

## Perceived Career Counselling Establishing Career Adaptability among Newly Hired Graduates

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/14836>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/14836

*Published Date: 16 September 2022*

### Abstract

This paper was designed to deliberate the perceived role of career counselling in establishing career adaptability among newly hired graduates. It is derived from counselling for career construction as the element of guidance in deciding on work roles to prepare for the transition adaptation. Considering the life-career well-being of an individual in enhancing their capacity to adapt and deal with occupational challenges. The individual's intention to seek career counselling to obtain information about a future decision or to rectify the decision made is a strategy for thriving in the challenging labour market. The industrial pressure acquires talented talents with relevant skills forces newly employed graduates to self-regulate, be flexible and capable of applying self-capabilities in the future. However, newly employed graduates lack self-awareness of their capabilities and strength and limited information related to industrial demand, which entrapped them in career choice and decision-making. Thus, perceived career counselling enables newly employed graduates to understand industrial demand better, supporting them in adapting to their job and implicitly planning their career trajectory. Indeed, this paper encourages better comprehension of the perceived career counselling in establishing career adaptability to gain optimal and suitable employment.

**Keywords:** Career Counselling, Career Adaptability, Newly Employed Graduates, Life-Career Wellbeing, Career Trajectory

### **Introduction**

Organisations and industries are concerned with the labour market's ability to supply the skills required in line with the rapid advancement of technology and changing work environments (Hays-index.com, 2020). The organisation insists on recruiting people with relevant technical, technological knowledge and capabilities, and soft skills to meet the job quality standard (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2019). Interestingly, recruitment trends evolve where demand for skilled employees by organisations is deemed crucial and pertinent for having new employees that could immediately perform. Consequently, organisations and industries must collaborate with the educational system to adequately educate and train future potential employees to understand the organisational goals. The initiative will require future employees to enhance themselves by associating with digital and technology practices, a resilient, coordinator, creative, and readily adapt to prepare for future challenges (Low et al., 2021; Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia, 2020; QS Quacquarelli Symonds Limited, 2019).

This foreseen situation acquires newcomers to be ready for the changes, willing to learn new things, and take challenges and adjustments (Jenna, 2021) to suit the transition that enables them to be relevant in this limited labour supply market (Heath, 2020). However, future human resources seem constrained by a lack of skilled labour (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2019). These labour competency issues, especially in today's technological transformation phase, were argued due to the declining number of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program enrolment (Academy of Sciences Malaysia, 2018; Khazanah Research Institute, 2018). Hence, the Malaysian government's initiative to produce local talent may strengthen industrial productivity (Mustapa, 2022). Furthermore, with the ever-changing nature of the global market, the industry has set the appropriate quality standard for the organisational members corresponding to the technological innovation, reindustrialisation, and diverse working cultures (Ainol Mardhiah et al., 2019; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2019).

Nevertheless, the industrial demand pressures the newcomers that refer to newly employed graduates. They struggle with the transition, are unprepared for potential work environment challenges, have misconceptions about job roles and even expect a bounty of advantages during their early employment (Magnano et al., 2021; Puteh et al., 2015; Suhairom et al., 2017; Tahir et al., 2020). Even more worrisome to the industrial practitioner is the dearth of newly employed graduates that are able to apply practical work abilities in a real workplace situation. The challenging new environment and the generational issues were perceived as indicating that they haven't yet ready for work, have few ideas about the realities of the workplace, struggle with self-adaptability, and are ill to deal with adverse working conditions (Rozana, 2019; Thirunavukarasu et al., 2020). In tandem, employers are dissatisfied with newly employed graduates' work performance and empirical evidence revealed unconvincing graduates' employability skills (Cheong et al., 2016; D'Silva, 2020; Nadarajah, 2021; Tanius, 2018).

A Malaysian study by Nadarajah (2021); Cheong et al (2016); Heang et al (2019) on newly employed graduates revealed that employed graduates lack communication skills, analytical

skills, and lack focus while working. They are found to be dissatisfied with the assigned task, have low excitement about new experiences, have difficulty interacting with colleagues, and lack teamwork and self-confidence. This demonstrates that they are unconcerned with what is going on around them; instead, they are still in their own world, regardless of what the future holds or what occurs in the present.

In fact, the majority of freshly hired graduates are clueless about the existing and future expectations of the sector. They aren't able to equip themselves with real-life skills and competencies that are relevant to the job. This claim is fully supported by Le et al (2019), academic achievement doesn't guarantee a job after graduation, since grades are only one screening criterion. Indeed, a report by the Department of Statistics, Malaysia (2022), employed graduates are occupying positions that do not match their qualifications or level of study. This condition raises worries regards of graduates' capacity to find adequate jobs. A study by Abd Rahman et al (2020), graduates fail to acquire equal roles, and they are willing to apply for positions below their educational level. Evidently reveals that they lack industry understanding, and willingness to accept any job offer resulting imprisoned them in career insecurity.

As such, this limited industrial awareness leads newly employed graduates to the status of underemployment, underrated salaries, and unemployment (Central Bank of Malaysia, 2019; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022; Williams & Hanani, 2021). Even though there is some thought, of working in lower-level roles (misaligned with their qualifications) as the starting point of working experience which allows newly employed graduates to gain working experience, understand the working culture and start the profession from the ground up (International Labour Organisation et al., 2019). However, the choices made will impact the future, the duration of either underemployment or underrated salary on their entry-level employment may impact their career prospects, wages, and job satisfaction.

Thus, to ensure that the new employee will be able to get certificate-aligned employment, it is necessary for them to be aware of the basic industrial and working requirements. Indeed, strengthening the limitless attitude, self-esteem, proactive behaviour, courage, and optimism could assist newly employed graduates in thriving through the challenging transition. Furthermore, establishing career adaptability could keep newly employed graduates from falling into a sedentary lifestyle (Magnano et al., 2021; Rivera et al., 2021), success in work transition and well-being (Monteiro et al., 2019), and increases job satisfaction (Amira Nursyafiah et al., 2018; Fiori et al., 2015; Sony & Mekoth, 2016). In consonance with this, this paper debates the significance of perceived career counselling as a critical tool for achieving career adaptability; thus, uplifting the newly employed graduates to strategies in determining the finest field-aligned employment sector. Thus, assisting the newly employed graduates to likely realise they deserve a better job. In addition, to give awareness of how recently employed graduates see a job that corresponds to their educational background, skills, and personal preferences is necessary.

### **Career Adaptability**

Career adaptability was first introduced by Super and Knasel (1981) as a readiness to cope with changing work and work conditions. Savickas (2002) defines it as the readiness to cope with unpredictable adjustments in an individual career path. It is necessitated in an

individual's life orientation involving achieving future career objectives. Subsequently, career adaptability has evolved, defining the broad combination of psychosocial resources that contribute to the development of success-related resources (Johnston, 2018; Savickas et al., 2009; Savickas, 2013) in the unpredictable adjustment of career paths, current and future vocational development tasks, and occupational transitions (Savickas, 2013). The evolution of the notion reflects the individual's proactivity in researching, preparing for, and modifying their future professional behaviour.

Indeed, the concept is beneficial in orienting individuals toward the future, progressive focus in cultivating mental exploration, foreseen future work roles and environments that enable individuals to excel in career planning, readiness to embrace tasks, navigating life transitions and overcoming traumas. Through involvement in psychosocial construction, individuals will be more concerned about their future careers by enhancing their control over their careers, curious about potential career choices, and confident in their ability to live up to their ambitions. Career adaptability comprises four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. These four domains are highly associated with career satisfaction, self-direction, and personal well-being (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2017; Ramos & Lopez, 2018; Rivera et al., 2021). Capabilities of the individual in possessing themselves with high career adaptability domains will ease them for future career outcomes.

Further, career decision-making success allows individuals to have better career trajectories. Thus, the psychosocial construct between individuals and their surroundings, specifically the working environment, is vital in daily working life. Individual construct in terms of emotional intelligence, self-regulation, self-esteem, and also the psychological capital (Eryilmaz et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2021; Merino-Tejedor et al., 2016; Safavi & Bouzari, 2019) is associated with career adaptability that could assist the individual in achieving the career objectives. Meanwhile, the willingness and ability of individuals to adapt to the working environment by participating in the work role, working in corporate culture, and assimilating into the organisation's demand indicate the person's job, environment and organisation fit that ease the individual in adjusting and accept the surrounding (Andela & van der Doef, 2019; Bahat, 2021; Bam et al., 2019; Miller & Youngs, 2021; Rauvola et al., 2020; Wahyudi et al., 2019).

However, individuals' capabilities in determining self-strength are necessary for this unpredictable working demand and changes. Empowering self-awareness over demanding industrial relevant skills requires individuals to possess the concept of career adaptability. Assist them in doing well in their job, adapting to various job responsibilities, modifying themselves to fit with their surroundings, and thus enabling them to plan their career trajectories. Anyhow, diminishing career adaptability initially limits the awareness of newly employed graduates on possible best career opportunities. As a result, they were wedged in low-skilled jobs, underemployment, and underrated salaried job.

Hence, the hypothesis by Yan and Roselan (2020), a career counselling role could assist individuals in finding, maintaining, and managing the best suit job in the future. Similarly, as suggested by Syazila et al (2021), career counselling contributes to real-life work exposure and helps in career decisions. In line with Maree (2016, 2018), viewing career counselling in the South African context indicates that career counselling helps in employment and life transition. Nevertheless, practising career counselling in early life design is yet to be given

priority, the minimal consideration given to the development of vocation behaviour at the early stage of career life span (Yan & Roselan, 2020; Maree, 2018). As such, it is relevant to examine perceived career counselling in enhancing career adaptability and assisting newly employed graduates with their future career planning.

### **Perceived Career Counselling**

Savickas (2013) describes career counselling as guidance in assisting people in discovering and performing adequately on the job, making career-related decisions, adjusting to work, managing one's career, negotiating career transitions, and advising on work-life balance. The guidance is provided by a highly trained specialist capable of listening to the client's narrative life story, concentrating on identifying and understanding the client's individual paradigm to transform it into the essence of interest, tension into intention, and obsession into a profession. Career counselling encompasses a variety of perceived issues that people face throughout their lives; the practices provide greater flexibility in addressing professional challenges and tasks. Indeed, career counselling is part of guiding and helping a person overview their career path in aligning with the current and future industrial demand (Hui et al., 2018; Maree, 2016; Ozdemir, 2016).

There are numerous researchers advocated for the depth literature on career counselling involvement in career decision-making and working environment (Ismail, 2017; Nor Syazila et al., 2021; Ocampo et al., 2020; Shin & Lee, 2019; Ulrich et al., 2018; Zammitti et al., 2021). Indeed, career counselling is a conversation session between clients (counselees) and counsellors. The counsellor listens to the client's life experiences, assists in determining the best capabilities for a potential current or future career opportunity, and increases their awareness of career planning. Thus, this paper examines the significance of perceived career counselling in affecting career adaptability as a guide for individuals to gain a perspective on their lifelong professional goals.

However, in Malaysia, career counselling is a burgeoning profession that still enhances its activities in influencing individuals to gain career assistance. Historically, in the Malaysian context, in the 1980s, counselling Malaysia was exposed to psychiatrists and psychologists in the mental health and medical environment (Malek et al., 2014). The counselling concept was started in the school system, focusing on addressing development needs, disciplinary, personal, family, and social problems, and career guidance (See, 2004). However, there is a disparity in the practice of career advice at the education level. The school counsellor specifically gives efforts that focus on the professional aspects that are limited. Career assistance activities are conducted in burst events such as career fairs, carnivals, and lectures on a large scale (Kok et al., 2012; Quek, 2014). In contrast to career counselling in Western countries, particularly Germany, career counselling assists youngsters in making decisions about their educational course and streaming, the complex combination of subjects chosen, and the transition from elementary to secondary education (Ulrich et al., 2018).

Moving on to social and economic development, the career guidance intervention could strengthen youngster decision-making. Transitioning parental to self-supervision in academic preparation and mental and physical health in the social component (Yin-Fah et al., 2016) would enhance life maturity to thrive in the future. Participation and involvement in career counselling could enhance career awareness, career knowledge, and maturity in

understanding the industry's needs and demands toward the relevant skills. Through classroom-based career education, as it is practised in Germany, youth are exposed to counsellors and guided in identifying their interests and abilities. The program gives the youngster an idea to decide whether to pursue study or participate in work experience placement.

Therefore, the practice of career counselling at the university level in Malaysia to aid tertiary students for future career progression is undesirable among students. A study by Yin-Fah et al (2016) revealed a low percentage of students seeking the services. Indeed Othman & Abdullah (2015) yielded counselling in Malay trends (as the largest racial group in Malaysia) viewed the counsellor as an outsider or a stranger to share their difficult emotions or problems. Despite all, a report by the Department of Statistics (2022) reveals that 0.5% of graduates consult a career and counselling facility and 0.1% contact an alumni office for assistance in job hunting. Due to this fact, Mohan & Sorooshian (2012) alleged that Malaysian society should have an open concept about counselling to obtain minimum guidance and fruitful results mentally, physically and emotionally.

Thus, a career counsellor's roles are essential to assist the newly hired in aligning their best job decisions with their desire for life satisfaction. Notwithstanding, career counselling initiatives in Malaysian organisations are somewhat limited. As argued over the last decade by Mohamed & Musal (1994), organisations' counselling activities are concerned more with employee disciplinary issues. The condition persists to the present day; the current study on Malaysian civil servants discovered that counselling activities control employees in conducting their job correctly (Hazaila et al., 2018). The study indicates that since employees are exposed to personal concerns, it potentially contributes to low productivity that requires counselling to realign them with job priorities; thus, counselling is to keep them aligned with their performance indicators. Meanwhile, regarding the issue of integrity and fraud in the corporate setting of the Malaysian public sector, counselling plays a role in using religious infusion to overwhelm the problems (Jamaliah et al., 2018; Rafidah et al., 2019). As implemented in the early 1980s, this demonstrates that counselling procedures in Malaysia are primarily concerned with the disciplinary problem.

Even though counselling is classified as personal and career (Hazaila et al., 2018), counselling has emerged and risen, but it is uncommon in business organisations (Pope et al., 2002). The empirical research reveals that business organisation counselling focuses on the individual's problem instead of guiding employees to overview their self-interests and talents. Thus, it has repercussions for a bunch of newly employed graduates, who are still searching for the appropriate route and hoping for the best. The limited exposure makes it difficult for them to understand the bigger picture, regulate their career trajectory and determine the most profitable employment choices. Even though career counselling has been proven effective in developing individual career awareness (Poh et al., 2018), career maturity (M. S. Ismail et al., 2018), personal development (Thuryrajah et al., 2017), career choice (Talib et al., 2010) and career adaptability (Abkhezr et al., 2021; Ramdhani et al., 2020). The empirical study and practicality are limited.

### **Perceived Career Counselling and Career Adaptability**

Since the career counselling concept assists an individual in enabling them to assess their characteristics, interest, values and personality in the meeting, preparing and participating in the new world of work forged them to sustain and contribute to the communities (Savickas, 2013). Through self-evaluation, skills and abilities determination assisted by the counsellor, the individual is able to estimate occupational exploration accurately. The guidance entails identifying and overcoming specific obstacles by aiding individuals to reflect on their surroundings and utilise the possible resources. In the meantime, individual life-work experience will become basic formatting in constructing a career. As a result, the individual can make meaningful career matches by facilitating the intersection between person and environment.

As career adaptability increases along with the dimension of concern, curiosity, control, and confidence, career counselling assistance shapes individual self-extension, which allows individuals to connect to society and regulate their vocational behaviour. Through the support and advice, the individual develops the methods for handling essential tasks, navigating professional transitions, and resiliency in the face of occupational traumas (if any) to establish a meaningful future career. A career counselling discussion session is valuable in providing an overview of a future career. In this connection, individuals will be concerned over their distant future, curious about the more prominent occupational aspects, have control over their decision-making and have the confidence to engage in a field that aligns with their interests and values.

This sense of continuity enables individuals to aspire to achieve future success. The continuity of career life experience contributes to an individual's reaction toward real-life activities to strive over occupational and personal vision. Reveal in the study by Abkhezr et al. (2021) of African young adult refugees indicate life experience stories during the migration journey inspire them to imagine and plan their future career after resettlement. However, environmental differences and changes are acquired to readily instil career adaptability to cope with any unforeseen situation. Thus, career counselling is essential in guiding them to adapt to new surroundings, which implicitly impacts career development and career transition.

Similarly, as argued by Maree, 2018; Ramdhani et al., 2020), the life design career counselling and career counselling dialogue between counsellors and counsees become a core element in designing a future career. The relationship between both parties can reflect the situation and sense-making in exploring the counselee's aspects of identity and adaptation that are useful for work-life design. They are able to realise their life's purpose and find significance in their actions.

In the essence of the highly competitive job market, adaptability and employability are necessary. The role of career counselling is to foster self-awareness and self-resilience in the face of occupational challenges. By narratively drawing up individual life stories and advice, the individual can deal with the challenges at any career phase and empower future career trajectories. The orientation of career counselling would assist individuals in enhancing their career opportunities, job-related thinking, readiness to confront future career obstacles, and even career transition.

**Theory of Career Construction**

Encompass of career construction theory on this paper empowering individuals in reconstructing future career plans and imaginary. Career construction explains the self-interpretation and interpersonal processes of the individual to steer toward the success of occupational behaviour. This idea proposed by Savickas (2013) addresses the self-development of individuals as a result of environmental adaptability. By recognising individual strengths and abilities, individuals are motivated to engage in learning in order to enhance their occupational skills. In addition to the life-storey narrative, individuals' characters and occupational behaviours are shaped to prepare for the unanticipated environment, as they emphasise self-construction to adapt to their surroundings.

Thus, an individual's potential for career adaptability can be improved by developing a psychosocial construct that integrates people and environments. Indeed, career adaptability reflects people in building upon the career construction; effective handling by proactive seeking guidance from a career counsellor could assist in the context of individual career life. As individuals act as actors, agents, and authors in the career intervention, people become who they are. Based on childhood development (family and social influences), striving to adapt to the occupational plots and self-regulate in pursuing their chosen career, career counselling enables to coconstruct individuals to build from the outside pressure becoming individual strength.

In making self-identity in the reaction to the environment, the role model assists the individual in beginning life construction. As indicated in past studies, parents influence an individual's career decision-making and choice (Fawehinmi & Yahya, 2018; Ilyana & Siti Raba'ah, 2020; Ulrich et al., 2018; Yaqoob et al., 2017). While in the career trajectory, the organisation's members consist of supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates who may act as role models for the individual in guiding future career decision-making. Indeed, an individual's ability in self-construction is the most effective strategy to achieve one's desire. Through discovering self-identity, a person will be steered into a professional path consistent with their distinctive characteristics.

**Conclusion**

Career adaptability is vital in this challenging labour market. The shrinking and weakness of the labour market acquiring individuals to align with industrial and global demand. The hesitance of newly hired graduates in determining their own professional path may be alleviated with career counselling. The career counselling concept possesses a combination of people's life story narrative and guidance that aligns with the current and future market and assists the individual in constructing a life-career trajectory. People who were hesitant to seek attendance became caught in an unsatisfactory situation due to a mistake made early in the decision-making process. According to Guan et al. (2018) and Parola & Marcionetti (2021), the capacity to attain career adaptability is contingent upon making appropriate career choices.

Thus, perceive career counselling could establish career adaptability among newly employed graduates. Seeking career counselling would assist them effectively in career choices. Making the ideal career choice would also result in life-career fulfilment for newly hired graduates (Yen et al., 2019). Indeed, career counselling initiatives in employment that support individual



professional development should be addressed. Regardless of labour market challenges, career counselling benefits personal life-career wellness. The individual's ability to adapt, adjust, learn, and advance in life could depend on a career counsellor's support.

In addition, most Malaysian counselling services are centred on mental and psychological therapists. Possibly the practice of counselling services in Germany could be adept in Malaysian society, whereas the role of employment agencies providing career information, individual counselling, training and employment placement along with career assessment tests and labour market sharing (Ulrich et al., 2018). Subsequently, organisations that regard career support could enhance their human resource functions in supporting newly employed graduates in gaining life job happiness, loyalty, job stability, and keeping the finest talent by providing an overview of their life-career trajectory. Apart from that, perceived career counselling guides the individuals to be more self-reliant and self-capabilities to perform their best for the organisation.

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