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**CAREER COUNSELLING AND MEANINGFUL CAREER PATHS: INVESTIGATING  
ITS ROLES IN ALIGNING INDIVIDUAL SKILLS, VALUES, AND LIFE  
CIRCUMSTANCES AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN UYO METROPOLIS.**

By

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the role of career counselling in promoting meaningful career paths among adolescents in Uyo Metropolis, with particular focus on how it facilitates the alignment of individual skills, values, and life circumstances. Adolescence represents a critical stage in career development, where informed guidance can significantly influence future educational and occupational outcomes. Drawing on existing literature, the study highlights how career counselling enhances self-awareness, supports informed decision-making, and fosters confidence in navigating complex career choices. It further emphasizes the importance of contextual factors such as social expectations and economic realities in shaping adolescents' aspirations and opportunities. The study concludes that effective career counselling not only aids in selecting suitable career paths but also contributes to long-term personal fulfillment and adaptability. Therefore, the study advocates for strengthened counselling frameworks within educational systems to better equip adolescents for purposeful and sustainable career development. It also recommends that schools in Uyo Metropolis should establish and strengthen functional career counselling units staffed with trained and qualified counsellors to provide consistent guidance to adolescents.*

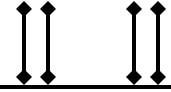
**KEYWORDS: Career Counselling, Meaningful Career Paths, Individual Skills, Values and Life Circumstances, Adolescents, Uyo Metropolis.**

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**INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important decisions teenagers must make is their career, which affects not just their professional paths but also their feeling of purpose and personal growth. The shift from school to the profession can be intimidating for a lot of young people, especially if their personal interests, skills, and circumstances are not well understood or matched with possible career options. Career counseling has emerged as a critical support mechanism in helping adolescents navigate these complex choices, providing guidance that fosters self-awareness and informed decision-making (Brown & Lent, 2019). Adolescents can explore opportunities that align with their specific talents and living settings through career counseling, which introduces formal frameworks for assessing individual abilities, values, and goals.

The goal of career counseling is to help adolescents interact meaningfully with their future rather than just finding them a job. Adolescents who receive guidance in identifying their competencies and aligning them with realistic career options tend to exhibit higher motivation,



confidence, and resilience when facing educational and professional challenges (Gati & Levin, 2020). Effective career counseling can assist young people in striking a balance between their aspirations and practical realities in urban regions like Uyo, where a variety of economic alternatives mix with social constraints and familial expectations. This congruence guarantees that career decisions are both feasible and rewarding, promoting long-term contentment and professional development.

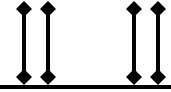
Furthermore, career counseling addresses the more comprehensive psychological aspects of teenage growth in addition to skill evaluation. Adolescents are navigating a formative stage of life where self-concept, social influences, and environmental factors interact to shape decisions that can have lasting consequences (Super, 2020). Career counseling assists teenagers in making decisions that are both practical and personally significant by offering tailored support that takes both dynamics into account. Counseling enables teenagers to choose jobs that align with their values, interests, and life circumstances by acting as a link between their current abilities and their ideal futures.

### **CONCEPT OF CAREER COUNSELING**

Traditionally based on the "trait-and-factor" model, which attempted to match an individual's personality traits with particular job requirements, career counseling has evolved from a straightforward "matching" process into a comprehensive, lifelong developmental intervention aimed at assisting individuals in navigating an increasingly volatile and non-linear labor market. Today, career counseling emphasizes career adaptability and self-construction. According to Wang & Li (2024), the field has shifted toward "Life Design Counseling" (LDC), which focuses on helping individuals create a coherent life narrative rather than just choosing a static job title. This approach recognizes that in a "VUCA" (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world, individuals must be equipped with the psychological resources to manage frequent transitions and redefine their professional identities throughout their lives (Hojdal, 2020).

Career counseling is now a vital link between education and the changing needs of the global workforce. Alnajjar & Hashish (2024) highlight that effective counseling programs significantly enhance job market readiness by fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, and decision-making self-efficacy. Counseling is more than just imparting knowledge; it's also about boosting a person's confidence in their own capacity to handle work-related responsibilities and get beyond obstacles in their surroundings. This is especially important in the post-pandemic period, when "skills-first" recruiting and artificial intelligence are changing career pathways, making personal work values like flexibility and purpose and internal career conversations the main sources of job pleasure.

In order to avoid burnout and guarantee long-term employability, the incorporation of self-regulation techniques into career counseling methods has become a revolutionary trend. In order to help clients develop greater levels of career resilience, modern counseling methods frequently incorporate "reflective tasks" that let them critically analyze their aims and beliefs. Beyond individual placement, the sector is focusing more on social justice and diversity in an effort to offer systematic support to underrepresented groups who encounter structural obstacles to professional growth. In coming years, the profession is expected to lean more heavily on AI-powered diagnostic tools and micro-credentialing, yet the "human element"—the empathetic, narrative-driven



relationship between counselor and client—remains the most valuable differentiator in achieving sustainable career success (Rezaiee & Kareshki, 2024).

### **CONCEPT OF MEANINGFUL CAREER PATHS**

A meaningful career path is a customized, long-term journey that prioritizes purpose, growth, and positive effect over simply financial gain and integrates professional work with personal values, passions, and strengths. It emphasizes independence, mastery of skills, and helping others; it frequently entails non-linear growth and ongoing learning.

The series of jobs or positions that a person advances in their professional life is known as their career path. It symbolizes the several phases and roles that an individual may experience as their career progresses. It's also a specific set of jobs that prepare you for upward growth in your industry. (Jefferson C. 2023).

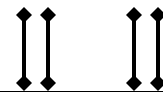
The sequence of positions a person plans to have while working for a company (or during their career) is known as their career path. However, consider it a road map rather than merely a list of employment. The starting point is the employee's current position, while the destination represents a goal, either short- or long-term. The career path encompasses the entire route, along with all the twists, turns, and pit stops that the employee needs to take to get to the "finish line." (Boogaard & Luc 2023).

A career pathway is a collection of occupations that give people a clear method to pursue and accomplish their professional objectives. In addition to delivering chances for advancement, challenging assignments, work-life balance, and more, they can assist in giving people direction and structure so they can select a fulfilling profession that matches their abilities, passions, and interests. Additionally, career pathways make it simple for people to get the tools, guidance, and assistance they need to succeed in their chosen fields. By providing such resources, career pathways help motivate individuals to gain skills for the new world of work and be better prepared for future job opportunities as they arise (Madsen, J. 2023).

### **CONCEPT OF INDIVIDUAL SKILLS**

Individual skill refers to a person's learned ability or innate talent to perform specific tasks or solve problems with proficiency. These capabilities, which include hard skills (technical) and soft skills (interpersonal), are enhanced through experience, education, and consistent practice, crucial for personal and professional development. They various behaviors that help people to carry out task by working well and socializing with others. They are intangible qualities that influence how a person acts and completes tasks. They are not quantifiable but make a great impact on your work ethic and interactions with others. They are also characteristics unique to an individual that are oftentimes natural to a person (Innate), although they can sometimes be gained through training. Those skills are developed intentionally as they are customarily determined highly favorable on a personal and professional level.

Individual skills are Personal qualities, skills and abilities that help an organization employee to perform their duties. It is the ability to practically apply theoretical knowledge in everyday service activities in accordance with the level of vocational education in the substitution



of Public Service. It could be good communication skills, the ability to work with textual information, the ability to overcome difficulties and make decisions. (Otaboervna M.K 2020).

### **CONCEPT OF VALUES**

Values are core ideas or precepts that direct people's actions and choices. They act as internal benchmarks that influence people's perceptions of right and wrong as well as their priorities in life. According to Schwartz (2020), values are crucial to social relationships and moral judgments since they are frequently impacted by society, religion, family, and individual experiences. They give people a framework for assessing circumstances, setting objectives, and acting consistently in a variety of settings.

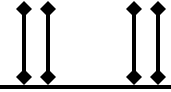
Corporate culture and employee behavior are significantly influenced by values. They have an impact on leadership philosophies, organizational dedication, and decision-making procedures. Businesses with clear values typically encourage ethical behavior, loyalty, and trust among their staff, which improves overall performance and sustainability (Furnham & Cheng, 2021). Organizations provide consistency and integrity in operations by aligning individual behavior with larger institutional objectives through the integration of fundamental values into rules and procedures.

Values are the foundation of social cohesiveness and group action in society. Mutual respect for social standards, cooperation, and understanding are all facilitated by shared ideals. They serve as the foundation for laws, moral standards, and social norms that help communities settle disputes and advance social welfare. However, cultural conflicts or miscommunications can result from differences in values, underscoring the necessity of tolerance and intercultural awareness in increasingly globalized communities (Rokeach, 2022).

### **CONCEPT OF LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES**

According to Michael Marmot (2023), life circumstances refer to the social determinants of health, including conditions in which individuals are born, grow, live, work, and age, which significantly influence their opportunities, well-being, and overall quality of life. These conditions influence life outcomes and resource accessibility. As noted by the World Health Organization (2024), life circumstances encompass the broader environmental, economic, and social conditions that affect individuals' daily living, including education, employment, housing, and access to healthcare, all of which determine health and social outcomes.

In the view of the American Psychological Association (2022), life circumstances are the situational and contextual factors that influence an individual's psychological functioning, including life events, stressors, and environmental conditions that shape behavior, coping, and mental health. Furthermore, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023) describes life circumstances as the combination of material living conditions and quality-of-life factors—such as income, social connections, safety, and work-life balance—that influence individuals' well-being and life chances in society.



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**EFFECTS OF CAREER COUNSELING AS MEANINGFUL CAREER PATHS**

In order to create meaningful professional paths, career counseling is essential in assisting people in making decisions that are in line with their beliefs, interests, and long-term objectives. Career counseling helps clients choose work that aligns with their fundamental motivations through goal definition and self-exploration, which increases commitment and job happiness. Research indicates that individuals who engage in career counseling demonstrate a significantly higher level of career clarity and perceived fit between personal values and occupational choices compared to those who do not participate in structured counseling interventions (Papadakis, 2023). A person's sense of purpose and fulfillment in their professional lives is enhanced by this alignment between self-concept and career direction, indicating that counseling is more than just advice; it helps people develop their identities and find meaning in their lives through their job.

Career counseling not only helps people better understand themselves, but it also gives them useful tools like goal-setting, strategic planning, and talent assessment to help them deal with the challenges of the modern job market. These skills are particularly crucial in a time of rapid technology advancement, unstable employment markets, and nonlinear career paths. For example, a longitudinal study tracking university graduates found that those who received systematic career counseling were better able to set realistic short- and long-term career goals, adapt to occupational transitions, and secure employment that matched their qualifications and aspirations (Lopez & Turner, 2024). In addition to improving job results, career counseling's organized approach fosters resilience by empowering people to view failures as teaching moments rather than as unfulfilled goals, which further strengthens a meaningful engagement with work.

Lastly, there is proof that career counseling improves psychosocial outcomes, including self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and mental health, which are the foundations of meaningful professional advancement. By helping clients articulate attainable career pathways and providing strategies to overcome barriers, counseling interventions have been shown to reduce anxiety related to career uncertainty and increase confidence in vocational decision-making (Singh & Luthra, 2025). A recent randomized controlled trial with adult job seekers found that participants who received career counseling services exhibited increased career self-efficacy and life satisfaction scores at a six-month follow-up compared to a control group, illustrating sustained benefits beyond initial counseling (Kim, 2022). These psychosocial benefits support a more cohesive sense of self and a sense of agency in directing one's career, both of which are essential elements of perceiving work as personally significant rather than merely functional.

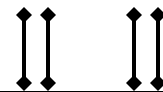
**ROLES OF CAREER COUNSELING IN ALIGNING THE SKILLS OF ADOLESCENTS**

➤ **Skill Identification and Assessment**

Career counseling helps adolescents identify both innate and acquired skills. Tools such as aptitude tests, personality assessments, and interest inventories allow counselors to match individual competencies with potential career paths (Turan & Yilmaz, 2019). Early strength identification guarantees that teenagers select professions that make the most of their skills.

➤ **Skill Development and Enhancement**

Counselors offer methods and tools for improving technical competence, critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills. By encouraging participation in workshops,



internships, and practical experiences, counseling aligns adolescents' skill sets with the demands of the modern workforce (Henderson, 2018).

➤ **Educational and Vocational Alignment**

Career counseling bridges the gap between academic choices and skill application. Adolescents learn to select courses, programs, or training opportunities that complement their abilities and career aspirations (Sultana, 2017). In the long run, this alignment improves employability and lessens skill mismatch.

➤ **Enhancing Decision-Making and Self-Efficacy**

Adolescents who receive counseling are better able to make well-informed career decisions by developing their decision-making, planning, and self-efficacy skills. When adolescents understand their capabilities, they are better positioned to pursue realistic and rewarding career goals (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2016).

➤ **Adapting Skills to Market Demands**

Adolescents can learn about new skill needs and labor market trends from career counselors. This knowledge allows adolescents to refine existing skills or acquire new ones, ensuring alignment with current and future workforce needs (Nguyen, 2020).

➤ **Psychological and Motivational Support**

Adolescents who receive career counseling feel more confident in their capabilities and are inspired to overcome obstacles. Psychological support ensures that skill development is not only cognitive but also aligned with personal interests and life goals (Lent & Brown, 2019).

## **ROLES OF CAREER COUNSELING IN ALIGNING THE VALUES OF ADOLESCENTS**

➤ **Building Self-Awareness And Confidence**

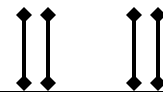
Career counseling helps teens build self-awareness by encouraging reflection on their strengths, skills, and values. By understanding these aspects, teens can make more informed career choices. According to Nicole Bankhead (2024), this self-awareness builds confidence, as teens recognize they can shape their future meaningfully. This exploration helps teens discover potential paths and equips them with skills to research, evaluate, and pursue their chosen careers.

➤ **Decision-making Guidance:**

Teenagers frequently have a variety of employment alternatives, and if they don't receive the right direction, they could choose pathways that don't line with their values. Career counseling provides them with tools for evaluation and decision-making that incorporate their own values, goals, and opportunities (Savickas, 2021). This guarantees that their job decisions take into account both internal incentives and realistic prospects.

➤ **Value Clarification and Prioritization:**

Counselors assist teenagers in distinguishing between internal values and extrinsic constraints, such as society conventions or parental expectations. Adolescents increase their commitment to chosen professions by learning to prioritize what matters most to them in a career through



structured discussions and reflective exercises (Brown & Lent, 2020). Future disputes and discontent in the workplace are decreased by this alignment.

➤ **Goal Setting and Future Planning:**

Teenagers can map out clear routes to fulfilling careers by connecting values to specific job objectives. Counselors help people define realistic short- and long-term goals and develop self-efficacy, drive, and tenacity that are consistent with their values. As noted by Whiston. (2021), this guarantees that teenagers choose suitable professions and actively pursue them.

**ROLES OF CAREER COUNSELING IN ALIGNING THE LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES OF ADOLESCENTS**

➤ **Self-Awareness and Personal Development**

Career counseling helps adolescents understand their interests, values, strengths, and weaknesses. Self-assessment tools and reflective activities enable youths to identify careers that align with their abilities and aspirations (Shrestha & Pradhan, 2021). Developing self-awareness ensures that career choices are consistent with personal life circumstances, reducing the risk of dissatisfaction and dropout.

➤ **Academic and Vocational Guidance**

Counselors assist adolescents in selecting educational pathways that align with their career goals. This guidance bridges the gap between academic performance and vocational interests, helping students make realistic and strategic decisions (García-Garnica et al., 2020). By matching interests and abilities with educational options, adolescents are better positioned for future success.

➤ **Coping with Social and Environmental Challenges**

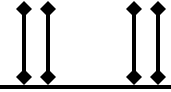
Adolescents often face social pressures, family expectations, and economic constraints. Career counseling provides strategies for managing these external influences, fostering resilience and adaptability (Kumar & Sharma, 2022). This role is particularly important in aligning career aspirations with life circumstances, including financial or familial responsibilities.

➤ **Enhancing Decision-Making and Goal-Setting Skills**

Adolescents who receive counseling are more equipped to make decisions, plan, and set goals. By teaching critical thinking and problem-solving strategies, counselors enable students to make informed choices regarding their career paths and life plans (Li & Wang, 2021). These abilities support teenagers in navigating uncertainty while staying in line with their circumstances..

➤ **Promoting Career Awareness and Market Knowledge**

Career counseling exposes teenagers to emerging careers, labor market trends, and professional expectations. Awareness of career opportunities allows students to align their ambitions with



realistic prospects and societal demands (Nguyen, 2023). This role ensures that adolescents' goals are both aspirational and achievable.

### ➤ **Psychological Support and Motivation**

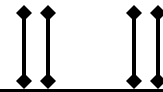
Adolescence can be a period of stress, confusion, and low self-efficacy. Career counseling provides emotional support, boosts confidence, and encourages motivation toward long-term goals (Al-Ahmadi & Al-Khaldi, 2021). Pragmatics is the study of acceptable language use in social contexts, including discourse markers, colloquial idioms, and manners.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, by assisting teenagers in understanding and aligning their abilities, values, and living circumstances, career counseling plays a critical role in directing them into meaningful and successful career pathways. Effective counseling offers the clarity and guidance required for well-informed decision-making in the setting of Uyo Metropolis, where societal expectations, economic realities, and personal aspirations frequently cross. Career counseling not only helps teenagers choose suitable career options but also gives them the resilience to overcome obstacles in the future by promoting self-awareness, confidence, and practical preparation. In the end, funding organized and easily accessible career counseling guarantees that young people are better equipped to pursue meaningful lives and make valuable contributions to society.

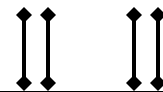
## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Schools in Uyo Metropolis should establish and strengthen functional career counselling units staffed with trained and qualified counsellors to provide consistent guidance to adolescents.
- Career counselling programs should be introduced early in secondary education to help students gradually discover and develop their interests, skills, and values before making critical career decisions.
- Government and educational stakeholders should provide adequate funding and resources, including career assessment tools and updated occupational information, to enhance the effectiveness of counselling services.

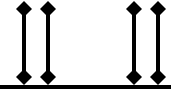


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