

THE KEY TO SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATING THE CAREER WORLD: PERSPECTIVES FROM HOLLAND, SUPER, AND KRUMBOLTZ THEORIES

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Abstract: This study is a literature review in the field of career and industrial counseling. The purpose of this research is to examine major theories in career counseling, particularly the theories proposed by John L. Holland, Donald E. Super, and John D. Krumboltz. The research employed a qualitative descriptive method using a library research design. Data were collected from various academic sources, including scientific journals, books, and research reports relevant to career development theories. The findings indicate that three major theories significantly contribute to understanding career development. Holland's theory emphasizes the congruence between individual personality types and work environments. Super's theory highlights career development as a lifelong process influenced by self-concept, life span, and life space. Meanwhile, Krumboltz's social learning theory explains that genetic endowment, environmental conditions, learning experiences, and task-approach skills shape career decision-making processes. By integrating these three perspectives, individuals can better understand and navigate career development in a dynamic and competitive work environment.

Keywords: Career Counseling, Holland Theory, Super Theory, Krumboltz Theory, Career Development

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, career development has become an increasingly important topic due to rapid changes in the work environment influenced by globalization, technological advancement, and labor market dynamics. Career is no longer viewed merely as a job or position, but rather as a lifelong journey in pursuing professional achievements aligned with personal values, interests, and potential.

According to the World Economic Forum (2023), many individuals feel unprepared to face the demands of the rapidly evolving workplace, especially due to technological transformation and globalization. Similarly, a report by McKinsey & Company (2022) shows that only 32% of workers feel highly satisfied with their career paths, while many experience pressure in determining suitable career directions.

In Indonesia, career-related challenges often involve a mismatch between individual skills and labor market demands. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2023) indicate that

unemployment rates remain relatively high, particularly among university graduates, reflecting inconsistencies between educational outcomes and industry needs.

Various career development theories have been developed to guide individuals in navigating their professional journeys. Among the most influential are the theories of John L. Holland, Donald E. Super, and John D. Krumboltz. Holland (1997) proposed that successful career choice occurs when there is congruence between personality type and work environment. Super (1990) introduced a life-span, life-space approach, emphasizing that career development is part of overall human development throughout life. Meanwhile, Krumboltz (2009) developed the social learning theory of career decision-making, which highlights the importance of learning experiences and environmental influences in shaping career paths.

Previous studies support the relevance of these theories. Aditya and Sukma (2019) found that the implementation of Holland's theory in career guidance programs improved students' understanding of career suitability. Rahayu (2020) demonstrated that Super's developmental model helped university students systematically plan their careers. Similarly, Purnama and Junaidi (2021) revealed that learning experiences and environmental factors significantly influenced young workers' career decisions based on Krumboltz's theory.

Unlike previous studies that focus on a single theory, this study integrates Holland, Super, and Krumboltz theories to provide a more comprehensive understanding of career development. By synthesizing these three perspectives, this research aims to offer deeper insights into effective career navigation strategies.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method using a literature review design. According to Sugiyono (2016), qualitative research is conducted to examine phenomena in natural settings, where the researcher serves as the key instrument. Data collection was carried out through library research. Library research, as defined by Nazir (2013), involves reviewing books, academic journals, reports, and other relevant literature related to the research problem. The primary materials used in this study were scholarly articles, books, and research reports concerning career counseling theories.

Data were analyzed using three stages of qualitative descriptive analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2017). Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on relevant theoretical information. Data display was conducted by organizing information into structured explanations. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on systematic synthesis and verification of theoretical findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Holland's Career Theory: Personality–Environment Congruence

John L. Holland's theory of vocational choice is one of the most influential frameworks in career counseling. Holland proposed that career selection is fundamentally an expression of personality. According to Holland (1997), individuals seek work environments that allow them to express their values, skills, and personality traits. Career satisfaction, stability, and achievement occur when there is congruence between an individual's personality type and the characteristics of the work environment.

Holland categorized personality types and work environments into six types, commonly known as the RIASEC model: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional.

1. Realistic Type

Individuals with a Realistic orientation prefer practical, physical, and hands-on activities. They are typically described as stable, practical, and task-oriented. Realistic environments include mechanical, agricultural, construction, and technical occupations. These individuals tend to avoid highly social or abstract tasks.

2. Investigative Type

The Investigative type emphasizes analytical thinking, intellectual curiosity, and problem-solving. These individuals prefer scientific, mathematical, and research-based environments. They thrive in laboratories, academic institutions, and research centers where intellectual exploration is valued.

3. Artistic Type

Artistic individuals express themselves through creativity and imagination. They prefer unstructured environments that allow innovation, self-expression, and aesthetic sensitivity. Careers in music, literature, fine arts, and performing arts are commonly associated with this type.

4. Social Type

The Social type is oriented toward helping, teaching, counseling, and interacting with others. These individuals excel in professions that involve interpersonal communication, such as education, counseling, healthcare, and religious services.

5. Enterprising Type

Enterprising individuals demonstrate leadership, persuasion, and risk-taking tendencies. They are confident, ambitious, and motivated by achievement and influence. Typical environments include business, politics, sales, and entrepreneurship.

6. Conventional Type

Conventional individuals prefer structured, orderly, and detail-oriented tasks. They excel in administrative, financial, and organizational roles requiring systematic processing of information.

Holland's theory suggests that individuals are not limited to a single type but rather possess a combination of types forming a personality profile. The closer the alignment between personality and environment, the higher the probability of career satisfaction and success.

From a counseling perspective, Holland's model provides practical assessment tools, such as vocational interest inventories, that help individuals identify compatible career environments. In the context of modern career dynamics, this theory remains relevant, especially for early career exploration and career guidance programs.

Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Theory: Career as Lifelong Development

Unlike Holland's personality-centered approach, Donald E. Super conceptualized career development as a lifelong process. Super (1990) argued that career development is inseparable from overall human development. His theory integrates three major concepts: self-concept, life span, and life space.

1. Self-Concept

Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of themselves, including abilities, values, personality traits, and aspirations. According to Super, career choices represent attempts to implement one's self-concept. As individuals grow and gain experience, their self-concept evolves, and career decisions may change accordingly.

2. Life-Span Development

Super proposed five developmental stages:

a. Growth (Birth–14 years)

During this stage, children develop interests, capacities, and attitudes that contribute to forming their self-concept.

b. Exploration (15–24 years)

Individuals begin to explore career alternatives through crystallization, specification, and implementation processes.

c. Establishment (25–44 years)

Individuals strive to secure and stabilize their chosen career path.

d. Maintenance (45–64 years)

Individuals seek to maintain their achievements and adapt to changes.

e. Decline (65+ years)

Individuals prepare for retirement and adjust to reduced occupational roles.

Super also introduced the concept of the Life-Career Rainbow, illustrating how individuals occupy multiple life roles (e.g., student, worker, parent, citizen) simultaneously. Career decisions are therefore influenced not only by occupational goals but also by role balance.

3. Career Maturity

Super identified four dimensions of career maturity: Career Planning, Career Exploration, Informational Competence, Decision Making

Career maturity reflects readiness to make appropriate career decisions. This concept is highly relevant in educational counseling settings, particularly for adolescents and university students.

Compared to Holland, Super's theory offers a dynamic, developmental framework. It recognizes that career is not a single decision but a lifelong process influenced by psychological growth and social roles.

Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making

John D. Krumboltz introduced a social learning perspective in career development, emphasizing the role of learning experiences and environmental influences. Drawing from Bandura's social learning theory, Krumboltz argued that career decisions are shaped by both internal and external factors.

Krumboltz identified four major components influencing career development:

1. Genetic Endowment and Special Abilities

Individuals are born with certain innate talents, interests, and predispositions. These inherited traits can influence career preferences and opportunities.

2. Environmental Conditions and Events

Environmental factors such as socioeconomic status, educational access, family expectations, and labor market conditions significantly shape career opportunities.

3. Learning Experiences

Learning experiences—both instrumental (direct reinforcement) and associative (observational learning)—play a crucial role in forming career beliefs and preferences.

4. Task-Approach Skills

These include problem-solving abilities, work habits, emotional responses, and cognitive skills that influence how individuals approach career-related challenges.

Krumboltz emphasized that career decisions are not purely rational but are shaped by unpredictable events and chance factors. This perspective introduces flexibility and adaptability as essential skills for career success. From a counseling standpoint, Krumboltz's theory encourages individuals to remain open to opportunities and develop problem-solving skills rather than rigidly adhering to predetermined plans.

Comparative Analysis of the Three Theories

Although Holland, Super, and Krumboltz approach career development differently, their theories complement each other. Holland focuses on personality–environment fit; Super emphasizes developmental processes and self-concept over time; Krumboltz highlights learning experiences and environmental influences.

Holland provides a structural typology for career matching. Super offers a longitudinal developmental framework. Krumboltz integrates social and cognitive learning processes. When combined, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of career development: Personality influences preference (Holland); Developmental stages shape readiness (Super); Learning and environment determine adaptability (Krumboltz).

Thus, effective career counseling should integrate assessment of personality traits, developmental readiness, and environmental-learning factors.

Implications for Career and Industrial Counseling

The integration of these three theories provides several implications: Career counseling should begin with personality assessment (Holland); Counselors should consider life-stage

development (Super); Counselors must address environmental barriers and learning experiences (Krumboltz); Flexibility and adaptability should be emphasized in modern career planning.

In an era characterized by technological disruption and shifting labor markets, rigid career planning models are insufficient. Individuals must develop resilience, adaptability, and continuous learning habits. The synthesis of Holland's congruence model, Super's developmental theory, and Krumboltz's social learning perspective offers a multidimensional framework for navigating complex career landscapes.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Holland's, Super's, and Krumboltz's theories collectively provide a comprehensive and multidimensional framework for understanding career development in contemporary society. Rather than viewing career choice as a single event or static decision, these three theoretical perspectives reveal career development as a dynamic process shaped by personality structure, developmental progression, and social learning experiences.

Holland's theory contributes a structural understanding of career-personality congruence, emphasizing that career satisfaction and stability are strongly influenced by the alignment between individual personality types and work environments. This perspective is particularly valuable for early-stage career exploration and vocational assessment. However, personality congruence alone does not fully explain long-term career trajectories.

Super's life-span, life-space theory extends this understanding by conceptualizing career as a lifelong developmental process embedded within multiple life roles. The integration of self-concept evolution and developmental stages highlights that career decisions are continuously reconstructed throughout an individual's life. Career maturity, therefore, becomes a critical indicator of readiness for decision-making, especially among adolescents and emerging adults.

Krumboltz's social learning theory further enriches this framework by introducing the role of environmental influences, learning experiences, and chance events in shaping career paths. His emphasis on adaptability, flexibility, and task-approach skills reflects the realities of modern labor markets characterized by uncertainty and rapid change. In this context, career success is not solely determined by personality fit or developmental timing, but also by an individual's ability to respond constructively to environmental opportunities and constraints.

The integration of these three theories suggests that effective career and industrial counseling must adopt a holistic approach. Counselors should assess personality characteristics (Holland), evaluate developmental readiness and self-concept formation (Super), and consider environmental-learning dynamics and adaptability skills (Krumboltz). Such integration enables individuals to make informed, flexible, and sustainable career decisions.

In an era marked by technological disruption, global competition, and shifting occupational structures, rigid or linear career planning models are increasingly insufficient. A multidimensional theoretical framework, as synthesized in this study, offers a more realistic and responsive model for navigating the complexities of modern career development.

Nevertheless, this study is limited to theoretical analysis through literature review. Future research should explore empirical validation of integrative career counseling models that combine personality congruence, developmental maturity, and social learning factors. Quantitative and mixed-method approaches could provide deeper insights into how these theoretical integrations influence career satisfaction, adaptability, and long-term professional success.

Ultimately, navigating the contemporary career world requires not only understanding who we are (personality), where we are in life (developmental stage), and what we have learned (experience), but also how effectively we integrate these dimensions into adaptive and purposeful career choices.

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