

## CAREER ASSESSMENT IN PAKISTAN: CURRENT SCENARIO

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### ABSTRACT

*Assessment in career counseling is an essential part because it helps counselors to identify individuals' unique characteristics which assist in making educational or vocational decisions, having lifetime implications. Using interview technique, this article aimed at examining the existing practices of Pakistani career practitioners about their use of assessment tools with their counselee. Career counseling appears to be a neglected area as scant evidence can be found related to its development, particularly with regard to career practitioners' training and development of assessment tools. Yet, some practitioners are fully aware of its importance and utilize psychometric assessment tools mostly for helping students for making academic or career related decisions. However, dependence on internationally developed theories in practice and research is a matter of concern. It indicates career assessment and career counseling at large needs policy makers' and academicians' attention to address the gaps through policy and indigenous theoretical framework.*

**Keywords:** Career Assessment, Personality Testing, Interest Inventory, Indigenous Career Theory.

### INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the current state of career assessment in Pakistan with regard to its development and career practitioners' assessment skills. We begin with the brief introduction of career assessment tools, followed by discussing their increasing need in the context of challenges faced by Pakistani society.

Utilization of a scientifically proven career assessment tool for the purpose of self-exploration provides a baseline to objectively determine

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the direction of the entire guidance process. Knowledge of career theories, and selection and administration of an appropriate psychometric tool is one of the core elements among the minimum competency criteria for the career practitioners (National Career Development Association [NCDA], 2009). The need for career assessment for the purpose of selecting a suitable field is even greater today because of the rapidly changing labor market and introduction of diverse occupations requiring new skills in the technological advanced era (Bruckner, LaFleur & Pitterle, 2017).

In career assessment, interests, abilities and values are considered as the most significant areas to identify. Founder of the career guidance movement, Frank Parsons's talent- matching approach (Parsons, 1909) provided the foundations for the development and advancement of career assessment tools during the times when the western world was combating the challenges posed by industrialization and World War I. The discipline continued to grow as the world faced new challenges with the modernization of technology and another setback struck by World War II (Eliason et al, 2014). As reported by test publishers, each year more than 2,500,000 career assessment tests are administered (Hansen, 1995). However, the use of tools developed in western countries based on theories which represent their culture and work environments is not warranted in Asian societies having different sets of cultural values and labor market dynamics (Leung, 1995).

### **Context for the Need of Career Assessment in Pakistan**

Policy makers have always been cognizant of the importance of career counseling in Pakistan. Our review of 20 policy documents including nine five-year plans, five education policies, five youth policies and Vision 2025 indicated the presence of provision of career guidance and counseling at school and university level. However, less stress has been on the assessment in this process, as only the second and third five-year plan (Ministry of Planning Development and Reform, 1960; 1967) specifically suggested the use of standardized assessment tools for subject and career selection.

The gap between policy and its implementation with regard to career guidance and counseling services at school and college level is wide as some studies suggest the absolute absence at government institutions (Khan, 2010; Nafees et al., 2012; Wasif, 2010), but few private institutions at secondary and higher secondary level have been reported

to provide it in a less formalized way, lacking quality due to insufficient resources. Consequently, students resort to their parents, teachers and; in few cases to their friends, for advice. This advice is not considered satisfactory because it is mostly based on limited information about the available options, the world of work and parents' own desire for their children to pursue conventional careers (medicine, engineering, business and commerce) rather considering children's aptitude, personality and personal inclinations. Until recently, in fewer cases on record, mass media, in the form of television and internet, has become a source of information on career selection, mostly in urban areas. (Bilal & Malik, 2014; Kamran & Khalidi, 2011; Khan, Murtaza & Shafa, 2012; Qurrat-ul-Ain & Khatak, 2012; Saleem et al., 2014; Siddiqua, 2017; Yaqoob et al., 2017).

The situation of career counseling for higher education students was less or more the same as for school and college students until the University Grants Commission was transformed into the Higher Education Commission [HEC] in 2002. For quality assurance and in an attempt to link university graduates with the labor market, HEC made it mandatory for degree awarding institutions to establish placement/ career service centers (HEC, 2007). Zahid, Hooley and Neary (2019) revealed in their review of Pakistani universities' websites that almost half of these institutions have established career guidance services. The focus of these services remains on helping students in their successful transition to the labor market. Some universities are also engaged in providing broad spectrum career services including career assessment but the whole process relies on theories established in western societies.

Each year more than three million students ascend to high school, more than one and a half million to higher secondary and more than two million to tertiary education in Pakistan (National Education Management Information System, 2018). As ordained by our education system, every student is bound to make a subject choice while entering into ninth grade. The selection of subjects at this stage is of grave importance because it may limit the choices at advance level. If students select arts and humanities in matriculation, they are not allowed to study science or engineering at intermediate level and further. Intermediate pre-medical students cannot further study engineering and pre-engineering students cannot study health and medicine related subjects at tertiary level. These conditions for our young students, who are still in the self-exploration

phase of their life, trying to understand the world around them, and presented with numerous fields of study and careers, indicates greater importance of career assessment to help them make an appropriate decision.

Being an emerging economy in the advanced technological and globalized world, Pakistan faces multitude of challenges. Although Pakistan is considered one of the youngest countries in the world as two-third of its population fall under the age of 30 years, and young people between the age bracket of 15-19 years make almost one third of the total population (Najam & Bari, 2017), yet it stands miserably at 134 rank out of 157 on Human Capital Index Pakistan (World Bank, 2018). To accelerate economic growth, country is making an effort to shift into a knowledge-based economy (Kalim & Lodhi, 2002) and create job opportunities requiring intellectual skills. The demand for such a skill set is increasing in Pakistan as well as in advanced countries. At the same time, the current government is introducing fiscal and monetary policies to boost local production and investment. The development of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is also near being functional and promises to open the door of employment in several sectors (Azhar, 2019). On the other hand, the internet is introducing our students and new graduates to new programs of study and careers beyond borders. It implies when educational and career choices increase and related information becomes easily accessible, it increases the need for self-awareness for improved decision-making. There is no unified career guidance system for our more than seven million students to assist them in developing self-understanding and be able to make cognizant subject/ career choice along with due consideration of certain familial, social and economic factors.

The next session briefly outlines the evolution of career assessment, then we analyze the body of local studies available on career assessment tools and finally move on to identify opportunities available for career practitioner's training on assessment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Brief History of Career Assessment**

During the early stage (1890-1919) of career counseling, when job placement services mostly relied upon Parsons simple model based on observation and data gathering skills, the use of psychometrics in testing

is believed to give respectability to the field and acceptance in the populace (Pope, 1997). An educator by profession and regarded as the first school counselor, Jesse Davis's Student Vocational Self Analysis (Davis, 1914) based on his systemized analysis of self-awareness linked with the occupation process is regarded as a pioneering work in the field of career assessment. Following Davis, was the first psychologist, James Miner, who developed career interest questions by utilizing weighted scores to help students make career decisions. It is his work that is believed to inspire one of the celebrated academicians and researcher Dr. Edward Strong (Harrington & Long, 2013).

The very first and the longest running career development organization in the world, NCDA (then the National Vocational Guidance Association) was established in 1913. The major goals for its creation remain to provide professional development opportunities, counseling standards, publications and advocacy for career practitioners (Feller, 2013). The first standardized career assessment tool Carnegie Interest Inventory (1920) was published by the Carnegie Institute of Technology. At this institute, many authors contributed in the refinement and advancement of standardized career assessment tools through development of survey items, differentiating interests of similar but comparable occupations, identifying gender differences and development of separate interest tools for men and women. Another significant contribution was made by Crowder in 1924 through the classification of several types of items into occupations, hobbies, subjects, activities, types of people etc. These eight classifications were used by Strong in The Vocational Interest Blank (1927), (Harrington & Long, 2013). During the 1930s, the vocational guidance services in union with psychometrics were extended to schools in the United States (Super, 1955). 1940-1959 witnessed these services being formalized for the tertiary level students and having personnel who are specifically trained for this purpose.

It was the same time that witnessed the flourishing of some career development theories that provided foundation to several career assessment tools across the world. Among those, Holland's theory (1997) of work environments is the most celebrated one as it is believed to be easily translated into practice across many cultures and has dominated the field for more than 5 decades (Nauta, 2010). It classifies people and environment into six types and suggests, people find satisfaction in their

work if their personality is congruent with their work environment. It has provided conceptual foundation to the most contemporary interest inventories, some of which include Holland's own work in collaboration with his colleagues, such as Position Classification Inventory (Gottfredson and Holland, 1991) and Self-Directed Search (Holland and Messer, 2013), the latest version of Strong Interest Inventory (Donnay et al, 2005) and Career Key (Jones, 2010).

Implementation of Self-concept in career decision was the central idea introduced by Super and his colleagues (Super et al., 1957). However, most notable concepts of their theory that were translated into assessment tools are career maturity, vocational values, and vocation roles (Šverko, 2001). The Career Maturity Inventory was first developed by Crites. Hundreds of studies have been conducted which produced strong evidence on its reliability and validity across cultures (Crites and Savickas, 1996).

Theory of work adjustment (Dawis, 2002, 2005; Dawis and Lofquist, 1984) is another classic example of those models which have helped practitioners to guide individuals, especially with the need to make entry into a profession and those with adjustment concerns. The central idea of the theory revolves around personal needs of an individual, the needs of organization and the correspondence between them and four adjustment styles. This theory also provides propositions that can be tested and adapted in different cultures (Leung, 2008).

### **Career Assessment in Pakistan**

As we mentioned earlier, the advocacy on career assessment has been very much a part of many policy documents at both national and provincial level. However, very limited evidence can be found in the literature and on ground for its development.

In Pakistan, the 1970s could be regarded as the golden era for career assessment development since it was given due importance through a hefty investment by the Federal Ministry of Education for establishing a test development unit in its curriculum wing. The department initiated several projects for the test construction but no significant milestones were achieved, consequently it could not sustain its existence (Dar, 1982).

Students and faculty are engaged in the research projects a on regular basis, some of the studies related to career assessment have been

conducted so far that we discuss here. Career Key (Jones, 2010) is a widely used psychometric tool based on Holland's theory of work environments for helping individuals make education or career related choices in the western world. In Pakistan, it was adapted and translated in Urdu language by Hussain et al. (2014). The adaptation study sample consisted of 179 students, recruited from Karachi and Lahore. The Career Key Urdu [CKU] layout was kept the same as compared to the original version. Although each subscale of CKU exhibited a significant reliability index ranging from .68 - .85 but it failed to match with the spatial structure of the theory it is based upon. Suggesting, unsuitability of Holland's theoretical model for Pakistani population.

Scale of Occupational Aspiration was developed by Aziz and Kamal (2009) for adolescents in schools. The concept of prestige in theory of circumscription and compromise (Gottfredson, 1981) was utilized for item development. Although the total sample of the validation study was only 60 subjects, the average reliability scores of the scale for both men's and women's traditional occupations was observed to be significant at alpha .75.

The Job Knowledge Test was developed by Khan, Anis-ul-Haque and Anila (1995) which proposes that if students have adequate knowledge about occupations, they are able to make better career decisions. This scale was specifically developed for students in secondary classes. 240 students from Islamabad participated in the study and the test reliability was observed at .84 alpha.

*Aap ki Dilchaspian* is an adapted and Urdu translated version of Gordon's Occupational Checklist (GOC) (1967) by Khan (1992). The purpose of adaptation was to help eight grade students to identify their career interests. Khan not only simplified the language of the original scale but reduced almost half of its length. The overall reliability of the instrument was measured with an adequate sample of 300 subjects and yielded significant reliability coefficient .80 alpha.

Although not in a significant amount, the literature suggests contemporary efforts have been put in both development and adaptation of career assessment psychometric tools. Almost all tests appear to demonstrate a reasonable reliability index, yet each study has limitations. Firstly, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the instruments. For validation studies, most researchers agree upon a minimum of five

participants per item (Comrey and Lee, 1992; Gorsuch, 1983; Tinsley and Kass, 1979; Irwing and Hughes, 2018; Zhao, 2009). Secondly, each scale has limited geographical coverage, such as except one, all inventories have recruited samples from the capital city only.

Another limitation of these studies, for except one is the absence of reference of a national occupation document in the literature review phase. This step is important since all studies relied on western theories and a local occupation document could provide relevant information on the existing professions in the country. Latest document of Pakistan Standard Classification of Occupations (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2015) contains more than two thousand skilled occupations along with the level of literacy required for each occupation group. Such documents not only help in item development but provide strong foundations for matching a skill with a profession.

### **Training Opportunities for Career Practitioners in Pakistan**

Skillful utilization of career assessment tools is a critical step in the process of career guidance (Harrington and Long, 2013). Among the eleven minimum competency areas decided by NCDA (2009) for career practitioners, individual or group assessment skills come in the three foremost skills. According to the organization, career educators or practitioners must train themselves to be able to decide and use various kinds of assessment tools including personal characteristics such as interests, personality traits, adjustment style, aptitude. Other areas of assessment include but not limited to hobbies, self-concept, work environment, career maturity and learning styles. Practitioners must be cognizant of clients' characteristics while selecting a suitable assessment tool according to various characteristics of the counselee and his/ her situation. The administration of tools, scoring and interpretation of results, writing reports and assisting clients on the basis of his/ her performance on the tool comes with greater responsibility.

Only a specialized program can prepare career practitioners for the skills discussed above. In Pakistan, we could identify only one specialized career counseling graduate program (National University of Science and Technology, 2013). Lately, a 70 hours short course in career counseling is offered by the federal government (Skill Development Council Karachi, 2020). Both programs claim to train students in the assessment area but they borrow western career theories and assessment tools for this purpose.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Since, HEC has declared career services a mandatory provision at University level, of which career assessment is an integral part. It goes without saying that the career service provider must be skilled at the use of various types of career assessment tools. But as it is evident in the above discussion that we face acute shortage of indigenous career assessment tools and training programs, it is crucial to know how our career educators are able to perform their job with lack of resources.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Our research was guided by the two broad objectives:

1. To understand the role and contributions of career practitioners when resources for helping clients and professional growth are scarce.
2. To understand the scope of their career services particularly related to assessment.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Participants:** We recruited career practitioners working at university and in private setup. The reason for employing both types of practitioners was to get their different perspectives. We used expert sampling technique, a type of purposive sampling method because we are in the exploratory phase and there is not adequate empirical evidence available on career assessment in Pakistan (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016). Expert sampling informants allow interviewee to gain in-depth information from various aspects through their knowledge and experience which is difficult to get otherwise (Frey, 2018). To identify the potential participants from universities (UP), out of 204, 194 HEC recognized universities' functional websites were reviewed and identification of private practitioners (PP) was done through their appearance in google search. The selection process was mainly based on the provision of career assessment in the process of guidance and accessibility to the sample.

11 institutions were identified but nine were contacted, as we excluded two because they outsourced assessment services. Four private practitioners were identified and all were contacted. We received positive responses from three institutions and two private practitioners who were willing to participate in the study. All of our participants came from educational backgrounds other than career

guidance with a range of experience in the field from 4 years to 20 years. Both private practitioners were male and among the university participants, one was male and two were female.

**Instrument:** An interview guide based on ten broad open-ended questions, mostly followed by probing questions, was developed to conduct semi-structured interviews (See Appendix). The guide covered career practitioners' qualification and professional background in the demographic section and the scope of services and information regarding assessment was explored through the main body of the interview guide. Semi-structured interviews are considered useful for small scale research where they can help an interviewer to gain maximum information with flexibility (Drever, 1995). Another advantage of this method is that it allows thematic analysis of the gathered data (Alvarez and Urla, 2002).

**Data Collection:** All interviews were conducted by the first author, a PhD student, having experience of career counseling at college level. Three interviews were conducted on phone and two were conducted online as the participants were geographically dispersed across three major cities in Pakistan. Interviews were recorded with consent on smart phone and transferred to computer to transcribe clean for the analysis. The average length of the interviews was 48 minutes, ranging between 30 to 60 minutes.

**Analysis:** Following the method suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), we used thematic content analysis technique. First author completed the transcription on MS Word and the coding was done on MS Excel. To get acquainted with the data, we read the transcriptions multiple times and proceeded with the systematic coding. It helped us to identify the possible themes indicating broader patterns of meaning within the data. Initially identified themes were then reviewed for further refinement. We reconsidered those themes where the data was clearly diverse or insufficient. Once we were sure that our themes satisfactorily fit the data, we began to define and name them. Final analysis is presented in the results section.

## **RESULTS**

We identified three distinguishing themes: career practitioners' education and training, types of career assessment techniques used by practitioners and current scope of career assessment services. First theme

answers our first objective of the study and the other two subsequent themes cater the second objective. First two themes are divided into sub-themes, whereas third theme presents the practices of both types of practitioners separately due to differences in their work. Selected quotations from the interviews have been cited appropriately in each theme.

### **Career Practitioners' Qualifications**

**Practitioners' education:** None of our five participants received education relevant to their work in career counseling. More specifically, two UP came from psychology background, one having PhD in cognitive and developmental psychology and the other with specialization in clinical psychology. By virtue of their educational field, one UP had earned a license to administer a foreign personality test commonly used for career assessment across many countries.

*"I am a certified Myers-Briggs Type Indicator practitioner." (UP2)*

The other UP was qualified to conduct IQ tests, achievement tests and projective techniques utilized in clinical settings. Third UP had earned a masters' degree in English literature. On the other hand, one PP had received a dual undergraduate degree in Business administration and Communication and the other PP earned a double master's degree, one in Arabic language and the other in Business administration. However, he did some self-study to enhance his career Counseling knowledge and skills.

*"At that moment I took a break from my work and stopped Counseling for a while. During this course I focused on self-learning, understanding and acquiring (Counseling) skills that I must possess." (PP2)*

**Practitioners' training and experience in career counseling:** None of our participants received prior training to get into the role of career practitioner. It is important to note that all UPs were assigned for providing career services besides their teaching or administrative position in the university, where their primary role remains of an educationist.

*"My major role is teaching and research supervision, Counseling is a kind of part time job." (UP1)*

They did not receive any training pertaining to career counseling before getting into the additional role of career service provider. However, both

PPs began their career in the relevant field and received some form of training and experience outside Pakistan.

*“I am professionally trained in career counseling and career guidance from the Internationally Renowned Career Services Department at The University of Arizona, USA.” (PP1)*

*“After completing my education, I joined a foreign mission as an Education advisor and that was for my benefit. I got the advantage to travel to different countries and get international exposure (in the field).” (PP2)*

### **Type of Career Assessment Techniques Used by Practitioners**

**Quantitative Assessment:** Except one PP, all four participants utilize quantitative assessment tools in the counseling process. Each practitioner emphasized on the major areas like personality, interests, values and abilities for making career related decisions.

All three UPs administer internationally developed scales, however, the two PPs have their own assessment. PP1’s technique resembles more with a qualitative method as he uses a semi-structured interview schedule.

*“We use international online tools...” (UP3)*

*“Our Institute has developed its own localized self-assessment which assist in determining the students’ potential towards careers and vocation that they can do well in... I give them (students/clients) a form to fill out ....” (PP1)*

PP2 has developed four questionnaires based on his own understanding and knowledge of personality, abilities, values and interests.

*“We have an open online assessment, then we have another online assessment of advanced level but that is only accessible through permission. Then there is another assessment in hard form, for those who cannot afford the charges of our thorough assessment. The difference in this assessment and thorough assessment is that, through this assessment we suggest students a general field suitable for them, for example engineering, however in thorough assessment three distinctive fields are suggested.*

**Reliability of assessment tools used by practitioners:** Besides one PP who thinks otherwise, two PPs believe though internationally developed tools may not be completely culturally appropriate but they help to provide a basic idea of the personality.

*“Definitely, non-indigenous instruments do not fully fit to test our population but we use them to acquire basic understanding of students’ personality that can be beneficial to guide them.” (UP2)*

Both PPs find their assessment tools to provide valid and reliable results. However, their method of determining reliability is different as PP1 utilized immediate feedback after each session and PP2 has conducted a survey with a gap of minimum five years to get clients feedback.

*“We have done countless self-assessment and consistently earned excellent feedback from our stakeholders...” (PP1)*

*“The success rate of this (advance) assessment is 96.6%...We surveyed more than two thousand people who had availed our services almost five or six years ago... Those who had adopted our recommended field based on our assessment, they reported successful results and those who did not, shared they regretted taking fields other than our suggested ones.” (PP2)*

### **The Scope and Extent of Career Assessment Services**

**Private Practitioners’ Account:** Both PPs career services scope is geographically wide as they conduct career Counseling sessions and workshops both for individuals and groups across different provinces in Pakistan. More specifically PP1 is based in Karachi and is more active in Sindh. On the other hand, PP2 is based in the capital region, and more frequently visits its surroundings, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, southern Punjab and certain areas of Baluchistan. Most of the time they both have to approach private and government educational institutes and sometimes they’re invited too. Besides institutional visits and organized workshops, they privately conduct paid individual Counseling sessions which includes assessment. It is also of significance that most of their visits in government and non-profit organizations are either pro-bono or sponsored by the private sector. Thousands of students have benefited from their services across Pakistan. However, in their opinion career Counseling needs support to become an established field and be available to masses.

*“I believe, now this work should expand. Our organization has done this work on a solid basis, now things should be transferred to other hands without having fear of being copied, that my business recipe will be out...It should be done with a spirit of making many thousand trainers who can counsel students in our country...” (PP2)*

*“...sustainability is an area we can improve by investing more in career education and not compromising on hiring quality human resources to sustain career reforms programs efficiently... now is the time to present a legislative bill in the provincial assemblies to have a career education act in Pakistan...” (PP1)*

Besides conducting workshops for students both PPs have launched inclusive career Counseling training programs for teachers which also includes career assessment.

*“We train teachers to-be career advisors, career coaches and career educators that determine aptitude, interests, values and their personality through a holistic coaching and career counseling process.” (PP1)*

**University Practitioners’ Account:** The scope of career assessment at two of the participating universities goes beyond campus. However, one institute which has its own test resource center along with a Counseling center rarely gets requests for career assessment from inside the campus.

*“We conduct assessments related to intelligence, personality and very rarely career assessment. Like I can recall, in the last 5-7 year hardly a couple of people came for a career assessment.” (UP1)*

Sometimes they are approached by organizations for training or by schools at the time of admissions when assessments at test resource center are utilized.

*“There are some schools where our team conducts students’ assessments related to IQ and sort of career type... Besides that, some government and private institutes training has some part of assessment that we conduct... We have a soft skills training series which includes components like stress, motivation, effective work performance and work-related issues. More commonly (career) assessments (present in test resource center) are administered in*

*training workshops and research purposes.” (UP1)*

The other two universities have a full-fledged career counseling department, mainly run by clinical psychologists. Out of these two institutions, one of them provides assessment services to all of their current students, however the other one also caters the needs of its alumni, staff, their families and often collaborate with the other local universities to conduct career counseling sessions in which career assessment is an integral part. The university also offers the only graduate program in career counseling available in Pakistan.

*“At the career advisory center, along with other standardized psychological assessments we have tests available related to achievement, ability, aptitude, interests, values, personality and work-related issues...” (UP2)*

## DISCUSSION

In this study of career assessment for students, we explored the topic through existing literature, and career practitioners' accounts in private settings and at public sector universities. Private practitioners appeared to be more prepared and active in their role in comparison with those at university. These findings are not unexpected since university practitioners are assigned with this task without proper training and education as a part time work to fulfill HEC criteria to acquire the mandate of a chartered institution. Despite their lack of preparation for the role of career service provider, they possess basic counseling and assessment skills by virtue of being in the field of psychology. It is encouraging to find that two universities' career counseling centers have the capacity to provide services beyond campus as one of them have their own test resource center and the other offers the only graduate program in career counseling. However, career assessment tools available at test resource center are of little practical value because they are mostly developed by students to be further used in research rather for assisting pupils in real life. These findings are congruent with our previously mentioned literature review of existing local career assessment tools which concluded having insufficient sample, non-indigenous theoretical foundation and inconsideration of local realities in test development process restrict their use. The participants of this study appeared to be cognizant of the implications of using international career assessment. It is high time that stakeholders steer the direction of current research to promote development of indigenous

theories that can effectively cater individuals' needs considering local dynamics rather than modifying and adjusting methodologies and tools developed for an individualistic society.

Our study identified information that carries importance for psychology students, teachers and career service providers at different universities who are guiding students without proper education and training. On the basis of survey results, both private practitioners in our study claimed their career assessment and training yield satisfactory results, nevertheless scientific evidence is always required for the authentication of these claims. Besides master's level graduate program, the other prominent feature of short career counseling trainings is their length and level. Ranging from 1 day to 4 months, they aim to equip individuals with necessary skills to become a career counsellor. These qualifications offered by various bodies promote a fragmented structure of career counseling training, which is incapable to respond to the needs of service providers in different settings. Career practitioners in various settings require to have special knowledge of career theories, social and cultural context, labor market trends, education system and employment opportunities, which argues for specialized training and qualification. Basic or inadequate knowledge of guidance theory and training can result in inappropriate diagnosis and treatment. A regulatory body which controls both quality and quantity of career services is a requirement for shaping this profession and plays an effective role to develop a policy framework (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2004).

Our study highlighted the prevalent use of quantitative career assessment. It is suggested by test developers to combine information from other sources regarding various aspects of the counselee rather than solely depending on a general or specific test score (Holland and Messer, 2013). Different types of qualitative assessment resources can help to create a clear self-understanding. Decisions made on the basis of insufficient information or poorly developed tools may have life-long implications.

The understanding of our education system suggests, students must have accessibility to career services at an early age, at least when they are in secondary classes. Few career counselors with limited to no training are not sufficient to address the need of our more than 5 million students in schools and colleges. Several national policies have included career services provision for the youth but miserably failed to achieve the

purpose, especially for those at school and the unemployed population. As suggested by one of our participants, legislation must be carried out for the advancement of the career counseling field and it must be declared mandatory for secondary school students.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Like any other research, our study has some limitations, including the relatively small sample size, over which we had little control due to the small target population. Also, we only interviewed career counselors serving in two types of settings. As the previous researches suggest, a handful of private schools have recruited full time counselors who help students in making career choices. To identify those counselors was a tricky task as currently there is no database available. However, our findings are consistent with the available facts and previous researches in the field.

### **CONCLUSION**

Despite lack of proper training and education for career counselors in Pakistan, the importance of career assessment is realized by the service providers. Though poorly theorized, a small body of career assessment tools is available. The unique social, political and economic factors of our country demand a career guidance system that is in accordance with our societal values. Until we develop such a system, the development of indigenous career theories, assessments, and career practitioners' training can be promoted through its parent field Psychology; provided sufficient financial and intellectual resources are made available at universities.

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