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Career Guidance Workshops in Science and Practice: Their Impact on Career Indecision, Certainty and Mental Well-being

Jemini-Gashi, Liridona
liridona.jemini@uni-pr.edu, University of Prishtina

Abstract

Context: Career guidance is an essential component in supporting adolescents to make informed and meaningful career choices, especially during a formative period that significantly shapes their future professional trajectories. Studies highlight a growing need for structured career guidance programs in contexts like Kosovo, where such interventions are largely informal and underdeveloped (Jemini-Gashi & Kadriu, 2022). Theoretical and empirical frameworks (Savickas, 2012; Whiston, Goodrich Mitts & Wright, 2017) emphasize that career counselling fosters self-awareness, decision-making skills, and coping mechanisms that benefit both career certainty and overall well-being. In low-resource settings, these interventions also have the potential to serve as psychosocial support mechanisms for adolescents facing emotional distress during career decision-making.

Approach: This study employed a pre- and post-test quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of a structured career guidance workshop on high school students in Kosovo. Thirty-three adolescents participated in a five-step intervention, which included modules focused on self-awareness, skills assessment, career exploration, goal setting, and action planning. Standardized measures were used to evaluate outcomes: the Career Decision Scale (CDS) for career certainty and indecision, and the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) for mental well-being. Data collection occurred immediately before and after the intervention to assess change over time.

Findings: The results revealed statistically significant improvements in career certainty and reductions in career indecision. Moreover, participants reported lower levels of psychological distress. The structured workshop promoted both cognitive clarity about career choices and emotional relief, indicating that career guidance interventions can produce beneficial effects on adolescents' mental health alongside improved vocational readiness. The findings align with previous research that advocates for career interventions as dual-purpose tools for personal development and career planning (Mohammed, Kumar, & Padakannaya, 2021; Jemini-Gashi et al., 2023).

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Conclusions: This study underscores the importance of integrating mental health considerations into career guidance frameworks to enhance their effectiveness. Policy makers and educational institutions in Kosovo and similar contexts are encouraged to formalize and invest in structured career counselling programs within school curricula. This approach supports both informed career choices and improved psychological resilience among youth.

Keywords
career guidance, adolescents, mental well-being, career decision-making, Kosovo

1 Introduction

In an ever-changing labour market, adolescents face increasingly complex decisions regarding their professional future. The transition from school to the world of work requires not only the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills but also the capacity to cope with uncertainty and make informed decisions that align with personal aspirations and values. In this context, career guidance is increasingly seen as an essential factor in supporting young people in developing clarity, self-confidence, and resilience during their career decision-making process.

Studies in this field consistently highlights the growing need for structured and evidence-based career guidance programs, especially in contexts where these services are still limited or informal (Jemini-Gashi & Kadriu, 2022). Career counselling interventions have proven effective in promoting self-awareness, increasing confidence in career choices, and reducing indecisiveness in adolescents (Porfeli & Lee, 2012; Eryilmaz & Kara, 2020). Recent studies have also highlighted the importance of including mental well-being components in career guidance practices, recognizing the close connection between psychological well-being and the capacity to make sustainable decisions (Savickas, 2012; Mohammed et al., 2021; Madu et al., 2022; Jemini-Gashi et al., 2023).

In the context of Kosovo, career guidance in public schools is gaining increasing attention; however, it still faces structural, institutional, and resource-related challenges (Jemini-Gashi & Kadriu, 2022). In addition, the increasing complexity of educational pathways and transitions such as upper secondary tracks, higher education options, vocational routes, and opportunities for lifelong learning and their interplay with labour market demands further accentuate the need for systematic support in navigating both educational and occupational choices. This study aimed to contribute to the existing literature by assessing the impact of structured career guidance workshops on career certainty, indecision, and psychological well-being in high school students. Using an interventional design with pre- and post-measurements, built on a five-step model that includes self-awareness, knowledge of professions, school and career paths, real-life encounters and career decision-making, this study explores not only the measurable outcomes of the intervention but also its potential to promote more comprehensive approaches that support integrated academic and emotional development in adolescents.

2 Literature Review

Contemporary studies on career interventions clearly demonstrate the importance of using theory-based approaches to help young people cope with career indecision, develop career certainty, and maintain mental well-being during academic and professional transition processes (Shoffner et al., 2015; Falco & Summers 2019; Madu et al., 2022). In this context, interventions that build self-awareness, develop career exploration skills, and promote intentional decision-

making have been shown to be highly effective in building professional identity (Koivisto et al., 2011; Mau et al., 2021; Jemini-Gashi et al., 2023).

The study by Björnsdóttir et al. (2024) found that theoretically grounded career interventions based on Career Construction, Person Environment fit, and the Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) model significantly reduced career indecision, increased self-efficacy, and clarified professional goals among Icelandic high school students. Counselling programs in the early stages of transition are effective in reducing indecisiveness and reinforcing self-efficacy in decision-making, contributing to higher psychological well-being and a clearer professional direction (Crișana and Turda, 2016). An important contribution to the literature is the life-design approach, which is particularly useful in resource-poor contexts. The study by Jude, Maree, and Jordaan (2023) shows that even in limited circumstances, narrative interventions can foster certain aspects of adaptability, such as curiosity, empowering young people to give meaning to their careers in relation to life realities.

Meanwhile, Dahlan et al. (2020) emphasized the role of self-directed information in reinforcing certainty in career planning, showing that interventions that place the young person at the center of exploration through self-reflective tools have a high potential for developing self-confidence and professional autonomy. Similarly, Cardoso et al. (2022) argued that group interventions based on life design not only strengthen professional identity and self-efficacy in decision-making but also promote deep personal reflection and a sense of future orientation, which are essential elements for confident and purposeful decision-making. A valuable contribution to the field is the study by Castro et al. (2024), which demonstrates that even short-term interventions can produce tangible improvements in career certainty and psychological adaptability if they are based on the active exploration and identification of individual strengths.

In addition to research focusing on adolescents, empirical studies have further underscored the close interrelation between career decision-making processes and psychological well-being. Mohammed et al. (2021) showed that well-being and career decision-making difficulties are closely interconnected, with students who experience greater uncertainty about their professional future reporting higher levels of psychological distress. Their simultaneous multi-equation modeling further indicated that interventions aimed at strengthening self-understanding and reducing decision-making barriers may play a crucial role in supporting mental health. Complementing these findings, Madu et al. (2022) demonstrated that clarity in career choice is positively associated with higher levels of psychological well-being among undergraduate students, suggesting that a more defined sense of vocational direction can reduce emotional strain and enhance overall adjustment. Taken together, these studies underscore the importance of structured guidance and reflective practices in fostering both clearer career orientations and improved emotional well-being, an insight that directly informs the rationale for the current study's focus on security in career choice, indecisiveness, and psychological distress.

Kunnen (2014) also highlighted the link between career indecision and mental well-being, arguing that career orientation can reduce psychological distress and help even young people with high levels of emotional stress build a sustainable professional commitment. Milot-Lapointe et al. (2019) added that elements of the intervention structure, such as written exercises, personalized feedback, and the quality of the counsellor client relationship, are essential not only for decision-making but also for mental well-being, with indecision serving as an important mediator of this process. This idea is further strengthened by a meta-analysis by Milot-

Lapointe and Arifoulline (2024), which summarizes the positive effects of individual counselling on reducing psychological distress and building professional self-confidence. The five components identified in this analysis, psychoeducation, cognitive restructuring, analytical exercises, personalized feedback, and addressing barriers, should serve as a basis for the design of future interventions.

A significant contribution to the existing literature is the study by Jemini-Gashi et al. (2023), which demonstrated the effectiveness of a five-step, SCCT-based career guidance intervention in the Kosovo context. The workshops led to significant improvements in adolescents' career self-efficacy and clarity of career goals, indicating that structured, theory-driven guidance can meaningfully support career development. Although changes in outcome expectations did not reach statistical significance, this was likely due to already high baseline levels. Overall, the study provides robust empirical support for the effectiveness of such interventions in reducing career indecision and promoting psychological well-being (Jemini-Gashi et al., 2023) and directly informs the design of the present research.

Building on these findings and the broader body of research on career guidance and adolescent well-being, the present study is grounded in an integrated theoretical framework combining Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). CIP theory (Peterson et al., 1996; Sampson et al., 2004) conceptualizes career decision-making as a structured problem-solving process that involves self-knowledge, occupational information, and decision-making skills. The five-step workshop implemented in this study focusing on self-knowledge, knowledge of occupations and educational pathways, exploration, real-life encounters with professionals, and career decision-making was therefore designed to address both the cognitive problem-solving processes highlighted by CIP and the motivational and affective mechanisms emphasized by SCCT. Within the framework of SCCT, career development is understood to emerge from the reciprocal interplay between individual characteristics and contextual support; this notion is embodied in the study's design, which combines personal reflection activities with structured professional interactions that simultaneously provide information and social reinforcement (Lent & Brown, 2020). In line with recent literature calling for integrative interventions that combine career development with psychological support (Amaral et al., 2023; Milot-Lapointe & Arifoulline, 2024), this framework underpins our focus on career indecision, decision-making certainty, and mental well-being as interconnected outcomes of the intervention.

Based on the findings of numerous studies that treat adolescence as a key period for shaping professional identity and developing decision-making skills (Björnsdóttir et al., 2024; Cardoso et al., 2022), the current study was constructed as a natural and necessary continuation of previous research in the Kosovo context, which has proven the positive effects of career guidance interventions on the psychological and professional empowerment of young people (Jemini-Gashi et al., 2021; Jemini-Gashi & Kadriu, 2022; Jemini-Gashi et al., 2023).

This study aims to provide an important contribution to the empirical understanding of the effectiveness of career guidance workshops for adolescents, focusing on three key components that the literature has identified as interrelated and mutually influential factors in the successful transition from education to career: career indecision, decision-making certainty, and mental well-being. The intervention implemented in this study consisted of a series of structured workshops designed to guide participants in the process of career planning and decision-making. These workshops aimed to provide a safe and supportive environment for young people, where

they could develop self-awareness, learn about career and school options, set goals, and engage in real-life encounters with professionals, thus reinforcing the competencies necessary to make informed decisions about the future. The program was built on a five-step model: (1) self-knowledge, (2) knowledge of professions, (3) exploration of school and career paths, (4) real-life encounters with professionals, and (5) career decision making. By simultaneously addressing the cognitive, emotional, and motivational aspects of career decision making, this study aims to contribute to improving counselling practices and building a theoretical and practical basis for developing sustainable policies for vocational guidance in secondary education in Kosovo.

In this context, the research question guiding this study is:

What are the effects of a structured career guidance workshop on career indecision, decision-making certainty, and mental well-being among participating high school students in Kosovo?

Based on this research question, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Participants will report significantly higher levels of career decision-making certainty after the career guidance workshop than before the intervention.
H2: Participants will report significantly lower levels of career indecision after the career guidance workshop than before the intervention.
H3: Participants will report significantly lower levels of psychological distress after the career guidance workshop than before the intervention.

Taking place in a context where institutional support for career guidance remains limited and often fragmented, the findings of this study may have considerable value for policymakers, guidance professionals, and schools themselves, providing robust evidence on the effectiveness of structured and theory-based interventions in improving young people's preparation to make informed and sustainable career choices. Thus, the current study represents an important scientific and practical contribution towards the comprehensive development of young people and their preparation for the challenges of a constantly transforming labour market.

3 Methods

3.1 Participants

In collaboration with school psychologists, students were invited to participate in an intervention program for career guidance and planning built on a five-step model. The sample for this study comprised 33 senior high school students from grades 10 to 12 in a public upper secondary school in Kosovo, with ages ranging from 16 to 18 years (M = 16.97, SD = 0.87). The sample included 19 girls and 14 boys. The program aimed to assess the impact of career development workshops on three key components: career indecision, decision-making certainty, and mental well-being. All 33 participants took part in each phase of the study, including the initial measurement (pre-test), participation in the workshop sessions, and the final measurement (post-test).

3.2 Measurements

The Career Decision Scale (CDS), developed by Osipow, Winer, Koschier, Yanico, and Clarke (1976), has been used to measure two essential components of career decision-making: certainty and indecision in this process.

The questionnaire contained a total of 19 questions, of which 18 were closed-ended questions rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“not at all like me” to 4 “completely like me”), reflecting how much the description of each statement fits the participant’s experience with educational and professional planning. The 19th question was open-ended, giving participants the opportunity to add free information regarding their situation and perceptions of career decision-making.

The first two questions of the scale measure the level of certainty that the participant feels in relation to his or her career decisions. Meanwhile, questions 3 to 18 assessed indecisiveness in relation to career decision-making. The instrument has been standardized and used in the Albanian-language version, and has shown high reliability values assessed through Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, where for the subdimension of certainty in decision-making, the value $\alpha = .949$ was reported, while for indecisiveness in decision-making, the value $\alpha = .946$. These indicators confirm the internal consistency of the scale in Albanian cultural and linguistic contexts (Jemini-Gashi, 2014).

The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) (Kessler et al., 2003) was used to measure psychological distress. This self-assessment instrument contains 10 statements related to different aspects of an individual's mental and emotional states over the last 30 days. Participants rated each statement on a five-point intensity scale, from "never" to "always,” where higher scores indicate higher levels of distress psychological. In the Albanian language version, the scale showed a high internal reliability of $\alpha = .923$ (Arënliu et al., 2021).

3.3 Study Design and Procedure

After obtaining approval from the Municipal Directorate of Education, school principals, and school psychologists, the selected students were informed about the purpose and manner of the study approximately two weeks before the start of the intervention. All participants provided their consent to participate in the study, while for those who were minors, consent from their parents or legal guardians was obtained. Preliminary measurements were conducted in school settings familiar to the students with the aim of creating a safe and calm environment. The workshops were organized over two days and included various activities, such as structured lectures, moderated discussions, individual exercises, and assignments in pairs or small groups. Their content was based on five intervention steps: (1) self-awareness, (2) professional knowledge, (3) exploration of educational and career paths, (4) real-life interactions with professionals, and (5) career decision-making. After completing the workshops, participants were given a one-week period to practically implement the elements of each step and to prepare a personal portfolio that reflected their career planning, decision-making, and concrete steps for the future. At the end of the week, the students presented their individual products, shared reflection sessions were held, and final measurements were administered to assess the effects of the intervention on their self-efficacy, expectations, and career-related goals.

This study used a single-group intervention design and pre- and post-intervention measurements and was considered a longitudinal study. Initially, the participants were administering

questionnaires to measure career self-efficacy, career expectations, and career goals. After analyzing the baseline data (pre-test), a career orientation workshop based on the five-step model was conducted. Ten days later, the same participants underwent a final measurement (post-test), and changes were analyzed to assess the effectiveness of the intervention (Creswell, 2014; Shadish et al., 2002; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

Intervention Model: Five-Step Career Development Workshop

The intervention consisted of a two-day structured career guidance workshop implemented in collaboration with school psychologists. Each day included approximately 8 hours of group activities combining short inputs from the facilitators, individual reflection, and small-group work. Following the workshop, participants also received follow-up support through individual online mentoring sessions and reflective discussions.

The workshop was organized into five consecutive steps:

Step 1: Self-awareness

In the first phase, students worked on recognizing their interests, values, strengths, and personal preferences. They completed short self-assessment questionnaires, engaged in guided reflection, and discussed their results in small groups. At the end of this step, each participant created a brief personal "career profile."

Step 2: Knowledge of professions

In the second step, participants explored different occupational fields using prepared materials such as professional sheets, short videos, and presentations. They discussed typical tasks, required skills, and working conditions, and compared this information with their own profiles to see which fields might fit them best.

Step 3: School and career paths

This phase focused on educational options and their links to future careers. Students received information about upper secondary tracks and higher education programs and worked with worksheets to connect preferred occupations to concrete school majors and study programs. Together with the facilitators, they sketched possible school and career paths and discussed admission requirements and potential challenges.

S*tep 4: Real-life encounters*

In Step 4, students met professionals from different fields (onsite or online). They asked questions about their education, everyday work, and career decisions. After the meetings, participants reflected in small groups on what they had learned and how this information influenced their own ideas and expectations about the future.

Step 5: Career decision-making

In the final step, participants reviewed the insights from the previous phases and started formulating their career objectives. With the support of the facilitators, they drafted a short individual career plan including preferred school choices, concrete next steps, and short- and long-term goals. This phase also included a discussion on how to handle doubts and possible changes in plans, encouraging flexibility and realistic decision-making.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected through the instruments were analysed using repeated-measures statistical tests (pre-test/post-test) to assess the changes in participants' scores before and after the intervention. Paired-group t-test analyses were applied to examine whether there were statistically significant differences in the levels of career indecision, decision-making certainty, and psychological distress after completing the workshops.

4 Results

The results of this study support the hypotheses raised regarding the impact of intervention through career guidance workshops on improving career decision-making certainty, reducing indecisiveness, and reducing psychological distress among young people in Kosovo.

The data revealed a significant increase in the level of career certainty after the intervention. Specifically, participants reported a mean of responses of M = 3.87 in the preliminary phase (pre-test), compared to M = 4.13 in the final phase (post-test). The t-test for related samples resulted in t(46) = -4.17, with a p-value < .001, indicating a statistically significant improvement in the certainty that young people feel regarding their future professional choices. These findings support Hypothesis 1, suggesting that the intervention contributed to increasing career certainty. The increased sensitivity to articulate professional goals after the workshops testifies to the effectiveness of intervention components that address self-exploration, professional information, and structured decision-making.

Regarding career indecision, the data showed an average decrease from M = 4.07 in the first phase, to M = 3.78 after the end of the intervention. Although the change in the t-value = -1.27 is not very pronounced, the p-value < .001 indicates a statistically significant effect, supporting Hypothesis 2. The interpretation of this result suggests that participation in structured workshops had a positive impact on reducing uncertainties and internal obstacles related to indecision in choosing a career.

The impact of the intervention was also reflected in the reduction of psychological distress. The average in the preliminary phase was M = 4.23, whereas in the final phase, it decreased to M = 4.03. The statistical value was t(46) = -2.23, with p < .05, indicating a statistically significant difference between the two phases. This supports Hypothesis 3, suggesting that the intervention had an impact on reducing symptoms of anxiety, stress, or general emotional distress (Tabele 1).

Table 1
Pre- And Post-Test Means and Paired-Samples T-Tests for Study Variables

Variable	Pre-test M	Post-test M	t(46)	p
Career certainty	3.87	4.13	-4.17	< .001
Career indecision	4.07	3.78	-1.27	< .001
Psychological distress	4.23	4.03	-2.23	< .05

Note. Values are based on pre- and post-intervention scores for participating high school students.

Overall, the data support the conclusion that career guidance workshops structured according to the five-step model provide an effective intervention framework to address key challenges related to the transition from school to career. The consistent pattern of results across all

three outcome variables: higher career decision-making certainty, lower indecision, and reduced psychological distress, indicates that the intervention was successful not only in clarifying career-related choices but also in improving participants' emotional adaptation to the decision-making process.

5 Discussion

The results of this study showed a significant and statistically significant improvement in the level of career security of the participants, with an increase from M=3.87 to M=4.13 after the intervention. This finding broadly supports the existing literature suggesting that structural and theory-based interventions for career guidance can significantly enhance self-efficacy and clarity in decision making (Koivisto et al., 2011; Jemini-Gashi et al., 2023).

The five-step intervention applied in this study, which emphasizes self-knowledge, exploration of professions, and structured goal-setting, appears to have played a central role in strengthening participants' career certainty. Similar patterns have been reported in the existing literature. Madu et al. (2022) found that clearer career choices are strongly associated with better psychological well-being among undergraduate students, highlighting that when young people gain clarity about their professional direction, their confidence and emotional stability tend to improve. This aligns with our findings, suggesting that reflective and structured guidance activities help students build a stronger sense of purpose and reduce the ambiguity that often accompanies career-related decisions. Likewise, Mohammed et al. (2021) demonstrated that well-being and career decision-making difficulties are closely interlinked, showing that interventions that enhance self-understanding and facilitate informed decision-making can significantly reduce the cognitive and emotional barriers students face. These insights support the present study's results, indicating that approaches combining self-reflection, professional information, and guided decision-making contribute meaningfully to the development of a more stable and confident professional identity. The improvement in career certainty observed in our intervention is further consistent with findings from Cardoso et al. (2022), who showed that life design-based models effectively strengthen young people's sense of direction and orientation.

Although the mean reduction in indecision was more modest (from M = 4.07 to M = 3.78), the statistically significant change indicates a meaningful decrease in hesitation and uncertainty about career choices. This result supports Hypothesis 2 and aligns with studies by Crișana & Turda (2016) and Kunnen (2014), both of which underscore that early exposure to structured career interventions can prevent or reduce professional confusion. It is important to note that indecision, as a construct, is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors, ranging from self-doubt, fear of failure, and limited career knowledge to social pressure and lack of guidance opportunities. Because these factors often operate at multiple levels, they tend to require more sustained or long-term interventions to generate pronounced change. The more modest reduction observed in this study reflects this complexity and aligns with Milot-Lapointe et al. (2019), who identified career indecision as a key mediator between counselling processes and overall mental well-being. This suggests that the intervention succeeded in initiating change, but longer-term or follow-up activities may further enhance outcomes.

The change in psychological distress, (from M = 4.23 to M = 4.03), remains statistically significant and highlights the broader emotional benefits of structured career guidance. This finding aligns with Amaral et al. (2023), who emphasized the interconnections between emotional well-being and career-related difficulties. In the current study, the reduction in distress

may reflect an increased sense of clarity and control over the decision-making process, which can help reduce anxiety associated with uncertainty about the future. Furthermore, the decrease in distress echoes the insights of Milot-Lapointe and Arifoulline (2024), who identified specific counselling components such as cognitive restructuring, personalized feedback, and enhanced self-understanding as contributors to improved psychological well-being. Within our intervention, elements such as personal reflection exercises, group discussions, and the development of a personalized career plan may have provided participants with emotional reassurance and a sense of direction, thereby helping mitigate anxiety and uncertainty. Collectively, these findings suggest that even short-term interventions can generate meaningful cognitive and emotional gains, particularly when they integrate elements that address both informational and psychological needs.

In the context of Kosovo, similar career guidance interventions have demonstrated effectiveness in supporting young people's career development. Findings from Jemini-Gashi et al. (2023) showed that structured, theory-based workshops grounded in the life-design framework significantly increased participants' career decision-making clarity, strengthened their sense of direction, and enhanced their emotional readiness to make informed choices. These results mirror the outcomes of the present study, suggesting that such interventions are particularly suitable for youth in transitional education-to-work contexts. The alignment between the current findings and those reported in Kosovo reinforces the relevance and applicability of structured guidance models in this setting, highlighting their potential to address both cognitive and emotional dimensions of career decision-making.

The main findings on increasing confidence, reducing indecisiveness, and reducing distress confirmed the efficacy of the five-step approach implemented in this study. By positioning the young person as an active actor in the process of decision-making and professional exploration, the intervention simultaneously addressed the cognitive, emotional, and motivational needs of participants (Savickas, 2005).

5.1 Study Limitations

Although the findings of this study are promising and provide a significant contribution to the literature on career guidance for adolescents, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results.

First, the single-group study design and lack of a control group limited the ability to draw strong causal inferences. While the results showed significant improvements in post-intervention, the influence of external factors, such as other parallel experiences during the study period or the effect of the participants' natural maturation, cannot be ruled out. Second, the sample size was relatively small (N=33) and representative of only a specific urban school context in Kosovo, which limits the generalizability of the results to broader or more heterogeneous populations. Finally, the lack of a follow-up measure hinders the assessment of the long-term sustainability of intervention effects. Without impact data from several months after the workshops, it remains unclear whether the improvements observed are sustainable or transient.

Despite these limitations, this study provides important foundations for the further development of career guidance interventions and prompts reflection on the design of more robust and comprehensive studies in this area.

5.2 Theoretical, Practical Implications, and Future Directions

The findings of this study provide initial empirical support for existing theoretical perspectives in the field of adolescent career development. The results offer a tentative indication of how interventions that integrate personal exploration, direct experiential activities, and structured decision-making processes may simultaneously influence career security, indecisiveness, and psychological well-being, thereby adding a nuanced layer to current conceptual understandings.

In practical terms, structured interventions through workshops based on the five-step model proved to be an effective and feasible tool for the school context in Kosovo. The program demonstrates that it is possible to develop orientation capacities in young people even in the absence of consolidated professional counselling systems at the institutional level (Eryilmaz & Kara, 2020; Koen et al., 2012). As such, this study can serve as a guide for education professionals, school psychologists, and policymakers in designing evidence-based interventions for secondary schools in the country.

Given that the design of this study included only a single group without a control group and double measurements over time, future research should use experimental or quasi-experimental designs, including a control group, long-term follow-up, and advanced statistical analyses to assess the sustainability of effects (Shadish et al.,2002).

It would also be valuable to expand the study to other demographic and socioeconomic contexts, exploring how factors such as gender, level of family support, and access to career information might interact with the effects of the intervention. Future research could also address the impact of specific intervention components (e.g., meetings with professionals, group work, and professional training) to identify the most effective elements and develop standard training guidelines for school psychologists and career counsellors (Jemini Gashi, 2023; Koen et al., 2012; Shoffner et al., 2015).

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides clear evidence that structured career guidance interventions, designed based on contemporary theoretical approaches and adapted to the school context, have a beneficial impact on the personal and professional development of young people. The significant improvement in career security, reduction in indecisiveness, and reduction in psychological distress after the intervention indicate the urgent need to integrate these practices into school curricula and education policies in Kosovo.

This contribution, although limited in scale, provides a functional and replicable model for future initiatives in the education system and serves as a call for further interventions that place young people at the center of the career planning process, equipping them with the knowledge, self-confidence, and well-being they need to build their future with competence and sustainability.

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Biographical notes

Dr Liridona Jemini-Gashi is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Pristina. Her research focuses on adolescents' career decision-making and the factors that influence it. Her academic interests include career guidance, mental health, and psychological well-being