

Promoting Career Maturity through Cognitive Behavior Therapy in Group Counseling: A Pathway to Informed Decision-Making for Students

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Abstract

This article explores the potential of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) in group counseling to enhance career maturity and informed decision-making among students. The concept of career maturity, defined as an individual's readiness and capability to make informed career decisions, is crucial in guiding students through the career decision-making process. Career guidance programs have been recognized as instrumental in fostering career maturity and informed decision-making. The integration of CBT in group counseling has been proposed as an effective approach to enhance career maturity. This systematic literature review examined various sources to gather empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives on the topic. The findings indicate that CBT-based group counseling sessions significantly improve students' career maturity and decision-making skills. The cognitive restructuring process inherent in CBT helps students challenge negative thoughts and develop confidence in their career decisions. The supportive environment of group counseling encourages interaction and mutual learning among participants. Despite promising results, the study acknowledges limitations, such as reliance on self-reported measures. It recommends further research to explore long-term effects and encourages educational institutions and career counselors to incorporate CBT-based group counseling sessions into their programs. The article contributes to the expanding body of knowledge on CBT's role in enhancing career maturity and decision-making and provides insights for educators, counselors, and researchers in this field.

Keywords: cognitive behavior therapy; group counseling; career maturity; decision-making; students

INTRODUCTION

In the educational landscape, students frequently demonstrate a wealth of knowledge and comprehension regarding their future career prospects; nonetheless, the process of making career-related decisions often presents significant challenges for them. The concept of career maturity, representing an individual's readiness and capability to make informed career decisions, becomes of prime importance in this context (Super, 1990). Career guidance, acting as an instrumental tool of progressive educational institutions, aims to bolster students' optimal achievement in their developmental tasks (Zunker, 2016). This guidance and assistance, as noted by Gysbers, Heppner, and Johnston (2009), can play a pivotal role in fostering students' career maturity and ultimately facilitate their informed decision-making processes in the career context (Super, 1997; Patton & McMahon, 2006).

Differing views exist on the pathways to enhance career maturity among students. Winkel (2006) highlights the importance of students completing career-specific tasks up to a certain designated level, suggesting that the resultant observable behavior can be a reliable indicator of career maturity. Conversely, Savickas (2022) posits that the possession of the requisite knowledge is crucial to making appropriate career decisions. This knowledge not only streamlines the decision-making process but also enables the effective implementation of guidance and counseling services within the school setting.

In the realm of counseling approaches, Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) has been proposed as a potentially effective tool to enhance career maturity among students (Corey, 2013; Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2002). Rooted in the aim of changing clients' maladaptive thought patterns, CBT aspires to combat automatic negative thoughts (Beck, 2011). It

essentially involves guiding students in the process of restructuring their negative thoughts and fostering a sense of confidence and optimism about themselves, their surroundings, and their prospective futures.

Consequently, the integration of CBT within group counseling frameworks can potentially emerge as a formidable strategy to foster career maturity and informed decision-making among students (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005; Kivlighan, 2018). This paper seeks to probe further into the exploration of this potential, building upon the existing theories and empirical evidence in the field. It is anticipated that the forthcoming discussion will contribute significantly to the expanding corpus of knowledge in this domain, providing useful insights for educators, career counselors, and researchers alike.

METHOD

The research methodology for this study predominantly relied on a comprehensive review of diverse sources that could serve as useful references. These sources encompassed a plethora of resources such as academic papers, books, industry reports, and other relevant publications that potentially contribute to understanding and enhancing students' career maturity. A crucial aspect of this research involved identifying and analyzing the existing literature in the field. According to Creswell (2010), engaging with the extant research findings and literature is of paramount importance when attempting to identify and address the gaps left by previous researchers. By diligently examining the existing literature, the researcher aimed to understand the current state of knowledge on the topic, identify areas that need further exploration, and position the present study within the broader academic discourse.

Search Strategy

This systematic literature review was conducted according to the guidelines provided by PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses) (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group, 2009). The search strategy involved the identification and screening of published articles from databases including PsycINFO, PubMed, ERIC, and the Cochrane Library. The search was limited to articles published in English. The search terms used were “Cognitive Behavior Therapy”, “Group Counseling”, “Career Maturity”, and “Decision-Making”. Both the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and keyword search approaches were utilized.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they were empirical, published in peer-reviewed journals, focused on the use of CBT in group counseling settings, and addressed the enhancement of career maturity and decision-making among students. Reviews, opinion pieces, case studies, and studies that did not specifically focus on CBT, group counseling, career maturity, or decision-making were excluded.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data were extracted from each eligible study using a standardized form. The extracted data included study design, sample size, age of participants, intervention details (such as duration, frequency, and specific components of CBT used), and outcomes relating to career maturity and decision-making. A narrative synthesis was conducted to analyze the extracted data. Due to the expected heterogeneity in the study designs and outcome measures, a meta-analysis was not deemed suitable for this review.

Quality Assessment

The quality of the studies was assessed using the Effective Public Health Practice Project (EPHPP) Quality Assessment Tool for Quantitative Studies (Thomas, Ciliska, Dobbins, & Micucci, 2004). This tool rates studies based on several components, including selection bias, study design, confounders, blinding, data collection methods, and withdrawals and dropouts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research focused on assessing the potential of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), when implemented through group counseling, in enhancing career maturity and facilitating informed decision-making among students. The findings were enlightening, providing an insight into the ways that this therapeutic approach could bolster career maturity. Results indicated a marked improvement in the career maturity of students who participated in CBT-based group counseling sessions. Pre- and post-assessments of students' career decision-making skills revealed a significant growth post-intervention. These findings corroborate with the assertions made by Corey (2013) and Creed, Patton, & Bartrum (2002), reinforcing the effectiveness of CBT in nurturing career maturity.

A key aspect of CBT is the cognitive restructuring process, which encourages individuals to identify and challenge their automatic negative thoughts. It was observed that as students underwent this process, their self-efficacy and confidence concerning their career decisions improved significantly. This aligns with Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy, suggesting that individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to execute actions necessary for specific performances directly impact their motivation, thought patterns, and behaviors. Furthermore, the group counseling format of these sessions offered an additional layer of support and motivation for the students. By sharing their experiences and learning from their peers, students not only felt more confident about their decisions but also developed a broader perspective of career options, echoing the benefits of group therapy outlined by Yalom & Leszcz (2005). However, it is important to note that while the research yielded promising results, a number of limitations were identified. The study relied heavily on self-reported measures, which may be subject to bias. Future research could consider incorporating more objective measures or triangulating the data with other sources, such as teachers' or counselors' observations and assessments. In conclusion, the results of this study affirm the potential of CBT, implemented through group counseling, as an effective strategy for enhancing career maturity and fostering informed career decision-making among students. It is recommended that educational institutions and career counselors consider integrating CBT-based group counseling sessions into their career guidance programs. Future research could focus on exploring this intervention's long-term effects on students' career trajectories.

Understanding CBT and Its Role in Group Counseling

CBT, as a psychological treatment modality, has been extensively researched and its effectiveness has been documented in numerous studies (Beck, 2011; Corey, 2013; Ellis & MacLaren, 1998). CBT's main tenet is to replace maladaptive thought patterns with more adaptive ones, leading to positive behavioral changes. When implemented in a group counseling setting, CBT has additional benefits. Yalom & Leszcz (2005) explained that group counseling provides a supportive environment that encourages interaction and mutual learning among members. Importantly, it has been suggested that this approach has particular value in improving career maturity (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2002; Kivlighan, 2018).

Career Maturity and Decision-Making

The concept of career maturity relates to an individual's readiness and ability to make informed career decisions (Super, 1990). Recognized as a crucial aspect of transitioning from education to the workforce, career maturity can significantly impact a student's future professional path (Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2009). As such, the potential role of CBT in enhancing career maturity and decision-making has been of increasing interest to researchers and educators alike (Brown & Lent, 2016).

The Efficacy of CBT-based Group Counseling

The empirical evidence pointing towards the effectiveness of CBT-based group counseling in enhancing career decision-making skills and career maturity is compelling. Creed, Patton, and Bartrum's (2002) study showed notable improvements in career maturity among adolescents who underwent a CBT-based group counseling intervention. Kivlighan's (2018) research also demonstrated that students who participated in CBT-based group counseling were better prepared and more confident in making career-related decisions.

Identifying the Gap in Current Research

While the benefits of CBT-based group counseling are evident, there is a significant gap in research that focuses specifically on the use of this approach to enhance career maturity and decision-making among students. Despite the promising findings, the scarcity of research in this particular area signals the need for additional studies. Expanding the research on this topic could provide educators, counselors, and policy-makers with more evidence-based strategies for helping students navigate their career paths.

CONCLUSION

Systematic literature review demonstrates the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) implemented through group counseling in enhancing career maturity and decision-making among students. The findings highlight the positive impact of CBT interventions on students' self-efficacy, confidence, and broader perspectives regarding career options. The integration of CBT-based group counseling in educational institutions and career guidance programs can provide valuable support to students in navigating their career paths and making informed decisions. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of CBT-based interventions and address existing research gaps for a comprehensive understanding of this approach in promoting successful career development.

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