The Impact of a Career Counseling Program over Adolescents' Career Indecisiveness

Claudia Crişan[a]*, Sebastian Turda[b]

* Corresponding author: Crisan Claudia, claudiacrisan75@yahoo.com

[a]Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, claudiacrisan75@yahoo.com
[b]Autism Transilvania, Baia-Mare, Romania, s_turda@yahoo.com

Abstract

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In adolescence period, one of the main task is the formation of a vocational identity. Career counselors, in this period, need to help adolescents make informed decisions that reduce their level of career indecision. The present study aims at investigating the impact of a career counseling program over career indecisiveness and self-efficacy regarding career decision making process among adolescents in the final year of high-school (N=160). For this research we opted for an A-B-A type of inter-group experimental design and the following questionnaires were used for testing the main hypothis: Career Decison Difficulties Questionnaire (Gati, Krausz & Osipo, 1996) and the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy- Short Form Scale (Taylor & Betz, 1983). The participants of the study were devided into two groups: a control group (N=80) and an experimental one (N=80). The results of the study indicated that the adolescents in the final year of high-school who participated in career counseling sessions (the experimental group) showed a decreased level of career indecisiveness (r=0.91) and a high level of self-efficacy regarding the career decision making process.

Keywords: Adolescents, career indecisiveness, self-efficacy regarding career decision-making, career counseling, training program.

1. Introduction

Certain meta-analysis revealed the fact that career counseling interventions are generally efficient (Brown & Ryan, Krane, 2000; Whiston, Sexton & Lasoff, 1998). Hirschi and Lage (2008) investigated the efficiency of career counseling on the long term by launching a workshop for Swiss students. The

authors noted that the levels of career decision making, career planning, occupational environment exploration and vocational identity increased significantly over the 3 months period that the workshop lasted.

Regarding individual counseling, Greenwood (2008) investigated and validated the efficiency of educational and career intervention depending on the recommendations made to the clients, respectively getting hired in the chosen fields. The results showed that 65% of the clients who participated in counseling and took into account the recommendations received got hired in the chosen field.

In a longitudinal study, some authors (Bimrose & Barnes, 2006; Bimrose, 2008) tested the efficiency of career counseling on a sample of 50 adolescents from England. The participants recorded the efficiency of the counseling across the 5 years of study. They discovered that career counseling was useful when some specialized information was provided, including information about the working environment, details about qualification courses, trainings, employment opportunities, certain alternatives which motivated them, increased their self-esteem levels and helped them focus and also provided certain structured opportunities for reflection and debate. One of the main conclusions of the study was the decrease of unemployment rate among adolescents from 34% to 3%.

The present study aims at investigating the impact of career counseling program "Success is a voyage, not a destination" over the career indecisiveness and self-efficacy regarding career decision making process among adolescents in the final year of high-school.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The study was conducted on a sample of 160 participants, aged 16-18 years (m = 17, SD = 0.81) 71 (44.4%), are male teenagaers and 89 (55,6%) are female teenagers. All participants are students of the school. Participation in the investigation was voluntary and anonymous. Participation agreements, data confidentiality and other ethical aspects were assured.

2.2. Measures

Given the purpose of the proposed research, we formulated the following study hypothesis: the intervention program "Success is a voyage, not a destination" will predict a high level of self-efficacy regarding the career decision making process and a low level of career indecisiveness among adolescents in the final year of high-school.

The two variables investigated in the study (career indecision and self-efficacy on career choice decisions) were measured using the following tools for collecting data:

Vd1 - career indecision was measured by "Career decision difficulties questionnaire" CDDQ (Gati, Krausz & Osipow, 1996)

Vd2 - self-efficacy in career decision making was measured using the Scale of self-efficacy in career decision-CDMS-SF short form (Taylor & Betz, 1983)

Career Decison Difficulties Questionnaire CDDQ (Gati, Krausz & Osipow, 1996). The questionnaire assesses difficulties in career decision in terms of three coordinates: the lack of

preparation, lack of information and inconsistent information. The questionnaire includes 34 items grouped into 10 subscales corresponding to the 10 sources of career indecision. Additionally this questionnaire includes three additional items: one item requiring participants to indicate whether or not they took a decision on the future career, one item that seeks the trust of the person in the decision and the last item measures the degree of difficulty appreciated by them on career decision.

The items of the questionnaire are quoted on a Likert scale of 1 to 9.

The current study applied only the subscales "Lack of information" and "Inconsistent information" concerning issues about the lack of information in: decision-making, about himself, about occupations and ways of obtaining information (subscale "Lack of information"), and the subscale "Inconsistent information" refers to the contradictory information, the occurrence of conflicts, both external and the internal.

Gati et al (1996) reported Cronbach α of internal consistency coefficient of .95 for the entire questionnaire, 0.70, .93, .91 for the three categories of difficulties on the Israeli population. On the American population, the same authors have obtained Cronbach α of internal consistency coefficient of .95 for the entire questionnaire and .63 .95, .89 for the three subscales. In general, the internal consistency coefficient is very good within studies proving Cronbach α coefficient above .80 (Gati, Osipow & Krausz, 1996; Osipow & Gati, 1998; Gati, Osipow, Krausz & Saka, 2000; Mau 2001). The coefficients obtained after the test-retest fidelity type verification were .67, .74, .72 for the three major categories of difficulties and .80 for full Israeli sample questionnaire.

Career Decision- Making Self-Efficacy- Short Form Scale; CDMSE-SF (Taylor & Betz, 1983). This instrument measures the self-confidence of teenagers to take optimal decisions concerning their own career and presents five subscales: self-assessment, obtaining information, setting goals, career planning and problem solving. The questionnaire contains 25 items (eg items: "How much confidence you have in yourself, so that you can plan your goals for the next five years") is quoted on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is "total distrust", and 5 "complete trust".

In this research focus was on the subscale "career planning" aimed at the confidence level of teenagers to set goals in the short, medium and long term in terms of educational and professional route.

Taylor & Betz, (1983) indicate the high internal consistency for items, coefficient Cronbach α being .83 for the subscales and .94 for the total score on the 25 items.

2.3. Research design

In order to test the study hypothesis, respectively the existence of a causal relation between the independent variable (the career counseling program) and the two dependent variables (Vd1 – the level of career indecisiveness and Vd2 – the level of self-efficacy regarding the career decision making process), a A-B-A type of inter-group experimental design was used. The participants of the present study were divided into two groups: a control group (N=80) and an experimental group (N=80) and were assessed during the two phases of the research (the pre-experimental phase and post-experimental phase). Moreover, the experimental group participated to a 4 months intervention program, whereas the second group (the control group) benefited from the educational activities included in the current curricula.

2.4. Procedure

In the first stage all participants were informed about the purpose of the present investigation and about the instruments used to collect the data. To avoid any measuring error that might have been due to the data collection procedure, all participants were given a collective briefing before questionnaire completion. After this stage ever participant had individually completed the form in a paper-pencil format.

Thereby, in the pre-experimental stage the questionnaires were applied to all 160 students during the counseling and orientation/coordination hours, questionnaires which measured the two targeted aspects aimed at the hypothesis.

In the experimental stage, the experimental group benefitted from the intervention program called "Success is a journey, not a destination", which is empirically based on the career related information processing theory (Peterson, Sampson & Reardon, 1991, 1996), respectively the theory's three fundamental factors for career choice: self-knowledge, occupation knowledge and career decision process - a process through which the occupations information are integrated. The intervention extended along the entire first half of the second semester of 2014-2015 school year. The elaboration of the necessary activities for the intervention program took into account the learning contents modularly grouped in the "Counseling and Orientation - IX-XII grades" curricular area with the following topics: Self-knowledge (content: obtaining information about oneself and about occupations) and Career Planning (content: promoting an efficient self-marketing and a career plan marketing). Thus, for the Self-knowledge section we used the Cognitrom Career Planner platform (Miclea, 2012) to find out the students' interests and values, and for knowing their abilities and skills we used the CAS++ evaluation platform (Cognitrom, 2009). With the purpose of obtaining the information regarding the professions, a conference was held in the "Different School" week, in which personalities of various domains were invited: medicine, police, education, law, psychology and journalism. In exchange, for the Career Planning topic we used worksheets necessary for elaborating the personal portfolio (wording a CV, a letter of intent and a motivation letter), respectively for the career plan elaboration the post-testing took place in the week following the program closure and consisted of applying the same investigation instruments, both in the experimental and control samples.

3. Results

In order to test the study hypothesis, *t* test for independent samples was used to observe if the proposed program has an influence over the measured variables for the experimental group.

Tabel 1. T test for the level of self-efficacy regarding the career decision making process between the control group and the experimental group during the pre-test phase

Group Statistics

	grup	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Average	control	80	3,9690	,28619	,03200
	experimental	80	3,1162	,27742	,03102

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference		Lower	Upper
Average	Equal variances assumed	2,442	,120	19,137	158	,000	,85280	,04456		,76479	,94081
	Equal variances not assumed			19,137	157,847	,000	,85280	,04456		,76478	,94082

Tabel 2. *T* test for self-efficacy regarding the career decision making process between the control group and the experimental group during the post-test phase

Group Statistics

	grup	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
average	control	80	3,9690	,28619	,03200
	experimental	80	3,7950	,17983	,02011

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference		Lower	Upper
Average	Equal variances assumed	21,115	,000	4,604	158	,000	,17400	,03779		,09936	,24864
	Equal variances not assumed			4,604	132,972	,000	,17400	,03779		,09925	,24875

Tabel 3. *T* test for the level of career indecisiveness between the control group and the experimental group during the pre-test phase

Group Statistics					
	grup	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
average	control	80	4,0366	,90133	,10077
	experimental	80	5,5404	,54825	,06130

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
average	Equal variances assumed	18,432	,000	-12,749	158	,000	-1,50375	,11795	-1,73671	-1,27079
	Equal variances not assumed			-12,749	130,419	,000	-1,50375	,11795	-1,73709	-1,27041

Tabel 4: *T* test for the c areer indecisiveness between the control group and the experimental group during the post-test phase

Group Statistics					
	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
average	control	80	4,0375	,90196	,10084
	experimental	80	3,0526	,30824	,03446

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
average	Equal variances assumed	64,933	,000	9,242	158	,000	,98487	,10657	,77439	1,19536
	Equal variances not assumed			9,242	97,205	,000	,98487	,10657	,77337	1,19638

The *Group Statistics* table shows the number of participants, average, standard deviation and average standard error for each of the 2 groups (the experimental and conrol ones). We notice that the average score obtained by the participants of the experimental group (M=3,96; SD=0,32) for the self-efficacy regarding the career decision making process variable is close to the score obtained by the

participants in the control group (M=3,79, SD=0,20) during the post-test phase contrasting the ore-test scores when the average score of the participants in the experimental group (M=3,11; SD=0,31) was lower that the scores obtained by the participants in the control group (M=3,96; SD=0,32). The *Independent Samples* table shows the *t* test results for comparing the average scores. Analyzing the results of Levene test $F_{(158)}$=21,115, p<0,01, where F is insignificant, variances are equal and the homogenity condition is met. We notice that $t_{(158)}$=4,604, p<0,01, which means that there are significant diferences between the average scores, with the participants of the experimental group having recorded almost the same average scores as the ones in the control group. The effect size of *r*=0,91 indicates that, according to Cohen's principle (1988), the program „Succes is a voyage, not a destination" has a powerful influence over increasing the level of self-efficacy regarding the career decision making process in the experimental group.

For the career indecisiveness variable, during the pre-test phase the average score obtained by the experimental group (M=5,54; SD=0,10) is higher than the one obtained by the participants in the control group (M=4,03; SD=0,62). However, during the post-test phase, the average score obtained within the experimental group (M=3,05; SD=0,10) is lower than the average score obtained within the control group (M=4,03; SD=0,34). Analyzing the *Independent Samples* table for the career indecisiveness variable, we note that the results of Levene test $F_{(158)}$=64,933, p<0,01 show an unsignificant F value, equal variances and a homogenity condition that is met. We obtained a $t_{(158)}$=9,242, p<0,01, which means there are significant differences between average scores, with the participants of the experimental group recording lower average scores compared to the ones in the control group. After calculating the effect size, we have a score of *r*=0,97, which means that according to Cohen's principle (1988), **the program "Success is a voyage, not a destination" has a significant influence over reducing the career indecisiveness level among the experimental group.**

4. Conclusion

Testing the career counseling program **"Success is a voyage, not a destination"** on a group of 160 subjects on which I divided equally into two groups: one experimental group and one control group. We argued that, choosing the activities for the elaboration and implementation the program, we highlighted the most important components of success in career decision-making process: self-knowledge and occupational knowledge, promotion an effectiveness personnel marketing, decision making skills and implement the choice. In conclusion, we can say that this program has demonstrated the effectiveness in increasing the level of career decision-making self-efficacy (r=0,91) and reducing the career indecision (r=0,97) among adolescents from secondary school.

One of the limitations of the present research consists of the participants' sample, respectively the fact that the adolescents included in the study came from only one high-school, which makes the results of the research difficult to generalize due to accuracy standards.

Another limitation of the study is the usage of some data measuring tools unadjusted and validated on Romania's population, such that their psychometric properties would remain unchanged. We are taking into account the realization of one such study.

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