

The Role of Dysfunctional Career Thoughts and Indecision in Determining Guidance Needs

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Abstract

This study investigates the extent to which dysfunctional career thoughts and indecision affect career guidance needs. The participants were 523 high school students from two cities in central Finland. All the participants were second-year students and were 16 to 19 years old ($M = 17.47$; $SD = .44$). The respondents completed the Ohjaus-TarveArvio (OTA), a Finnish translation of the Career Thoughts Inventory, a measure of dysfunctional career thoughts and questions concerning career decision states and the need for support in career decision-making. The results showed that significant differences exist between factor scores of dysfunctional career thoughts, degree of indecision, and needs for career guidance. Proper screening of dysfunctional career thoughts and the state of indecision could provide valuable information for counselors concerning how to formulate appropriate guidance interventions that enhance readiness for career decision-making.

This study developed from an interest in investigating the extent to which dysfunctional career thoughts and indecision affect career guidance needs in Finnish high school students. The role of guidance is to support students in their studies and to ensure that they have sufficient skills and knowledge to progress in their studies and enter

the world of work. Career decision-making is therefore one of the major tasks in high school career guidance. In the process of career decision-making the focus should be on career information and assessment (Gati & Levin, 2012). Career information and assessment is defined as supporting students in assessing their personal characteristics and needs as well as connecting them with information on opportunities and requirements in labour and education markets (Schiersmann et al., 2012). The assessment of students' readiness for career decision-making and of their needs for career guidance services should be a starting point in facilitating complex and non-linear transitions from secondary education to further education and employment. The use of appropriate assessment procedures is an important aspect for stakeholders, practitioners, and students in formulating plans that assist individuals in developing career decision-making skills. In the present study, career decision-making is concerned with the state of indecision and its relation to the potential lack of decision-making readiness due to the occurrence of dysfunctional career thoughts.

Dysfunctional Career Thoughts

Dysfunctional thoughts are specific barriers in a student's thinking process (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013) and they may present significant problems in the decision-

making process (Kleiman et al., 2004). Dysfunctional career thoughts related to career decision-making include self-efficacy beliefs (Guay, Ratelle, Senecal, Larose, & Deschenes, 2006), attachment anxiety and avoidance (van Eecke, 2007), negative self-talk or confused thought processes (Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, & Lenz, 2004), or negative thoughts and feelings (Sampson, McClain, Musch, & Reardon, 2013). Dysfunctional career thoughts limit the acquisition of decision-making skills and occupational knowledge, as well as the clarity and consistency of self-knowledge (Sampson et al., 2004).

Dysfunctional career thoughts are a central element in the cognitive information processing approach (CIP; Peterson, Sampson, & Reardon, 1991; Sampson et al., 2004). CIP theory includes three dimensions of dysfunctional thoughts: decision-making confusion (DMC), commitment anxiety (CA), and external conflict (EC). DMC and CA refer to the internal psychological aspects of indecision, whereas EC reflects social barriers, such as attachment avoidance (van Eecke, 2007). DMC describes the difficulty students have in beginning or continuing with career decision-making due to disabling emotions and/or a limited understanding of the decision-making process itself. CA describes the inability to commit to a specific career choice, accompanied by generalized anxiety about the results of the decision-making process



that leads to further indecision. EC describes the inability to balance the importance of personal perceptions with the importance of input from significant others, leading to reluctance to assume responsibility for decision-making (Peterson, Sampson, Lenz, & Reardon, 2002).

Dysfunctional career thoughts are related to an understanding of what services best meet students' career guidance needs. Sampson et al. (2004) have classified career guidance needs and services into three categories. First, students with low-level dysfunctional thinking and high readiness for career decision-making have the potential to be served by self-help services. Self-help services are self-guided career resources found in libraries and online. Second, students with moderate-level dysfunctional career thinking and readiness for occupational and career decision-making have the potential to be served by brief staff-assisted services such as career courses, peer-groups, and short-term individual counseling. Third, students with high-level dysfunctional thinking and low readiness for career decision-making have the potential to be served by individual case-managed career guidance services organized at high schools, career centers, and employment offices. This study builds upon the limited work completed to date (Saunders, Peterson, Sampson, & Reardon, 2000; Walker & Peterson, 2012).

Career Indecision

The taxonomy of career problem-solving and decision-making states comprises three major categories: *decided*, *undecided*, and *indecisive* (Sampson et al., 2004). Decided individuals have made their commitment to a specific educational or occupational choice (Sampson et al., 2004). Undecided

individuals, on the other hand, have not made their commitment to a specific educational or occupational choice due to gaps in their knowledge necessary for choosing (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996; Gati, Osipow, Krausz, & Saka, 2000) or gaps in their current life-situation if they do not need to make career decisions (Lerikkanen, 2002).

Over 50 variables have been explored as possible correlates of the state of indecision (Brown & Rector, 2008). Osipow (1999) categorized indecision into developmental indecision and chronic indecisiveness. Indecision reflects an individual's inability to initiate or sustain decision-making processes. This difficulty is a result of potential mental health issues such as depression (Walker & Peterson, 2012) or attachment avoidance (van Ecke, 2007). It ensues due to general indecisiveness and a lack of information about one's self or about occupations (Kleiman et al., 2004). In addition, characteristics of developmental indecision include disabling emotions and/or a lack of understanding about the decision-making process itself (Sampson et al., 2004). Generalized anxiety about the outcome of the decision-making process, internal conflicts, and inconsistent information (Kleiman et al., 2004) result in an individual's inability to make a commitment to a specific career choice, and this, in turn, perpetuates the state of indecision (Sampson et al., 2004).

The variables that have been found to play an important role in chronic indecisiveness comprise personality traits that affect many situations demanding decisions (Osipow, 1999), and include anxiety, depression, and psychological hardiness (Brown & Rector, 2008). Substantial evidence exists that suggests indecisive students are not a homogenous group (Santos & Ferreira, 2012).

Brown et al. (2012) noted that indecision comprises the following four factors: (a) negative affectivity associated with chronic indecisiveness and high levels of anxiety, depressive affect, and trait neuroticism; (b) choice/commitment anxiety with a high need for self- and occupational information and low levels of self-esteem and general problem solving confidence; (c) interpersonal conflict with dependent decision-making style and external barriers; and (d) a lack of readiness combined with a lack of planfulness or goal directedness as well as a lack of self-efficacy beliefs in career decision-making. Sampson et al. (2004) define indecisive individuals as those who have not engaged to a specific occupational choice due to gaps in their knowledge for choosing. They have a maladaptive approach to career problem solving in general, which is accompanied by a maladaptive level of anxiety.

High School Education and Guidance in Finland

In the Finnish educational system, basic education is a public nine-year education provided for all members of the age cohort in comprehensive schools. Compulsory schooling starts when a child turns seven and ends after the basic education syllabus has been completed. After nine years of compulsory education, students usually opt for high school or vocational upper secondary education and training for three more years. The largest fields of vocational upper secondary education and training are technology, communications, transport, social services, health, and sports. Vocational upper secondary education and training is popular in Finland. However, half (51%) of the age cohort continues their studies in high schools (Statistic Finland, 2015).



Applicants are selected for high school based on their marks in basic education. The high schools are public schools and education is tuition free, provided by the municipality or an educational consortium of municipalities, and a national core curriculum is followed. In the national core curriculum of high school studies there is one compulsory and one specialization course of guidance. Additionally, in all the schools they have at least one study counselor who is responsible for organizing guidance for students. The second year in high school is the time when most students make their career decisions, and thus they will receive guidance lessons and individual counseling for career decision-making. Finnish students must be guaranteed the opportunity to complete their high school studies within three years. In addition, they have the right to receive as much educational and occupational guidance as they require.

The Present Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which dysfunctional career thoughts and indecision affect career guidance needs. First, we determined if there were significant mean differences between the level of dysfunctional career thoughts and the following demographic variables: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) basic education, (d) city, (e) high school, and (f) diploma the participant was studying for. We hypothesized that there were no significant mean differences between the level of dysfunctional career thoughts and these demographic variables (Lerkkanen, 2011).

Second, we determined whether significant differences existed between factor scores of dysfunctional career thoughts and the state of career indecision. Our hypothesis was that a significant differ-

ence existed between the level of dysfunctional career thoughts and the state of indecision (Lerkkanen, 2011; Kleiman et al., 2004).

Third, we examined whether significant differences existed between factor scores of dysfunctional career thoughts and needs for guidance according to the following variables: (a) tendency to seek support, (b) prioritized educational choice, and (c) satisfaction with the current educational choice. We hypothesized that there were significant differences between factor scores of dysfunctional career thoughts and all three separate variables, which would indicate a need for guidance (Gilat, Ezer, & Sagee, 2010; Hirschi & Läge, 2008; Kleiman et al., 2004; Lerkkanen, 2011).

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 523 students (218 males and 305 females) from ten high schools in two cities (first, $n = 367$ and second, $n = 156$) in central Finland. All of the participants were second-year students between 16 and 19 years old ($M = 17.47$; $SD = .44$). Most of the participants (93%) reported that their basic education was obtained at a comprehensive school. Some of the participants (7%) have graduated from vocational education before high school studies. The sample was 99.5% Caucasian.

Procedure

All of the high schools from the two cities were invited to participate. Of the 12 total, 10 (5 from each city) participated. Permission for students to participate in the study was granted from the respective school administrations. The par-

ticipants' parents were informed about the study and they had the ability to decline their children's participation. The data was collected via an online survey tool (Digium Enterprise) and all the measures were combined into a single questionnaire. The response time was approximately 15 minutes. The first data set was collected between November 2011 and February 2012, and the second data set between April and May 2012. The difference between the two periods was due to the schedule of the counselors who facilitated data collection in their schools.

Measures

The readiness measure for career decision-making. Ohjaus-TarveArvio (OTA) is a 32-item, self-administered inventory that measures negative thoughts that inhibit career problem solving and decision-making (Lerkkanen, 2008). The OTA is based on cognitive information processing theory (Peterson et al., 1991; Sampson et al., 2004) and measures negative career thoughts according to the pyramid of information processing and the communication, analysis-synthesis, valuing, and execution (CASVE) cycle.

The basic structure of the Finnish OTA is similar to the Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI; Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996a). The CTI is a 48-item inventory that measures the amount and nature of dysfunctional career thoughts (Sampson et al., 1996a). The CTI Total score is correlated with career indecision as measured by the Career Decision Scale (Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico, & Kashier, 1997) and the Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (Kleiman et al., 2004). In addition, the CTI Total score correlates with attachment anxiety and



avoidance as measured by Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (van Eecke, 2007). The CTI items were translated into Finnish and underwent initial validation by Lerkkanen (2002). Subsequently, the Finnish version of the CTI was further developed into the OTA. The differences between the CTI and OTA include the number of the items, 48 vs. 32, and a revision of some of the items for use with high school students (Lerkkanen, 2012). Similar to the CTI, the OTA provides a Total score and three subscale scores—Decision-Making Confusion (DMC), Commitment Anxiety (CA), and External Conflict (EC)—derived from an exploratory factor analysis. In the preliminary tests of the OTA for high school students, the internal consistency coefficients using Cronbach's alpha were .92 for the Total score (32 items), .93 for DMC, .82 for CA, and .68 for EC. Intercorrelations among the three subscales varied between .03 and .39 (Lerkkanen, 2008).

The content of the OTA items allude to (a) culture and educational system aspects; (b) pessimistic views about the process of decision-making, the world of work, and personal control; (c) anxiety about the process and the uncertainty of the possible outcomes; and (d) self and identity factors associated with generalized anxiety, self-esteem, unclear vocational identity, and interpersonal conflicts. The 32 items were derived from eight content domains from CIP theory (Peterson et al., 1991; Sampson et al., 2004). Higher Total scores indicate lower readiness for career decision-making. The scores of each of the subscales are important because they indicate the kinds of challenges individuals face in making educational and career-related decisions. Each of the eight content domains of the CIP approach (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz,

Reardon, & Saunders, 1996b) was represented with four items on the OTA. The rating scale for each item consists of a 4-point Likert-type scale (0 = *strongly disagree*; 3 = *strongly agree*). The maximum Total score in the OTA is 96, on the dimension of DMC 48 (16 items), CA 21 (7 items), and EC 24 (8 items).

The state of career decision-making was determined by asking participants which of the three states most appropriately described their situation: (a) *I know exactly what I'm going to do after high school* (decided), (b) *I'm still unsure what I'm going to do after high school* (undecided), and (c) *My career plans after high school are totally unclear* (substantially undecided). The choices followed the structure in previous studies (Lerkkanen, 2008, 2011; Peterson et al., 1991).

The need for guidance was measured by three separate measures: (a) satisfaction with the current educational choice; (b) prioritized educational choice; and (c) tendency to seek support. All these measures are used as three separate variables in the subsequent analyses. The need for guidance concept is based on previous studies (Lerkkanen 2002, 2011) and the national education policy of high schools in Finland. In scale (a) participants were asked if they were satisfied (yes/no) with the educational choice they had made (Lerkkanen, 2002). To assess scale (b), participants were asked whether the school in which they were studying was their first choice (yes/no). Honkonen (1997) and also Lerkkanen (2002) noted that the order of priority in educational options indicated guidance needs. If students did not receive their first educational option, they expressed more need for guidance. Scale (c) was assessed in terms of the expressed need for support (yes/no) in choosing a career. This part of the measure was based on previous studies of help-

seeking attitudes (Gilat, Ezer, & Sagee, 2010; Lerkkanen, 2002).

Data Analyses

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to determine which OTA items load to which factors in an a priori 3-factor model. One-sample t tests were used to find out if there were significant mean differences in OTA factor scores (dependent variable) with respect to gender, city, satisfaction with career choice, prioritized educational choice, and tendency to seek support (independent variable). One-way ANOVA was used to determine if there were statistically significant mean differences in OTA factor scores (dependent variable) with respect to different age groups, basic education, high school, diploma for which the participants were studying, and the state of career indecision. The alpha level to test the hypotheses was set at .001 to protect against family-wise error (independent variable). Finally, Levene's test was used to ascertain whether the assumptions of equality of variances were met in the respective comparisons of independent samples.

Results

Factor Structure of OTA

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the principal components analysis with oblique rotation specifying a three-factor solution. The three-factor solution was chosen for two reasons: (a) the CIP theory used in the OTA suggests three factors: Decision-Making Confusion, Commitment Anxiety, and External Conflict; and (b) the three-factor solution was tested in previous studies (Lerkkanen 2002, 2008). Oblique rotation was used because it maximizes the variance of the coefficients, and it



assumes the factors are correlated to some degree. Based on the pattern matrix, Item 32 (*My choices after high school are just my own business*) was eliminated from the factors due to too low loading on all three factors. The first factor (16 items), Decision-Making Confusion, accounted for 33.61% of the variance. The second factor (8 items), External Conflict, accounted for 8.63% of the variance. The third factor (7 items), Commitment Anxiety, accounted for 7.37% of the variance. The three factors together explained 49.60% of the variance. Participant alpha coefficients were .93 for the Total score, .93 for DMC, .85 for CA, and .76 for EC.

Demographic Variables

The first research question assessed the significant differences among the dysfunctional career thoughts, as measured by the OTA factor scores in groups of demographic variables. Employing a *t* test, there were no significant mean differences between OTA scores with respect to age, city, basic education, high school, and diploma for which participants were studying. However, there were significant mean differences between males and females with respect to DMC ($t = -3.221$; $p = .001$; $d = .28$), CA ($t = -4.268$; $p = .000$; $d = .38$), and OTA Total score ($t = -3.256$; $p = .001$; $d = .24$), but not for EC ($t = .428$; $p = .669$). The results thus indicated that females demonstrated moderately higher scores than males did on dimensions of DMC, CA, and the OTA Total score. Therefore, with the exception of gender, the OTA appears to possess considerable discriminant validity regarding potential confounding demographic variables.

Indecision and OTA Scores

The second research question determined whether significant differences existed between dysfunctional career thoughts, as measured by the OTA factor scores in groups of the respective levels of the career decision-making states. One fifth of the participants (21%; $n = 112$) were decided about their plans after high school. Over half of the participants (60%; $n = 316$) were undecided and they were uncertain about their future after high school, and 18% ($n = 95$) of the participants were indecisive, that is, they were completely unclear about their plans after high school. Based on the one-way ANOVA, there were significant mean differences in the levels of the *state of career decision* and OTA scores. The results indicated lower levels of decidedness were significantly ($p < .001$) related to lower levels of readiness for career decision-making (see Table 1). The differences were significant for all OTA scores: DMC ($F = 167.373$; $df = 2$; $p < .001$), CA ($F = 57.507$; $df = 2$; $p < .001$), EC ($F = 7.856$; $df = 2$; $p < .001$), and Total score ($F = 116.178$; $df = 2$; $p < .001$).

Need for Guidance

The third research question looked at whether significant differences existed among the dysfunctional career thoughts, as measured by the OTA factor scores, in groups in need for guidance, as measured by (a) tendency to seek support, (b) satisfaction with the current educational choice, and (c) prioritized educational choice. Over half of the participants (57%; $n = 297$) responded that they needed support from others in choosing a career and 43% ($n = 226$) of the participants indicated they do not need support. Based on *t* tests, there were signifi-

cant ($p < .001$) mean differences between the tendency to seek support (expressed need for support, yes/no) and the respective OTA factor scores: DMC ($t = 11.129$; $p < .001$), CA ($t = 8.487$; $p < .001$), EC ($t = 2.657$; $p < .01$) and Total score ($t = 10.116$; $p < .001$). The results showed that if the participants expressed need for support in choosing a career, they also had higher scores on the OTA (see Table 2). With respect to the Total score, the comparison of means did not meet the assumption of equality of variances (see Table 2) according to Levene's test ($F = 8.193$, $p = .004$). To take this finding into account, the *t* ratio for equal variances not assumed was selected in this particular instance. Nevertheless, the results showed that if the participants expressed a need for support in choosing a career, they also had significantly higher scores on the respective dimensions of the OTA (see Table 2).

Almost all of the participants (95%, $n = 494$) responded that they were satisfied with their choice of high school. There were significant mean differences between *satisfaction with the educational choice* (yes/no) and DMC ($t = -3.888$; $p < .001$), EC ($t = -3.505$; $p < .001$) and OTA Total score ($t = -3.452$; $p < .01$). The results showed that if the participants were not satisfied with their choice, they had significantly ($p < .001$) higher scores on DMC, and EC. The results also show that confusion in linking self-knowledge and occupational knowledge to form options (DMC), and uncertainty in taking charge of the decision (EC) mean were higher with students who were dissatisfied with their educational choice. The variance of *satisfaction with the educational choice* was oblique. Therefore, the findings were characterized as an indicative result.

Most of the participants (82%) indicated their present high



school was their *prioritized educational* choice. There were no significant mean differences in the respective OTA scales with respect to students attending their first choice of high school.

Discussion

This study investigated the extent to which dysfunctional career thoughts and indecision affect career guidance needs. The results showed that there are significant differences between factor scores of dysfunctional career thoughts, and degree of indecision, and needs for career guidance.

First, we explored whether there were significant differences between the means of dysfunctional career thoughts and the following demographic variables: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) basic education, (d) city, (e) high school, and (f) diploma the participant was studying for. The results partly supported the first hypotheses that there were no significant mean differences between the level of dysfunctional career thoughts and demographic variables (see Sampson et al., 1996b). The only exception was gender. Females appeared to indicate a higher level of dysfunctional career thoughts in DMC, CA and OTA Total score (see also Ginerva, Nota, Soresi, & Gati, 2012; Watson, Creed, & Patton, 2002). On the one hand, this finding could be attributed to more willingness by females than by males to admit to negative career thoughts. In other words, a social desirability response set may be a factor in responding to OTA items. On the other hand, females may indeed be experiencing more anxiety, self-doubt, and apprehension regarding the career decisions they face than males do. However, in spite of possible gender bias in the OTA, we believe that the endorsement of any item in any terms of agree or

strongly agree—regardless of gender—is worthy of exploration and reframing in order to replace negative thoughts with more positive ones (see Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996c).

Second, we focused on identifying Finnish high school students' dysfunctional career thoughts and indecision. As expected, the findings supported the second hypothesis. Indecisive students indicated more dysfunctional career thinking than the undecided or decided students did. Hence, career guidance practitioners could well use students' state of decision-making to identify indecisive students (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). The results of this study demonstrate that using the OTA as a screening device to measure readiness for career decision-making can provide appropriate information concerning what phase of the decision-making process students are in. Additionally, the OTA results can generate information regarding what the correct level of guidance service is (self-help, brief-assisted, individual case-managed) to deliver to the students.

Third, we determined whether there were significant mean differences between dysfunctional career thoughts and needs for guidance as measured by tendency to seek support, satisfaction with the current educational choice, and prioritized educational choice. We hypothesized that there are significant differences between factor scores of dysfunctional career thoughts and all three of the separate variables, which would indicate a need for guidance. The findings were partly in accordance with the hypothesis. The means of dysfunctional career thoughts were higher with students who have higher tendencies to seek support in career decision-making and were more dissatisfied with their current educational choice. In this study, there were no significant

differences between the means for priority of high school and level of dysfunctional career thinking. This finding is in line with the result that over 80% of the participants in the sample were in their school of first choice.

Practical Implications

The results suggested that counselors should pay particular attention to guidance needs assessment in high schools. Without an adequate needs analysis, counseling services might over- or underserve students. Proper screening avoids overserving highly prepared young people with costly individualized interventions that are unnecessary, and it avoids providing inadequate interventions by staff that is unaware of the substantial needs of young people with a low readiness (Sampson et al., 2004).

The findings of this study are in accordance with the results of prior studies on career indecision. A major risk factor in Finnish high schools is poor commitment to career goals after high school studies. Previous studies have reported that adolescents emphasize work-related goals and the likelihood of securing a job after graduation (Bertoch, Lenz, Reardon, & Peterson, 2014; Nurmi, Salmela-Aro, & Koivisto, 2002). Therefore, guidance interventions should be targeted at exploring the goal orientation and capability for career decision-making. Setting goals and being optimistic may be conditions that help students to formulate plans for their professional future, take a greater responsibility for their choices, and be more engaged in their educational pathways (Jung & McCormick, 2010; Nurmi et al., 2002; Savickas, 2005).



Table 1

Means of OTA factor scores and the state of career indecision

	n	DMC		CA		EC		Total score	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Substantially undecided	95	24.8	8.2	10.5	4.1	5.9	3.3	43.1	12.1
Moderate undecided	316	15.6	7.3	9.7	3.8	5.7	3.4	32.9	11.8
Decided	112	6.2	6.4	5.5	4.3	4.3	3.5	18.0	12.8

Note. DMC = Decision-Making Confusion, CA = Commitment Anxiety, EC = External Conflict
All the differences between the means were significant (p=.000).

Table 2

Means of OTA factor scores and tendency to seek support

	n	DMC		CA		EC		Total score	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Expressed need for support	297	18.8	8.5	10.3	4.0	5.8	3.4	36.7	12.5
Expressed no need for support	226	10.5	8.3	7.3	4.2	5.0	3.5	24.7	14.1

Note. DMC = Decision-Making Confusion, CA = Commitment Anxiety, EC = External Conflict
All the differences between the means were significant (p = .000)

Limitations

There are some limitations of our study that need to be considered when making any generalizations based on these results. First, the sample includes only second year high school students from two cities in Finland. Therefore, the generalizability of results to all high school students is limited. Second, more than fifty variables have been explored as possible correlates of the state of indecision (Brown & Rector, 2008). The present study has focused on dysfunctional career thoughts only. For instance, more research is needed to study the corre-

lation between the way of thinking (optimism/pessimism) and indecision. Additionally, more information is needed concerning the relationship between needs for guidance and trait neuroticism or between low levels of self-esteem and problem-solving confidence. Third, our results are based on an examination of significant differences between the groups. Further studies could also use correlation-based analysis between dysfunctional career thoughts, indecision, and the need for guidance.

Conclusion

This study examined the extent to which dysfunctional career thoughts and indecision affected the career guidance needs of high school students in Finland. The results showed that students varied considerably in dysfunctional career thoughts, indecision, and perceived need for guidance. The extent of dysfunctional career thoughts varied by gender, and dysfunctional career thoughts were related to increased indecision and a greater perceived need for guidance, as well as to decreased satisfaction with educational choice.



Clearly, a large number of students in this study experienced difficulty in career decision-making and were aware that they needed assistance. These results call into question the one-size-fits-all design of career guidance services where each student receives a similar individual or group guidance intervention. Career guidance practitioners can use brief assessments of students' dysfunctional career thoughts and indecision to identify those students who most need assistance with their career choices. Guidance resources in high schools need to be focused on where they are going to do the most good, thus making the best use of limited guidance resources. In the delivery of guidance services, a brief assessment of each student's needs is an essential first step.

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