

Career Counseling

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Career Counseling Theory Overview and Application

Career counseling plays a crucial role in helping individuals navigate their career paths by providing guidance, support, and strategies for making informed decisions. Two prominent theories in the field are the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment (MTWA). These theories offer valuable frameworks for understanding the factors that influence career development and provide practical applications for career counseling practitioners.

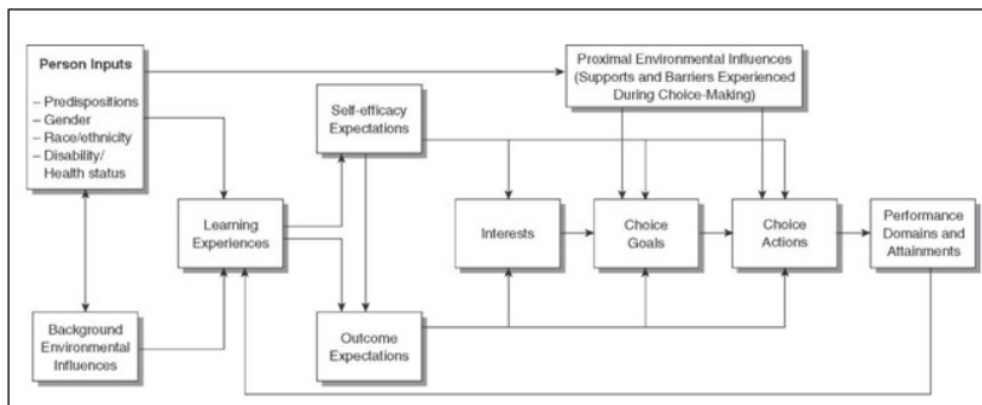
Social Cognitive Career Theory

Overview of the Theory

The fundamental elements of SCCT consist of three intricately interconnected factors: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals (Wang et al., 2022). Self-efficacy pertains to an individual's personal convictions regarding their capacity to carry out certain activities. Outcome expectations are an individual's beliefs regarding the potential results that may arise from engaging in specific behaviors (Lent et al., 2017). According to the theory, these two factors play a significant role in shaping individual interests and goals, which in turn, have a considerable impact on career decision-making and achievement outcomes (Wang et al., 2022).

Figure 1

Simplified View of SCCT Development



(Wang et al., 2022).

SCCT is particularly applicable in my career development because it provides a framework for understanding the interplay between my beliefs, experiences, and broader socio-environmental context. Practical application of SCCT principles will allow me to actively shape my career development. For instance, the theory encourages individuals to cultivate self-efficacy beliefs and develop realistic and positive outcome expectations (Wang et al., 2022). These improvements will result in the individual being more likely to establish higher performance goals for themselves and to persist longer in the face of setbacks.

Integration into Counseling Practice

SCCT provides a structured explanation of how the interplay among fundamental cognitive, personal, and environmental factors influences an individual's career growth and progression. As such there are several assessment tools and techniques to evaluate these key variables. To assess a client's level of self-efficacy, a career counsellor may use the College-Going Self-Efficacy Scale (Hardin et al., 2021), Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale (Purnama & Ernawati, 2021) and the Personal and Social Development Self-Efficacy Inventories (Yuen et al., 2022) among others, depending on the needs of the client.

Other SCCT factors similarly have normed and validated instruments for evaluation. A client's learning experiences can be evaluated using the Learning Experiences Questionnaire (Gruber & Strömsten, 2021). There are also more targeted measures such as the Math/Science Interest Scale or the Math/Science Outcome Expectations Scale which measure a client's interest and outcome expectation in Math and Science respectively (Garriott et al., 2017).

SCCT proposes several strategies and interventions for facilitating client development. In practice, SCCT encourages the integration of cognitive restructuring techniques which stimulate clients to adopt self-enhancing performance attributions, wherein they attribute their accomplishments to the development of personal capabilities and perceive ability as a mutable characteristic that can be acquired rather than an inherent, unchangeable attribute (Lent, 2020).

SCCT also advocates for the cultivation of decision-making and goal-setting skills, which involve breaking down long-term goals into smaller, more achievable sub-goals and identifying resources to support personal aspirations (Lent, 2020). These self-regulation skills can be effectively taught by employing relatable examples from domains like academics or social relationships, which are meaningful to the client and can be applied to their career development.

Cultural Considerations and Interrelationships with Other Factors

Self-efficacy can be influenced by cultural factors. Cultural contexts shape individuals' beliefs about their capabilities and accessible opportunities, which, in turn, affect their career choices and actions (Brown & Lent, 2017). Furthermore, cultural factors such as gender roles, societal status, and economic status can significantly impact a client's outcome expectations in the SCCT framework (Brown & Lent, 2017). As such, it is important to

distinguish between SCCT variables and paths that may have universal applicability and those that may be specific to particular cultures.

It is also important to consider the effectiveness of SCCT in the case of clients with a history of substance abuse. According to a study by Shafie et al. (2018), career counselling has a positive impact on the career maturity and self-efficacy level of former drug addicts. Having experienced a past of substance addiction, I appreciate that clients with a history of substance abuse have unique challenges and concerns when it comes to career development. SCCT enables individuals identify and reshape their outcome expectations related to employment, providing guidance on setting realistic career goals and building confidence in their ability to succeed in the workplace despite past struggles (Maynes & Nishikawara, 2023).

The Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment

Overview of the Theory

MTWA offers a framework for understanding the compatibility between a person and a specific job or organization. The MTWA structural model outlines the characteristics of individuals and work environments by examining the demands they place on each other and the ways in which they can support each other. It also considers what each side can provide or offer to the other (Dawis, 2023). By assessing both the individual and the environment along two main dimensions, it gauges the degree of fit. On the other hand, the process model of the MTWA examines adjustment styles influenced by factors such as flexibility, active adjustment, reactive adjustment, and perseverance, aiming to understand the processes of work adjustment and its sustainability (Dawis, 2023).

In my career development, the MTWA is increasingly useful in facilitating my assessment of the compatibility between my skills, interests, values, and personality traits,

and the demands and resources of potential job roles or organizations. It also provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of work adjustment and how I can sustain or manage compatibility in my job or organizational contexts.

Integration into Counseling Practice

A thorough comprehension of the environmental demands in relation to Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) is essential for effectively applying MTWA. MTWA incorporates a principle of symmetry, necessitating that the individual's assessment aligns with the same dimensions of KSAs used to describe the work environment other (Dawis, 2023). Through commensurate measurement, valuable insights are gained not only regarding the individual's capabilities but also the extent to which they align with the specific requirements of the job, detailing the level of match or mismatch between the individual and the environment.

The evaluation of the needs, values, and interests of the client is performed using the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (Holm, 2019) which identified 20 need dimensions that were then condensed into five higher-order work values: achievement, autonomy, status, safety and comfort, and altruism. In a similar vein, the evaluation of the environment centers around its capacity to offer opportunities that align with their identified needs, values, and interests.

The process of reducing the level of mismatch between the individual and the environment can be achieved through strategies applied by either the individual or the environment. This process of maintaining or enhancing compatibility is characterized by the following adjustment factors: “flexibility, active adjustment, reactive adjustment and perseverance” other (Dawis, 2023, p. 9). Flexibility is the individual's capacity to endure person-job incompatibility. While active adjustment involves the individual actively influencing the environment to foster compatibility, reactive adjustment involves the

individual making changes within themselves instead. Lastly, perseverance refers to the duration for which an individual persists with incompatibility, even after investing effort in active and reactive adjustment.

Interrelationships with Other Factors

Similar to the discussion in SCCT, it is important to consider clients with a history of substance abuse. In this situation, the commensurate measurement assessment can assist in identifying opportunities that align with their recovery journey and support their ongoing sobriety. Moreover, MTWA recognizes the role of adjustment strategies in reducing mismatch. For the clients, these strategies may involve helping enhancing their coping skills, stress management techniques, and practicing effective communication. From the employer's perspective, efforts may be made to create an environment that minimizes potential triggers as much as possible.

Conclusion

SCCT and MTWA offer valuable frameworks for understanding and applying principles in career counselling. SCCT emphasizes the ⁴interplay between self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals in career decision-making. MTWA focuses on assessing the fit between individuals and work environments, considering factors such as skills, interests, values, and adjustment styles. Both theories can be effectively integrated into counselling practice, with assessment tools and interventions tailored to individual needs. Additionally, considerations for clients with a history of substance abuse highlight the importance of addressing their unique challenges and promoting compatibility in their career development journey.

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