

Client factors and working alliance: a preliminary study in Career Construction Counselling

Paulo Cardoso ^a, Rui Campos^a, Maria do Céu Taveira^b and Filipa Silva^b

^aDepartment of Psychology, University of Évora, Évora, Portugal; ^bSchool of Psychology, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the client factors that predict working alliance in career construction counselling. The sample included 49 Portuguese participants (34 females). A demographic questionnaire collected information about clients' gender, age and educational level. Distress was assessed using the Outcome Questionnaire-45. The strength of working alliance was measured by the Work Alliance Inventory-Short and Revised at the end of both the first and the last career counselling sessions. Multiple regression analyses were computed to test whether client characteristics (gender, age, educational level and distress) predicted the strength of the working alliance. Client distress and low educational level were found to be significant predictors of working alliance strength in both the first and last counselling sessions.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 23 December 2020
Revised 10 September 2021
Accepted 30 October 2021


KEYWORDS

Working alliance; Career Construction Counselling; distress; educational level; client change

Career Construction Counselling (CCC; Savickas, 2019a) is a narrative counselling approach that assists clients in revising their life story/career micronarrative in order to facilitate career decision-making. CCC takes place in three phases. In the first, counsellors invite clients to formulate their problem and explore their adaptability resources and they then apply the Career Construction Interview (CCI; Savickas, 2019a). This semi-structured tool explores five topics about clients' life themes, that is, core life problems and the solutions sought for these issues (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979). The topics are: (1) role models to evoke self-concept dialogues; (2) favourite tv programmes, magazines and sites to reveal manifest interests; (3) a favourite story from a book or a movie to analyse how clients plan to resolve the career problem; (4) sayings or mottos to reflect on the advice that clients give themselves; and (5) early recollections to explore clients' perspective on current career issues. During the second phase, the answers to CCI are explored to foster the writing of a new career narrative and the elaboration of fresh career plans. The third phase consists of drawing up a step-by-step career plan and the evaluation of changes achieved (Cardoso et al., 2019).

To facilitate client change, the counsellor takes on the role of co-creator of meaning by trying to assume a participatory attitude in their experience, helping them to express freely the subjective career experiences, to explore the emergent representations and construct new meanings (Savickas, 2019a). This view of the CCC process makes the counselling relationship central to meaning making, since only a strong and secure counselling environment can enable the free exploration of clients' personal experiences and the adoption of new perspectives on self-experience and career challenges.

Despite its relevance to the CCC process, as far as we know, only one study (Taveira et al., 2017) to date has looked at the counsellor-client relationship during CCC. As part of a project investigating

CONTACT Paulo Cardoso  pmsc@uevora.pt  Department of Psychology, University of Évora, Apartado 94, 7002-550 Évora, Portugal

© 2021 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group