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ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO CAREER COUNSELING SERVICES: A CASE STUDY OF TRIBAL GROUPS OF IDUKKI REGION OF KERALA STATE

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Abstract

This paper aims at analyzing the factors that hinder people from seeking career counselling services and the extent to which such services are used. Based on the survey findings, we establish potential constraints to access services, namely, unawareness, financial challenges, distance, low availability of services, and language/culture bias. Still, all the respondents stated that they had ever used the career counseling services, meaning that there's a high interest in such services. Therefore, we present policy recommendations and recommendations that could possibly increase the chances of successful delivery of career counseling programs. Some of them include awareness and outreach, cost and reimbursement, service options, language and cultural competency, integrated care, and continuous improvement of services. Through these recommendations, stakeholders such as policymakers, educators, and community leaders can make efforts to provide support and direction to everyone to help them achieve their career goals and objectives. It is in this regard that the present analysis underlines the benefits of investing in career counselling services as a way of enhancing economic enrichment and personal emancipation.

Keywords: career counseling, barriers, accessibility, utilization, policy implications

Introduction

The development of the career identity has gone through certain shifts in its focus. These changes have been attributed to technology improvements, upheavals in the labour market and the global economic transition which make the decision making process in the profession

complex (Baker 2009). There are over 500 million indigenous peoples in the world, accounting for roughly 5% of the global population and living in around 70 countries (Kharkongor & Albert, 2014). From their core values to sociocultural contexts, they are deeply embedded in nature and community (Flynn et al. , 2013). Thus, the influence from the dominating societies, globalization, and internal factors make indigenous people a diverse category that fall between the poles of tradition and the contemporary world. Parkhouse et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of career counseling for indigenous youth in the current advancement of multicultural psychology. Self-financed Indigenous youth unlike the other groups prefer vocational training than going for higher education. It also has no clear career progression path, and is often characterised by more abstract motivation rather than financial rewards.

Acculturation theory is the basis for the career identity (Tao et al. , 2018). This hypothesis aims at propounding the idea that human beings who acquire and emulate vocational behaviour from others are more likely to excel in their vocations. Career identity on the other hand can be defined as the extent that an individual affirms the capacity to organise and implement processes that are necessary in the attainment of specific goals (Brown & Lent, 2013). The contributions highlighted have an important function of constructing the understanding of career identity. Lacking career mobility opportunities and financial rewards are commitments that public sector employees consider as less met (Christensen & Wright, 2011). This implies that people who observe achievement indirectly are more likely to augment their perception of personal efficiency or professional persona. For this beneficial impact, to occur the onlooker must perceive the model's endeavors as being successful.

Presenting a concerning picture India has around 98 million indigenous people out of which one-quarter is the global indigenous population (Shadmi et al. , 2020). Nevertheless, protective provisions written in the constitution indigenous populations, also called tribals in India, still face higher poverty rates and worse health and literacy rates compared with the rest of the nation (Macklem, 2009). Stigmatized beliefs distort thinking about their ambition and hardworking, while ignoring the structural factors that prevent them from obtaining information and professional positions.

The tribal people of Idukki town , which is a part of Idukki district of Kerala, suffer from multiple issues which indeed exposes the lacunas of the career counseling centres in catering for

career advancement. The tribal community gives a factual picture of such problems. Despite its efforts to support learning, education institutes have not sufficiently taken cognizance of the key role of tribal community leaders in shaping the hands-on and observation-oriented learning of community students. Unfortunately, the tribes of Idukki especially lack confidence regarding their employability skills particularly in Professional Management skills. This can also be attributed to lack of career counselling institutes which simply points to a missing link. The community argues that the tribal community graduates are in a state of confusion when it comes to their professional affiliation; this the community puts blame on the skill centered institutions. This lack of education is expressed through the poor performance of Idukki in the Travel and Tourism Competitive training and the lack of qualified employees. Thus, it is necessary to carefully investigate the concepts of vicarious experience and vocational identity for meeting the requirements of the tribal groups in Idukki.

Review of literature

There are some issues which are still evident even in the current world of promotion of employment and these have impacts on the vulnerable such as the tribal group. Because of persistent economic marginalization, the rural workers are rendered even more vulnerable by the large scale virtue of land for various purposes such as the establishment of SEZs, IT centers, real estates, and mineral explorations. This threatens their space and means of earning a living and goes a long way to affecting their economic status (Mallik, 2019).

Many indigenous people has been introduced to a country in question in terms of social status and human rights, and these people dwelt at remote areas due to economic factors of some influential party. The need for migration among the Indian population has been occasioned by growth, globalisation and industrialisations in present day India mainly in the struggle for land acquisition (Arcelus, 2020). This has been brought about by various forces that have created the movement and can be described as a system of processes. According to my findings, there are both push and pull factors that are connected with the process of globalization in Asia and its impact on the indigenous peoples living in India. Push factors include expulsion from the family home, issues such as alcoholism and other debts compel people to look for other fortunes (Simons et al., 2013).

The opportunities of getting a job and economic opportunities in this case act as positive incentives that forces people towards embracing urbanisation and industrialisation. It is, therefore, necessary to reveal those challenges and opportunities of career advising as an academic area. It is relevant to realise changes that may be taking place in the respective fields of study because this could be informing the society that some places have changed economically, thereby changing the available employment opportunities in those areas (Sagarika, 2022).

As time passed by with the discovery of different fields and sectors, impressive numbers of job vacancies can be noted which can potentially provide new ways to enhance skill and employment. Career coaching can and should be viewed as being effective in terms of developing relevant knowledge base that is applicable to new areas of endeavor as well as increasing the learner's preparedness for new challenges. This involves appreciation of how technology develops; globalization; and how the job market evolves. Furthermore, when addressing the questions of environmental concerns, it is pertinent to highlight the positive influence of the SD agenda for the development of sustainable development, which cannot be effected at the expense of the environment and social justice.

Methodology

The target population of the present study will be the tribal people living in Idukki town of Idukki district of Kerala, India. This community is estimated to have a population of approximately 4,000 people. Due to limitation of time, resource and accessibility, purposive sampling technique has been used to select the sample of 60 individuals From the tribal community in Idukki. The approach made it possible to purposefully select candidates who have the traits that are needed for the study as most respondents had graduated from educational establishments or are actively looking for a job. The major data gathering technique used in the study was administering questionnaires in the form of structured interviews on a sample of participants from the tribal population. Also, a questionnaire was conducted in order to collect quantitative data concerning particular characteristics of career identity, employability and attitudes toward career counselling services. Semi-structured interview questions were developed in order to address participants' career journey, impressions, and difficulties in constructing career identity, job market readiness, and accessing career development services. Interview

questions had been designed based on the information gathered from the literature review, regarding the factors that may affect career development such as vicarious experiences, vocational identity, and economic factors.

Results

From the table 1 it is found out that in general, the unemployed people have higher confidence level in attaining their career goals compared to the employed people for all levels of education. This could be attributed to various factors such as the need to upgrade their employment status, positive attitudes regarding future employment prospects, and the need to overcome present difficulties. Employed as well as unemployed people also attitude more confidence in achieving their career goals if they had educational diploma/certificate, bachelors and masters degree as compare to high school education.

Table 1: Employment status vs. Education and confidence to achieve goal

		Education				Total
		High School	Diploma/Certificate	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	
Employment Status	Employed	0	2	12	1	15
	Unemployed	4	0	40	1	45
Total		4	2	52	2	60

		How confident are you in your ability to achieve your career goals?			Total
		Extremely confident	Very confident	Somewhat confident	
Employment Status	Employed	0	14	1	5
	Unemployed	7	37	1	5

Total	7	51	2	0
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This implies that higher education may help individuals to be more confident in regard to their careers and/or career dreams. Of particular interest, there are no respondents in the employed group who completed high school and had an extreme level of confidence on attaining career aspirations. This could be a signal of a potential deficit in confidence among those whose level of education may not have been advanced, and thus could be worth exploring further in terms of the factors affecting confidence and career orientation.

The findings reveal that the participants’ confidence in attaining their career aspirations depends on their education level as well as their employment status. Knowledge of these dynamics can help guide career guidance and support services that may help individuals achieve their career goals more efficiently.

Table 2. Unstandardized Coefficients and Standardized Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		β	Std. Error	β		
1	(Constant)	0.772	0.046		16.770	0.000
	If yes, how influential were these observations in shaping your own career decisions?	0.185	0.030	0.631	6.188	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Have you ever been influenced by observing others' career experiences?						

The table 2 shows the regression analysis results with a dependent variable “Have you ever been influenced by observing others’ career experiences?” and an independent variable, “If yes, how influential were these observations in shaping your own career decisions?”

The t-statistic (16.770) measures how many standard errors away from zero the coefficient estimate is. It measures the extent of variability that can be attributed to the

coefficient. This means that a high t-value implies greater significance. The Sig. Value of 0.000 reveal how likely the results if the null hypothesis, stating that there is no relationship, holds true. In general, 0.05 is commonly accepted to be significant in statistical analysis.

This coefficient (B) expresses the means by which the dependent variable is affected when the independent variable goes up by one unit. In this case, the coefficient estimate suggests that for every one-unit change in the influence of observations, the is 0.185 rise in the odds of experiencing career-related influence from other people. As for the Beta coefficient, it measures the variation in the dependent variable in terms of standard deviation for a one standard deviation shift in the independent variable. It enables the researcher to assess the measure of the distinct independent variables. The t-value (6.188) and significance value (0.000) confirm the coefficient as statistically significant, meaning that the observations have a significant impact on the influence from others’ career experiences.

Table 3: Have you ever utilized career counseling services?

*** What barriers, if any, have you encountered in accessing career counseling services?**

		What barriers, if any, have you encountered in accessing career counseling services?					Total
		Lack of awareness about available services	Financial constraints	Geographical distance	Limited availability of services	Cultural or language barriers	
Have you ever utilized career counseling services?	yes	17	17	10	13	3	60
Total		17	17	10	13	3	60

Table 3 below shows respondents’ demography, common barriers faced when seeking career counseling services and if they have ever used career counseling services.

Barriers to Accessing Career Counseling Services:

Lack of awareness about available services: Of the 60 respondents, 17 (28.3%) enumerated this as a barrier. Indeed, 17 of the 60 respondents (28.3%) cited financial as a challenge to factor. Geographical distance was reported to be a barrier by 10 respondents among the 60, which gives a percentage of 16.7%. Respondents' perceived barriers are as follows: 60 participants responded to the survey and 13 of them (21.7%) mentioned limited availability of services as an impediment. Of 60 respondents, three respondents (5%) reported being challenged by culture or language issues. In the cross-sectional study, all the respondents (n=60) have sought career counseling services.

Discussion

This study provided insights regarding the options available to those who want to seek career counseling services, as well as the challenges faced by such individuals. These findings offer tremendous practical relevance for enhancing and advancing the profession in general, as well as specific career counselling services offered to candidates.

Some of the issues that were identified in the current study include lack of knowledge about available interventions, and financial challenges. These factors were considered by about 28% of the respondents as key challenges to career counseling services. The above findings underscore the importance of enhanced advocacy to make people aware of the existence and importance of career counseling services. However, it is imperative that measures be taken to increase the accessibility of these services and make them as affordable as possible, primarily for those of limited means.

Accessibility of services was the other major concern, with about 22% of the respondents reporting of limited availability of services due to barriers such as geographical distance, which was reported by 17% of the respondents. This means that there is need to extend the delivery of career counseling services to areas where there are few practitioners or no practitioners at all and to offer such counseling services in different contexts such as schools, youth centers, and through electronic means. To overcome these barriers, it is essential to ensure policy coherence, involve educational institutions, and mobilize resources at the national and the local levels.

Cultural or language barriers were mentioned less often (5 percent), but still reveal that social issues remain a concern for certain professionals. Thus, the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate career counseling services should address the following challenges: This may include recruiting counselors with multicultural and multilingual proficiency, offering interpretation services, and providing culturally appropriate career-related prints and materials.

However, all participants in the current study stated they had engaged in career counseling services; the results indicate that there is high demand and perceived utility of career counseling services within the population. This is why it remains relevant to enhance the programs and services of career counseling in order to be ready to address the needs of people at different phases of their career development.

Conclusion

This research has presented a good understanding of the factors that hinder the uptake of career counseling services as well as the uptake of such services. As for the results of the analysis of different types of barriers and the level of utilization, the most promising directions for further development and enhancement of effective services and programs have been defined. As highlighted in the current research, perceived barriers like inadequate knowledge about the services available and financial problems emerge as prominent. Approximately 27.9% respondents considered these factors as barriers to obtaining career counseling services. This is a clear indicator that there is need to conduct specific sensitization on existence and need to acquire the services of career counseling. However, increased attempts to popularise these services for those with limited financial means are key to ensuring that everyone can get the services they need. Other factors that were deemed significant barriers were geographical distance and limited services, of which 17% and 22% of the respondents pointed out. This indicates why there is a need to extend the access of career counseling services especially to areas which is hard to come by or areas that can barely be reached, as well as increasing the capacity of career counseling services in different settings. Policy makers, educational institutions and community organizations need to work together to find new ways to solve these problems and to allocate the resources properly.

Cultural or language barriers were mentioned by fewer respondents (5 percent), which means that although these barriers were less likely to be cited as an issue, they are important for some people. To overcome these challenges, it is necessary to conduct culturally and linguistically appropriate career counseling focused on the needs and preferences of the particular minorities. Although the above challenges apply, all participants in this study confirmed that they have ever sought career counseling services pointing to the fact that there is high demand and perceived utility of such services among the population. This supports the need to continue developing and enhancing career counseling programs and services to respond to the needs of people at all stages of their career growth. Therefore, the study stresses the need to remove obstacles that limit access to career counselling services to promote equal access to this service for all people. Promoting awareness, removing barriers, increasing accessibility of services, and addressing cultural and linguistic issues will help to improve the work and contribution that career counselling can play in assisting people to achieve their desired careers. All these efforts go a long way in creating a favorable environment for the career development and career mobility.

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