Rogers. From the works of these theorists, Super derived basic assumptions that allowed him to develop his own developmental process of occupational choice. A hallmark of Super's theory is the view that occupational development is a process of making several decisions over time, culminating in occupational choices that represent an implementation of the selfconcept.Super viewed self-concept as a combination of biological characteristics, social roles

people play, and evaluations of the reactions that others have toward the individual. For Super, self-concept served to organize roles that people play throughout their lifetimes.

An important idea throughout Super's career development theory is the concept of role. Super described six major roles—homemaker, worker, citizen, leisurite, student, and child—and stressed that these roles, as well as the importance of these roles, vary throughout one's life. For instance, he argued that during childhood, the roles of leisurite, student, and child are particularly important, while the roles of worker, citizen, and homemaker are minimal. During adolescence, citizen and worker may become more important roles, but work is not often directly related to one's eventual career. It is during adulthood that one has more occupational choices. Consequently, it is important that professionals understand the concept of life roles (in conjunction with developmental stages) when helping individuals to make occupational choices. The notion of developmental stages is essential to Super's life span theory. Super proposed a series of stages or ''maxi-cycles'' over the life span, beginning with the growth stage during early childhood. During this stage, children become curious about life and begin to explore their environments. The information gained through this exploration will be an important component of the children's self-concept. The exploratory stage begins with adolescents' awareness that an occupation will be an aspect of life and ends with young adults choosing occupations that they believe are within reach and provide important opportunities.

The establishment stage, as one would expect, relates to adults' early encounters within actual work experiences. During the maintenance stage, employees attempt to continue or improve their occupational situations. The final stage, disengagement, includes the preretirement period during which employees' emphasis on work is focused on retaining their positions rather than enhancing them. This period ends when older adults withdraw from the world of work. Super proposed characteristic developmental tasks within each stage. Mastery of these tasks allows individuals to function effectively in their life roles within that stage and prepares them for the next task. Successful coping with the requirements of each stage is dependent on the individual's careermaturity—a group of physical, psychological, and social characteristics that represent the individual's readiness and ability to deal with the developmental problems and challenges that are faced. The person whose maturity is equal to the problem probably resolves it with minimal difficulty or concern. However, when the maturity is not sufficient for the task, responses of procrastination, ineptness, and/or indecision are likely to occur.

As was mentioned previously, a fundamental aspect of Super's theory is that occupational choice is an implementation of the self-concept. The implication for career counselors is that, in addition to providing clients with information about who they are, counselors need to integrate objective information about the self (e.g., interests, values, abilities). Holland's theory of vocational personality type focuses on this objective information.

3.3. Holland's Theory of Vocational 0Personality Types

Holland's theory continues to enjoy attention as it celebrates more than four decades of popularity. Holland's person–environment typology and theory of career choice clearly is the most widely studied career theory in history. In addition, the concepts that derive from this theory are integral to the vocabulary, tools, and processes of career counseling.

Holland's theory of occupational choice is based on several assumptions. One assumption is that persons and environments can be categorized according to six types:

Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional

1. Realistic individuals are likely to enjoy using tools or machines in their work and often approach problems in a practical or problem-solving manner. Likewise, a Realistic environment is one in which the work setting includes tools, machines, and/or animals that the individual manipulates and where the ability to work with ''things'' is more important than the ability to interact with others.
2. Investigative persons are likely to enjoy challenges that require the use of intellect and are apt to enjoy learning and feelings of confidence about their ability to solve mathematical and scientific problems. Similarly, an Investigative environment is one in which people search for solutions to problems through mathematical and scientific interests and competencies.
3. Artistic individuals like the opportunity to express themselves in a free and unsystematic way by creating music, art, and/or writing. Correspondingly, an Artistic environment is one that is free and open and is encouraging of creativity and personal expression.
4. Social persons are interested in helping people through teaching, helping with personal or vocational problems, and/or providing personal services. Similarly, a Social environment is one that encourages people to be flexible and understanding of each other and where people can work with others through helping with personal or career problems, teaching others, and being socially responsible.
5. Enterprising individuals enjoy being with others and like to use verbal skills to sell, persuade, and/or lead. Correspondingly, an Enterprising environment is one in which people manage and persuade others to attain organizational or personal gains.
6. Conventional persons are typically dependable and have the ability to follow rules and orders in unambiguous situations. Likewise, a Conventional environment is one in which organization, planning, and ability to follow directions (often in an office environment) are of utmost importance.Another assumption, coined Holland's calculus hypothesis, describes the relationship

among the six person–environment types. The calculus hypothesis states that the six types can be arranged around a hexagon, with the types most similar to each other (e.g.,Social and Enterprising) falling next to each other and those most dissimilar (e.g., Social and Realistic) falling directly across the hexagon from one another. Holland's theory has been applied extensively in career counseling, most notably using the six-category typology to categorize individuals in the interpretation of interest inventories such as the Self-Directed Search (SDS) and the Strong Interest Inventory (SII). In addition, Holland's typology has been used to classify occupational information and college majors in an attempt to facilitate individuals' success in making occupational decisions.

3.4. Summary of Theories

The theory of work adjustment, Super's life span theory, and Holland's theory of vocational personality types all have received a great deal of attention and empirical support over the years. Research on the theory of work adjustment has generated many promising findings; however, research specifically using constructs from this theory has proceeded at a slow pace. Super's life span theory is intuitively appealing and offers assistance in understanding the richness of an individual's career and life. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether it will maintain its position of preeminence in the future. Finally, Holland's theory of vocational personality types stands as the most influential of the existing theories in both research and practice, and research supporting Holland's theory is very robust.

4. Career Counselingsfor Occupational Choice

Career theories suggest that people make their occupational decisions in an orderly and systematic fashion. Yet research shows that for most people, the path often is serpentine. On the one hand, barriers to occupational entry, such as stereotyping, prejudice, and family, economic, and educational constraints, thwart people's opportunity to follow their interests. On the other hand, roughly 60% of adults report that serendipity plays a role in helping them to make good career decisions. Career counseling is a process, facilitated by a counselor, designed to help people find their way through the decision-making process. The ultimate goal is to help people obtain satisfaction and effectiveness in their jobs, occupations, and careers.

Career counseling can be structured in several different delivery modes. In some cases, the intervention is one-on-one between the client and the counselor. In other instances, the intervention may be conducted for groups and may resemble an educational experience with assignments and ''in-class'' discussions and information sharing. Career counseling also can occur in a variety of settings. For example, it is not unusual for college students to seek career counseling to help them decide on majors or to help them focus their job searches at the time of graduation. Many high schools also offer students the opportunity to explore future careers either with their school counselors or in life studies courses. Some

employers offer career exploration opportunities within the work setting or arrange referrals for clients to work with career counselors. In addition, community and adult education centers offer career counseling. Many people also seek out career counselors (now sometimes called career coaches) who are in private practice or work for consulting firms. The desire to learn more about oneself and to ponder career questions is not the privilege of only the young. Many adults turn to career counseling for a variety of reasons. Some people are genuinely unhappy in their jobs and seek career counseling with the goal of finding better matches for their interests, personalities, and values. Some people are bored and believe that their abilities are underused or that they have reached career plateaus. Others, in spite of their achievements, may question whether they are making a difference. Still others believe that they drifted into their jobs and never made deliberate choices. Not all people will discover, even with the help of career counseling, that they have a passion for work. For some people, work is necessary simply to provide for their basic needs, and other aspects of their lives will give them more pleasure and satisfaction than will their work. However, career counseling can help even those not driven to career achievement to maximize the match between their personal characteristics and those of the jobs they choose.

Regardless of the format, setting, life stage, or goals and purposes, most career counseling approaches involve psychological assessment. The ideal situation allows assessment of interests, abilities, personality, values, and needs. However, time and financial constraints often limit testing to the administration of a vocational interest inventory such as the SII, the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey (CISS), the SDS, the Career Assessment Inventory (CAI), or the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) .

5. Research in Career Counseling

The field of career development has been one of the most actively and rigorously researched fields within counseling psychology. The field has a great deal of information available indicating that career development services, such as workshops, classes, groups, computerized career information, and guidance systems, tend to be highly effective in helping individuals to become clearer and more confident about their career goals. Considerably less information is available specifically about the efficacy of career counseling. Even less is known about what specific aspects of the career counseling process lead to effective outcomes. A recent meta-analytic study conducted by Brown and Krane analyzed 62 studies and approximately 8000 participants in attempting to determine which interventions led to the greatest change. From these data, five specific components of career counseling were shown to contribute significantly to the effect size: written exercises, individualized interpretations of information, the provision of information on the world of work, opportunities for modeling, and the building of support for career choices in individuals' social networks. The authors noted that these five interventions collectively seemed to be associated with remarkable, nearly linear increases in career choice effect size. Thus, as the methodological tools available

to researchers are becoming more sophisticated, we are learning more about what specific interventions are most helpful in the career counseling process.

6. Conclusion

Research has been done to determine the effectiveness of career counseling. The results across several studies indicate that an average client has an outcome that is better than the outcomes of 80% of untreated control groups. Research has shown that congruence between a person's interests, abilities, personality, and values and the work environment — a desirable outcome of career counseling— leads to success and performance on the job and in school, life and work satisfaction, persistence on the job (i.e., tenure), and positive self-image and selfesteem. Conversely, poor correspondence (i.e., person– environment incongruence) is related to burnout, increased levels of anxiety, and somatic complaints. The implication of these outcome results is that whether people view their work as a job, a career, or a calling, career counseling can be a powerful aid in making occupational choices that lead to well-being.

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