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Career construction counselling intervention to promote the sense of calling of a disadvantaged black woman

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ABSTRACT

This article reports on how longitudinal counselling for career construction clarified and promoted the sense of calling of a black woman. Purposive sampling was used to select a woman wanting to promote her sense of calling to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable people. A longitudinal, eight-year, explanatory, and intrinsic case study design was adopted. The Maree Career Matrix (MCM) and the Career Interest Profile (CIP) were used to elicit the participant's multiple micro-life stories and key life themes and to co-author her future career-life story narrative. The data were analysed thematically and reflexively using ML Savickas's approach. Longitudinally, the participant's self- and career identity and sense of calling were clarified and reinforced. More research is needed to expand the theory base of the intervention strategy discussed in this article (especially in contexts that differ from the context in which the intervention's theory base was first developed).

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Importance of career counselling

Career counselling is an essential service and a powerful intervention for navigating career and life decisions. It is vital for coping with the multifaceted and intricate occupational world of the twenty-first century. It provides personalised support in assessing people's aptitudes, skills, interests, strengths, areas for development, values, and central life themes and in promoting satisfying and sustainable careers. Career counselling is especially important in today's swiftly evolving job market where new industries are continually emerging and traditional roles are disappearing. Career counselling can help people identify career options and develop strategic plans that align with their personal and professional goals. On a deeper level, career counselling, particularly narrative career counselling, can be a transformative experience that enhances people's understanding of their existential experiences, such as the purpose and meaning of their work. It helps clarify their "vocation" or "calling" (Dik & Duffy, 2009) by eliciting and drawing on their central career-life themes – this enhances their career-choice clarity, boosts their confidence, and provides direction in their career journey. Ultimately, career counselling fosters people's overall professional and personal growth by improving their decision making, fostering their employability and career resilience, and enhancing the sustainability of their career-lives. Career counselling thus brings out and illuminates people's sense of identity and purpose, their existential experiences, and their sense of calling.

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Importance of the concept calling

Dik and Duffy (2009) define calling as a “transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation” (p. 427). According to this definition, a calling often relates to a cause far bigger than people themselves – a mission and vision (Maree, 2024a) they feel obliged to achieve. A calling can also be embedded in people’s passions, strivings, interests, and central life themes. Here, internal rather than external factors drive their calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009). Experiencing a calling can direct people towards careers that can be internally fulfilling and also income generating. Furthermore, a sense of calling can enhance people’s (career) resilience and their sense of self and career, which is particularly important in occupational contexts where work often overshadows people’s sense of self and identity as well as their societal life (Duffy et al., 2023).

Calling, meaning, and purpose

Calling relates to meaning and purpose and more specifically to people’s vocation. Meaning relates to the significance of people’s experience of aspects of their career-lives, while purpose relates to their central career-life goals. People’s calling, on the other hand, relates predominantly to their job, work, or career and, more importantly, how their job, work, or career features in their broader career-life context.

Definition of calling

According to Esteves and Lopes (2017), the concept “calling” has strong religious undertones. It was traditionally viewed as a higher purpose to undertake specific tasks or missions (Hardy, 1990). However, the religion connection has diminished over time, with more emphasis now on people’s internal motivation to find professional fulfilment and purpose (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). While some individuals may begin their work driven by religious motives, the religious connection is not essential for perceiving a job as a calling (Hansen, 1997). According to Dik et al. (2020), a calling typically involves a sense of purpose driving an individual towards doing socially significant work, sometimes with spiritual, passionate, or altruistic connotations. Ehrhardt and Ensher (2020) view a calling as seeking purpose and meaning in work aimed at helping others or contributing to the common good, guided by internal or external motivations. Duffy and Dik (2009) argue that individuals with callings align their work with broader purposes and aims. Ahn (2016) suggests that a calling encompasses life purpose, personal meaning, and core values, echoing Bellah et al.’s (1986) view on the subject.

Experiencing a career-life calling

Experiencing a calling involves exhibiting a clear sense of purpose, meaning, and hope in one’s career-life pursuits. People with a sense of calling frequently display enhanced commitment, purpose, and meaning in their careers, which in turn reinforces personal development and contributes to societal wellbeing (Dik & Duffy, 2009).

Challenges in identifying a calling

Recognising one’s calling amidst the complexities of career choices and societal expectations can be daunting. Cultural issues, personal upbringing, and a lack of self- and career identity contribute to this challenge (Dik & Duffy, 2009).

Impact of systemic and cultural issues on life and career outcomes for economically disadvantaged rural black women in South Africa

(It should be stated at the outset that this article discusses the status of black women *in rural South Africa*. The intention is not to generalise to all black women or to all rural black women or to all economically disadvantaged black women.)

Systemic barriers

Unequal access to education exists in rural areas and townships in South Africa where many teachers are poorly trained and the education infrastructure is inadequate. The result is that the work and career outlook of most black women in these areas is seriously compromised, forcing them to accept low-level, unskilled employment that is out of alignment with their ambitions, goals, and ability.

This situation is exacerbated by a labour market characterised by spiralling unemployment rates – especially among black women in South Africa’s rural areas. Most of these women are compelled to engage in informal work, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation and offers them minimal job and financial security. For them there is thus little likelihood of jobs or careers that align positively with their sense of meaning, hope, purpose and, particularly, calling.

Cultural norms and expectations

Cultural norms and expectations largely shape rural black women’s career-life outcomes. Traditional gender roles are still deeply entrenched with women expected to give precedence to family responsibilities over their personal and professional needs and ambitions. There is therefore little chance of their taking up career-life opportunities and negotiating possible “decent” work (Kenny, Cinamon, et al., 2023; Kenny, Schmidtberger, et al., 2023; Maree, 2024b). Their potential remains unfulfilled and they remain “trapped” in a situation they cannot change, never being able to meet their authentic career choice needs.

Intersection of systemic and cultural issues

The intersection of systemic and cultural issues perpetuates an existing cycle that is hard to break: minimal access to education opportunities restricts work/career prospects that are already severely constrained by cultural expectations. Irrespective of the existence of a calling, these interwoven barriers to growth and further development make it virtually impossible for rural black women in particular to ever find fulfilling work.

In addition, systemic issues such as poor healthcare and limited access to financial services aggravate the socio-economic challenges confronting these women. Health-related issues (common in impoverished living conditions) often derail educational and work or career plans. Limited access to loans, grants, and other financial instruments means that rural black women in South Africa struggle to invest in their future and further education (or establish small businesses), making it impossible for them to realise their career-related dreams and their calling.

The importance of career counselling and its development in modern-day society cannot be overstated. On an individual level, career counselling promotes people’s career decision-making capacity and sense of meaning, purpose, hope, and satisfaction in their career-lives (Maree, 2024a, 2024b; Maree & Magere, 2023)

On a broader level, career counselling contributes to the economic growth of a country as counselling recipients are helped to become more employable, adaptable, and sure about their choice of field of study, thus preventing many students and learners from dropping out of education prematurely at huge expense to the state. It is concerning that people from marginalised groups (people

living in resource-scarce and poverty-stricken areas in South Africa, black women, people with disabilities, and people in townships, informal settlements, and deep rural areas) have little access to any form of career counselling, let alone state-of-the-art, contemporary career counselling. Many students and learners have reported that their career decision making was influenced by their cultural experiences, with cultural identity and sense of belonging having a significant impact on their perceived career adaptability and readiness to enter the workforce (Cantrill, 2024).

Cultural issues can constrict impoverished black women's career development and growth (Maree, 2020) as their idiosyncratic culture often defines and dictates their household responsibilities. These responsibilities frequently clash with their study aspirations and commitments. There is also little support from stakeholders to create environments where these women can feel "held" (Winnicott, 1964) and secure. Quite the opposite, as they often have to overcome numerous barriers to advance in their work environment, and they receive little help in establishing a clear trajectory for their career development. They also have to contend with gender-based discrimination as well as limited access to education opportunities at different levels. Often, these women feel disheartened at being denied work opportunities considered "ambitious" and not befitting their roles as mothers. Consequently, they are unable to conceptualise and enact meaningful careers consistent with their interests, aptitudes, personalities, values, and central life themes.

Next, I briefly discuss the essence of career construction counselling (for more information on the topic, the following authors for instance can be consulted: Hartung et al. (2022), Maree (2020), and Savickas (2019a, 2019b)). Below is a synopsis of research findings on life design and career construction for women (disadvantaged black women especially).

Life design counselling

Life design counselling, as explained by McAdams (2010, 2013), focuses on nurturing people's three developmental layers of psychological self: the person as an actor, an agent, and an author. Recipients of counselling transition from performing merely as social actors to becoming motivated agents and, ultimately, integrating their myriad career-life experiences as autobiographical authors (Maree, 2020). First, the concept of the social actor, according to McAdams (2010), refers to how early temperament variances evolve into enduring personality traits observable in adulthood. Through life design counselling, people are helped to uncover their inherent dispositional traits and interest profiles. Second, the notion of the motivated agent, as described by McAdams (2010), refers to people's ability to align actions with self-determined plans and goals. Life design interventions prompt people to introspect on their career-life narratives thereby facilitating a process of reflection and integration of past experiences with present aspirations, resulting in a more coherent and satisfying narrative. Lastly, the autobiographical author refers to the narrative identity wherein people construct an evolving storyline weaving together past recollections and future aspirations to imbue their lives with unity, coherence, hope, and purpose. Through life design counselling, people are helped to integrate their career-life narratives, fostering a sense of meaning and purpose in their vocational trajectories (Dik et al., 2020).

Career construction counselling

Savickas (2013) career construction theory (CCT) guides the creation, analysis, and interpretation of career-life stories. Career counsellors co-author stories with clients, helping them navigate contemporary challenges and enhancing their existential experience rather than merely eliciting stories. (The term "existential experience" refers to reflections about life and death and the importance of retaining a sense of hope and meaning in life (Silverman, 2021; Wilmshurst, 2020).) The theory and practice of career construction counselling draws on social constructionism rather than on psychological constructivism. A clear distinction should be drawn between these two terms. Whereas both refer to meaning making, psychological constructivism signifies a rational and

intrapersonal way of constructing meaning and purpose, social constructionism signifies a social, interpersonal meaning-making manner. By definition, psychological constructivism is intrapersonal and not social. Blending career construction theory and social constructionism practice offers career counsellors a creative and viable way of intervening and helping clients with career decision making and indecision issues.

Effectiveness of career construction counselling

As mentioned above, many research studies have shown the effectiveness of career construction counselling (CCC) for rural black women in South Africa in particular. Career construction counselling helps people navigate career choices successfully, overcome their particular internal barriers, and fosters workplace meaning, hope, and purpose, enhancing individual and collective ambitions (Duffy & Dik, 2009; Kenny & Di Fabio, 2023). The emphasis CCC places on fostering culturally sensitive and “holistic” practices contributes significantly to its success. This intervention (CCC) recognises and understands black women’s often painful lived experiences in deep rural contexts and considers their unique socio-cultural context (Chen, 2024). It facilitates the provision of safe and supportive spaces (holding environments (Winnicott, 1964)) to help them clarify their self- and career identity and to advance their development, introspection, and self-reflection. At the time of writing this article, however, I could not find any research on the effect of CCC on disadvantaged women in severely constrained circumstances.

Uncovering people’s life stories and career-life themes

Career construction counselling (CCC) emphasises the importance of uncovering people’s life stories and career-life themes and also the importance of treating people as the only true experts on themselves. CCC considers the power dynamics in the counselling space by allowing people to advise themselves rather than “telling” them what to do or what career to choose. As mentioned above, my colleagues’ and my research in South Africa and Africa generally (Jude & Maree, 2024; Maree & Mahlalela, *in press*) has shown that CCC interventions can be implemented successfully to empower and inspire people across the diversity continuum. Our research has shown that such interventions in individual and group contexts with disadvantaged black women in deep rural areas in South Africa (Maree et al., 2022) advance their understanding of which careers are suitable for them (the self as a social actor), enable them to set attainable goals, enhance their sense of self (the self as a motivated agent), and strengthen their psychological self (the self as a biographical author) (McAdams, 2020). CCC interventions also advance their (career) resilience and rekindle their sense of meaning, hope, and purpose in the work situation (Duarte et al., 2017)). Based on principles of positive psychology and positive career counselling (Maree, 2022), CCC can help people identify their unique strengths, areas for development, values, and life themes. This empowers them to make well-informed career-related decisions and to deal proactively with repeated transitions in their personal and career-lives.

Essential aspects of career construction counselling

According to Savickas (personal communication, September 16, 2015), the life design paradigm encompasses career construction counselling, dialogical self-construction theory (Guichard, 2009, 2022), chaos theory (Pryor & Bright, 2011), and systems theory (Patton & McMahon, 2006). There are thus various ways to use life design counselling to elicit people’s career-life stories, each based on a different theoretical basis. There is no one right or wrong way as each theory base and associated intervention has its own merits and potential disadvantages.

Collin and Guichard (2011) argue that life design counselling serves three purposes: First, it clarifies major life themes. Second, it helps people grasp the significance of work in their careers.

Third, it assists people in adopting key perspectives to promote meaning, positivity, and purposeful living. Similarly, Duarte (2009) believes that self- and career counselling can strengthen people's sense of self and identity. Duarte (2009) stresses the psychological nature of life design, which involves critical self-reflection and the integration of various components such as education, training, counselling, and psychology to create a fulfilling career-life. Career construction counselling (CCC), as advocated by Savickas (2021), emphasises the importance of people's narratability, autobiographicity, career adaptability, intentionality, and activity to enrich their career trajectories.

Narratability: crafting coherent career-life stories

Narratability refers to people's capacity to express their career-life stories (micro-life stories) coherently. These narratives, as described by Savickas et al. (2009), are unique accounts crafted by recipients of counselling, in collaboration with other recipients, that are later validated by career counsellors to ensure authenticity. Kenny et al. (2023) maintain that such supportive relationships with adults can help young people find purpose, foster hope, and develop social responsibility. In the midst of technological, global, and environmental challenges, many people prioritise academic success, neglecting the key issue of alerting the youth to the importance of making broader societal contributions (Liang & Klein, 2022).

Autobiographicity: utilising life stories during transitions

Autobiographicity refers to people's ability to draw on their autobiographies (life stories) during career transitions. By leveraging autobiographies, people can access proven strategies and implicit advice to navigate similar transitions in the future.

Career adaptability: steering personalised career trajectories

Career adaptability deals with the need for change, while narratability emphasises continuity. Together, adaptability and narratability empower people to cultivate flexible and trustworthy selves that can promote their sustainable development (Di Fabio, 2023; Di Fabio & Blustein, 2016; Di Fabio & Cooper, 2023; Di Fabio & Rosen, 2020). This empowerment facilitates active participation in meaningful actions and success in knowledge societies (Savickas et al., 2009).

Intentionality in career development

Intentionality refers to people's determination to derive meaning from their lives. It involves generating alternative plans, exploring various career-life options, assessing them critically, and making informed decisions to shape their career trajectories successfully (Maree & Morgan, 2012; Watkins, 1984).

Activity: driving change in career development

In career counselling, activity (spurred on by intentionality) serves as a catalyst for actualising change (Cardoso et al., 2023). Through active engagement (Lutz et al., 2023), people initiate transformative processes such as self-construction, career construction, life designing, and social contributions. This transformation turns passivity into intention and intention into action. Savickas (2019a) and Porfeli et al. (2013) established a connection between people's self-evaluative capabilities and an ABC model of attitudes, beliefs, and competencies, which correlate positively with four key "adapt-abilities" – concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. These "adapt-abilities" play a key role in helping people navigate rapidly changing contexts, particularly during transitions or career-related traumas (Savickas & Porfeli, 2010).

Summarised, CCC encourages purpose-filled actions to enhance people's career identity formation, career development and self-development, and career adaptability as well as intra-individual learning and career competencies (Ginevra et al., 2017; Hartung & Savickas, 2023). CCC helps people articulate and enact a career story that promotes adaptive responses to unmastered developmental tasks (Erikson, 1994), addressing career choice challenges and successfully navigating repeated career transitions (Savickas et al., 2009). CCC also enhances people's career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas, 2019a), which are essential coping mechanisms in their journey towards managing career (choice and enactment) challenges and transitions (Maree et al., 2018). Whereas concern involves looking forward and adopting a positive attitude towards future educational and professional trajectories, control requires taking responsibility for self- and career construction and accepting the choices made. Curiosity includes exploring alternative choices and obtaining appropriate and sufficient information to make feasible career choices alongside personal goals. Confidence refers to believing in one's capacity to navigate career-choice challenges. Together, these subdimensions reveal people's career readiness.

Self-construction theory

(Because CCT comprises elements of self-construction, this section will be brief.)

Self-construction theory (SCT) is premised on the belief that people actively construct their self-identities through narrative discourse storytelling in social contexts and interactions. Unlike career construction theory, self-construction theory focuses on people's self-identity development and existential questions such as What does my life mean? What is the purpose of my life? How can I gain control of my life? Why do I live? and Is my life worth living? (Guichard, 2009).

(What distinguishes CCT and SCT from other paradigms is their people-centredness, allowing people to participate actively in the career counselling process.)

Career-life calling: the role of career counselling in experiencing and enacting a career-life calling

According to Dik and Duffy (2009), "surprisingly little research within counseling and vocational psychology has investigated people's experiences of purpose and meaningfulness in the work role" (p. 425). Most people today also struggle to uncover, identify, embrace, and consciously "live" (enact) their calling (Duffy et al., 2018). A calling is a person's sense of self-identity, career identity, purpose, hope, and achievement. This section examines the intricacies associated with uncovering and enacting a calling in people's personal and career lives, shedding light on the potential of career counselling to guide people towards recognising, embracing, and fulfilling their career-life calling.

Role of career construction counsellors in enhancing people's sense of calling

As mentioned above, Savickas (2019a, 2019b) career construction counselling intervention emphasises the importance of establishing a safe space, promoting self-expression, facilitating reflection and reflexivity, considering identity, identifying central life themes, and linking career choices with personal and social meaning to advance and shape people's sense of calling. Career construction counselling interventions provide career counsellors with the opportunity to help people identify and experience a sense of calling in their personal and career lives.

How can career counselling assist people in executing their calling?

To execute or enact their calling, people need to ensure there is a strong positive alignment between their core values, ambitions, goals, central life themes, and career-life choices. By helping them narrate and draw on their career stories (autobiographicity) (Savickas, 2019a), career counsellors

enable clients to transform their sense of calling into actionable steps that promote forward movement and facilitate change in their career-lives (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007).

Managing career choice insecurity and self-doubt

It has become commonplace to say that the world of work is changing rapidly – that the only thing people can be sure of these days is that rapid change has become the so-called “new normal” in people’s career-lives. Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2017) argue that career counselling equips people with the skills they need to navigate insecurity and lack of certainty in their career-lives. It enhances career development and also indirectly promotes people’s capacity to uncover, clarify, and pursue their calling. By reframing people’s setbacks and painful career-life stories, they are helped to realise that setbacks and pain can be converted into triumph over adversity, leading to social contributions as people actively master what they have experienced (suffered) passively (Freud, 1964; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2017; Savickas, 2019a).

Summarised, discovering, experiencing, and living their career-life calling are best achieved when people clarify their (narrative) self- and career identity. This transformative process reignites their sense of meaning, purpose, and hope, ultimately reflected in the social contributions they make through their work (Duffy et al., 2018).

Goals of the study

Introductory observations

The case study illustrates how a counselling paradigm developed in a western paradigm can be applied in a developing country to foster calling. The article builds on existing research documenting the effectiveness of career counselling for this specific population. Viewed through the theoretical lens described so far, this article examines the potential of a counselling for career construction intervention to enhance the emancipation, resilience, career readiness, and fulfilment of a black woman in a seriously disadvantaged, structurally constrained area who experienced major challenges in her attempts to gain exposure to and access employment. The research discussed here considered strategies for implementing culturally appropriate career counselling interventions that could furnish career counselling practitioners with the understanding and means to support disadvantaged black women as a seriously underserved minority (Di Fabio et al., 2023).

Research questions

This article reports on the longitudinal effect of a counselling for career construction intervention on the sense of calling of a black woman in a deep rural region in South Africa. I sought answers to two (explorative) research questions:

- a. How did the intervention clarify the participant’s sense of calling?
- b. How did the intervention promote the participant’s sense of calling?

Here, I took my cue from Savickas (M.L. Savickas, personal communication, February, 2024) who stressed the importance of asking “how” questions and not merely determining the effect of an intervention on study participants.

Method

Participant

Convenience sampling was used to select Amara (pseudonym), a 39-year-old Pedi-speaking woman. I first met Amara in March, 2016, during my first visit to the Good Work Foundation (<https://>

goodworkfoundation.org/) in Hazyview. The executive of the GWF had invited me to visit the institution, experience first-hand the work they were doing, and present a short orientation workshop on integrative career construction counselling. Holding a BA (Media Studies and Communication) and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education at the time, Amara focused on student support and development, particularly for GWF students. She worked as a recruitment officer, visiting schools to encourage students to join the GWF and motivating Grade 12 learners. In 2016, she registered for a Diploma in Grade R Teaching and graduated in 2019. In 2023, she graduated with an Honours Degree in Communication and subsequently enrolled for a Master's Degree in Media Studies and Communication at the beginning of 2024.

Mode of inquiry

An integrative qualitative-quantitative approach, with more emphasis on the qualitative component, was followed for the career counselling intervention. The approach was based on an exploratory, intrinsic, descriptive, single case study design.

Procedure: integrative qualitative-quantitative workshop

The Good Work Foundation (GWF) executive and the workshop participants agreed to take part in an integrative qualitative-quantitative career counselling intervention. The process included qualitative and quantitative assessments, integrating their results to support self- and career construction counselling. It was emphasised that although the participants would receive information on career choices, psychosocial factors, and psychoeducational factors, the ultimate responsibility for decision making rested with the participants.

A concise integrative qualitative-quantitative workshop was then conducted using the MCM and CIP for data generation, tailored for selected members of the GWF team, including Amara. Through this interaction, I found Amara to be a committed and compassionate individual, dedicated to bringing about positive change in the lives of others. Amara regularly shared her belief that she was “-destined” (called) to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged people.

Procedure: 2018 intervention

The 2018 intervention took place over two days. Session 1 (lasting 180 minutes) focused on eliciting career-life stories. Amara (along with other participants) responded to the two questionnaires discussed below. Their qualitative and quantitative responses were then integrated, leading to session 2 (lasting 70 minutes), which centred on authorising the participants' career-life stories. During this session, the group participants and I reflected on and discussed their responses to questions from session 1, aiming to authenticate their micro-stories (the participants were repeatedly prompted to elucidate the significance of their responses). Session 3 (lasting 60 minutes) focused on facilitating change and forward movement, involving the participants in group activities. Together, we identified practical steps the participants could take to finalise their career choice decisions. We then revisited the psychoeducational, psychosocial, and career choice information they were asked to consider. The intervention included a discussion of their primary life themes, revealed largely through their responses to questions about significant early-life challenges.

Procedure: 2024 intervention

Between 2018 and 2024 Amara and I communicated regularly about her work at the GWF and her progress with her studies. I often offered my input regarding matters related to her studies and her personal development. It is probably safe to say that I, in a limited way, acted as a mentor to this

dedicated, compassionate woman in search of existential experience and the enactment of what she initially described as her “vocation”.

The individual session with Amara in 2024 had a format similar to that in the initial session. (Just to clarify: The MCM and the CIP were part of the intervention and were administered in both 2018 and 2024.) However, in 2024, emphasis was placed on Amara’s connecting her identity statement to her career choices, mission (the personal meaning she sought to derive from her career), and vision (the social contribution she aimed to make through her career). Whenever she sought advice, her exact words (responses to questions) were repeated aloud, prompting her to reflect on the implicit advice in her responses. I reiterated the importance of transforming her identified areas for development and growth into strengths. I encouraged her to convert any “pain” or “suffering” (Freud, 1964) she had experienced into meaning, hope, purpose, and social contributions.

Data-generating instruments

Quantitative

The Maree Career Matrix (MCM), as outlined by Maree (2016, 2017a) and Maree and Taylor (2016a, 2016b), is based on Holland’s interest theory while also integrating elements of the trait-and-factor theory, developmental theory, and social learning theory. Originating in South Africa and developed and standardised between 2002 and 2015, the MCM evaluates interests as well as self-assessed confidence levels pertaining to various career trajectories. With 152 occupations organised into 19 categories, each containing eight careers, the MCM demonstrates robust psychometric properties.

Rasch analysis has verified that the MCM’s interest scales measure a cohesive construct, with all categories exhibiting reliability coefficients exceeding .70. In addition, test-retest reliability for career interests and confidence estimates exceeds .70 across all categories. MCM scores thus provide career counsellors and their clients with a robust framework for exploring and gaining deeper insights into career profiles during counselling sessions.

Qualitative

The Career Interest Profile (CIP, Version 6) (Maree, 2017b). The CIP helps construct qualitative (narrative) data, often termed “stories”. It is founded primarily on Savickas’ career construction theory (Savickas, 2019a) together with insights from Adler (1958) and Cochran (1997). Consisting of four parts, the CIP has demonstrated its trustworthiness (reliability/validity) across diverse contexts, emerging as a highly effective instrument in career counselling (Maree, 2017b). CIP questions are carefully structured, beginning with straightforward questions and progressing to more probing, “deep” questions.

Calling-related interview

In 2024, I conducted an interview (The Calling Questions Framework for conducting an interview on “Calling”) with Amara, consisting of 12 open-ended questions with sub-questions, aimed at exploring her views on her sense of calling (see later). This interview was unique to the 2024 study and formed part of the research effort to assess the impact of the intervention on the participant’s sense of calling.

Rigour of the study

In the 2018 (group) as well as individual (2024) sessions, the participants were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and provide input on the intervention findings and interpretations, expressing

both agreement and disagreement. Their feedback was carefully recorded and considered. Through qualitative and quantitative methodologies, triangulation was achieved, ensuring thorough data generation. Data were also generated to help support the replication of the research in various settings.

Qualitative questions were asked to promote crystallisation (Janesick, 2000), and an external coder, with a doctoral degree in educational psychology, independently coded the data to ensure alignment with the identified themes. Throughout the intervention, I maintained open communication with the participants, discussing all aspects of the intervention and explaining the assessment instruments (Kewley, 2006). I repeatedly asked them to clarify their responses during the data analysis (Sieck, 2012) to help ensure accuracy and integrity in the interpretation of the findings.

Data analysis

To improve the analysis of Amara's stories and scores in 2024, specific actions were implemented as outlined below. Following Savickas' (2019a) recommendation, Amara was repeatedly prompted to examine the deeper significance of her responses to qualitative questions, such as those pertaining to her role models. Instances of repeated words, expressions, or phrases were carefully noted, and Amara's own words were read back to her to foster introspection. I also encouraged her to vocalise her thoughts to enhance the authenticity of the experience for her. Together, we used her responses to questions regarding the most significant challenges in her early life to identify her key life themes. These themes were then correlated by Amara and me with various fields of study as part of a process of co-construction.

Integration of qualitative and quantitative findings

The MCM provided insights into Amara's quantitative career interests and confidence levels. These findings were then triangulated with her qualitatively identified career category preferences from the CIP, enriching the research outcomes and showing their complementarity (Tonkin-Crine et al., 2015). The identified career categories were discussed in detail with Amara to ensure their alignment with her own qualitative perceptions of her interest profile. They were then cross-referenced with other insights obtained from the CIP.

Integrating these data sets enabled the identification of fields of study that could support Amara in securing not merely employment but, more importantly, enhancing her employability and fostering a sense of meaning, hope, and purpose in her career-life. Moreover, it assisted in eliciting advice from Amara herself on how to leverage her career to enrich her existential experience both within and beyond her professional life.

Ethical issues

Amara provided written informed assent and consent for the analysis and anonymous reporting of the research. Approval for the research was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the relevant University.

Findings

Quantitative outcomes

According to the MCM, Amara's preferred interest and confidence categories were Entrepreneurship; Social, care-giving, and community services; Medical and/or paramedical services; Legal practice and security services; Persuasive; Sport; Arts and Culture; and Executive and management practice.

Qualitative outcomes

Amara's preferred interest categories, according to the CIP, were Social, care-giving, and community services; Medical and/or paramedical services; Entrepreneurship (running and maintaining a personal business); Legal practice and security services; Executive and management practice; Persuasive; and Word art.

Amara's responses to selected questions in the final section of the CIP are shown below. Several notable differences can be seen between the 2018 and the 2024 responses. The responses indicate Amara's progress from a career development practitioner attempting to make a difference in her immediate, limited context to someone aiming at making a difference on a (limited) local level to someone wanting to make a difference on a higher (national) level. Her verbatim responses have been edited minimally to preserve their authenticity. Due to space limitations, only specific responses are discussed below.

1. In 2018, in response to my question "How can I be of value, of use, or of help to you?" (Maree, 2017b; Savickas, 2019a), Amara replied: "Assist me in getting to know myself better and also aid me in deciding which career suits me best." Analysis of this response revealed the following life themes:
 - i. The process of exploring different career options to find the most suitable fit.
 - ii. Seeking help and assistance in both personal and professional development.
 - iii. The need for support in making informed career choices.
 - iv. Emphasis on personal development as a foundation for career decisions.

In 2024, Amara said: "Guide me through my professional journey to help me help others at a higher level." Analysis of this response revealed the following life themes.

- i. The need for direction and support in her career trajectory.
- ii. The desire for growth and improvement in her professional skills and capabilities.
- iii. A focus on service, assisting, or benefiting others through her work.
- iv. Aspiring to achieve a greater level of impact and significance in helping others.
- v. Progressing to roles or positions that enable more effective or broader assistance to others.

These themes highlight a career trajectory characterised by continuous learning, improvement, and a commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of others. They also indicate an increased sense of social responsibility and Amara's desire to identify a career that will help her reach out to a broader audience than before.

2. People she admired in 2018

- i. "Oprah Winfrey. I love the way she believes in education and how she is helping young girls to be educated in her school" (exhibiting a desire to work in a local context).
- ii. "Barack Obama. I love how he speaks. I also want to be a good public speaker one day" (appreciation of his skills).
- iii. "Trevor Noah. I love how he changed he's life background and become a world-renowned comedian" (appreciation of his skills).

People she admired in 2024

- i. "Oprah Winfrey. She is someone who is living her life to make a big difference in other people's lives." (Oprah Winfrey is admired for her dedication to making a significant difference **in people's lives in general**).
- ii. "Trevor Noah. I love the fact that he is so humble and respects people, and articulately promotes their culture, race, and religion." (Trevor Noah is admired for his social contributions on **an international level**).

- iii. *"Barack Obama. I love the fact that he is a good public speaker and the initiatives he has made for young people."* (Barack Obama is admired for his proficiency as a public speaker supporting young people **in general**.)

Amara's progress and deepening sense of calling is evident here. The major changes in her response to the role models between 2018 and 2024 indicate an enhanced sense of calling in terms of her ultimate career-life goals.

3. Her favourite quotations (her self-advice to herself) in 2018

i. *"Education is power."*

ii. *"Love is blind."*

Her favourite quotations (her self-advice to herself) in 2018.

i. *"Education is the key to success."*

ii. *"Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you."*

iii. *"Alone you are strong, together you are stronger."*

(These responses, too, indicate her need to identify a career that will help her experience existential fulfilment in and through her work.)

4. **The leader I want to be**

2018: *"A motivational speaker so I can motivate young people not to give up in life."*

2024: *"I aim for leadership within the Department of Education to influence curriculum enhancements and [all] learners' education."*

Once again, the two different sets of responses indicate an enhanced sense of wanting to influence learners on a broader level than previously,

5. **My biggest challenges ("problems") when I was young**

2018:

i. *"I had to live without my father for a long time."*

ii. *"I did not get proper guidance in the absence of a father figure."*

2024:

i. *"Attending school without adequate footwear."*

ii. *"Battling illness in university due to insufficient food 2018."*

Her 2024 responses indicate challenges (pain) that she would eventually transform into triumph and resilience in broad educational contexts compared to her earlier focus on challenges (pain) experienced in primary education.

Promoting reflexivity

To promote reflexivity, Amara was repeatedly encouraged to consider the overlap between the quantitative and qualitative outcomes. Together, we searched for recurring words, phrases, themes, and subthemes in the CIP reflections and between the CIP and MCM responses. The quantitative results validated the qualitative preferred fields of study and vice versa.

Amara and I jointly compiled a table juxtaposing the various "micro-stories" (qualitative outcomes) with the "scores" (quantitative outcomes). We carefully examined the equivalence

between the “scores” and the “stories” to triangulate the two data sets, establishing a strong positive correlation between them. Together, we agreed that continuing her master’s degree studies in Media Studies and Communication would enable her to proceed on a career trajectory that would eventually empower her to serve a broader and more diverse group of young people and help bolster their self- and career-identity. Ultimately enhancing their sense of meaning, hope, and purpose in their career-lives and the clarification and promotion of the sense of calling.

Four weeks later, Amara was ready to provide the link between her identity statement, career choices, as well as her mission and vision statements (see below).

1. *Identity statement* I am a caring and determined person, passionate about education. I love working with people and make a difference in young people’s lives. It pains me to see people struggle as much as I struggled when I was young (and even in later life). I grew up in a big extended family, living with my grandparents, my aunts, my uncles and my cousins. Poor as we were, we always looked out for each other
2. *Career choice* My dream is to become a lecturer or working in an educational space, where I can empower people with my knowledge through education.
3. *Mission statement (personal meaning)* My passion for education is the reason why I want to inspire and encourage young people I interact with daily. Being a motivator and to say it does not matter where you are born, and your background does not determine your future.
4. *Vision statement (social meaning)* My goal is to contribute to my community and the country as a whole, by offering knowledge and education to the youth. As a motivator, I want to motivate young and older people by convincing them that Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.

Calling Questions Framework for conducting an interview about “Calling”

(Only questions that elicited meaningful responses are discussed below.)

1. Career Background Questions

i. Can you provide an overview of your career journey so far?

From completing my first degree to working in a call centre as a debt collector in Johannesburg, where I faced challenges such as being treated with disrespect and humiliated. Eventually, I transitioned to working as a receptionist at GWF, where I discovered my passion for helping others, particularly young people with an impaired sense of self facing challenges.

2. Definition of Calling

i. How do you personally define the concept of a “calling”?

ii. Has your understanding of calling evolved over time? If so, how?

Yes, my understanding has evolved, particularly through my experiences at GWF, where I transitioned from merely motivating others to counselling them; eventually realising that my calling involves helping and supporting others.

iii. Are there specific criteria or characteristics that you believe define a calling?

Yes, I have learnt that passion, kindness, and compassion are key characteristics that define and promote one’s calling.

3. Perceiving a Calling

i. Could you describe how you first became aware of your calling?

I became aware of my calling through experiences where people in need (especially marginalised people with little hope in life) recognised my talents and abilities to help and support them.

ii. Did you have a clear sense of calling from an early age, or did it develop gradually?

It developed gradually, influenced by inspirational figures like Oprah Winfrey and personal experiences witnessing the power of education to change the lives of desperate, “forgotten” adolescents.

4. Experience of Calling

i. Do you currently feel a strong sense of calling in your life?

I’m not entirely sure if it’s sufficiently strong in relation to my current work role. I believe I am called to transition to an occupational environment where there is more I can do to fulfil my calling, despite facing negative experiences, especially at a broader level. I also need to mention that I feel a particularly strong calling to give back and make a difference, particularly during my spare time.

5. Learning and Developing a Calling

i. What was the process like for you in discovering and developing your calling?

It was a positive journey, albeit challenging, particularly balancing work and exploring my calling.

6. Personal/Private Life Calling

i. How does your sense of calling manifest in your personal or private life?

My sense of calling is closely tied to my pursuit of education, as it plays a crucial role in enacting my calling. In my personal time, I assist learners in the desolate, resource-constrained township where I live and where no one is exposed to career education and vocational guidance.

7. Choosing Professions/Fields of Study/Work

How did your sense of calling influence your decisions regarding your profession or field of study?

My sense of calling heavily influenced my decisions, motivating me to pursue fields where I could make a meaningful impact, such as communication management and public relations.

8. Maintaining a Calling

i. What strategies or practices do you use to maintain a strong connection with your calling over time?

I strive to stay committed to my current calling at GWF while pursuing my doctoral degree, which I believe will open up limitless opportunities for me to make a difference.

9. Specific Moments or Insights

i. Were there any specific moments or insights that guided you toward your chosen career trajectory?

Yes, being motivated by inspirational figures like yourself who demonstrate their living of their calling practically instead of merely talking about such matters. You sent me an inspirational voice-mail in which you expressed your recognition of my potential to become a role model for a broad family) was a pivotal moment that guided me towards my current chosen career trajectory.

Amara's post-interview reflections.

At the end of the interview, I asked Amara how she managed to achieve her degree despite the challenges she faced. Her response is below.

I overcame the challenges of earning my degree by staying determined and focused, despite my difficult background. Raised by my grandmother, who valued education despite her lack of formal schooling, I was motivated from a young age to break the cycle of uneducation in my family. I consistently excelled academically, driven by the desire to make my family proud, especially my grandmother, who sacrificed her Social Grant savings to pay my first registration fee. When she passed away during my second year, I faced extreme hardships, including going without food, but I refused to give up. My commitment to being the first in my family to graduate and serve as a role model for my siblings, cousins, and other young people in extreme poverty, and eventually a larger audience, kept me going. I knew that despite the difficulties, my perseverance would pay off, allowing me to support my family and better serve my disadvantaged and suffering community.

Amara's reflections highlight her journey of overcoming significant adversity to earn a degree and equip herself with the skills to help others who have suffered as she did and triumphed over challenges. Raised by a loving grandmother who valued education despite her own lack of formal schooling, Amara was deeply motivated to break the cycle of poverty and lack of education in her family. Despite severe financial hardships, the loss of her grandmother, and extreme poverty, she remained determined to succeed. Her commitment was fuelled by a desire to become a role model for others facing similar challenges, ultimately striving to uplift her family and community.

Discussion

Superficially, the study examined the longitudinal effect of a counselling for career construction intervention on a black woman in a deep rural region in South Africa. However, on a deeper level, the research revealed a contextually relevant and sensitive approach to helping the participant clarify and develop her sense of calling through her endeavours to help other women who, like herself, had to endure impoverished and structurally constrained environments.

The research questions

- a. How did the intervention clarify the participant's sense of calling?
- b. How did the intervention bolster the participant's sense of calling?

are discussed in the next two sections.

How did the intervention clarify the participant's sense of calling?

People often grapple with clarifying and achieving their sense of identity, meaning, purpose, hope, and fulfilment, which ultimately shape their existential experience. In other words, they often struggle to clarify and consciously execute (live) their sense of calling (Duffy et al., 2018). As noted above, there were several notable differences between Amara's 2018 and the 2024 responses to the question "How can I be of use, value, or help to you?" Initially, in 2018, Amara presented with a certain level of uncertainty (Rottinghaus & Miller, 2013) about a future study field and career. In 2024, she sought guidance ("advice") on how to make a difference on a higher, broader (national) level. These differences revealed Amara's progress and change from a career development practitioner attempting to make a difference in her immediate, limited context to someone aiming to make a difference on a higher (national) level.

Inspired by the research findings of scholars such as Savickas (2021), Hartung et al. (2022), Sharf (2013), and Cardoso et al. (2019), I used a career construction counselling intervention to assist Amara in understanding her reason for seeking career counselling. The intervention enabled her to narrate, reflect on, and routinely revisit and “update” her career-life story (narratability). Increasingly, her calling became clearer, namely to not only experience but actually **live** her dream of making key social contributions on a broader (national and perhaps even international) level. In the process, her self-efficacy (helping to decrease her career choice indecision) was improved (Kou et al., 2024; Choi et al., 2012). This finding supports Lent and Brown’s (2013) contention that people with higher self-efficacy tend to be more decisive in their career pursuits. Cantrill (2024) argues that promoting agency in young people enhances their self-efficacy in career decision making, providing a sense of control, especially crucial for those with past experiences of instability such as frequent relocation. The author contends also that first-person narratives complement personal exploration and strengthen mental health and wellbeing – findings supported by this study as well.

Against this background, Amara and I jointly elicited and used a “representative” sample of her multiple micro-stories to enhance her capacity to manage the transition she was confronting. We conceptualised and implemented a roadmap to illuminate her self- and career identity (Savickas & Savickas, 2019). Based on our findings, she could clarify her mission and vision in life and consequently use her (vocational) traits combined with her adaptability (developmental resources) and key life themes to crystallise her calling and enhance her existential experience (Savickas, 2024). Her sense of calling was promoted as her desire to serve disadvantaged people on a broader platform was affirmed and validated by herself and supported by the counsellor. In the course of the longitudinal case study, her self-identity and career identity improved and she expressed delight at being able to make better life-changing decisions. This finding supports Creed et al.’s (2021) assertion that emerging adults’ struggle with life-changing decisions can impede their employability.

Insecurity and tentativeness regarding Amara’s envisaged career gave way to an enhanced sense of mission and vision – she was on her way to serving the audience she was so keen to serve on a higher and more effective level. These outcomes support the research findings of other scholars (including Del Corso et al. (2011), Maree (2020), Nota et al. (2016)) on how career construction counselling interventions can be tailored to meet the needs of people in contexts significantly different from the original setting of such interventions seamlessly and functionally. Together, Amara and I succeeded in establishing and linking her “scores” (conscious knowledge) in the MCM with her “stories” (subconscious insights revealed by, for instance, her responses to the questions about her biggest challenges when she was young). The latter shed light on the challenges (pain) she had experienced, which she would eventually transform into triumph, resilience, and contributions in broad educational contexts compared to her previous focus on challenges (pain) experienced in the primary education field only.

How did the intervention bolster the participant’s sense of calling?

The narrative that permeates Amara’s self- and career identity unveils her essence, direction, purpose, and the significance of fulfilling her central life theme (to help others and have a lasting impact on them). This aligns with the views of Fouad et al. (2009) and Gati and Kulcsár (2021) that merely providing information fails to meet people’s career counselling needs. Amara’s self-evaluation was seemingly also enhanced during the intervention, confirming Debicki et al.’s (2016) and Kou et al.’s (2024) finding that emerging adults with positive core self-evaluation (CSE) feel more fulfilled by their achievements in life.

Amara’s feedback indicates that the intervention helped her achieve the “developmental layers of the psychological self, namely the person as an actor, the person as agent, and the person as the author” (McAdams, 2013, p. 273).

The psychological self as a social actor

In reply to the question “How can I be of value, of use or of help to you?”, Amara responded in 2018: “*Assist me in getting to know myself better and also aid me in deciding which career suits me best.*” From a vocational guidance (social actor) perspective, she understood that different fields of study could help her realise her desire to help people in need and enhance her existential experience. Her heightened self-insight regarding her main interest categories and associated study fields was revealed in her answers to questions during the feedback interview (Gülse et al., 2021).

The psychological self as a motivated agent

In reply to the question “How can I be of value, of use or of help to you?”, Amara responded in 2024: “*Guide me through my professional journey to help me help others at a higher level.*” Here she indicated an increased sense of social responsibility and her desire to identify a career that would help her reach out to a broader audience than before. After the intervention Amara exhibited greater awareness of the attitudes, beliefs, and competencies needed to achieve her ambitions. She showed greater readiness to draw on her adaptability and ability to negotiate career-life transitions. Her psychological self as a motivated agent was thus strengthened from a career guidance point of view. The intervention clarified her career-life goals and helped her identify the steps to take to achieve her ultimate goal of helping vulnerable people with little access to resources attain their own career-life goals. Her sense of self-efficacy and resilience had improved (Bandura, 2006) and she was able to decide unequivocally on a study and career trajectory that would help her actualise her sense of calling (and in the process enact her psychological self as a motivated agent) (Gülse et al., 2021).

The psychological self as an autobiographical author

Careful analysis of Amara’s responses revealed that the intervention had strengthened her psychological self as an autobiographical author. This finding is not surprising as the intervention goals were to clarify and reinforce her sense of calling. Amara’s progress and deepening sense of calling is clear from the changed way in which she looked at her three role models in 2024 as opposed to in 2018. The changes between the two sets of role models point to an enhanced sense of calling in terms of her ultimate career-life goals. She confirmed that the life stories of her role models had inspired her to draw on her own life story (which contained similar challenges to those of her role models (autobiographical thinking)). Connecting the dots of her career-life story (integrating her conscious knowledge about herself and her subconscious insights about herself) had been achieved by recounting and becoming aware of the key importance of drawing on her own career-life story to promote her sense of calling (Gati & Kulcsár, 2021). Blending her past, present, and envisaged future had heightened her belief that she could draw on her evolving story to live a meaning-, purpose-, and hope-filled life and also enhance the future career-life stories of many thousands of others (Hartung et al., 2022; Rottighaus et al., 2017; Tirri, 2023). The findings described here are in line with McAdams (2010) statement that “[n]umerous studies have shown that deriving positive [existential] meanings from negative events are associated with life satisfaction and indicators of emotional wellbeing” (p. 191).

Summarised findings

This study revealed how an intervention based on a western paradigm could be drawn on to empower women in developing country contexts (Laher & Kramer, 2023). The findings also show that the distinction between personal counselling and career counselling is artificial. Authors such

as Hartung (2015) and Krumboltz (1993), too, maintain that it is artificial and unscientific to argue that personal and career counselling are different interventions. This confirms the usefulness of drawing on personal as well as career counselling to resolve career choice and decision-making challenges.

Limitations

First, my empathy with people from minority groups, especially disadvantaged women in rural areas across the world in general and in South Africa in particular, and my deep engagement with the research topic, may have influenced some of my interpretations and conclusions. Second, other researchers may interpret the data differently and draw different conclusions. Third, the unique perceptions, beliefs, and insights of the participant may not represent those of all disadvantaged black women in rural areas in South Africa, a country characterised by widely differing cultures and sub-cultures. Fourth, both the instruments used in this study are self-report instruments, which rely on people's own perceptions about themselves and may therefore fail to fully reflect their true self- and career identity. Fifth, while the 2018 intervention may have been a catalyst in shaping her life throughout that period, it is also important to mention that Amara's life experiences between 2018 and 2024 also likely shaped her life and view of self as an actor and agent in her life.

Recommendations for theory, practice, future research, and policy

First, because of the overwhelming prevalence of trait-and-factor approaches across Africa, avant-garde approaches like career construction counselling should be explored with a view to better meeting the needs of disadvantaged women in rural areas (in South Africa in particular but elsewhere as well). Second, new research should evaluate the effectiveness of new approaches in addressing the needs of disadvantaged women in rural areas in developing countries, considering necessary adaptations to align with contemporary challenges. Third, intensive training should be provided to career counsellors on the use of innovative approaches in career counselling. Fourth, from a policy standpoint, relevant government ministers in Africa at large should ensure equitable access to support structures for all disadvantaged black women in rural areas. Fifth, future research should explore additional societal factors such as religiosity and spirituality and distinguish between religious and nonreligious sources of calling (Horvath, 2015). Sixth, an expanded model of career education should emphasise the crucial role of school and real-world experiences, including workplace exposure, in shaping the academic, vocational, and noncognitive skills needed for meaningful work (Duffy et al., 2022). Lastly: Researchers in the fields of career construction counselling and life design should consider studying and drawing on the Psychology of Sustainability and Sustainable Development Framework (Di Fabio, 2017a, 2017b) and, in terms of this framework, also consider conducting research on the value of exploring innovative career counselling strategies for universal relevance and sustainability in the anthropocene era (Maree, 2024a).

Conclusion

The counselling approach followed in this study demonstrated – by eliciting the participant's career-life micro-narratives – how autobiographicity helped a woman from a disadvantaged, poverty-stricken area enact her key life themes and clarify and enact her sense of calling. Through the ongoing processes of shaping her self- and career identity she experienced a sense of "symbolic immortality" (a living legacy) (Drolet, 1990; Lifton, 1979) and her calling was transformed into "transcendent calling" (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019).

Humble (2016) reports that in the slums of Dar es Salaam many talented children remain undiscovered and unaware of their capabilities, their potential wasted. This is also true of people in other marginalised populations, including women in impoverished rural areas in South Africa. These

populations often lack assistance in clarifying and promoting their existential experiences and sense of calling – and the counselling approach discussed here can assist them in knowing what they can achieve and also promote their sense of calling.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Professor Jacobus Maree a professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, specialises in educational psychology. Holding doctoral degrees in Education (Career Counselling), Mathematics Education, and Psychology, Maree is recognised for his extensive contributions. He is a fellow of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) and the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), serving on the Board of Directors of IAAP (Division 16). As the sole African representative on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Chair on Lifelong Guidance and Counseling and the UNESCO University Network and Twinning Chair, Maree's influence extends globally. He has delivered keynote speeches at 30 international conferences. He holds honorary scholarly appointments at various universities worldwide, further solidifying his impact in the field. Prof Maree received a B1 rating from the NRF.

Data availability statement

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available in the article [and/or] its supplementary materials.

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