

Marginalized Group Career Counseling Paper

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Career Counseling

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Single parents can often get overlooked as a marginalized group because of how common it has become in the 21st century. Not only do single parents face specific hardships in their personal life with having to maintain a household and raise children, but they also face particular difficulties in the workplace as well. This paper will highlight why single parents should obtain career counseling and the career counseling theory most beneficial for them. It will also examine a favorable plan for single parents, barriers they could experience finding careers, and local resources available to them.

Population and Why They Should Receive Career Counseling

Single parenthood has a major influence on an individual's career development. It is also common for single parents to face more struggles and difficulties throughout their career development process (Antoniou et al, 2018). For example, families that consist of two parents are likely to have some sort of support system in which they can share the childcare responsibilities and financial needs. Single parents take on the greater responsibility of sole provider and caretaker. This means they must find a career that synchronizes with their childcare responsibilities (Antoniou et al, 2018). Career counseling can help single parents find a career that they are satisfied with and also fits their children's needs.

Statistics on the Group

According to the US Census Bureau (2022), 23% of adolescents in the U.S. live with a single parent. Approximately, 84% of these single parents are mothers (Brand & Thomas, 2014). Not only do single mothers deal with the common struggles single parents experience day-to-day, but they also encounter additional challenges women face in the workforce including gender pay gaps and underrepresentation in management. Single fathers are more likely to be employed

and rarely face pay inequities in the workplace. But many work policies are aimed to favor mothers (Antoniou et al, 2018). For example, maternity leave is a requirement for most employers and is for a period of 12 weeks or longer. However, many employers don't offer paternity leave or don't offer it for the same length of time.

Career Counseling Theory

When it comes to career choice, one of the most important aspects a single parent must consider is if their career is going to coincide with the needs of their child. The Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) focuses on how individuals adjust to their particular work environment. This includes what characteristics and situations keep an individual satisfied with their work and if an individual is satisfactory to their work environments (Brown & Lent, 2020). For example, a client has needs and values that may be met with rewards in the work environment (Maternity, Paternity leave, Time flexibility, Childcare assistance, Distance working, Employer flexibility, etc.). Then, the work environment has a set of required skills and abilities they would prefer the client to possess (typing skills, organization, sales experience, etc.) If the client's needs and rewards correspond, they will likely be satisfied with their career. Likewise, if the client has the required abilities for the work environment they are considered satisfactory.

Plan for Counseling the Group

It has been established that the needs of the child are of the most important aspects of the career making decision. So, it would be vital to interview the client about their children and their needs. Important questions to ask include: How many children do you have? How old are they? Do they have conflicting schedules? Do they have any medical concerns or special needs? The answers to these questions will determine the course of other types of questions like are they in school or daycare? How much is tuition? Do you have friends or family who help care for your

children? This interview will determine if the client needs a flexible work schedule, specific work hours, or specific benefits that will satisfy their needs.

When it comes to career decision making it is also important for the client to be satisfied with their job and be able to fulfill the job requirements. There are two assessments that will be beneficial for the client. These assessments include the O*NET Work Importance Locator (WIL) and the O*NET Ability Profiler. The O*NET WIL is a self-assessment that determines what is important to the client in the work environment (National Center for O*NET Development, 2022). It helps to identify what types of careers will satisfy their needs based on their work values like conditions of work, work independence, achievements, and the characteristics of the work environment. The assessment is measured in six types of work values: Achievement, Independence, Recognition, Relationships, Support, Working Conditions.

The O*NET Ability Profiler helps a client to determine what their strengths and weaknesses are when it comes to a particular work environment. It also highlights what types of jobs they can learn and do well in. This assessment measures nine abilities within the client: Verbal Ability, Arithmetic Reasoning, Computation, Spatial Ability, Form Perception, Clerical Perception, Motor Coordination, Finger Dexterity, Manual Dexterity. These two assessments combined will help the client learn what is important to them in the work environment, what abilities they can do well, and what the client likes to do (National Center for O*NET Development, 2022).

Environmental/Personal barriers

Individuals who become single parents earlier in life are less likely to finish high school or attend college. This leads to them unable to find stable or higher income careers. This lack of work experience, limited qualifications, and poorer education can limit their options of

employment later in life. Single-parent families also bear the responsibility of being the sole provider of the household and main caretaker of the family. This means they have to balance their work schedule to their children's daily schedule. This means they have to find a career that allows some sort of flexibility, shorter hours, or distance working to accommodate these needs.

Local Resources

There are dozens of local career assistant resources for single parents. There are currently five One-stop career center locations in Arizona (4 in Phoenix and 1 in Gilbert). Each One-stop career center offers a variety of career counseling services including assessments, job training, resume building, and interview skills training. They also pay for the cost of certifications, licensing, and credentials individuals need in order to obtain a job (ARIZONA@WORK, 2022).

The Estrella Mountain Community College Career Center offers similar career counselor services as well. They provide assessments, resume and cover letter assistance, and mock interview skills training. They also host workshops and events throughout the year in order to pair individuals with careers they will enjoy (Estrella Mountain Community College, 2022). Lastly, Arizona@work.com provides a list of dozens of local career assistance locations individuals can go to in order to assist them with finding potential careers (ARIZONA@WORK, 2016).

Feasibility of the Plan

Undoubtedly, there may be obstacles and hardships that the client is going to face, but this plan is tenable. I feel like it all depends on if they have some sort of support system they can lean on in order to help them get through the day-to-day struggles. This doesn't necessarily mean to help them take care of their children, but to have a confidant to talk about their everyday conflicts (friends, family, support group, church group etc.) However, I do feel like the success

of this plan will be dependent on the educational background of the client. Most jobs require an individual to have a high school diploma or above and higher paying careers require a bachelor's degree.

Conclusion

Single parents are one of the most hardworking marginalized groups. They not only have to worry about maintaining an entire household on their own, but financially providing for that household as well. As career counselors, we can do our part in assisting parents obtain careers that will satisfy them and help them provide for their families.

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