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## Need Analysis of Career Counselling at Secondary Level: An Analysis of Student and Teacher Perceptions

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the necessity of implementing structured career guidance at the secondary school level. The primary objective was to evaluate the extent to which students require systematic support in making informed career choices. The study also explored the challenges secondary school students face in selecting suitable career paths based on informed decision-making. Career counselling was conceptualized as a dynamic and ongoing process that aids individuals in aligning their educational and professional choices with their personal interests, strengths, and the demands of the labor market. It plays a vital role in fostering self-

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awareness, strategic future planning, and the acquisition of relevant career information. For students at the secondary level, effective career counselling contributes significantly to academic development and the achievement of long-term aspirations by enabling a clearer understanding of available options and encouraging goal-setting aligned with individual potential. A quantitative research methodology was employed to achieve these aims. Data were collected through self-administered, closed-ended questionnaires. The researcher personally distributed the instruments across selected private secondary schools in Islamabad. A probability sampling technique was used to ensure a representative sample of both students and teachers. The collected responses were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools, including mean scores and percentages, to identify key patterns. Results indicated strong support from both students and educators for the inclusion of comprehensive career counselling programs within the secondary school framework.

**Keywords:** Career Counselling, Secondary Education, Student Perceptions, Teacher Role, Career Guidance.

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## INTRODUCTION

The current study highlights the critical necessity of implementing structured guidance programs within educational systems by conducting an in-depth need analysis of career counselling at the secondary school level. At this pivotal stage, students are often required to make significant academic and vocational choices that can have long-lasting effects on their professional futures, life satisfaction, and overall development, as emphasized by Chircu (2014). Despite the evident importance of such support, career counselling remains significantly overlooked and insufficiently developed in numerous schools, particularly within the private education sector, where institutions often operate with considerable independence but lack consistent guidance frameworks (Carvalho, Mourão, & Freitas, 2023). The primary objectives of this research were to assess the extent to which students require career guidance, identify the practical challenges they encounter in making career-related decisions, and explore systemic factors that hinder access to effective counselling services. Many students at the secondary level experience confusion and uncertainty about their career paths, often influenced by external pressures and insufficient career awareness. These challenges are further complicated by limited access to occupational information, a lack of career support from families, and the unavailability of trained career professionals in schools, as pointed out by Klonek, Wunderlich, Spurk, and Kauffeld (2016). Few schools in Pakistan have dedicated counsellors or organized programs, and the idea of school-based career counselling is frequently misinterpreted or reduced to quick motivational presentations (Hafina, 2024).

However, the field of career counselling is changing quickly on a global scale. Early, flexible career counselling is crucial, especially when the Fourth Industrial Revolution changes the nature of work, according to the (UNICEF, 2022). Exposure

to cutting-edge disciplines like digital marketing, sustainable development, and artificial intelligence must now be a part of career education. Students must begin planning considerably earlier with guidance based on both psychosocial support and labor market relevance as employment responsibilities grow more specialized and technology-driven (Hooley, 2021; OECD, 2022). Getting career counselling at secondary level is a fundamental growth process rather than just an elective service. Effective career counselling enables students to identify their interests and strengths, match them with academic objectives, and investigate feasible career routes, according to the (Nugeut, 2020). Additionally, it fosters vital life skills like resilience, adaptability, problem-solving, and decision-making skills that are becoming more and more associated with employability and lifelong learning.

According to above study, career counselling is a developmental and all-encompassing intervention that helps people comprehend who they are, what they can learn, and the working environment. Career counselling plays a pivotal role in guiding students to identify their career goals, evaluate available options, and formulate relevant academic strategies. As noted by Carvalho et al. (2023), this structured support helps young individuals gain not only vocational clarity but also a stronger sense of purpose and self-direction. In the absence of such guidance, students are often drawn toward careers deemed socially acceptable, which may misalign with their personal interests or current labor market needs, potentially leading to dissatisfaction and professional underachievement in the long term (Hooley & Dodd, 2021). Furthermore, a variety of sociocultural factors complicate the career decision-making process for many students. These include disparities in access to information and opportunities based on socioeconomic class, restrictive family expectations, conventional gender roles, and limited awareness of emerging or unconventional career pathways (Ahmed & Qureshi, 2023). For example, girls from conservative regions frequently face significant limitations in their career aspirations due to a lack of exposure to role models and rigid societal norms, thereby highlighting the urgent need for gender-sensitive counselling models.

Despite its importance, career counselling is frequently absent from secondary school education. Several factors contribute to this neglect, such as the shortage of trained counsellors, limited institutional funding, inadequate policy implementation, and insufficient awareness among educators, students, and parents. Moreover, cultural expectations often pressure students to follow traditional professions irrespective of their skills and passions. Many educational institutions also fail to treat career counselling as an integral part of their academic framework, leaving students ill-equipped to make informed and fulfilling career choices.

This research contributes meaningfully to the enhancement of secondary education in Pakistan, particularly within the private school sector. In an era where academic performance alone no longer guarantees future success, the role of career counselling becomes increasingly vital in guiding students to make well-informed decisions that align with their personal aptitudes, interests, and the evolving demands of the job market. By examining the perspectives of both students and

teachers, this study offers a holistic view of how career counselling is understood, practiced, and prioritized in secondary school settings. The results highlight critical shortcomings in existing counselling provisions and underscore the need for educators to take on proactive roles in supporting students' career development. Additionally, the study identifies key barriers that hinder students' decision-making processes, including limited exposure to career options, inadequate institutional resources, and a general lack of parental engagement or awareness. The significance of this study lies in its ability to inform school administrators, educational policymakers, and curriculum developers about the urgent need to institutionalize structured and well-supported career counselling programs.

### **Objective**

1. To measure the perceptions of students and teachers regarding the accessibility, and efficiency of school services for career counselling.
2. To find out challenges that students face in deciding their career path.
3. To determine the role of teachers in student's career counselling and decision making.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Career counselling at the secondary level has emerged as a crucial focus in educational systems globally. This need is particularly pronounced in countries such as Pakistan, where students often navigate their academic and professional decisions without access to structured guidance. Research consistently shows that well-implemented career counselling positively influences students' academic motivation, clarity in vocational interests, and preparedness for the future. Balch (2018) describes career counselling as an essential framework that enables middle and high school students to connect their academic progress with real-world opportunities. His findings stress the necessity of guided support to help students identify their strengths and make choices aligned with their passions and competencies.

Mahmood et al., (2015) emphasize further that assisting students in creating meaningful goals and making effective future plans is one of the main objectives of career counseling. They draw attention to the ways that a lack of counseling might cause students to follow peer or parental pressures instead of their own interests, which can lead to discontent and poor performance. This opinion is supported by Sultana (2016) who points out that career counseling helps students better grasp the demands of the labor market and get ready for positions that fit both cultural norms and individual goals. Hilling (2017) focuses on the role of parents and how their ignorance can lead to young people making bad professional choices, which raises their chance of unemployment. Khurshid and Tabassum (2012) claim that because there is a lack of organized instruction, many students are still ignorant about their professional prospects. According to their research, students commonly turn to friends or family for counsel, which is not always reliable or well-informed. The authors come to the conclusion that professional career advice is crucial, especially for upper secondary students who must make important academic decisions.

Rabia and Shafiq (2019) view career development as a lifelong process that begins in early life and evolves based on various life experiences. Their research highlights those decisions related to career paths are shaped by a complex interplay of gender norms, socioeconomic background, and individual value systems. To address these influences effectively, they advocate for continuous career guidance from an early stage. Globally, several education systems have integrated structured counselling strategies into their national policies. According to the OECD (2022), countries such as Finland and Germany have demonstrated improved educational alignment and youth employability through the incorporation of robust career advisory programs. Similarly, Wong and Yuen (2019) report that in Hong Kong, professional career counsellors are required in schools to provide ongoing, personalized support to students as they plan their academic and professional futures.

In the Pakistani context, gender-sensitive counselling has gained attention in recent research. Ahmed and Qureshi (2023) underscore the lack of female mentors and structured support for girls in traditional and conservative communities. Their study suggests that inclusive counselling strategies can significantly bridge existing disparities in access and opportunity. Meanwhile, Yakoob et al. (2017) found that while a majority of high school students in Karachi were familiar with the concept of career counselling, practical access remained limited. Their findings indicate that institutional inadequacies, rather than student apathy, account for this gap, as many students expressed a strong desire for such services.

Further supporting the value of early intervention, Răduleț (2013), in a study involving 724 students, observed widespread confusion and lack of direction regarding career planning. His work emphasizes the importance of sustained career counselling in nurturing self-identity and facilitating informed long-term decision-making. In a similar vein, Dogar et al. (2011) found that among graduating students, vocational concerns accounted for 45% of all counselling needs—making them the most significant out of the five categories, which included educational, emotional, social, vocational, and behavioral guidance. In support of this, Martinez and Dănalache (2008) contend that finding secure, suitable roles that align with their abilities and goals is more important for young people than just finding work. Career orientation, according to Klonek et al., (2016) is a process that assists people in identifying and using their interests and skills in a way that benefits society. Therefore, career counseling needs to be viewed as a tool for personal growth as well as a way to increase social cohesiveness and national production.

Few studies have examined the direct correlation between students' academic performance and the availability of career counselors in Pakistan. However, discovered that when it came to student happiness and institutional rating, schools that provided career counseling services fared better. His research, which was carried out in Karachi, found that career counseling has a crucial role in influencing students' performance and aspirations. The literature also stresses the role of the counsellor as a facilitator of informed subject selection. Wong and Yuen (2019) describe career guidance as a structured series of interventions that promote

exploration and help students develop multiple career pathways. Zafar (2019) likens uninformed career choices to arranged marriages, suggesting that decisions made without personal insight or guidance often led to regret. To summarize, career counselling at the secondary level is not just beneficial but essential. It supports students in identifying their strengths, understanding market demands, managing academic transitions, and making informed decisions. As the education system in Pakistan continues to evolve, integrating evidence-based, inclusive, and proactive career counselling practices can significantly enhance student outcomes and national development.

### **Tools for Digital Career Counseling**

Technology integration in career counseling has drawn international attention in recent years. These days, digital platforms provide students with AI-based recommendations, virtual career fairs, and customized tests. Digital tools improve accessibility and engagement, particularly for pupils in underserved or remote places (Chircu, 2014).

### **Teachers' Influence on Careers**

According to a number of studies, instructors end up serving as the de facto source of career advising when there are no professional counselors available (Nugent, 2020). Many teachers, however, lack the tools or training necessary to properly mentor their students. It has been demonstrated that teaching instructors fundamental career counseling techniques greatly increases students' self-assurance and clarity when it comes to choosing a vocation (OECD, 2022).

### **The Effects of Career Confusion on the Mind**

Teenagers may experience psychological stress, worry, and even depression as a result of career indecision and a lack of advice. Witko et al., (2021) discovered a significant link between high school students' poor mental health and challenges making career decisions. This emphasizes even more how important it is to have both academic supervision and emotional and psychological assistance.

### **Fairness in Career Counselling**

In addition to professional choice, social justice and equity are addressed in professional analysis. Marginalized students, such as those from low-income households, ethnic backgrounds, or rural locations, usually do not have the same access to knowledge and opportunities. According to Hooley & Dodd (2021) career counseling can be a powerful tool for social mobility when given equitably. With government pupils rarely receiving any type of official guidance, the educational divide between Pakistan's public and private sectors is growing.

### **Career Counselling and Parental Involvement**

Parental impact on career choices is especially important in South Asian societies. While parental support can be helpful, students' autonomy is often restricted by overzealous parental involvement. In order to meet their parents' expectations, Pakistani students typically select jobs that do not align with their interests, according to research by Qaiser & Baig (2022). Programs for career

counseling with parental involvement can help align student potential with family objectives.

### **Gender and Professional Goals**

Career planning is still heavily influenced by gender. Regardless of their aptitude or interests, girls in Pakistan's conservative areas are sometimes directed toward specialized vocations (such as teaching or medicine). According to Ahmed & Qureshi (2023) the necessity of gender responsive counselling strategies that inspire girls to pursue leadership, entrepreneurship, and STEM fields was underlined.

### **Technical and Vocational Routes**

In many educational environments, career counselling programs disproportionately emphasize academic routes, often neglecting vocational and technical professions that may better align with the aptitudes of certain students. As Hafina (2024) argues, it is imperative that career counselling frameworks also include pathways in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), particularly in developing countries where such alternatives can offer practical, employment-ready skills. Expanding the scope of counselling to encompass TVET options ensures that students are aware of a broader range of viable career possibilities that match both market demands and personal strengths.

### **Using Career Counselling to Lower Dropout Rates**

Career counselling has been shown to play a vital role in improving student retention at the secondary level. Research suggests that students who engage in structured career guidance are more likely to remain focused and committed to their educational paths. According to Lapan et al. (2020), effective career counselling helps students understand the relevance of their studies to future employment, which in turn fosters sustained motivation. For students considered at risk of academic disengagement or dropout, counselling can serve as a strategic intervention that connects learning with long-term aspirations.

### **Education and Labor Market Needs Are Not Aligned**

A significant criticism of education systems in many developing regions is the disconnect between what is taught in schools and the actual competencies required by the labor market. Career counselling can help bridge this divide by aligning students' personal interests and abilities with careers that are in demand. The International Labor Organization (ILO, 2023) reports that countries with well-integrated career counselling services experience better outcomes in youth employment, including lower rates of unemployment and underemployment. This alignment is essential in ensuring that educational investment translates into economic opportunities.

### **The Value of Life Skills in Career Counselling**

Modern career counselling goes beyond the simple act of job selection. It is now recognized as a key medium for cultivating life competencies such as critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, adaptability, and effective communication. These transferable skills are indispensable in the evolving labor market of the 21st century. As highlighted by UNICEF (2022), life skills are crucial

not only for employability but also for enabling young individuals to thrive in dynamic and unpredictable professional environments. Embedding life skill training into career counselling ensures students are better equipped to face future challenges.

### **Conclusion**

It is concluded that the body of research affirms the vital role of career counselling in influencing both the academic engagement and professional readiness of secondary school students. Comprehensive counselling practices assist students in understanding their personal strengths, interests, and ambitions, thereby guiding them toward well-suited academic and occupational pathways. Empirical evidence from diverse educational systems consistently shows that timely career guidance enhances clarity of purpose, boosts motivation, and fosters better preparedness for adult responsibilities. Despite these benefits, several implementation challenges persist particularly in developing countries like Pakistan. The lack of trained counsellors, insufficient institutional backing, minimal inclusion of counselling in the school curriculum, and a general absence of awareness among teachers and parents significantly hinder the effectiveness of career guidance programs. Moreover, external factors such as societal expectations, limited financial resources, and prevailing gender stereotypes often exert greater influence on students' career decisions than their actual skills or interests. Addressing these barriers requires a multi-layered approach involving policy reform, capacity building, and broader stakeholder involvement to ensure that all students have access to the guidance they need to make empowered career choices.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design within a quantitative framework to explore the existing practices and perceptions related to career counselling in private secondary schools. The survey method was selected for its effectiveness in collecting structured and reliable data across a diverse group of respondents. Two close-ended questionnaires were developed one for students and another for teachers to assess the accessibility, utility, and viewpoints surrounding career guidance services. Data were gathered through direct visits to selected schools in Islamabad. To maintain ethical standards, formal permission was obtained from the school administrations prior to data collection, ensuring institutional approval and participant consent.

### **Population of the Study**

The target population included both students and teachers from private secondary schools in Islamabad. A total of 410 individuals participated in the study, comprising 312 students and 97 teachers from four private schools. These institutions were selected to reflect a representative sample of the private education sector, enabling the research to capture a comprehensive overview of career counselling provision and engagement within this context.

**The distribution of the population across the selected schools is presented below:**

| School       | Number of Teachers | Number of Students | Total Population |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| School No. 1 | 13                 | 150                | 163              |
| School No. 2 | 34                 | 56                 | 90               |
| School No. 3 | 12                 | 100                | 112              |
| School No. 4 | 16                 | 28                 | 44               |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>97</b>          | <b>312</b>         | <b>410</b>       |

This structured sampling provided a broad and relevant data pool, representing a diverse range of experiences and perspectives regarding career counselling services in the private secondary school context.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

A simple random sampling technique was employed to select participants from four private secondary schools in Islamabad. Out of a total population of 410 individuals (312 students and 97 teachers), a sample of 331 respondents was selected, consisting of 240 students and 91 teachers. The sampling was designed to ensure fair representation from each school.

**The detailed breakdown of population and sample selection from each school is presented below:**

| School       | Student Population | Student Sample | Teacher Population | Teacher Sample |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| School No. 1 | 150                | 108            | 13                 | 12             |
| School No. 2 | 56                 | 52             | 34                 | 32             |
| School No. 3 | 100                | 80             | 12                 | 12             |
| School No. 4 | 28                 | 20             | 16                 | 13             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>312</b>         | <b>240</b>     | <b>97</b>          | <b>91</b>      |

This sample allowed for balanced data collection across different school contexts within the private education sector.

### Instrumentation

To gather the necessary data, the researchers developed two structured, closed-ended questionnaires one tailored for students and the other for teachers. These instruments were designed to assess three key areas: (1) the availability and accessibility of career guidance services within schools, (2) the perceptions and experiences of both students and teachers regarding career counselling, and (3) the challenges students face when making career-related decisions. Each item in the questionnaires was rated using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” to quantify the level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

### Data Collection

The data collection process involved direct, in-person visits to the selected schools. During these visits, the researchers personally administered the questionnaires to both students and teachers at the secondary level. Before conducting the survey, formal approval was obtained from school principals to ensure institutional consent and ethical compliance. Clear instructions were provided to all respondents, and adequate time was given for completion. This method facilitated a high response rate and helped maintain the accuracy and reliability of the collected data.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

**Table 1**

Student Responses (Career Counselling at Secondary Level)

| Item No. | Statement   | Mean Score |
|----------|---|------------|
| 1        | Career counseling for students to choose the better career field                | 4.27       |
| 2        | Counseling is provided to achieving their goals                                 | 4.13       |
| 3        | Career counseling concern in secondary level                                    | 3.65       |
| 4        | School provides environment to students to ease the pressure of choosing career | 3.73       |
| 5        | School arranges trips for students to see things for themselves                 | 3.74       |
| 6        | Schools provides work-study during the vacations                                | 3.82       |
| 7        | Schools arranges seminars about career counseling                               | 3.72       |
| 8        | Teacher's vital role in choosing career   | 3.68       |
| 9        | Arrangements of career days/week activities                                     | 3.92       |
| 10       | Teacher relates teaching subject to careers                                     | 3.85       |
| 11       | Contribution of parents is highly required in choosing career                   | 3.86       |
| 12       | Lack of knowledge regarding career selection badly affects the future           | 3.62       |
| 13       | Contribution of teachers is very necessary for choosing better field            | 3.75       |
| 14       | School gives scholarships to remove financial hurdles                           | 3.64       |
| 15       | Students' opinion about who mostly guide them in career selection               | 3.71       |

The table summarizes the responses of 240 secondary-level students concerning their perceptions and experiences with career counselling services. The questionnaire items were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (DA). The statements addressed several dimensions of career guidance, including its overall importance, the involvement of educators and parents, institutional support programs, and the influence of external interventions such as motivational speakers and workshops. The overall results reflect a largely favorable student perception of career counselling practices within their schools. The highest level of agreement was recorded for the statement asserting the necessity of career counselling in facilitating better career choices, which attained a mean score of 4.27, with 84% of respondents affirming its importance. Similarly, high mean scores were associated with items recognizing the

supportive roles of teachers (mean = 3.75) and parents (mean = 3.86), highlighting their significant influence in students' career planning. Additional statements related to experiential learning such as field trips (mean = 3.74), participation in career-related seminars (mean = 3.72), and organized career day activities (mean = 3.92) also received considerable agreement, pointing to students' appreciation of diverse exposure opportunities. Furthermore, the linkage between academic subjects and career applications (mean = 3.85) was positively acknowledged by the participants. Conversely, comparatively lower levels of agreement were observed for statements concerning financial support and awareness challenges. For instance, the item about scholarships to remove financial barriers scored a mean of 3.64, while the statement related to lack of knowledge negatively affecting future choices had a mean score of 3.62. These responses suggest that while students recognize the value of career guidance, they also perceive notable gaps in institutional provisions and information access that require further attention. Item 15, an open-ended response about who primarily guides students in their career decisions, revealed that 40% rely on parents, followed by teachers (24%), friends (18%), and motivational speakers (17%). Overall, the data demonstrates a strong student endorsement of the need for structured and accessible career guidance services in secondary schools, while also highlighting opportunities for improvement in areas such as parental involvement, school-based counselling programs, and financial support mechanisms.

**Table 2**

Mean Scores of Teachers' Responses on Career Counselling (Items 16–29)

| Item No. | Statement   | Mean Score |
|----------|---|------------|
| 16       | Career counseling is important for students                                     | 4.58       |
| 17       | Students are less serious about their career                                    | 3.90       |
| 18       | Career counseling means to get related information about a subject              | 4.21       |
| 19       | Students are mostly confused without career counseling                          | 4.08       |
| 20       | School administration arranges training session for teachers                    | 3.75       |
| 21       | Students mostly select the career that their friends select for themselves      | 3.39       |
| 22       | Career counseling is providing remedial interventions for students              | 4.08       |
| 23       | Curriculum needs to develop career counseling strategies                        | 3.61       |
| 24       | Career counseling involves the student's interests and skills                   | 3.78       |
| 25       | Career counseling provides the goals and direction for better future            | 3.80       |
| 26       | Teacher plays vital role in choosing career for students                        | 4.24       |
| 27       | Teacher's role must be activated and motivated to achieve a career for students | 4.30       |
| 28       | Students like career according to their family tradition                        | 3.60       |
| 29       | Teacher as counselor can enhance the student's God gifted skills                | 4.14       |

The table summarizes the responses of 91 secondary school teachers regarding their views on the importance, implementation, and impact of career counselling in private schools. Each statement was rated using a five-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (DA), with mean scores providing insights into overall trends. The data indicates a strong consensus among teachers about the importance of career counselling. The highest mean score (4.58) was recorded for the statement that career counselling is essential for students (Item 16), with 97% of respondents agreeing. Additionally, teachers emphasized their own crucial role in the process, as seen in Item 26 (mean = 4.24) and Item 27 (mean = 4.30), which highlight the need for teacher involvement and motivation in guiding students toward their career paths. A significant number of teachers also acknowledged that students tend to lack seriousness about career decisions (Item 17, mean = 3.90), and many follow peers rather than make informed choices (Item 21, mean = 3.39). Teachers observed that confusion among students often arises in the absence of counselling (Item 19, mean = 4.08). Items related to school support and curriculum integration (Items 20 and 23) received moderately positive responses, with mean scores of 3.75 and 3.61 respectively, indicating room for institutional improvement in offering structured career development initiatives and teacher training. Moreover, teachers widely agreed that career counselling should be aligned with students' skills and interests (Item 24, mean = 3.78), and it serves as a remedial tool for students needing guidance (Item 22, mean = 4.08). Many also noted that students often choose careers based on family traditions (Item 28, mean = 3.60), and that teachers, as counsellors, can help nurture God-gifted talents (Item 29, mean = 4.14). In summary, the responses reflect a high level of teacher awareness about the significance of career counselling and its direct impact on students' future planning, while also calling attention to the need for systematic support through curriculum development, teacher training, and active engagement.

**Table 3**

Pearson Correlation Table Between Teacher and Student Responses

| Theme                                | Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) | p-value | Relationship Type             |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| Career counselling importance        | 0.76                                | 0.000   | Strong Positive Significant   |
| Teacher's role in career selection   | 0.68                                | 0.001   | Moderate Positive Significant |
| Career clarity and student confusion | 0.59                                | 0.003   | Moderate Positive Significant |
| Moderate Positive Significant        | 0.62                                | 0.002   | Moderate Positive Significant |
| Workshops/Seminars on career         | 0.57                                | 0.004   | Moderate Positive Significant |

**Interpretation**

The Pearson correlation results indicate positive significant relationships between teachers' and students' perceptions across the main themes. The highest

correlation ( $r = 0.76$ ,  $p = .000$ ) was observed in the theme of career counselling importance, suggesting strong alignment between teachers and students on its value at the secondary level. Other themes like teacher involvement and career clarity showed moderate but statistically significant correlations

## **Findings**

### **Findings from Student Responses**

Analysis of students' responses revealed the following key insights:

- A high overall mean score (4.27) on the statement "Career counselling is essential for students to choose the better career field" confirms that a large majority of students strongly recognize the importance of guidance in selecting appropriate career paths.
- Students also showed strong agreement with items related to the teacher's role in career selection (mean = 3.68), parental contribution (mean = 3.86), and career seminars/workshops (mean = 3.72). These findings suggest that students view their teachers and parents as critical influencers in shaping their future career goals.
- Items like "School arranges trips to work places" (mean = 3.74) and "School provides work-study programs during vacations" (mean = 3.82) had moderately high mean scores, indicating that some schools attempt to provide career exposure opportunities, though not consistently across all institutions.
- However, lower mean values on items like "Career counselling is lightly concerned at secondary level" (mean = 3.65) and "School gives scholarships to remove financial hurdles" (mean = 3.64) reveal a gap in the institutionalization and resource allocation for structured career guidance programs.
- Interestingly, students also showed that many still choose careers based on family traditions or peer influence, as reflected in the responses to the item "Students' opinion about who mostly guide them in career selection," where 40% selected parents, followed by teachers, friends, and motivational speakers. This underscores the importance of formal and professional guidance to balance out subjective and sometimes misinformed influences.

In summary, the student data highlight a clear appreciation for the value of career counselling, yet also suggest inconsistencies in its implementation and a lack of institutional practices to fully support informed decision-making.

### **Findings from Teacher Responses**

The findings from teacher responses reinforced and expanded upon students' perspectives:

1. The highest mean score (4.58) was for the item "Career counselling is important for students," with 97% of teachers agreeing. This establishes that teachers overwhelmingly believe in the necessity of structured career guidance at the school level.
2. The item "Teacher plays vital role in choosing career for students" had a strong mean of 4.24, indicating that educators view themselves as significant influencers and mentors in students' career development journeys.

3. Teachers agreed that students are often confused without career counselling (mean = 4.08) and that counselling helps in providing goals and direction for a better future (mean = 3.80). These insights align with the student data and reflect a mutual recognition of the importance of career clarity.
4. Moderate scores were reported for items like “School administration arranges training for teachers” (mean = 3.75) and “Curriculum needs to develop career counselling strategies” (mean = 3.61). These results point to a need for more systemic and policy-level support in equipping schools and teachers with tools and strategies for effective counselling delivery.
5. Teachers also acknowledged the influence of family traditions (mean = 3.60) and peer pressure on students’ decisions, further supporting the student data and suggesting that formal counselling can counteract uninformed influences.

Overall, teachers’ responses support the notion that career counselling is a necessary and impactful educational component, yet also highlight gaps in training, institutional structure, and curriculum support that must be addressed to enhance its effectiveness.

#### **Correlation Analysis: Teacher’s Role and Career Clarity**

To explore the interrelationship between key variables, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted using matched items from students’ responses:

- Teacher’s Role (Item 8): “Teacher plays a vital role in choosing career for students.”
- Career Clarity (Item 1): “Career counselling is essential for students to choose the better career field.”

The analysis yielded a moderate to strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.684$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This statistically significant relationship demonstrates that students who agreed with the teacher’s role in guiding their careers were also more likely to report confidence and clarity in their career selection. This finding confirms the hypothesis that educator involvement is directly linked with student empowerment in making informed career decisions. It highlights the importance of enhancing teacher preparedness and institutional support to strengthen this vital connection.

#### **CONCLUSION**

One of the important discussions emerging from the data is the disconnect between awareness and implementation. While students and teachers agree on the importance of career guidance, many schools lack structured, ongoing programs to support it. Teachers, despite recognizing their role, are often not formally trained as counsellors and may not have the tools or time to guide students effectively. Likewise, students’ reliance on parents, peers, or motivational speakers indicates that professional career counselling is not yet institutionalized within the educational framework. This study aimed to investigate the current landscape, perceptions, and influence of career counselling at the secondary school level by incorporating the viewpoints of both students and teachers. The results indicate a strong alignment between the two groups, emphasizing that career counselling is not only valuable

but also essential in supporting students during this formative academic stage. However, the data also revealed a noticeable gap between the perceived importance of career guidance and its practical execution within schools. While students expressed a clear need for structured and consistent support mechanisms—such as career seminars, workplace exposure visits, and personalized counselling sessions—such opportunities remain limited in many institutions.

Teachers demonstrated a willingness to contribute to the career development of students but frequently highlighted systemic constraints, such as insufficient institutional support, a lack of formal training, and the absence of dedicated counselling components within the existing curriculum. These challenges limit the effectiveness of teacher-led career guidance. Notably, the study found a statistically significant positive correlation between teacher involvement and students' career clarity, indicating that when educators are adequately equipped and encouraged to serve in guidance roles, students benefit through enhanced self-awareness, direction, and motivation regarding their career choices. This finding reinforces the need to embed career counselling more explicitly into school policies and teacher training programs to foster a supportive and future-oriented learning environment.

### **Recommendations**

1. **Institutionalize Career Counselling:** Schools must integrate career counselling into the academic curriculum rather than treat it as an occasional activity.
2. **Train and Empower Teachers:** Regular workshops and certification programs should be organized to build the capacity of teachers to serve as effective career mentors.
3. **Design Career-Focused Activities:** Schools should initiate programs such as career fairs, guest lectures, industrial visits, and work-study opportunities to broaden students' exposure.
4. **Policy-Level Integration:** Education boards and curriculum developers must recognize the need for structured career guidance and embed it in policy and practice.
5. **Parental Engagement:** Schools should involve parents through seminars and counselling sessions to create a collaborative approach toward career planning.

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