

## Original Research Article

# Career counselling and its knowledge among high school students in Pakistan

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**Received:** 02 May 2017

**Accepted:** 29 May 2017

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The objective of the study was to find out the knowledge of career counselling among High School Students in Pakistan, their attitude towards attaining this knowledge and role of counsellors in order to get the right decision.

**Methods:** This cross sectional study was conducted from October to November 2016\_in two private institutes of Karachi. It included 500 students enrolled in a single high school for A-level and intermediate study program for session year 2016-2017. A Structured questionnaire was developed and adapted from previous studies. Data entry and analysis was done using SPSS 20. Frequencies, percentages, and P-values were reported for the categorical variables, while mean and standard deviation for Age. The variables were cross tabulated against Knowledge to find out their associations. A P-value of 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

**Results:** Out of 500 respondents, 54% were females. Most of the students were in the age group of 17-19 years. Most of the students took Science as a major subject, while many declared it was their first attempt for higher school examination. 32.6% students had an aim of becoming Engineer while 29.8% wanted to be doctors. Most of these made this choice based on their personal interest. 54.8% of students had knowledge of career counselling. On applying chi square tests, availability of career counsellor and seminar attendance was found to be significantly associated with knowledge. Many of the students found counselling to be very important and they believed that there is a need of counsellor in every school. Most of them found their parents to be the most helpful in choosing their career.

**Conclusions:** It is concluded that most high school students possess appropriate knowledge, positive attitude but lack of proper practices. Students consider career counselling to be really important and they are really concerned in acquiring appropriate guidance. Parents seemed to play an influential role in their choices. It is evident that very few schools provide with career counselling session and there is no concept of presence of career counsellors in any school of Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Career counselling, High school, Students, Counselling, Knowledge

## INTRODUCTION

Career planning can be described as the process through which student make decisions related to their career. Career seeking is usually done in adolescent when one begins to explore different career choices and relate it to

their personal interest.<sup>1</sup> Numerous components impact students' decisions to take after a specific profession pathway. These incorporate individual interests, family, educators, the media, electronic data, and introduction to the occupation itself.<sup>2</sup> There is much impact of parents and teachers on students for choosing science and engineering as a subject, then for those who don't.<sup>3</sup> The

eventual career predilection is remarkably predicted by the career choice when students enter the professional school that ultimately makes those factors important which influence the student in making career preferences at the start of professional school.<sup>4</sup> Career exploration can be stressful at times, to survive this, most of the students put the responsibility of their career choice on parents, teacher etc. which may lead to less promising choice for them.<sup>5,6</sup> While, in some cases, it is found this stress is beneficial to a certain level which stimulates students to look for help and this eventually reduces the chance of a less optimal decision.<sup>6</sup> Career counselors and career guidance workshops also have its impact on career decision.<sup>7,8</sup> Career guides are not available to all high school students. Students from lower socioeconomic families and rural areas have the least access to it, therefore most students from these backgrounds pursue a career in the nonacademic program. As these students come from a background where knowledge of career choices are limited, should receive the career guidance most.<sup>9</sup>

Career advisors are the most important source for sorting the career-related issues, despite this fact, most students' turn to their family members for career guidance, especially those whose parents were highly qualified or those who had little ambition for education.<sup>10</sup> A research carried out in Ontario, Canada, where students stated that career advisors were less encouraging than their High school teachers and professors for their career related issue.<sup>11</sup> Although career guides are significant for educational and career development at the students' level but in the past, researchers noted that students were usually not satisfied with the advice they receive from them. The reason for this dissatisfaction would be that they gave advice generally to all instead individually according to student need and attribution.<sup>12-14</sup> A survey carried out in New Zealand in 2012, reported that only 15% of career counselors were qualified for career related education.<sup>15</sup> In one more study, held in Missouri US, it was also found that the significant role played by a school counselor is to promote the educational aim of the school and to support the counseling program of the university.<sup>16</sup>

In Pakistan, very few researches are available regarding knowledge of career counseling among high school students. The aim of our study is (a) to evaluate the knowledge of career counseling among students (b) attitude of students toward seeking career counseling (c) the need for the presence of career counselors of various fields at high school level who will help students in making career decisions of right choice.

## **METHODS**

### **Setting**

Intermediate and A-level students of Kashan's Academy and Time's Collegiate, Karachi, Pakistan.

**Duration:** October 2016 to November 2016.

**Sampling technique:** Probability convenient sampling.

**Study design:** Cross-Sectional Study.

### **Sample size**

In the time period of two months we collected data from 500 students of 2 different coaching institutes of Karachi.

### **Sample selection**

#### *Inclusion criteria*

Inclusion criteria were those giving Informed consent, those in intermediate or A-level study program, those in session year 2016 and 2017.

#### *Exclusion criteria*

Exclusion criteria were those in the second attempt of their intermediate or A-level program, those enrolled to any other High school for the same program.

### **Study variables**

#### *Dependent variables*

Attempt of high school exams, reason of choosing that field, prior experience in that field, knowledge of career counseling, importance of career counseling, availability of career counselor in school, decision making ability, attitude towards career counseling, future plans, source of information and advice, help of parents in choosing career, satisfaction regarding chosen career.

#### *Independent variables*

Age, gender, ethnicity, groups, aim, parent's occupation.

### **Data collection procedure**

A total of 500 students were registered after having informed consent using a structured questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted to assess the validity of questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed containing all relevant questions and modified with the help of previous studies. Participant was assured of confidentiality. He/ She was assured that no information regarding the interviews and test results will be shared to any one and that this information will be used only for research purpose. He was also assured that the identity will not be disclosed at any point in time. Questionnaires were given an identification number. Data was entered twice and then cleaned for any missing variables. Data collection process was supervised by principal investigator.

### Structured questionnaire

A Structured questionnaire that included all relevant questions of objectives of the study was developed and adapted from previous studies.

### Scales included

Students were asked about how much useful they consider the advice from parents, counselor or high school teacher, and were assessed using Likert scale based on 5-point rating from 1-not significant to 5-very significant. This was adapted from a previous article.<sup>17,11</sup>

### Data analysis plan

Data entry and analysis was done using SPSS version 20. Frequency and percentages were used to describe demographic data and other close ended questions while mean and standard deviation for age. Chi square analyses was conducted to determine association between knowledge of career counseling and various variables (gender, age group, study group, aim, any experience of working in that field, importance of career counseling in your opinion, availability of career counselor in school, seminar attendance) gender and seminar attendance, source of advice and gender, gender and people they trust on for their advice.  $P < 0.05$  was taken as statistically significant.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows that out of 500 respondents, there were 54% females and 46% males. Most of the students (67.2%) were from age group 17-19 with mean age  $17.6 \pm 1.203$ . Individuals with Urdu as a first Language were in greater number (41.8%). We had high school students (intermediate and A-level students) as our participants in which majority had intermediate as their past level of education. Most of the students took Science as a major subject (70.0%), while many (89.6%) of them declared that it was their first attempt for higher school examination.

Table 2 showed that 32.6% students aim to be engineer, 29.8% doctor and 12.6% chartered accountant, while rest of 20.8% wanted to pursue career in different other fields. Most of the students made their career choice based on their own interest (84.2%) while 5.4% student reported to choose their field based on parents' choice.

Figure 1 shows that according to our study, 54.8% of Students claimed to have knowledge of career counseling while 45.2% denied that. About 31.2% of individual feel that decision regarding their career was difficult while 23.6% consider it easy.

Table 3 shows that many variables (gender, age, group, aim, experience in that field, importance of career counselling, availability of career counsellor and seminar attendance) were assessed to find the association with

knowledge of career counselling and those found to be significantly associated were availability of career counsellor and seminar attendance.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic factors.**

	Frequency (n)	Proportion (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	230	46.0
Female	270	54.0
<b>Age (17.06±1.203)</b>		
14-16	144	28.8
17-19	336	67.2
20-22	20	4.0
<b>Previous level of education</b>		
Secondary	108	21.6
Intermediate	392	78.4
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Punjabi	34	6.8
Sindhi	75	15.0
Baloch	14	2.8
Pathan	49	9.8
Urdu speaking	209	41.8
Others	119	23.8
<b>Group</b>		
Science	350	70.0
Commerce	124	24.8
Computer Science	17	3.4
Arts	9	1.8
<b>First attempt</b>		
Yes	448	89.6
No	52	10.4

**Table 2: Aims and reason of choosing that field.**

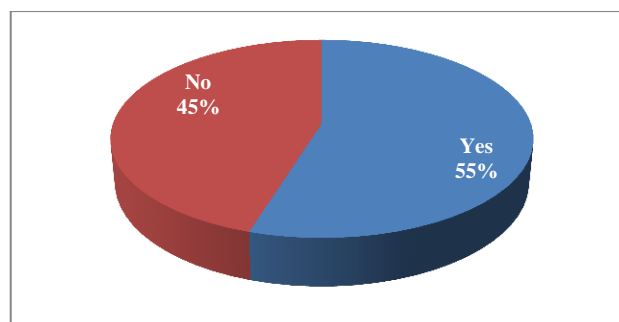
	Frequency (n)	Proportion (%)
<b>Aims</b>		
None	21	4.2
Doctor	149	29.8
Engineer	163	32.6
Chartered accountant	63	12.6
Others	104	20.8
<b>Reason</b>		
Personal interest	421	84.2
Parents' choice	27	5.4
Under pressure	4	0.8
Randomly	23	4.6
Don't know	25	5

Table 4 is regarding attitude, 45.4% of students evaluate their decision making ability as good, 24.6% and 21.8% consider it to be very good and excellent respectively. Most of the students claimed that once they make a decision they are almost always able to stick to it (49.4%). When asked about any trouble making a

decision 41.6% responded that it was mostly because they had less information.

Table 5 shows that majority of the students think that career planning at this time is either very important or quite important.

Most (82.6%) of the students believe that there is need of career counsellor in every school. When asked if they are given an option to change their career, greater number of students denied taking it. Regarding the role of parents, 82.6% said that their parents helped them in choosing their career and 91.0% of students claimed that they had never pressurized them for choosing any career.



**Figure 1: Knowledge of career counselling.**

**Table 3: Chi Square analysis of knowledge of career counselling with various variables.**

		Knowledge about career counselling		Total	P value
		No	Yes		
<b>Gender</b>	Male	104	126	230	0.994
	Female	122	148	270	
<b>Age groups</b>	14-16	64	80	144	0.609
	17-19	155	181	336	
	20-22	7	13	20	
<b>Group</b>	Science	154	196	350	0.283
	Commerce	63	61	124	
	Computer science	7	10	17	
	Arts	2	7	9	
<b>Aim</b>	None	6	15	21	0.808
	Doctor	64	85	149	
	Engineer	73	90	163	
	Chartered accountant	33	30	63	
	Others	50	54	104	
<b>Any experience of working in that field</b>	Yes	46	56	102	0.129
	No	180	218	398	
<b>Importance of career counselling in your opinion</b>	Very important	133	180	313	0.406
	Quite important	70	74	144	
	Slightly important	15	14	29	
	Not at all	8	6	14	
<b>Availability of career counsellor in school</b>	Yes	147	124	271	<0.05
	No	79	150	229	
<b>Seminar attendance</b>	Yes	41	104	145	0.002
	No	41	104	145	

**Table 4: Attitude.**

	Frequency (n)	Proportion (%)
<b>How would you evaluate your decision-making ability?</b>		
Excellent	109	21.8
Very Good	123	24.6
Good	227	45.4
Poor	37	7.4
Very Poor	4	0.8
<b>When you have trouble making a decision, do you think it is more often because you?</b>		
Need More Information	208	41.6
It is difficult to make decision	81	16.2
It never happened	67	13.4
Easily get double minded	144	28.8

**Table 5: Importance of career counselling at this time.**

	Frequency (n)	Proportion (%)
Very Important	346	69.2
Quite Important	93	18.6
Slightly Important	25	5.0
Not at all	36	7.2
Total	500	100.0

**Table 6: Future plans.**

	Frequency (n)	Proportion (%)
To continue with the same career	289	57.8
Will go to alternate field	49	9.8
No idea	94	18.8
No plans yet	68	13.6
Total	500	100.0

**Table 7: Seminar regarding career counselling in school.**

	Frequency (n)	Proportion (%)
No	317	63.4
Yes	183	36.6
Those who attended	145	
Those who found it useful	137	

**Table 8: Association between gender and seminar attendance.**

		Did you attend that seminar?		Total	P value
		No	Yes		
Gender	Male	82	57	139	0.000
	Female	37	88	125	

**Table 9: Sources of information.**

	Frequency (n)	Proportion (%)
<b>To make a decision</b>		
Search from internet	191	38.2
Ask from parents	160	32
Ask from teacher	92	18.4
Ask from friend	34	6.8
Visit a counselor	23	4.6
<b>Those you trust to take advice</b>		
Parents	334	66.8
Teacher	113	22.6
Counselor	11	2.2
Friend	21	4.2
Senior colleague	21	4.2
<b>Those you actually took an advice from</b>		
High school teacher	170	34
Counselor	65	13
Parents	265	53

Table 6 tells that when Inquired about their future plans many of the students (57.8%) want to continue with the

same career. It was also found that 58.8% have a plan to go abroad for studies.

Students were asked how it like is for them when they get conflicting information from different sources, 58.8% find it useful while 42.8% said it troubled them. However when gender was compared with conflicting information there was no association found (p value 0.05). About 56.6% students make decision based on values while 40.0% on circumstances, similarly 49.0% student make decision from mind while 46.0% from heart. In our study, 90.0% of students were satisfied from their career choices

Table 7 shows when inquired about the role of schools in career counselling, 54.2% of students claimed that their school had never provided with career counsellor, and only 36.6% of students reported to have a career counselling session at school. Majority 67.8% of students have not attended any counselling seminar outside school.

Table 8 shows when gender was associated with seminar attendance it was found that females attended the seminar more than males (p<0.05).

Table 9 shows when they needed information for making decision they mostly look from an internet source (38.2%) or ask from parents (32.0%). Overall students trusted their Parents most (66.8%) for an accurate and helpful Information. 71.6% rely upon them and 87.6% follow their advice. About 79.4% of students seek an advice concerning their career, and they mostly preferred it from their parents (53.0%), than high school teacher (34.0%) or counsellor (13.0%).

Table 10 and 11 show it was found that both males and females mostly took an advice regarding their career from their parents (p=0.016). And they also considered their parents to be the most trustworthy (p=0.02).

**Table 10: Association between source of advice and gender.**

		With whom you took advice			Total	P value
		High school teacher	Counsellor	Parents		
Gender	Male	89	35	106	230	0.016
	Female	81	30	159		
Total		170	65	265	500	

**Table 11: Association between gender and people they trust on.**

		What people do you trust the most to give you accurate and helpful information?					Total	p value
		Parents	Teacher	Counsellor	Friend	Senior colleague		
Gender	Male	165	42	5	5	13	230	0.022
	Female	169	71	6	16	8		
Total		334	113	11	21	21	500	

**Table 12: Likert scale.**

	Frequency (n)	Proportion (%)
0	3	0.6
1	39	7.8
2	29	5.8
3	139	27.8
4	142	28.4
5	148	29.6
<b>Total</b>	500	100

Table 12 shows when questioned about anything influencing their decision, 51.4% claimed that their personal interest, while 25.2% wanted to follow their ideals and 23.4% marked good job opportunities. Beyond consulting people, most student gather information from Internet (60.4%), 32.6% from experience and 7.0% from interviews.

When asked how useful they found their advice on a scale of 1 to 5 (not very useful to useful), 29.4% marked 5, while 28.4% and 27.8% marked 4 and 3 respectively.

**DISCUSSION**

Our study revealed that majority of high school students believe they have enough knowledge regarding career choices. They consider career guidance to be very important at this stage of their life for which students mostly get and consider parents advice to be of utmost importance. Most of the students want to opt for that career in which they have keen interest and they are enthusiastic to progress in that career.

In this study, we have found that student both males and females trusted their parents most and took career related advice mostly from them ( $p < 0.05$ ). On Likert scale, 29.6% of students found their parents advice to be very useful. Similar results were found in a study conducted in Canada in 2005, which also stated that career planning is important for high school students and they approach parents first for help regarding career planning.<sup>1</sup> Contrary to that, a study conducted in 2002 showed that the most common method in America's public high school to choose career is done via guidance counselor.<sup>9</sup> Our study shows that majority of the students claimed that their School had never arranged any career counseling session and they have never attended any career related seminars outside their school. We have observed that majority of students, on the basis of their personal interest choose scientific career while only few of them opt it under their Parents influence, which is contrary to what was found in a study conducted in Rhode Island according to which state that parents and teachers influence students (both male and female) to opt for scientific career.<sup>3</sup> We have also observed that 31.2% of individuals believe their career-related decision is difficult while 23.6% individuals consider it to be easy, similar results were also found in a study conducted upon High School students career-related decision-making difficulties in 2001.<sup>6</sup> Our study also shows that after parent's advice more females than males receive information regarding career counseling from high school teachers, similar results were found in a study conducted by Alexitch in the year 1997 which showed that more females than males received advised from high school teacher about career counseling.<sup>11</sup>

Through this research, it is observed that majority of the students consider that career counseling is very important and it is recommended students should be facilitated by career counseling sessions at grass root level i.e. schools so it could help them to have complete knowledge about the career which they are opting. Apart from this, our study concluded that parents and their advice play an important role in student's life in opting for their career. On the basis of this there is a need of career counselling seminars for students as well as their parents.

Due to limitation of resources, this study evaluated results from 2 institutions of Karachi, which is a urban and cosmopolitan city. The result of this research may not be generalized for student outside Karachi and they can differ if student from semi-rural and rural areas were involved. This study didn't focus on cultural and religious factor, which also may affect student career orientation. This study indicated that students consider career planning to be of utmost importance and they approach mostly their parents for career related decision. In future, researcher may look into how parents can provide best advice to their children regarding career and how parents can be trained to deliver. We have observed in our study that career counsellors are not available for majority of students and we are unable to depict their

role. Future researches can be carried out to find why counsellors are not available and if available how specifically they affect students career orientation/ goal and do they have enough knowledge of every subject to deliver.

## CONCLUSION

Hence it is concluded that regarding career counselling most of the high school students of Pakistan possess appropriate knowledge, positive attitude but lack of proper practices. Students consider career counselling to be really important and they are really concerned in acquiring appropriate career guidance. Parents seemed to play an important and influential role in student's career choices and students found their parents advices to be trustworthy. Regarding career counselling sessions in school it is evident that very few schools provide their students with career counselling session and there is no concept of presence of career counselors in any school of Pakistan. Thus future researchers must look upon that why administrative authorities of high schools are least concerned about career guidance session for their students and why they are not providing these students with appropriate career counselors.

*Funding: No funding sources*

*Conflict of interest: None declared*

*Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee*

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**Cite this article as:** Yaqoob U, Arif F, Samad M, Iqbal A. Career counselling and its knowledge among high school students in Pakistan. *Int J Community Med Public Health* 2017;4:2261-8.