

CAREER PSYCHOLOGY
(A Framework for Career and Counseling Practice)

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Abstract

The objective of career psychology is to highlight the principles of career counseling framework, the function of occupation for human, and the implication of counseling practice in the career and government policy. The research method was literature review supported by the presentation and study of relevant cases from the author's counseling practice. Based on the study and field practice experience, it was found that essentially psychological framework offers two aspects, i.e. critiques on a particular event in a particular moment, and whole ideas aimed to develop better conditions using academic approach are more beneficial for counselors interested in the field of career and occupation. This study aimed to add the knowledge of traditional career development theories.

Key words: *career, psychology*

I. Introduction

The perspective of psychology in the career world is developed to address the needs in counseling career and aimed to assist certain social class as a result of racism and other social pressures such as disability, sexual orientation, citizenship issues, age, gender, the lack of access to resources and job opportunities in the social and career contexts. There have been many theories and studies for dynamic career counselors, especially in regard to career and work experience; however, they are less meaningful because they are not founded on deep explorations on all aspects of life. The questions then, are as follows: whom does a person work for? Are there other reasons for work than merely to survive? Does a person only work to express his or her talent or personality or beyond?

The perspective of psychology in the career world in this article is aimed to add to the knowledge of traditional career development theories. In principle, career psychology is presented as meta-perspective designed to expand the visions of counselor and graduates of psychology, and serves as an idea for further theory development. In this framework, the traditional career choice and development theory remains relevant when clients experience dilemma on their career choices.

II. Discussion

A. The Principles of Career Counseling Framework

From the psychological perspective, there have been many explorations in general on how the context of a job shapes human lives. Humans tend to view that their time at work is equal to earning a lot of money. How many hours do I have to work today? Do I really have a job? Therefore, a job must serve as a potential means to apply skills instead of a mere way to earn money easily. A job is the focus of the real life, the main factor in the welfare/health of an individual, and the key to understand human behavior. Different from culture, race, gender, and social class, a job can either be a supporting or hindering factor in improving work health or driving the tension in an individual's life. However, speaking in the context of career counseling, there needs to be an understanding on how work experience applies entirely to all citizens, regardless of the selection, career, or job.

As there is only a small number of individuals with access to education and job opportunities, the working world offers additional means for self-expression and self-actualization. Currently, the focus on individuals with access to resources becomes the essence of career counseling understanding in relation to work. Although there are many studies on traditional working world that is based on the

middle class individual exploration, specifically, there are various levels of special treatments and option regarding employment.

The development of career counseling relies on several important efforts in the field of career counseling. Both women's rights and multicultural perspective activists, whether individually or entirely, criticize the practice and career development theories as they are mainly centered on middle class men from certain ethnic background. In addition, the job improvement movement also draws some prominent critiques on the literatures on career development, confirming the discussion on the natural characteristics of work.

B. The Functions of Working in Human Life

In this part, the study will discuss human needs that can be fulfilled by working, namely survival and authority, social connection, and the ability to determine their own destiny. These aspects are central in the complex understanding of the function of occupation in human experience.

1. Working as a Means of Survival and Authority

The first function of occupation is the significance for survival and authority. Through occupation, individuals are able to attain their basic needs of life such as food, water, clothes, safety, and shelter. This is in line with Maslow's opinion (1968) on the motivation theory, i.e. it is only after these basic needs are met that humans can be expected to fulfill their additional need of self-actualization. In the career psychology development framework, there are many studies on occupation that are centralized on the optimal "great career narrative," which is unfortunate as it is not based on actual cases among the world population.

The needs for human survival involve psychological, economic, and social power consents. Work provides access to material resource, namely money, and social resources, such as status, prestige, and special treatment that can foster greater power. Unfortunately, not all people obtain the same chance, because individuals in society differ in their ability to access opportunities, including training or education. Moreover, gaining access to resources is often based on the phenotypic characteristics of an individual (such as sex and skin color) rather than on skills or kindness. We believe that counselors really need to know how

they affect the clients so that they can provide effective interventions by not blaming victims of social pressure (Blustein, 2006; Blustein, McWhirter, & Perry, 2005; Helms & Cook, 1999).

2. Working as a Means of Social Connection

Humans also have a natural need in the form of social connections, affection, and good interpersonal relationship. The results of observations in the scope of traditional careers and organizational psychology have raised attention to the relationship of family and work life. The perspective of psychology in the world of work highlights the meaningful relationship between experience and work. There is a place of experiences for someone to interact with other people as a person's social contact and cultural environment in working (Blustein, 2006). When relationships are forged through work for maintenance and support, they assist in helping individuals succeed in a work challenge negotiation (learning new skills or assignments, dealing with work pressures, finding work, etc.). For many things, work can be a critical component in the construction and expression of an identity (Blustein, 1994; Schein, 1990). Experiencing alienation at work not only endangers individual job performance, but also has a significant negative impact on well-being and psychological health (Quick & Tetrick, 2003; Sennett, 1998). Finally, beyond providing opportunities for the self-development and direct interpersonal relationship, working also means playing a role in the structure of a broader economic society by providing individuals with the opportunity to get involved in a wider social system.

3. Working as a Means of Self-Determination

Another dimension of work experience besides providing job opportunities is also self-determination (fate) of individuals (Blustein, 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Many people are not subjected to special treatment in the selection of work in accordance with their personal interests and identity or a good discussion for the expressions of their self-concept. For that, they must find ways to sustain motivation and energy to carry out work that is stressful, boring, and sometimes humiliating (Blustein, 2006). Since many of the jobs that exist in the global economy are not related to interests and

motivations, it is believed that it is possible to apply knowledge to expand work experiences.

C. Implications for Counseling Practices

Blustein (2006) says that psychology in the world of work outlines a number of implications related to the field of career counseling practice. In this article, we briefly note and broaden recommendations with proposals for natural new initiatives by presenting psychological perspectives in the world of work.

Counseling in the World of Mental Health and Employment

One focus of the teaching of psychology in the world of work is that working, in all of its perfection, complexity, pain, and excitement, is a key component of human experience, and hence becomes a major focus in counseling practice (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2005; Richardson, 1993). In addition, it must be noted that most individuals are not familiar with setting a boundary between employment and socio-emotional issues (Blustein, 2001a, 2006).

Work-related problems are not always a part of behavior or a by-product of interest. On the contrary, the issue of relationship between work, behavior, and problems of interpersonal relations is a complex matter (Blustein, 2001b; Flum, 2001). As a consequence, Blustein (2006) includes integrated counseling and therapeutic approaches (p. 276) by highlighting the importance of work in the totality of human life.

Because of the history of psychotherapy and counseling approaches, practically the relationship between counseling, scope of work, and career has been falsely divided into separate components (Hackett, 1993). The health care system has fostered the breakdown of these pieces further, which has directed many counselors to view their clients and issues as separate, specialized, and unpotential aspects. In fact, mental health experiences and work-related issues often overlap in a dynamic and complex way (Hackett, 1993).

We make recommendations that are linked to integrated discussions relating to work in psychology and career counseling, and to do inclusive psychological practices. First, in line with other therapeutic approaches, the psychological practice requires a space which is created for counselors to deal with work-related problems (Blustein, 2006). In other words, the counselor must let the client know that work-

related problems will be an appropriate focus in the counseling process with attention and questions related to well respected work, such as valid points in exploration.

Work-related problems become secondary issues in the time of crisis when the client's safety is at risk. There comes a time when the counselor and client must come to an agreement for inclusive practice purposes. In other words, the client has a right to speak in determining the space for those related to work throughout the counseling session and how this issue is intended. The counselor can investigate how this problem plays a role in counseling by providing clients with work condition and how this has affected the service.

a. Fostering Empowerment. To help clients develop a sense of belonging to the environment. The concept of perseverance in working by Richardson (2000) and Blustein (2006) puts empowerment as "the development of goal-directed behavior that is also driven towards field-relevant mastery" (p. 278). Empowerment is shown on how counselors support clients to be self-determined in looking for jobs and equip them with skills, emotional competences, and confidence in deciding life goals, realizing plans, as well as making their goals come true (Richardson, 2000). It is then proven with the work that can make individuals feel meaningful to live within their environment.

Blustein (2006) states that empowerment, as an object in the context of inclusive psychological practices, can help clients to fully develop their talents, skills, abilities, and particularly the capability of researching to identify individual's personality. This capability serves as the basic competence, which significantly depends on workers' writing skill, interpersonal competence, and ability to work well in small groups. Those abilities must be possessed if the clients want to successfully meet the needs of workforce (Friedman, 2005; Hunt, 1995). Moreover, the ability to accept uncertainty and changes in the work field is needed by workers to develop themselves in this global economy era (Friedman, 1999; Rifkin, 1995). When the demand of jobs keeps increasing along with the changes in the economy, workers need to improve their skills and learn to be more flexible.

b. Fostering critical consciousness. Counseling is an additional concept of empowerment development (Blustein, 2006). In

line with the ideology proposed by Freire (1993), Blustein (2006) states "Critical consciousness encompasses individual's ability to reflect upon the broadly structured aspects of the world and begin to act based on previously conducted observations" (p. 280). This structural aspect, including economy, culture, and sociopolitical factors, often groups society into specific groups and deconstructs the orders in the community. This particular treatment cannot be specifically obtained, and denial is based on characteristics such as the immigrant's skin colour.

c. Promoting clients' skill-building for the changing workforce. One of the aspects of complicated client assistance is searching for profitable work which is in line the trend of the 21st century. It is crucial to help clients access the jobs that are in accordance with the skills they possess because when the client has no required skills, they will be frustrated in finding a job. Counselors are supposed to work on the assessment of transferable skills. Bolles's (2005) states that a question, for example, "What's the color of your parachute?", can help the client and counselor quickly identify the skills required to get certain jobs. However, identifying the jobs and the required skills is a double-edged sword. Without the help of a counselor in accessing the resources, clients might feel insulted and humiliated, especially if the jobs need ready-used skills. The framework of psychology in the workforce will help clients obtain the services.

Counseling perspectives in the world of work focuses on how to help clients address their problems. The etiological review of symptoms of pressure might suggest that pressures partially remind the clients of their experiences of being unemployed. Therefore, it is complicated to counsel them on how employment status affects them emotionally.

One characteristic of psychology in the workforce is that it is based on models that focus on self-development and choices of career (Brown, 2002). Therefore, counselors may use an interest assessment tool to help clients consider new options. It should be noted that even the simplest tool is beneficial to adjust Savickas's (2002) new construction of career model with which the clients may carefully examine their personalities in various ways in order to look for a job. However, one of the benefits of psychology perspective is in the

workforce encouraging creative and systematic thinking about the clients' specific problems and their recent lives.

The above explanation provides a representation of how work experiences which are in line with the demand of the workforce are required. Thus, the counselor should advise clients to update and improve their skills so that they may become more competitive. Moreover, the counselor needs to support the clients in working as long as they can access the resources required in working.

The use of psychology perspective in the workforce emphasizes clients' attention to racism and the way they turn experiences into a feeling. It needs to be understood when the clients feel angry, frustrated, despair, exhausted, and other emotions related to experiences of being discriminated and judged, a counselor must not question how feelings affect the process of job hunting.

Although counselors need to help them find a job in this industrial era, it is important to recognize and examine injustice that is real within the U.S. society in the contexts of racial, social, and gender issues. Leonard is an example of the significant party finding the pressure and discrimination regarding the government support. He is an immigrant from Haiti with low social-economic status and certain military history, age, and race. He needs to fill the gap of skills and pass through the complex government policy, which leads to exhaustion in finding a certain job. Thus, his understanding will make him believe that he is a part of the society and that he is officially protected from humiliation and marginalization. Injustice experienced by clients may be discussed if a counselor is able to explore him/herself in relation with work to identify what the clients need to discuss with him/her in terms of certain treatments they experience.

D. Implications for the Public Policy

In the perspective of career by Blustein (2006), Peterson and Gonzalez (2005), and Richardson (1993), counseling assists, develops a framework, and supplies scholars, practitioners, and public policy officials the opportunity to recognize a captivating and complex concept to become more multi-disciplinary in practice. In the future, such perspective gives an opportunity for research to be pushed towards new policies with new topics

in several areas, namely education, unemployment, and training.

However, it is important for counselors to conduct meaningful discussion to prove how work provides information about public policies and systems with broader scopes. In the same way, the psychological framework of the world of work proposes an integral fact promoting the broad social sphere to changes by constantly being intertwined with individual's counseling and other practices.

Education Policy and School-to-Work Program

Regarding the position and exploration of work during adolescence and upcoming adulthood, psychological perspectives of the world of work have implications for policies namely the design of psycho-interventions in education such as School-to-Work or Learning-Based-Work programs. There have been numerous students with little knowledge required to solve various detrimental vocational development tasks, including dependence. Thus, interventions to promote adaptive work based on experiential learning, for example trainings for various expertise, internship, work visualization, and on-site programming can improve students' workability based on skills and develop interpersonal skills, thereby facilitating the transition from secondary school ages to further meaningful and rewarding work opportunities.

a. Training and development. One of the most important areas for policy application which is supported by a psychological perspective of the world of work is the development and training for workers' current and future strengths. Development and trainings have been done in the United States in the form of Welfare-To-Work program which reveals many problems related to the fact that programs are often developed without clear attention to the different needs of the workforce, knowledge of how participants can understand the goal, or work experience (Blustein, 2006). We recommend that public policy makers investigate their agendas and goals in designing training programs for individuals who are infirm and faulty-trained. At the same time, we support the development and training programs that are based on best practices to culturally increase beliefs about work as clients usually demand it as a positive opportunity to be supplemented with determination in their work lives.

We also believe that the development and training efforts for the unemployed should be designed to provide them with labor-market-ready skills and knowledge. While many literatures discuss the clearly documented ability to develop academic skills as their foundation of their maximum potential, this paper is more concerned about the most important achievement that career counselors can offer to clients.

b. Unemployment and underemployment. Some traditional career theories, such as those proposed by Holland (1997), Lent et al., (2002), and Super (1980), focus only on questions about career implementation and choices as well as experiences of those who are unemployed, so career irrelevance is usually forgotten. Psychological perspectives of the world of work and the issues related to mental health and work lead to a discussion that we need practitioners in the field of career counseling. They are those dealing with clients who cannot put themselves in work or underemployed workers.

In companies, this framework is discussed and researched. The practice of counseling in the world of work and vocational area includes groups of people who tend have kind of unheard voices. These are people who are almost unable to make a career and usually forgotten by the professionals. This group, however, can be very good at explaining the examples of the needs for a framework that seeks to bring disenfranchised and underserved groups back to the ever-increasing fold of awareness and understanding of their circumstances and experiences.

E. Conclusions

Psychological perspectives of the world of work, applied to and contributing to research, has the potential to inform and promote meaningful social and counseling practices and public policies that lead to reducing deficiencies in the distribution of various resources to the community and schools and to racial, ethnical, lower, and grouped work classes. In essence, the psychological framework in the world of work offers a couple of things, namely criticism of a fixed state at a certain time and a set of ideas for the development of a better and intellectual approach. Those aspects are meaningful for scholars and counselors who are interested in career. We do not offer a psychological perspective in the world of work as a panacea

simultaneously used for all social ills intruding the society in the United States. Clearly more efforts are needed both in the counselor profession and beyond to create equal opportunities for people to access the resources they need as awards and jobs that can sustain their careers in the 21st century. However, it is hoped that this article can facilitate the improvement of its objectives, answering important questions from readers about their current assumptions and practices. We also broadly welcome those who want to join in with interventions and ideas to increase experiences of working with a number of people who work hard to make their lives better.

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