

Career consultation: Protocol of a psychological intervention for 10th-grade high school students

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Abstract: Career development in adolescence requires sustained interventions that go beyond transitional or decision-making moments. Psychological consultation is a core practice in school psychology, but its application to career development remains underexplored, with few published protocols. This protocol study presents Community Clubs, a school-based career consultation intervention designed for 10th-grade students. The protocol outlines the theoretical rationale, methodological design, implementation procedures, and planned efficacy evaluation through a quasi-experimental design with intervention and comparison groups. Expected outcomes include improvements in career adaptability, socioemotional skills, school engagement, study processes, and academic achievement. By providing a detailed and transparent description, this protocol advances research on career consultation, offers a replicable framework for efficacy studies, and supports practice by equipping school psychologists with structured guidelines.

Keywords: Career development, Career consultation, High school.

Career development is a continuous and lifelong process of human development that involves planning both within and beyond the school context (e.g., Zhang et al., 2022). It also includes the management of multiple life roles (e.g., Roche et al., 2017) and the engagement in informed decision-making (e.g., Conley & Baskin-Sommers, 2023; Turda, 2024). Within Vocational Psychology, career development has been conceptualized from developmental and contextual perspectives that emphasize the interaction between individuals and their environments across the lifespan (e.g., Vondracek et al., 2014), as well as from career construction approaches that highlight adaptive resources supporting individuals in managing career-related tasks and transitions (e.g., Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The National Career Development Association (NCDA, 2009) organizes career development into three interrelated domains: (1) Personal and Social Development, (2) Educational Achievement and Lifelong Learning, and (3) Career Management. Each domain encompasses specific behavioral indicators and developmental objectives that define core career development competencies. The Personal and Social Development domain focuses on the construction of a positive self-concept, the development of interpersonal competencies, the integration of personal growth and change, and the ability to balance multiple life roles. Its behavioral indicators include self-awareness, effective communication, collaboration, responsibility, and adaptive social functioning, which in adolescence are reflected in socioemotional skills such as curiosity, tolerance toward diverse perspectives, responsibility, sociability, assertiveness, optimism, empathy, trust, and cooperation. The Educational

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Achievement and Lifelong Learning domain emphasizes the attainment of academic performance necessary to achieve personal and career goals and engagement in lifelong learning processes. Behavioral indicators in this domain involve the use of effective study strategies and academic involvement. The Career Management domain involves the development of competencies related to career planning, decision-making processes, the use of accurate career information, and adaptation to changing labor market conditions. In adolescence, these competencies are reflected in activities such as academic and career planning, the exploration of personal interests and values, informed decision-making, and the development of career adaptability resources that support successful career transitions. Career adaptability, in turn, refers to a set of psychosocial resources that enable individuals to cope with current and anticipated career-related tasks, occupational transitions, and career-related challenges, and is commonly conceptualized through the dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Within this framework, career interventions can be defined as a set of strategies aimed at supporting individuals in developing self-understanding and, consequently, implementing effective career decisions (e.g., Oliveira et al., 2023). Research on the effectiveness of career interventions has consistently demonstrated positive effects in supporting adolescents' development, particularly in enhancing career adaptability, career exploration and career decision-making processes (Wang et al., 2024). Nevertheless, during adolescence, career interventions are often concentrated on key decision-making points, which, in the Portuguese educational system, typically correspond to the 9th (e.g., Carvalho et al., 2021; Cordeiro et al., 2017) and 12th grades (e.g., Gamboa et al., 2021). In school settings, the most common modalities of intervention are career group interventions (e.g., Rabie et al., 2021), career education activities (e.g., Barbosa et al., 2023), and structured courses (e.g., Zeng & Ma, 2025) or workshops (e.g., Gashi et al., 2023), while less frequent approaches include individual career counseling (e.g., Wang & Liu, 2023) and psychological consultation (e.g., Gormeley et al., 2024). This concentration around transitional moments underscores the need for sustained and developmentally oriented interventions across intermediate stages of secondary education (Wang & Wang, 2025). Career consultation offers a promising response to this challenge by extending support beyond isolated decision-making periods and promoting the continuous development of competencies across the three NCDA domains. Furthermore, as a collaborative model, psychological consultation may help address structural challenges in schools, particularly high student-to-counselor ratios, by engaging teachers in the process and capitalizing on their direct relationships with students.

Psychological consultation

Within educational settings, psychological consultation is regarded as a central practice in school psychology, particularly due to its collaborative and systemic orientation (National Association of School Psychologists – NASP, 2020; Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses – OPP, 2024). It is defined as an indirect form of service delivery and is typically characterized by a triadic relationship involving the consultant (e.g., school psychologist), the consultee (e.g., teachers or parents), and the student as the ultimate beneficiary (OPP, 2024). Although consultation models differ in theoretical orientation and scope, they share a collaborative and shared-responsibility framework aimed at promoting sustainable improvements in teaching practices and student outcomes (Erchul & Sheridan, 2014). In addition to addressing immediate concerns, consultation serves a preventive and capacity-building function by equipping consultees with strategies that can be generalized to future challenges. One widely recognized framework is Mental Health Consultation (Caplan, 1970; Dougherty, 2013), which can be implemented in client-centered, consultee-centered, program-centered consultation. Despite the conceptual richness and historical tradition of consultation models, there is still a scarcity of published intervention protocols and

rigorous efficacy studies in school-based psychological consultation. This gap is particularly evident within Vocational Psychology, where consultation-based career interventions in school contexts are still underrepresented.

Present protocol study

This protocol study aims to contribute to the field of educational psychology by presenting the design and planned efficacy evaluation of a career consultation intervention targeting 10th-grade adolescents. Although evidence-based approaches are increasingly emphasized systematic descriptions of career consultation procedures and implementation processes remain limited. By presenting both the design and the planned procedures for efficacy evaluation, this protocol study addresses this gap and provides a transparent and replicable framework for school-based career consultation. The study advances knowledge on preventive career interventions delivered outside critical decision-making periods, supporting career development as a continuous process within the school context. In addition, it offers methodological transparency and practical guidance for school psychologists implementing psychological consultation models, thereby strengthening the integration of evidence-based career development practices in schools.

Grounded in the NCDA (2009) guidelines, the intervention has two main goals: (1) to promote students' socioemotional skills and career adaptability resources; and (2) to contribute to students' academic performance (e.g., school engagement, study processes and academic achievement). The program follows a psychological consultation model, adopts the School Clubs methodology, and is theoretically grounded in contextualist, developmental, and systemic perspectives of career development (e.g., Vondracek et al., 2014). In line with the objectives of the intervention, the following hypotheses were formulated: (1) students in the intervention group will demonstrate a statistically significant increase in socioemotional skills and career adaptability resources from pre-test to post-test; (2) at post-test, the intervention group will report significantly higher levels of socioemotional skills and career adaptability than the comparison group; (3) students in the intervention group will show statistically significant improvements from pre-test to post-test in school engagement and study processes; (4) the effects of the intervention will be significantly associated with students' academic achievement (grades).

Method

Protocol study design

This protocol study describes the design of the “Community Clubs” intervention, a career consultation intervention implemented in school settings. The program invites students to explore and participate in their school and broader community life, including teachers, peers, and local stakeholders, by promoting active participation in meaningful, contextually relevant projects. This study follows a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test assessments, comprising an intervention group and a comparison group, to evaluate the efficacy of the intervention. Prior to the implementation of the intervention, a preliminary needs assessment is conducted with a previous cohort of 10th-grade students from the same school in the academic year preceding the intervention. The aim of this assessment is to examine students' levels of socioemotional and career adaptability competencies in order to identify developmental areas requiring support at a group level. Within the framework of this protocol, these competencies are conceptualized as indicators of intervention needs, informing the design and focus of the program. Additionally,

students' digital literacy is assessed to account for potential differences related to the administration format of the instruments.

Recruitment

Recruitment is coordinated by the research team and begins with establishing contact with the administrations of secondary schools located in municipalities that have an existing collaboration with the research team (e.g., university laboratory or research group). An initial presentation meeting is conducted to describe the objectives and procedures of the intervention program and to specify the roles of the school psychologist, teachers, and students involved. Following confirmation of interest, the school's representative signs a formal commitment agreement. The school psychologist is informed about this process in advance and attends the initial meeting, given their central role in the intervention. Participation of the school psychologist is also voluntary and based on an informed decision. Subsequently, the psychologist recruits teachers who are willing to collaborate.

The school psychologist coordinates the internal dissemination of the intervention during the first academic term. Dissemination involves the use of informational materials, such as posters displayed in common areas, a brief promotional video, and other digital resources shared through the school's social media platforms or sent to parents or legal guardians of 10th-grade students. The posters and the promotional video briefly presents what the Community Clubs are, their target audience, and the period of implementation (starting in the first academic term). Brief information sessions are delivered in 10th-grade classrooms to provide students with opportunities to ask questions and to gain a clear understanding of the purpose, structure, and type of activities of the intervention. It is expected that school psychologists employ more than one strategy, combining the distribution of materials with direct contact with students to maximize engagement. The intervention is implemented in small groups of four to nine students. Within each school, an estimated four to seven Community Clubs are implemented per class, with the total number of 10th-grade classes varying across institutions. The intervention is conducted by one or more psychologists, depending on staffing availability in each school. Students who express interest are invited to register on a voluntary basis, with participation contingent upon informed consent. If more than one Community Club is formed, students are randomly assigned to the clubs by the research team.

Participants and eligibility criteria

The intervention is designed for 10th-grade high school students, enrolled in either science and humanities courses or vocational programs. In the Portuguese education system, the 10th grade corresponds to the first year after students are formally tracked at the end of 9th grade. While the 9th grade centers on an initial educational choice and the 12th grade is marked by imminent transition decisions, the 10th grade represents a post-decision consolidation phase. At this stage, students are required to adapt to new academic demands, teaching structures, and peer contexts associated with their chosen pathway. This adjustment process may involve doubts about the suitability of their choice, fluctuations in motivation, and challenges in aligning academic performance with future expectations. As students are no longer making an initial choice but are not yet facing final transition pressures, this period offers a timely opportunity for structured career competence development.

Participation is open to secondary schools with school psychologists who voluntarily express interest and willingness to implement the intervention. The program follows a universal school-based approach, therefore, no specific exclusion criteria are defined beyond grade level and

voluntary participation. Eligible participants are 10th-grade students who voluntarily enroll in the intervention and provide informed consent from their parents or legal guardians. The comparison group consists of 10th-grade students from the same schools who do not enroll in the intervention but agree to participate in the evaluation procedures. These students participate voluntarily, with informed consent from their legal guardians, and continue to have access to regular school support services. An a priori power analysis indicated that a minimum of 128 participants (64 per group) is required to detect a medium-sized effect with adequate statistical power. Recruitment aims to exceed this number to account for potential attrition. Eligible teachers are members of the participating schools who preferably teach 10th-grade classes and voluntarily express interest in taking part in the program. The preliminary needs assessment involves a cohort of 10th-grade students from the same school in the academic year preceding the intervention. Eligibility criteria mirror those of the main study, including grade level and informed consent procedures. The expected sample size corresponds to the number of students enrolled in the participating cohort during that academic year.

Intervention

The Community Clubs intervention was developed in exchange with the Health Professions Affinity Community (HPAC; Weisblat & Porfeli, 2013), sharing some of its ideas during preliminary studies and first implementations between 2014 and 2016 (Taveira et al., 2016). The HPAC is an action-research program that engages high school students with interests in healthcare professions, particularly from disadvantaged urban and rural areas, in identifying community health concerns and co-developing improvement projects with local partners. In Portugal, the Community Clubs are extended to all fields and courses of secondary education and introduced within a practical research community (Goldstein et al., 2019; Tiippana et al., 2024). This practical research community consists of a research–practice partnership that fosters collaborative relations between research (e.g., labs focused on learning, instruction, and career development) and school psychologists (e.g., municipal and intermunicipal networks of school psychologists). The Community Clubs share this experiential and community-oriented rationale, designed to promote adolescents’ career exploration through the development of career adaptability resources and interaction with the community, in areas related to their personal interests (Taveira et al., 2016). Evidence from initial implementations indicated positive effects on career adaptability attitudes such as curiosity, concern, and confidence, as well as on students’ cognitive school engagement (Fernandes, 2017; Taveira et al., 2016).

The intervention is theoretically grounded in contextualist, developmental, and systemic perspectives of career development (Vondracek et al., 2014). Within this framework, career development is understood as a constructive, multidimensional process that unfolds through continuous interactions between the individual and their contexts. Core mechanisms, such as self-direction, self-organization, enactment, and self-regulation, support adolescents in actively exploring and shaping their career pathways within authentic, community-based experiences (Araújo & Taveira, 2009; Vondracek et al., 2014).

The Community Clubs are implemented in the extracurricular setting of school clubs, which are optional educational spaces where students share one or more common interests and goals, creating opportunities to develop specific attitudes and skills, with an emphasis on self-organization and autonomy (Norman, 2023). The range of offerings is diverse and includes language and culture clubs, reading clubs, science and technology clubs, arts and cinema clubs, and international projects such as the Erasmus+ program. These school activities are regulated by the Portuguese Basic Law of the Educational System (Lei n.º 46/86, Art. 26) and by the internal regulations approved by each school. For the implementation of the Community Clubs, it’s

necessary to propose to each educational institution interested in the program the creation and approval of this specific type of school club. These Clubs meet weekly with the participating teacher, with occasional visits from the school psychologist. As students' progress in the development of their projects, meetings shift to a biweekly schedule when appropriate. Each session lasts between one to two school terms (from 45 minutes to 90 minutes), and the total number of sessions ranges from approximately 10 to 15, depending on the needs of each group and the specific project developed by each Community Club. The intervention process is structured into four sequential steps: (1) Identify and learn about a problem in the community, (2) Identify and cultivate resources and plan an action with partnerships, (3) Implement and evaluate the action or program, (4) Share the action or program. Table 1 characterizes the goals, challenges, and activities of each of these steps.

Table 1

Intervention process: Think, build, promote, evaluate, and share

Steps	Goals and challenges	Activities	Competences
Step 1. Identify and learn about a problem in your community	Identify concerns in the surrounding community (What problems exist in my community?) Reflect on identified concerns and connect them with students' interests (Which of these problems interests me or catches my attention the most?) Develop group identity through the joint selection of one concern to address and the creation of the Club's name; explore what already exists and which solutions have been implemented to address the selected concern; enhance research skills and critical reflection on social issues and personal skills (What can we do to support the community? Why should we do this?)	Brainstorming session to identify concerns in the surrounding community. Reflection on how community concerns relate to students' interests and experiences. Joint decision on a priority concern and naming the Club. Research the concern in local and broader contexts, using diverse resources (e.g., internet, books, media, experts, and community professionals), complemented by individual and collective exploration in outside meetings, including visits to institutions and potential interviews with professionals. Share findings and reflect on individual and group competencies during meetings.	Cooperation Curiosity Empathy Responsibility Concern Curiosity
Step 2. Identify and cultivate resources and plan an action with partnerships	Establish a simple and realistic action plan connected to the selected concern (What community strengths could be mobilized to help? What partnerships could be brought into the program?) Reflect on the vision, mission, and expected impact on the surrounding community and target population (What can we make use of from what we already have? What can we affect and at what extent with our action plan?) Facilitate self- and environment-exploration through task distribution, collaboration, and role definition, encouraging reflection on individual interests, skills, values, and how these complement each other to support effective teamwork and project implementation (What individual skills do we already have that we can use and develop?)	Design a written, structured action plan including goals, timeline, task distribution, resources, budget, and partnerships. Conduct surveys, interviews, or interactions with the target population and professionals to inform the plan. Establish formal or informal partnerships (e.g., school, municipality, health center, universities, local stakeholders) via face-to-face or remote communication methods. Engage in a guided group discussion to define the vision, mission, and objectives of the club based on the plan. Conduct regular group reflection on progress and processes, adjusting strategies collectively when needed. Briefly present the club and related progress in a monitoring visit conducted by the research team. Complete a progress form of the Club.	Responsibility Cooperation Trust Assertiveness Control Concern Curiosity

cont.

Table 1 (cont.)

Steps	Goals and challenges	Activities	Competences
Step 3. Implement and evaluate your action or program	Initiate the execution of the plan (Take and overcome the first steps of the strategy) Reflect on the alignment between the planned and the actual process; anticipate potential barriers and develop alternative strategies to ensure feasibility (Document, share, and adapt as you go, becoming more flexible while carrying out what needs to be done; stay calm and keep moving forward with your work) Evaluate the impact of the implemented action on participants and the target population (Reflect on each step: How can the impact be measured? What could be improved? Can this plan be escalated? To what extent and how?)	Carry out the planned collaborative action in the community, with the help of teachers, the psychologist, and stakeholders. Make a list of barriers and a checklist of alternative strategies when necessary. Collect evidence of the program's process and key moments (e.g., photos, videos, testimonials). Reflect on and discuss as a group: (1) the plan versus practice, (2) difficulties encountered, (3) what could be done differently, and (4) knowledge and skills developed. Administer short questionnaires or similar tools when relevant to assess the perception and impact on the target population. Evaluate the feasibility of replicating similar activities or pursuing professional roles related to the action or identified concern.	Responsibility Confidence Cooperation Optimism Confidence Control
Step 4. Share your action or program	Promote face-to-face and remote communication and social skills (Share your action or program; present your program's successes and challenges to the community; reflect on individual and group skills, challenges faced, and lessons learned, and share them during the session).	Prepare a poster with evidence of the Club's activities (e.g., photos, testimonials, videos) to be presented at a formal session with all school/municipal/intermunicipal Community Clubs, at a university or local municipality venue. Participate in the formal sharing event, presenting the Club, its members, identity, process, challenges, and reflections. Record a short video introducing the Club and summarizing its work to share on the official intervention's social media page. Disseminate the Club's work in the school community (e.g., exhibitions, school website, newsletters).	Assertiveness Confidence Sociability Trust Confidence Concern

The intervention follows a psychological consultation models in educational settings, incorporating two types of administrative consultation (Caplan, 1970; Dougherty, 2013). At the first level, the research team assumes a program-centered administrative consultation role by supporting school psychologists in implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the intervention. At the second level, the school psychologist adopts a consultee-centered administrative consultation role, supporting teachers in enhancing their performance and reflective practice in the development of the Community Clubs. Prior to implementation, preparatory meetings are conducted to ensure a shared understanding of the intervention's objectives, procedures, and theoretical foundations. Structured materials and guidance are provided, and continuous communication between the research team and school psychologists is maintained throughout the intervention to support coordination, reflection, and consistency across implementations. A structured monitoring visit is also conducted during the second stage of the intervention. The purpose of this visit is to strengthen the connection between researchers and participants and to provide a structured moment of reflection on the project and the work developed up to that point. As such, during the visit, students are invited to present their group, reflect on their completed tasks and the working process adopted in the first two stages, and complete a brief project form. This form also includes open-ended questions regarding students' participation in other extracurricular activities and any psychological support received within or outside the school context, in order to contextualize their involvement

and developmental experiences. Sustainability of the intervention is supported by its integration within the existing school club structure and by the involvement of school psychologists and teachers as primary facilitators. By embedding the program within routine school practices and fostering research-practice partnerships, the intervention is designed to be maintained beyond the duration of the research phase.

The psychologist's role follows a consultant model, meaning that rather than leading or directing, their function is to accompany, support, guide, and reflect alongside those involved in the intervention. This includes maintaining regular contact mainly with the teacher and, when possible, visiting the Clubs to support their development. The psychologist is also responsible for organizing documentation, ensuring consistency across implementations, and upholding both ethical and procedural standards, particularly in relation to evaluation. A central aspect of this role is to make explicit the psychological and developmental value of the Clubs, for instance, how they promote the development of career adaptability, attitudes, and interpersonal skills. Crucially, the psychologist maintains direct contact with the research team and serves as the bridge, a kind of translator-interpreter, between students and researchers, ensuring that insights from practice are fed into the research process and that literature and knowledge from the research team inform the ongoing development of the Clubs.

The teachers are the everyday facilitators of the Club. Their main responsibility is to guide the group process not by providing direct answers, but by posing meaningful questions, encouraging reflection, and supporting students in planning and implementing their projects. Teachers also act as a bridge, facilitating the communication between the Club, the school, and the wider community, assisting students in accessing resources and establishing connections with potential partners. In addition, they promote critical reflection on socioemotional skills and encourage students to explore their interests and career goals. A key part of their role is to foster a strong group identity, nurturing teamwork, autonomy, and a sense of ownership among participants.

The research team is responsible for developing materials and procedures, ensuring implementation fidelity, as well as conducting the intervention evaluation. The researchers maintain continuous contact with school psychologists in order to monitor the process and provide timely support. They also coordinate the evaluation of the intervention, collecting and analyzing data to assess outcomes. In addition, the research team facilitates the exchange of knowledge within the practical research community, promoting mutual learning between researchers and practitioners. The research team also conducts a visit to each Club.

Measure

A pre-test is administered prior to the first Club meeting, and a post-test is conducted following the final presentation session of the Community Clubs. Both pre- and post-tests are administered to the intervention group and to the comparison group. Questionnaires are available in both online and paper-and-pencil formats. Regardless of the format, all assessments are administered in the classroom setting under the supervision of the research team and school psychologist. The preliminary needs assessment is conducted at a single time point prior to the implementation of the intervention. Data are collected in the same classroom context and using the same administration procedures (online or paper-and-pencil format) as those planned for the quasi-experimental study, ensuring consistency in data collection conditions. The instruments used include measures of career adaptability, socioemotional skills, and digital literacy. This procedure ensures consistency in data collection and provides a supportive environment for student participation. Table 2 presents an example of what may be the global intervention process schedule.

Table 2

Intervention schedule

Activities*	First term	Second term	Third term	Responsible role
Meetings with school administrations, school psychologists and teachers	X			Research Team
Internal dissemination of the intervention	X			School Psychologist
Enrolment of participants	X			School Psychologist
Distribution of Clubs participants	X			Research Team
Pre-test assessment		X		Research Team and School Psychologist
Intervention – Step 1		X		Teacher
Intervention – Step 2		X		Teacher
Monitoring visit from the research team		X		Research Team
Intervention – Step 3			X	Teacher
Intervention – Step 4			X	Teacher
Post-test assessment			X	Research Team and School Psychologist

Note. *The activities are listed in chronological order.

The selected instruments were chosen due to their conceptual alignment with the intervention’s developmental objectives and their established psychometric adequacy for use with adolescent populations.

Sociodemographic. Participants’ sociodemographic information is collected, including gender, age, and nationality, school name, type of secondary education program (e.g., science and humanities, vocational), grade retention, grade point average, parents’ age, nationality, educational level, and employment status, as well as living situation. Academic achievement is operationalized as students’ self-reported overall grade point average, using multiple-choice grade intervals, at the time of the pre and post-test evaluations.

Career Adaptability. The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale – Portugal Form (CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Duarte et al., 2012) assess participants’ career adaptability. It includes 28 items, answered in a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not strong) to 5 (strongest), distributed across four subscales: concern (e.g., “Realizing that today’s choices shape my future”), control (e.g., “Taking responsibility for my actions”), curiosity (e.g., “Exploring my surroundings”), and confidence (e.g., “Solving problems”). In the study of the Portuguese adaptation, Cronbach’s alpha values ranged from .69 to .79.

Social and Emotional Skills. The Survey on Social and Emotional Skills – Child/Youth form (SSES; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD, 2021; Castro et al., 2023) assess nine social and emotional skills. The survey comprises a total of 72 items, with eight items for each skill, answered in a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The following skills are evaluated: tolerance (e.g., “I learn a lot from people with differing beliefs”), trust (e.g., “I believe that most people are honest”), empathy (e.g., “It is important that my friends are ok”), responsibility (e.g., “I keep promises”), optimism (“I believe good things will happen to me”), curiosity (“I love learning new things in school”), assertiveness (e.g., “I like being a leader in my class”), cooperation (e.g., “I get along well with others”), and sociability (e.g., “I like talking to a lot of different people”). In the Portuguese adaptation and validation study, Cronbach’s alpha values ranged from .70 to .88.

School Engagement. The Student Engagement in School: A Four-Dimensional Scale (SES-4DS, Veiga, 2013, 2016) assess participants’ school engagement. The SES-4DS is a 20 items

scale, answered in a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (totally agree), comprising four dimensions of engagement: cognitive (e.g., “When writing my work, I begin by making a plan for drafting the text”), affective (e.g., “My school is a place where I feel integrated”), behavioral (e.g., “I am absent from school without a valid reason”), and agency (e.g., “During classes I put questions to the teachers”). In the SES-4DS study, Cronbach’s alpha values ranged from .70 to .85.

Study Processes. The Inventory of Study Processes (Rosário et al., 2003), validated for high school students (ISP-HS; Paiva, 2007), assess surface approach (e.g., “In most subjects, I study just enough to pass”) and deep approach (e.g., “I study daily throughout the academic year and review my notes regularly”) to learning. This is a 12-item inventory answered in a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). In the validation study of the ISP-HS, Cronbach’s alpha values ranged from .62 to .72 for the deep approach and from .47 to .72 for the surface approach dimension.

Digital Literacy. To account for potential variability associated with students’ ability to navigate and interpret questionnaires administered through an online platform, two subscales from the Digital Literacy Scale (Rodríguez-de-Dios et al., 2016, 2018) are included: critical skill (e.g., “I know how to compare different sources to decide if information is true”) and informational skill (e.g., “I find hard to decide what the best keywords are for online searching”). These subscales comprise 10 items, answered on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In the original study, Cronbach’s alpha values for these dimensions ranged from .63 to .75.

Data analysis

Statistical analyses will be conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 29.0. Descriptive statistics will be computed to report sociodemographic data (e.g., age, type of secondary education program) of both the intervention and comparison groups at baseline (pre-test). For the preliminary needs assessment, descriptive analyses will be performed to examine levels of socioemotional competencies and career adaptability resources in the cohort assessed prior to the intervention. To examine within-group differences between pre-test and post-test for the intervention group (Hypotheses 1 and 3), paired-sample *t* tests will be conducted and effect sizes (Cohen’s *d*) will be calculated. Baseline equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups will be examined using independent-samples *t* tests, with effect sizes (Cohen’s *d*) reported. Between-group differences at posttest (Hypothesis 2) will be examined using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), with group (intervention vs. comparison) as the independent variable and pre-test scores included as covariates, to control for potential initial differences. Effect sizes (partial η^2 and Cohen’s *d*) will also be reported. Associations between change scores (post–pre) in socioemotional skills and career adaptability resources and change scores in school engagement, study processes, and academic performance will be examined using multiple regression analyses (Hypothesis 4). Effect sizes (R^2) will also be reported to assess the magnitude of the associations. Although students participate in small Community Clubs, the feasibility of multilevel modeling will depend on the final number of clusters and participants. Given the expected small group sizes, primary analyses will be conducted at the individual level. Potential clustering effects will be examined and considered where appropriate.

Conclusion

This protocol outlines the rationale, design, and evaluation plan of the Community Clubs intervention, a school-based career consultation program targeting 10th-grade students.

Grounded in contemporary developmental and contextual perspectives of career development (Vondracek et al., 2014), and aligned with the three domains of career development (NCDA, 2009), the intervention aims to strengthen career adaptability resources and socioemotional skills, with positive effects on school engagement, study processes and academic achievement, while also fostering students' active participation in meaningful projects within their communities. The quasi-experimental design, including baseline equivalence assessment and statistical control of initial differences, provides a structured and ecologically valid framework for examining consultation-based career interventions, which remain underrepresented in the literature. Nevertheless, the absence of an active comparison condition and the possibility of normative developmental changes over the academic year should be considered when interpreting group differences. Given its implementation in real school settings, the intervention relies on the voluntary participation of psychologists, teachers, and students, which may introduce variability in adherence and group composition, including the comparison group. In addition, the reliance on self-report measures and the absence of long-term follow-up limit conclusions regarding the stability and generalizability of the findings. These contextual conditions constitute potential limitations that should be considered when interpreting and generalizing the findings. Overall, this study contributes to advancing both research and practice in vocational and educational psychology, offering a replicable framework for promoting adolescents' career development and informing the training of school psychologists in evidence-based consultation practices.

Declaration of conflicting of interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data availability statement

Due to ethical and data protection considerations related to the participation of minors, individual-level data will not be publicly available. Anonymized and aggregated data may be made available upon reasonable request to the corresponding author, in accordance with applicable ethical and data protection regulations.

Ethical approval

The intervention protocol is submitted to the Ethics Committee of the university to which the research team belongs.

Informed consent

Participants are informed of their rights, including the voluntary nature of participation, right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their data. As the participants are minors,

informed consent is obtained from their legal guardians. The assessment protocol includes a cover page with the informed consent form for adolescents.

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Authors contribution

Conceptualization: IC, MCT; Methodology: IC, MCT; Writing – Original draft: IC; Writing – Review and edit: MCT.

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Consultoria em desenvolvimento de carreira: Protocolo de uma intervenção psicológica para alunos do 10.º ano do ensino secundário

Resumo: O desenvolvimento de carreira na adolescência requer intervenções contínuas, que não se restrinjam aos momentos de transição ou de tomada de decisão. A consultoria psicológica é uma prática central na psicologia escolar, mas a sua aplicação ao desenvolvimento de carreira permanece pouco explorada, existindo poucos protocolos publicados. Este protocolo apresenta os Clubes Comunitários, uma intervenção de consultoria de carreira em contexto escolar, dirigida a estudantes do 10.º ano. O protocolo descreve o enquadramento teórico, o design metodológico, os procedimentos de implementação e a avaliação de eficácia prevista, através de um design quase-experimental com grupos de intervenção e de comparação. Esperam-se melhorias na adaptabilidade de carreira, nas competências socioemocionais, no envolvimento na escola, nos processos de estudo e no desempenho académico. Ao fornecer uma descrição detalhada e transparente, este protocolo contribui para o avanço da investigação em consultoria de carreira, disponibiliza um enquadramento replicável para estudos de eficácia e apoia a prática profissional ao oferecer orientações estruturadas a psicólogos escolares.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento de carreira, Consultoria psicológica, Ensino secundário.

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