



Research article

A MIXED METHODS RESEARCH FOR SCHOOL COUNSELLING AND PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE: CASE STUDY OF AN ADOLESCENT WHO HAD EXPERIENCED VERBAL BULLYING AND DISORDERED EATING

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe a case study concerning school counseling and career guidance of a teenager who had experienced trauma from past bullying experiences and therefore had adopted disordered eating habits. While these conditions no longer exist, she is nevertheless distinguished by her low sense of self-reliance, which is a barrier to deciding on an appropriate career choice. These results are based on the uniqueness of the case study, which helped highlight how factors such as disordered eating and bullying affect future career choices. This case study describes the use of a psychometric tool for the assessment of an adolescent girl who had experienced trauma. The methodology was mixed and was based on the administration of a psychometric vocational guidance tool as well as an interview. The results highlighted the student's understanding of her potential, her sense of self-reliance, which was enhanced, helping her in decision-making, and her career was planned according to her values and preferences.

Keywords: bullying, school counseling, trauma, vocational guidance.

Introduction

Counseling and vocational guidance involve the support of the individual in short-term sessions so that the person can understand his or her skills to decide on the choice of profession. In this context, the person could use the dynamics that have been developed during the sessions to develop an individual plan of action that can meet his or her personal needs. School counseling is a trend of adaptation from psychodiagnostic assessment to the provision of counseling services by counseling psychologists, aimed not only at primary but also at secondary prevention.

Theoretical background

A combined application of professional development theories was adopted when conducting career guidance counseling sessions. The objectives set by P. during the first counseling and career guidance session placed her in the "Exploration" phase of Super's career development theory, during which, through attending work-related courses and work experiences, she tries to understand how to obtain the desired career. Recognizing this stage helped guide P. to crystallize through developing and planning a specific work goal, concretizing generalized preferences, making a specific choice, and realizing some of her work aspirations through a specific action plan, in which training and steps towards cultivating and securing the desired career were identified.

The life planning model was also utilized as a counseling approach (Maree, J. G. 2010) to help P. gain greater awareness and confidence in her studies, career, and life course. Savickas explains that a narrative is useful when it helps people develop awareness to make choices. People use stories to make sense of their lives, and in this context, they can be guided and reflect upon their actions (Savickas, 2015). P needed help to make sense of her life without her grandmother. This approach inspired P. to express her purpose, state new intentions, and commit to the process. Although P. knows that she wants to contribute

socially through her profession, she is nevertheless worried of leaving to study and work outside Attica, which is emotionally burdening her since she is related to a person living in Attica. After the counseling sessions, P. understood that her studies could be done in Attica.

The theory applied to P's educational and work concerns was Holland's theory of work choices (Holland's six personality types). It will be beneficial to apply it to P's case because it is one of the most widely known and applied theories, as it offers a foundation that can be applied to most populations (Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey, & Niles, 2014). This theory emphasizes the here and now, and emphasis was also placed on the factors, in P's case, that influence her choices. P. is aware of her interests; she is already oriented to the First Orientation Group and the First Science Field in the General High School, and she knows what personality traits she wants her educational and work choices to reflect. Although she is cognitively characterized by implanted stereotypes that function to limit her development, she is highly self-aware enough to have identified them on her own and is willing to work therapeutically. She desires an educational and professional choice that does not act as a limiting factor but enables her to broaden her horizons. She is also swayed by internal searches to focus purposefully in the light of her maturation on a personal and relational level since she knows that her educational and work choices will be in her place of residence.

Holland's theory assumes that most individuals fall into six personality types: pragmatic, research, artistic, social, entrepreneurial, and conventional (Holland, 1997). In P's case, coding her personality into three of the six personality types will open up new horizons of options at the work level for her to decide which academic studies to pursue. Holland's theory aims at finding a suitable work environment that matches the personality of the person concerned so that she is more satisfied and successful (Holland, 1997). Thus, according to the theory, P. will be assisted in her job choice according to her personality type as well as in alternative job choices.

Holland understands and focuses on the present and the influence of the environment on job choice (Holland, 1997). This theory helped me as a counselor to guide P. in broadening her choices within the zone she has chosen in the first disciplinary field (humanities, law, and social sciences), in determining the dynamics of her choices according to her personality, and in finalizing her choices. According to her background, strong influences from her surroundings, in which they are all scientists, can be seen, so P. was oriented to become a scientist with a particular influence from her grandmother's profession, who was a Professor of Psychology at a university. Certainly, the influence of these influences was not linear, but the influence of her environment motivated her to achieve high learning outcomes and have such performance anxiety that she sought professional guidance. Additional personality traits are expressed in this theory, such as her communicative disposition and her need to gain prestige while being independent in how she pursues her profession.

Furthermore, Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory was used, which analyses how an individual can make professional decisions based on learning experiences (Krumboltz, Foley, & Cotter, 2013). This theory is based on four central elements that influence a client's career choice: genetics, environmental conditions and events, learning experiences, and task approach skills (Krumboltz, Foley, & Cotter, 2013). These elements combine to form the individual's belief system. The counselor will identify these strengths and weaknesses and make an effort to understand the client and their perception of themselves. In P's case, problems were identified in her self-perception, and learning experiences were identified that can be applied when introducing skill-building that will reframe her perspective.

At the same time in all sessions, P. was suffering from transition anxiety from secondary to tertiary education and from performance anxiety, which was addressed through the humanistic approach of counseling (Schneider & Leitner, 2002), in which the client experiences the convergence of the inner and outer self, which will enhance his or her self-confidence to overcome beliefs and emotional difficulties that act as barriers when deciding on studies and job choice. Through the process, P's emotions and beliefs were sorted out to establish a climate of trust, where she ultimately felt safe to express herself and develop to such an extent that she felt ready to realize her academic and career aspirations through a plan of action (Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey, & Niles, 2014).

Research design

Questions

Will the teenager be able to crystallize her career interests in line with her expectations?

Do her work interests match her personality traits?

Will a short-term program of vocational counseling and guidance sessions enable her to make a professional decision?

How have you perceived the counseling and career guidance processes?

Which are her feelings after administering the psychometric tool?

Method

Sample

An adolescent girl was selected who had been verbally bullied in the past and had developed disordered eating patterns as a result. These conditions no longer exist, and although at first sight, she has characteristics that could act as a counteracting factor to the trauma, i.e., excellent performance at school and a supportive family and home environment, it seems that her past experiences have reduced her self-confidence to such an extent that they affect her inability to choose a profession (Appendix A).

Procedure

This study adhered to the ethical and conduct requirements of research. A consent form was signed by both parents, as well as the adolescent herself, to take part in the research. The adolescent and her parents were informed of their voluntary participation in the research, the confidentiality of their anonymity, and the assurance that the results would be used exclusively for research purposes. After the collection of consent forms, three sessions of school counseling and vocational guidance were conducted. In the first session, the objectives of the career guidance counseling sessions were set, and the history of the case study was recorded. In the second session, the psychometric instrument was completed by the adolescent, and the results were explored. In the third session, a joint action plan for the implementation of the professional decision was written down, as was the method of monitoring the results.

Measurement

For the present study, the mixed method was used, consisting of the quantitative method through the administration of a psychometric tool, an interesting test of the E.O.P.P.E.P., and the qualitative method through an interview to investigate her experience of school counseling and career guidance sessions. The first three research questions in order were explored through the quantitative method, while the last two questions in order were explored through the qualitative method.

E.O.P.P.E.P. Test for Interests

For the present case study, the interest test of the National Organization for the Certification of Qualification and Vocational Guidance (E.O.P.P.E.P.) was chosen. It is a self-report questionnaire consisting of 60 statements and a four-answer scale. This choice of the test was based on the flexibility of conducting the test asynchronously through the E.O.P.P.E.P. web portal and on the fact that it is a free tool that reduces the effort and time of the job development process by matching interests with a wide range of options involving occupations. This test has the following psychometric characteristics: a) reliability (0.90-0.94), which is satisfactory, while in repeated measurements a reliability of 0.76-0.89 is achieved. Regarding its validity concerning the criterion (professional preference and choice of studies), it is at moderate levels, while the concurrent validity is met because there are satisfactory indicators.

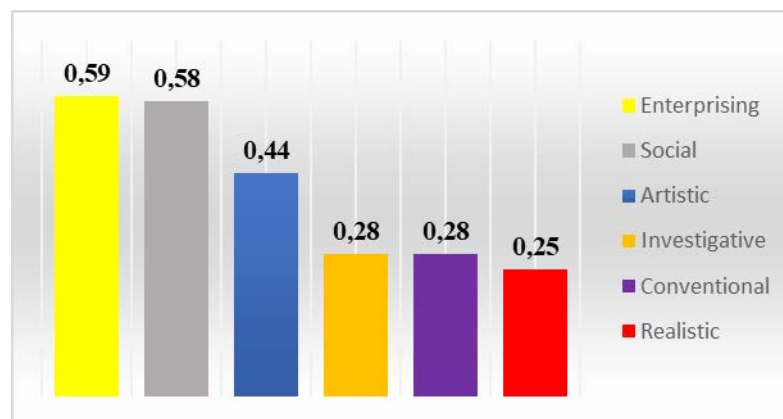
It is argued in the literature that an assessment based on this psychometric tool for professional development provides an appropriate orientation background for the selection of appropriate interventions (Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey, & Niles, 2014). It can be applied to all population groups with a variety of skills. This option also helps reorient the client's personality and verbal communication to understand them holistically. Still, the provision of this test can determine the attitude of the client to such an extent that he or she feels secure that the alternatives can be confirmed since different types of clients in

different work positions complete it because although they experience multiple obstacles in terms of achieving studies and work, nevertheless, in the end, it guides them effectively. Also, the use of this test enables the quantification of data and gives the impression of reliability and confidence that a solution will be found, thus further tightening the alliance between counselor and counselee.

Results

Regarding the first research question, it is observed that the consultant crystallized her interests according to her expectations. Completing Holland's test for interests, it is observed that the consultant is in the color triangle of Enterprising type (59%), Social type (58%), and Artistic type (44%), while she is in the 28% of the Investigative type, 28% of the Conventional type and 25% of the Realistic type (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The results of the six personality types



The second research question that will be examined with Holland's six types of theory is whether P., in describing her work interests, is describing her personality traits. With the Enterprising, Social, and Artistic types describing her personality being highly ranked concerning the general ranking, as well as the three types being close to each other, her personality is more consistent.

Her results are highly differentiated because the student is in the color triangle of Enterprising (59%), Social (58%), and Artistic (44%), while she is in the 28% of Investigative type, 28% of the Conventional type, and 25% of the Realistic type.

It was also at this point that P. realized that her personality outcomes are congruent not only with the work environment she wishes to work in but also with the work environment where her intimate environment is employed. In the business press, P. confirmed that she is interested in entrepreneurship and risk-taking. In the social type, P. is interested in helping people and listening to them. While of the artistic type, she expressed her interest not so much in art and music but in the need to incorporate characteristics of creativity and independence into her professional career.

The second meeting sought to reach the third question. Specifically, a very in-depth study was carried out by the counselee of the results proposed by the E.O.P.P.E.P., and through using of brainstorming by the counselor, P. ranked hierarchically the professions that would interest her based on the characteristics of the professions related to her identity and her desires. This technique then had the effect of 'unblocking her emotionally' and ranking them from least preferable (see point 3) to most preferable (see point 1) as follows:

1. Psychologist, because she feels it is a profession that will help her contribute on a social level.
2. Career guidance counselor, realizations made during counseling and guidance sessions, and
3. A lawyer who, although she likes her profession, feels she cannot express herself through lies to support someone.

In the hierarchical presentation of the results, the P. further targeted the necessity of combining them. The counseling sessions resulted in the outcome that P. wishes to pursue studies in psychology. These studies will form the basis for her to see through the action plan (see pp. 12–13) what specialization services she will offer as a career guidance counselor, a disciplinary psychologist, or both.

At this point, she realized that the professions she would be least interested in are hierarchical:

1. Teacher: She reiterated what she had said at the first meeting when taking the history, that the classroom is a routine that no longer satisfies her.
2. Journalist: She reiterated what she had said in the first meeting when taking a background, that although it is a communicative profession, she feels that it will not provide her with the full range of options to become a journalist, and she feels that it will not give her the scientific and social prestige she seeks.
3. All professions related to managing and advising money, such as investment advisor, insurance consultant, etc. These were excluded based on the criteria that excluded the fourth science field of economics and information technology and the corresponding orientation group in high school. At this point, she realized that entrepreneurship (the type that scored higher) would interest her more in the context of developing a career under which she could offer counseling and therapeutic services, e.g., becoming a therapy center owner.
4. Communicator, because he hates public speaking.

Regarding the fourth research question of how the consultant perceived the process of administering the psychometric tool, this result was obtained (Figure 2):

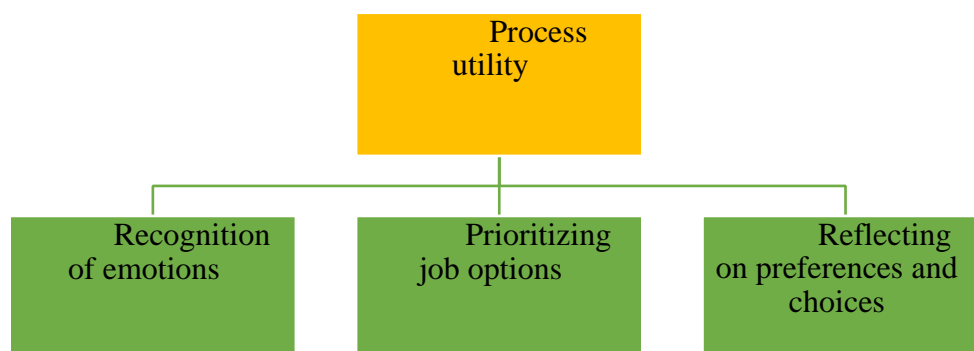


Figure 2. Mapping the usefulness of school counseling and career guidance.

Utility of the process

P. found the school counseling and career guidance process useful in i) describing and identifying her personal feelings and characteristics; ii) prioritizing her influences and work choices; and iii) reflecting on herself from different perspectives.

Regarding the fifth research question regarding the feelings of the counselee after the procedure, the following result was obtained (Figure 3).

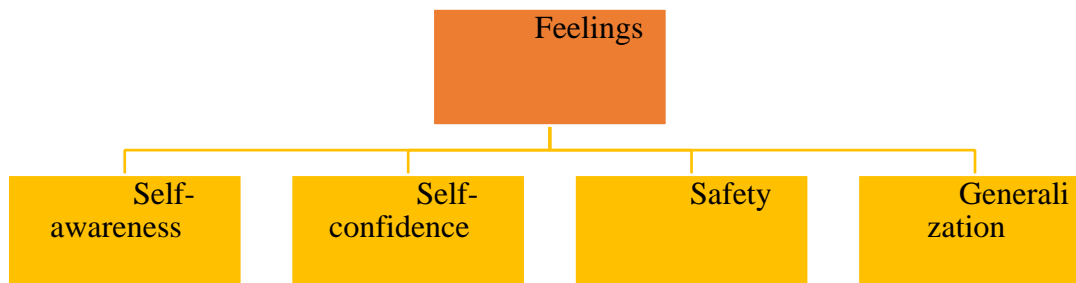


Figure 3. Mapping of feelings after the process of school counseling and career guidance sessions

Self-awareness

So, while she felt she knew herself well, she had not understood all the personal aspects involved in her choice of studies and profession, which determined her at the time of the test results. This was because she was presented with self-awareness challenges that prioritized her interests. She discovered new job options that she had not realized were appropriate for her. The counselor saw her options according to her type and helped her emerge and quantify desires that she unconsciously could not understand. She now understood how she had experienced bullying and disordered eating as trauma when this was now in the past.

Confidence

She now feels confident for her career, the studies she wants to pursue, and the job roles she imagines herself in.

Security

Determining career choices based on Holland's theory made her feel secure because it defined her among infinite choices.

Generalization

The consultant felt that to generalize her skills in resolving intimidating conflicts.

The results of the P. are consistent with the information that had been set by the background. It is observed that the prioritization of the outcomes in terms of the appropriate choice of occupation satisfies deeper needs such as helping people, giving her communicative, scientific, and social prestige, and providing the choice of whether to be dependent on an employer while allowing her independence in terms of hours. In addition, she wishes to be educationally and subsequently professionally located in an area that will provide her with positive experiences.

Action plan and monitoring

In the third and last counseling and career guidance meeting, an action plan for P was developed together with the counselee. It was considered important that the objectives be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound within a specific period. She was given instructions for completing and explaining the individual modules of this plan. The recording of goals was visualized to record the progress of P. According to the gradient hypothesis towards the goal, an increase in the level of effort is expected depending on how close one feels to its completion. This will be exploited through the creation of a checklist, which will include the completion of activities that can be easily checked. The cross-walking activities will be divided into categories, and the action plan will be formulated in an electronic format, to which the PI will add or subtract lines from the table below:

Table 1. Action plan

Name: P.	P
Skills I already have:	Employability
	Ambition
	Persistence
I fall short in:	1) Self-confidence
	2) Know-how
Long-term objectives:	
1.	To graduate from the Department of Psychology

2.	To choose an appropriate master’s degree to acquire a specific specialization		
3.	To acquire skills, educational work experience is required for the profession of psychologist, such as cultivating empathy, attending appropriate seminars, etc.		
4.	To become a psychologist, entrepreneur, and owner of a therapy center or a training center for professional psychologists.		
Medium-term goal: To succeed in the Department of Psychology at a university or college			
Short-term goals: 1) to study systematically for the National Examination and 2) to work on the following ideas:			
Time interval: daily engagement			

Where you are now:			
1) I wish to become a psychologist, 2) I already have excellent grades in my courses: Ancient Greek: 19, Latin: 20, Literature: 20, Modern Greek: 19, and History: 20.			
Ideas:	1) In the presence of the consultant, there has already been an attempt to actively engage in the investigation of information via the internet, on the E.O.P.P.E.P., on the web portal of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, and the websites of the academic psychology departments of public universities in Attica (E.K.P.A. and Panteion), as well as on the websites of private colleges in Attica.		
	2) The different academic rights and the equalized professional rights of the psychology department compared to those of a college have already been investigated through the respective websites.		
	3) A live visit to a public university of the Department of Psychology and to a private college of psychology, where, in the presence of my parents and accompanied by a written list of questions already prepared in a counseling session, we will talk to the University and College Liaison Department and the counselors, who will show me around the university and explain some aspects of the curriculum.		
	4) In a month, I will be attending an event at Public University Bay where entrepreneurs will be in attendance.		
	5) At the same time, through the use of the internet and with the consent of my parents, I will get in touch with groups of working psychologists.		
	6) Also, for one week, I will be job shadowing, following, talking, and doing small jobs with psychologists and counselors		

	in Attica.		
	7) During the summer, I will be volunteering at foundations that work with different population groups to determine which ones I am most interested in.		
How to reach your goal:	1) I will be studying for the Panhellenic Exams.		
	2) I will work on my ideas.		
	3) I will systematically and asynchronously monitor websites related to the profession of psychology.		
Work schedule:			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
Unexpected events:			
1. Description of an unexpected event:	self-confidence	uncertainty	sense that it should be further cultivated.
curiosity			
persistence			
flexibility			
optimism			
risk-taking			

Conclusion

P.'s school counseling and career guidance process helped her reframe her goals and, in this context, to explore and create new educational and employment opportunities. P. is interested in becoming a psychologist, a profession that she will use to feel personal satisfaction, and through targeting the appropriate master's degree and appropriate further training and seminars, she will be able to enhance her skills so that she can enter private practice and work in her place of residence. Having applied a combination of theories, it was observed that Holland's theory of the six personality types is characterized by benefits, such as the concretization of options according to personality type, but also some weaknesses. Concerning the latter, although job options are provided through the listing of occupations, opportunities may nevertheless be overlooked, appearing outside the table where occupations are categorized. This tool raised concerns as to whether it acted as a self-fulfilling prophecy of job choice that fit the code. If it was possible to repeat the sessions, it would have been beneficial if the sessions were not held at midday when the student felt tired, but at times when she felt well rested. It became impossible to find such times owing to her busy schedule in preparation for the National Examinations, but the possibility is emerging that meetings at more suitable times would be more effective. From the whole process and its results, it can be concluded that the psychometric tool is helpful, but it would be interesting to test the Ariston Test in combination with other weighted psychometric tools, such as the Revised Olweus bully/victim questionnaire and the Eating Disordered Attitude (EAT 26), which would contribute to the comparison with the already existing results of the interest test.

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Appendix A

Clinical history

During the first series of meetings, background information was taken, and the goals of the consultant were explored. My counselee, P., 17 years old, has earned time at school, resides in Attica, and is from a well-off family.

P. is 1.70 cm and 50 kg and has no history of eating disorders during her childhood or later adolescence. No family history of eating disorder problems was identified in her family history either. She had developed healthy eating choices and had never developed disordered eating attitudes towards food until the age of 16. For six months, however, she was subjected to only verbal and not any other type of bullying at school because she excels every year. The result of the bullying was that the student experienced stress, anxiety, and depression, emotions that she externalized through disordered eating. The disordered diet she had adopted, consisting of fast food, lots of sweets, etc., lasted for a few days and did not affect her body weight but rather affected her inability to feel secure and optimistic so that she could focus on her choice of future profession. In her childhood, she had not been subjected to any form of bullying, and for the first time, she started a strong kind of bullying at the age of 16, focusing on her grade superiority over the rest of the class. The pupil only erupted through hyperphagic episodes at times when she was subjected to bullying. She was recently seen by a nutritionist, who diagnosed that not all the conditions to be diagnosed with an eating disorder are met because the student has now changed schools, does not suffer these bullying experiences, and her diet is now balanced, which requires psycho-emotional strengthening, hence the referral to a counseling psychologist.

P.'s hobbies are reading mystery books and dancing, which helps her emotionally unload, but she would not like it as a profession. She is looking for help in choosing a school and a profession that would give her, among other things, scientific prestige.

She is not opposed to traveling, but ideally, she would prefer her studies, which will lead her to her future profession, to be in Attica.

During her childhood, she wanted to help people in her environment and become a teacher, but at the age of 12, she felt that the classroom was a routine that no longer satisfied her. Later, she wanted to become a journalist, which is a communication profession, but she feels not only does not provide her with the full range of options to pursue a private profession but will not give her the scientific and social prestige she seeks.

However, with time, she matured more and decided to choose the kind of education she would get and the profession she would pursue to give an outlet to her interests. She also considers it important that the profession she will pursue should provide opportunities both in the context of dependent work and private work in her own office, without having so far clarified and targeted a specific professional

field. Her future aspirations concern education and a career that requires a type of personality and skills characterized by educational and professional qualities that involve social interaction and cooperation, as well as the possibility of choosing whether or not to be dependent on an employer while allowing her independence in terms of working hours. In addition, she wishes to be in an educational and, subsequently, professional environment that offers her positive experiences.

To this day, she has not volunteered in any sector to gain work experience but only worked for a month last summer in her uncle's cafeteria, a work experience that did not satisfy her because, although it was a social profession, it tired her physically.

All her life, she has been labeled the "smart one" and her intimate environment routinely cautions her to maintain her high scores so as not to "throw away her talents". Although she already feels emotionally and cognitively mature, this pressure from her social environment does not give her the space and peace of mind to reflect on her real needs to seek out experiences and choices that enable her to develop herself.

P. focused attention on her emotional state, which she described as particularly stressful for her transition from secondary to tertiary education, and she is trying to orient herself in a specific field so that she is further motivated to achieve high grades in the Panhellenic Examinations and to have the possibility of an educational choice that will lead her to a job that is in line with her personality and does not limit her flexibility of choices.

P. seeks counseling and professional guidance, from which she will get to know herself even better and be psycho-emotionally strengthened, starting by finding a suitable profession, which will give her self-confidence and resilience; skills that will be generalized in solving bullying behaviors, which she is experiencing and which she currently feels are sabotaging her. A clear plan of action will emerge to guide her in finding the studies and profession she will pursue in the future, as well as exploring alternative options in the field she will target as a result of the career counseling and guidance sessions.