

ARTICLE

Career practitioners' response to career development concerns in the time of COVID-19

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a world-wide impact on all areas of individuals' health, including physical, psychological, financial, familial, social, and vocational. In the United States, the unemployment rate rose from 3.5% (5.8 million) to 13.3% (21 million) in May 2020 before dropping to 7.9% in October 2020. Cognitive information processing (CIP) is one career theory that addresses career needs of clients and society. In this article, we examine the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and wellness, highlight differences for marginalized groups, and demonstrate how CIP theoretical elements may have been impacted by COVID-19, and provide strategies enhancing client growth in these domains during a time when largescale social and physical distancing is recommended. The CIP-based differentiated service delivery model is also described as a means for extending and providing access to career services.

KEYWORDS

cognitive information processing theory, COVID-19, access, strategies, career practitioner

Career counseling clients' life experiences, needs, and considerations have increased in complexity as a result of COVID-19. While the primary impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a physical health crisis for individuals and health care systems, secondary impacts are clearly evident in mental health (World Health Organization, 2020) and the economy (Carter et al., 2020). "Primary impacts of an outbreak are defined as the direct and immediate consequences of the epidemic on human health. Secondary impacts are defined as those caused by the epidemic indirectly, either through the effect of fear on the population or as a consequence of the measures taken to contain and control it" (UNICEF, 2020, p. 1). Demand for health services will increase as a result of poor mental health and negative lifestyle changes (Carter et al., 2020). Maani and Galea (2020) reported that high rates of unemployment caused by COVID-19 will be associated with increased mental health problems, resulting

in increased demand for both counseling and employment services. An international survey of policy makers and practitioners examined the recent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and found an increased demand for career resources and services, especially among vulnerable populations (Cede-fop et al., 2020). The impacts on work, health and mental health, and on marginalized groups in particular, have been substantial.

COVID-19: Impacts on work

The employment impact of COVID-19 has been significant. Approximately 14 million working adults in the United States have lost their employment due to the COVID-19 crisis (Pew Research Center, 2020a). In other terms, the unemployment rate went from a record low of 3.8% in February 2020 to 13% in May 2020 (Pew Research Center, 2020b) and more recently dropped to 7.9% in October 2020 (<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>). This rise in unemployment is significantly greater than the unemployment rates of the Great Recession, which lasted from December 2007 to June 2009 (Pew Research Center, 2020a). By the middle of May 2020, unemployment rates reached 36 million people in the United States, and this number had been steadily rising, according to (Cohen & Hsu, 2020, p. 1). In fact,

In an analysis of the latest unemployment-claims report, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce found that in 11 states, more than a quarter of those in the work force in February were now unemployed. And a survey by the Federal Reserve found that in households making less than \$40,000 a year, nearly 40 percent of those who were working in February lost their jobs in March or the beginning of April. For millions of Americans, government benefits have provided a crucial lifeline. Unemployment programs alone delivered \$48 billion in payments in April, according to the Treasury Department.

Individuals working in the service industry must make difficult decisions considering going to work, risking illness, and needing to pay bills (Cohen & Hsu, 2020). This decision may be especially difficult for those who may be at high risk themselves or have high risk individuals living in the home. Furthermore, these challenges are exacerbated in certain groups.

With intimidating unemployment rates, many are faced with uncertainty about their career future. While jobs may allow remote work, uncertainties about the long-term availability of this option may have mental health effects that impact work performance and productivity. Older adults face a double burden of losing their jobs and being at an increased risk of death if they contract the virus (Gould, 2021). Those too young to be in the workforce may be affected by their caregiver's state of employment (i.e., vicarious unemployment; Nitzarim & Thompson, 2019) and experience ambiguity about their future careers, what the world of work may look like, and how they can best prepare for it.

Conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic contribute to increased career ambiguity and decreased career decision ambiguity tolerance, that is, how an individual assesses and reacts to ambiguous situations (Xu & Tracey, 2015a). Studies (Xu & Tracey, 2014, 2015b) have shown that ambiguity intolerance impacts career indecision and career decision-making self-efficacy. Further, individuals with higher levels tolerance for ambiguity experience less distress in the uncertainty that usually accompanies the career development process (Krumboltz et al., 2013). Overall, these numerous mental health, social, career challenges as a result of COVID-19 and the interactions among them precipitate an additional need for career counselors who are aware of the nuanced ways in which the pandemic has affected and may continue to affect diverse groups.

COVID-19: Impacts on mental health and wellness as related to career counseling

Career practitioners (CPs) must consider and address the impact of COVID-19 in discussion with their clients. A recent American Psychological Association (APA) Stress in America Survey found that 68% of adults surveyed reported that the pandemic has negatively impacted their employment due to hours being cut (19%), struggles navigating responsibilities in the home (14%), losing their job (14%), and declines in productivity (14%; APA, 2020). The survey also found that 70% of adults had concerns about the economy, a 30% increase over the previous survey year reflecting concerns similar to the 2008 recession. Recent statistics have highlighted increases in mental health concerns such as substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation since COVID-19 due to self or government mandates to stay at home (Xiong et al., 2020). For many, this abrupt change in regular interactions and connectedness has resulted in long periods of aloneness and disconnectedness that can exacerbate these mental health concerns.

In many natural disasters, social supports and outreach from neighbors have been shown to play an important role in combatting depression, isolation, and anxiety-related mental illness (Saltzman et al., 2020). For example, Saltzman et al. (2020) pointed out that social support during and after other disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and a 1972 Idaho mining disaster resulting in the loss of 44 miners helped to reduce the intense loneliness and effects of trauma from the experiences. Differing from other national and international disasters, COVID-19 added separation from others as a vital piece of protecting oneself and significant others who may be at high risk (Saltzman et al., 2020). While a rise in substance abuse by 25%, depression (10%), and anxiety (5%) was seen following Hurricane Katrina, the 9/11 attack, and other national disasters (Galea et al., 2020), unity or togetherness has played a significant role in recovery that divorce rates in New York statistically decreased for 4 years post the 9/11 attack (Saltzman et al., 2020).

Other considerations that impact mental illness or distress rising during the COVID-19 crisis must be taken into account. Saltzman et al. (2020) suggest that the accessibility of technology may be an outlet for isolation, but for others technology could exacerbate feelings of isolation and the direness of the crisis through media coverage, causing heightened feelings of anxiety and depression. Fitzpatrick et al. (2020, p. 817) stated:

“COVID-19 fear, and the poor mental health that accompanies it, also means some communities will face a steeper uphill battle to recover from this public health crisis. Additional preliminary data analysis ... reveal individuals experiencing greater levels of depression amid the pandemic are also less likely to support quarantine measures (voluntary or mandatory).”

CPs must be aware of and able to address complexities of intersecting realities individuals may be facing and how that impacts their mental health. For example, lower socioeconomic status individuals are already at a disadvantage with receiving mental health services and this could further decrease access to services, due to denial of coverage for counseling via an online platform (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). Additionally, due to COVID-19, many have lost employment and are at risk of losing coverage needed for ongoing mental health services (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). Financial crises with real or perceived job loss and/or financial insecurity may heighten already existing anxiety for many (Kazlauskas & Quero, 2020). Uncertainty and instability of employment resulting from the pandemic contribute to worry about the economy and security of employment. Such stressors can exacerbate mental health symptoms further emphasizing the need to address these concerns even as individuals present with more pressing symptom related concerns of anxiety and depression. Clients seeking career services present more than just their career problem, bringing mental health, family, social, and life concerns into sessions as well. This complexity resulting from the interaction of financial stressors, anxiety,

and depression requires CPs to adjust to meet individuals' vocational, psychological, emotional, and behavioral needs. These complex, intersecting concerns are likely to continue even after the pandemic subsides. Thus, CPs need to develop a framework and interventions for addressing and supporting career counseling clients and their multifaceted needs.

COVID-19 impacts on marginalized groups

The COVID-19 pandemic has had disproportionate health impacts on communities of color ([Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\), 2020](#)). In the Black community, there are higher prevalence rates of the virus and death rates related to the virus ([SAMHSA, 2020](#)). Black and Brown people's susceptibility to the virus is probably associated with ongoing racial disparities in health status, access to health care, wealth, employment, wages, housing, income, and poverty in the United States ([Economic Policy Institute, 2020](#)). Moreover, Black and Brown people are more likely to have comorbid medical conditions (which are a risk factor for COVID-related death), more likely to live in multigenerational homes, and more likely to work in service jobs where they have higher rates of contracting the virus ([SAMHSA, 2020](#)). These statistics highlight the need for career focused researchers and practitioners to take a social justice-oriented approach when examining the environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With respect to employment, some groups have been more affected than others. In May 2020, the unemployment rate for women exceeded men's (14.3% vs. 11.9%; [Pew Research Center, 2020b](#)). In the same month, immigrants saw higher unemployment than U.S. born workers (15.7% vs. 12.4%) while young adults (ages 16–24) have also been disproportionately affected by unemployment compared to other age groups ([Pew Research Center, 2020b](#)). Between February and April 2020, mothers saw an average decrease in employment of 3.85 percentage points, as compared to fathers, at 2.35 percentage points ([Handwerker et al., 2020](#)). Women's unemployment rate is nearly double in December 2020 (6.7%) what its rate of 3.5% in January 2020 ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021](#)). In terms of race, while unemployment increased for both White and Black individuals, unemployment rates are higher for Black adults ([Economic Policy Institute, 2020](#)). Finally, unemployment rates are lower among workers with higher levels of education ([Pew Research Center, 2020b](#)), demonstrating social class differences in the impact of the pandemic. In May 2020, the unemployment rate was lowest among workers with a bachelor's degree or higher education (7.2%), while 18.5% of workers without a high school diploma were unemployed ([Pew Research Center, 2020b](#)). The Bureau of Labor Statistics ([Handwerker et al., 2020](#)) reported that workers who identified as Black, Asian, older, or as an unmarried mother were more likely to lose their jobs in April and not return to work in May. The barriers faced by these groups at the onset of the pandemic are persisting and if left unchecked, may extend postpandemic. Overall, these disparities highlight the need for a focus on the unique needs of certain groups who are disproportionately affected in health and unemployment by COVID-19, and present an opportunity and duty for CPs to actively attend to, and advocate for policies that remove barriers and bolster supports for those who are experiencing compounding difficulties related to career and work.

COGNITIVE INFORMATION PROCESSING THEORY

Cognitive information processing theory (CIP; [Sampson et al., 2020](#)) aims to help individuals through the career decision-making process and may have useful applications for helping individuals with career decision-making in the current pandemic due to research supporting its use with a variety of individuals (e.g., college students, veterans, unemployed, and people with disabilities) and on issues such as initial career choice, career indecision, career transition, dysfunctional career thoughts, and mental health related to career concerns. CIP identifies four elements required for making an informed career decision, including the knowledge domain which consists of self and options knowl-

edge, the decision-making domain which ideally is comprised of an effective career decision-making and problem-solving approach (i.e., in CIP theory, known as the CASVE Cycle), and the executive processing domain, which consists of how an individual manages the process of addressing their career concern, and includes awareness of and ability to control self-talk that might impede the process. The CASVE Cycle outlines a CIP-based sequence of recommended career decision-making steps. Research has shown that taking a career class (Osborn et al., 2020) and engaging with CACGs (Osborn et al., in press) helps individuals move from earlier (CAS) phases to later (VEC) phases and that engaging in CACGs increases career decision-making skills overall, as well as positive changes for each phase of the CASVE Cycle (Osborn et al., in press). With respect to the four components, research (Osborn et al., 2021; Osborn et al., 2020) has shown that the four elements are separate and yet related, for example, as one learns about options, and evaluates those options, self-talk is impacted, self-knowledge is enhanced, and they progress in the career decision-making process. Thus, as a practitioner works with a client in one area, change is simultaneously happening in the other areas.

Readiness to engage in the career decision-making and problem-solving process is comprised of two interactive elements, capability and complexity. Capability is an individual's ability to make a decision at a given time, includes an awareness of each of the pyramid components, and is influenced by mental health, dysfunctional career thoughts, self-esteem, intelligence, emotional state, level of honesty in reflecting on one's career-related traits, and a willingness to take personal responsibility for career decision-making. Complexity refers to the external environment that presses in a supportive or nonsupportive way on a person as they contemplate their career concern. Complexity factors may include significant others, family, friends, social groups, societal issues such as racism and discrimination, economic variables such as financial stability or poverty, and organizational factors such as promotion policies. As capability and complexity intersect, four possible categories of career readiness emerge: someone who is low in both, high in both, high capability but low complexity, and low capability and high complexity. To effectively address different client decision-making readiness levels, a differentiated career service model is recommended (Sampson et al., 2020, Sampson, 2008; Toh & Sampson, 2019).

COVID-19, CIP APPLICATIONS, AND THEORY-BASED STRATEGIES

In the following sections, we illustrate how CIP theory is particularly applicable for assessment and intervention in the midst of and following the current COVID-19 crisis by providing a framework for the integration of career, mental health, and family to deal with the stress, isolation, and family disruption caused by the pandemic. Specific applications of and strategies for CIP-based interventions are described for each CIP element.

Self-knowledge

In order to make an effective career decision, individuals must have an accurate picture of themselves. This involves a knowledge of their interests, values, skills, personality, and any other aspects of themselves (e.g., culture, mental health, and spirituality). Self-knowledge develops as one engages in the world. Interests and disinterests are identified, skills are built, and values clarified through these experiences. Self-knowledge is clarified as individuals engage in the career exploration and decision-making process. COVID-19 and stay-at-home mandates as well as loss of work impact individuals' self-knowledge. Technology has created opportunities to learn about and experience new tasks, which may result in new interests and enhanced skills. For example, online "masterclasses" offer trainings on various topics, such as the five-hour, 26 video series, "Yotam Ottolenghi Teaches Modern Middle Eastern Cooking," which provide a relatively brief, hands-on exploration of the topic, and probably gives the individual just enough of a taste to determine whether or not they want to pursue additional

training in that area. On a professional level, many professional organizations have moved to virtual conferences with prerecorded presentations. Often times, this results in continuing education credits and can add to a person's specializations. Archived online trainings, classes, recorded presentations, and niche YouTube channels and interest groups will provide clients with opportunities to build their self-knowledge long after the pandemic has passed. By engaging with these platforms, individuals can obtain or deepen knowledge on specific topics, learn new or build upon existing skills, and discover new areas of interest or applications of their interests and skills in new ways. For example, someone who has strong realistic interests may happen upon a social media page for do-it-yourself projects, and see a variety of projects that they had never considered before. From there, they might search for videos or step-by-step instructions on how to create these projects, and as they do, they will build their skills and explore whether that particular activity is fulfilling.

Values clarification has also likely occurred for many individuals during this time. Values can be defined as what is important or salient to a person, and might include considerations such as salary, travel requirements, and training requirements. The shelter-at-home/work-from-home requirement may have introduced a previously unconsidered value of where and when one is able to work. Seeing medical personnel working on the frontlines while also risking their own health and perhaps limiting family contact might cause those originally considering a career in the medical field to re-examine these work-related values for themselves. Another factor might be whether a job is considered to be essential. CPs can support clients in their exploration and building of self-knowledge through standardized assessments (Stoltz & Barkley, 2019), card sorts (Osborn, Hayden, et al., 2016), storytelling (McMahon & Watson, 2013; Savickas & Hartung, 2012), computer-assisted career guidance systems (CACGs; Osborn et al., in press), with focused discussion of these personal aspects, and also through encouraging safe engagement in feedback-providing activities (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000).

Options knowledge

Options knowledge (Sampson et al., 2020) entails an analysis of career information with a focus on integrating self-knowledge as well as other dimensions of CIP in this evaluative process, and is seen as an essential component of career decision-making by all major career theories. To build options knowledge, CPs often direct individuals to learn typical job requirements, the necessary skills, required training, financial benefits, and outlook for the profession, using resources such as the O*NET (onlineonet.org). However, COVID-19 has dramatically transformed the world of work. The occupational information in O*NET may not be completely accurate given this disruption. Many of the tasks and knowledge required might remain the same, but how the job is performed might have shifted dramatically, and the question of whether that shift will be ongoing is at this point, unanswered.

Many occupations that were thought to depend upon face-to-face contact adjusted to be successfully administered virtually. One example is telehealth. Though the concept is not new, the magnitude of its use due to COVID-19 has increased exponentially. Ethical, legal, and technical elements of providing appropriate telehealth thrust many providers used to the traditional process of providing therapy into a new realm. It is also likely that telehealth will be valued going forward. This is but one example of how a job and even a field has changed in response to the pandemic, with a new array of skills being required, and yet, the required technical skills listed for mental health counselor in O*NET do not currently list any related to telehealth. Within the context of this changing landscape, CPs might encourage clients to go beyond static descriptions of options in databases such as O*NET to engage in informational interviews with workers and employers in a potentially desirable field, or job shadowing or volunteering, to learn first-hand how aspects of the job may have changed. Attending to emotions that may be associated with learning about options is also recommended (Young & Valach, 2004). Other interventions and activities that increase options knowledge include undergraduate career courses (Osborn et al., 2020), CACGs (Garcia et al., 2020; Osborn et al., in press; Sampson & Osborn, 2015), discussions with parents (Adebowe, 2014; Chin et al., 2019), extracurricular activ-

ities (Denault et al., 2019), paid work experiences (Creed & Patton, 2003), career fairs and internships (Pesch et al., 2018), and personal contacts like professors (Zondag & Brink, 2017). Given research showing (Osborn et al., 2021; Osborn et al., 2020) that options knowledge is related to self-knowledge, decision-making skills, and metacognitive aspects such as self-talk, activities involving any of these three areas is also likely to contribute to the development of options knowledge and vice versa. For example, Dozier et al. (2015) found that individuals who engaged in an online career assessment reported more occupational exploration over a 3-week period as compared to those who had not.

Career decision-making and problem-solving

Career decision-making and problem-solving is an intensive process that requires integration of ever-evolving knowledge about self and options (Sampson et al., 2020). Prior to engaging in career decision-making, a CP needs to assess individual's readiness (i.e., their current capability and complexities). COVID-19 has had a strong impact on many individuals' capability to make decisions. The Washington Post (Fowers & Won, 2020) reported that nearly one third of Americans are now reporting symptoms of clinical depression and anxiety, both of which can have a tremendous impact on how one evaluates themselves, their options, and engages in decision-making (Zunker, 2008). In addition, COVID-19 may have resulted in financial constraints, family stressors, and economic concerns, many of which will likely have long-lasting impacts that extend after the pandemic has subsided. Combined with the COVID-19 pandemic is the societal awareness and increased concern and stress of systemic racism. Personal experiences with COVID-19 and racism increase the complexity an individual is experiencing in making a career decision. A CP can support an individual who is in the career decision-making process by helping them examine and manage their current levels of capability and experiences of complexity, through identifying areas of strength and supports, as well as areas that need to be enhanced. When readiness to engage has been determined (collaboratively, with CP and client), a person is ready to begin or continue the career decision-making process, starting with the first step in the CASVE Cycle.

Communication is the first step in the CASVE Cycle, and occurs with awareness that a career problem exists through internal and/or external cues. Some external cues emerging from COVID-19 might include being furloughed from a position, having to delay or pause training for a career path, disappointments for promotions, starting a job, and financial concerns. Internal cues of depression, anxiety, and fear of what has or might happen also might cause a person to begin considering career options. Helping a client tune into these cues during the first phase of career decision-making is important, and also occurs throughout the process culminating when a career decision has been made (communication-revisited). Attending to the emotions associated with these cues is recommended (Hayden & Osborn, 2020; Young & Valach, 2004).

During *Analysis*, an individual is encouraged to examine existing and emerging knowledge of self and options. Strategies for supporting clients in this phase were discussed in the self and options knowledge sections.

Synthesis-Elaboration encourages individuals to expand options, often by taking an assessment and seeing an accompanying list of options that match certain characteristics, or through reading "related occupations" to one that is of interest. *Synthesis-Crystallization* requires a person to narrow the list to around five, occurring as one learns more about the actual options and reflects on that in light of their self-knowledge. This process of expanding and narrowing options on the basis of instable knowledge about self and the world of work will likely be impacted by the shifting landscape of the world of work. Once valid options might no longer be as a result of this enduring crisis. For example, a person considering a career or training might delay or eliminate that option if it requires moving to a city with higher COVID-19 incidence rates. CPs can support individuals by helping them determine more stable variables of self and comparing those to their options. Career assessments such as career and skills inventories or CACGs expand or elaborate options based on a person's indicated

characteristics, and integrating with CACGs in particular can also help individuals narrow down or crystallize options (Osborn et al., in press; Sampson & Osborn, 2015). While COVID-19 may have decreased confidence in certain skills or interests, some areas may be more stable, and new areas of interest and skill development may emerge.

In *Valuing*, options are evaluated through the lens of potential impacts on self, significant other(s), family, and community in positive and negative ways, culminating in a first choice and backup option. Each of these groups have a differing impact on the individual making the career decision. A person might not have a significant other at the time they make a career decision, or they may be especially close to one family member who has a stronger influence. Intersections across these impacts can lead to more clarity or more confusion. COVID-19 may have impacted not only each of these groups but also interactions among and between these groups. In addition, what might have been seen as a positive at pre-COVID-19 might have shifted. For example, the opportunity or requirement to travel might have been seen as a positive, but now be viewed as risky and undesirable. A CP can help an individual attend to the impact that their career considerations may have on important people in their life, such as family (Fouad et al., 2010), including the exploration of compromises and even grieving potential losses associated with making one choice over another.

During *Execution*, the option is tried out, through taking a course, volunteering, or applying for a position. COVID-19 has limited many opportunities for this type of experimentation in a live setting, through limits such as how many individuals can be in buildings, hiring freezes, and decreased volunteering opportunities in face-to-face operations. At the same time, other opportunities may have developed that previously were nonexistent. Clients may now have the opportunity to “visit” more places of employment virtually to learn about their options, where they might have previously been limited by geographical location. As great effort went into developing these virtual opportunities, there is an increased likelihood that they will remain post-COVID. CPs can help identify other ways to explore whether their first choice is likely to be a fit, through connecting the client with a professional association, directing the client to blogs that describe how work in specific fields have changed, or having them engage in an online course or experiential activities the client deems safe, such as paid work experiences (Creed & Patton, 2003) or other occupational engagement activities such as volunteering, informational interviews, and shadowing (Cox et al., 2016).

Executive processing

Executive processing encompasses several different cognitive processes such as self-talk, self-awareness, and monitoring and control of metacognitions which influence career development over time (Sampson et al., 2020). These metacognitions are interconnected with other CIP constructs (Osborn et al., 2020). The relevance of executive processing with the current pandemic is highlighted in the connection between negative career thoughts and constructs of mental health. Negative career thoughts are related to hopelessness and depression (Dieringer et al., 2017; Walker & Peterson, 2012). Being in a state of worry, certainly pertinent within the context of COVID-19, is also associated with negative career thoughts (Hayden & Osborn, 2020). The experiences of COVID-19 and increases in anxiety and stress affect self-talk as well as the ability to monitor and control progress toward career goals. Helping clients examine and challenge their thoughts and self-talk, set realistic goals, develop cognitive flexibility and adaptability, and considering ways in which skills may have been enhanced in the pandemic, and may persist postpandemic, can be applied, are all strategies CPs can employ to attend to executive processing. The Career Thoughts Inventory (Sampson et al., 1996a) is a validated tool for identifying negative career thoughts, and the use of the accompanying workbooks (Sampson et al., 1996b) which focuses on cognitive restructuring demonstrated gains in writing effective reframes (Carr, 2004). CIP-based group counseling has also shown significant reductions in negative thinking (Leuty et al., 2015).

IMPLICATIONS FOR VARIOUS ROLES OF CPs

CPs work in various roles and settings, and thus have multiple access points for impacting the lives of clients, whether through direct contact, research, consultation, and/or through training and education. The impacts of COVID touch each of these roles, and thus require our attention to enable us to be considerate of how to best navigate those respective responsibilities, both for those whom we interact with, and also for ourselves. A certain amount of understanding and grace may be needed with respect to expectations for clients, students, colleagues, and even ourselves.

Implications for practitioners

CPs focus on exploring and supporting the multidimensional aspects of the human experience. Considering Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs, basic health and safety needs must be addressed before a client is able to progress in other areas (Jerome, 2013). Though there are mixed indications of a true progression through the hierarchy as initially conceptualized by Maslow (Compton, 2018), the model highlights the broad array of needs that encompass the human experience. COVID-19 simultaneously threatens the ability to satisfy basic and higher ordered needs which often imbodyes career concerns.

A strength of the career development profession is the ability to engage individuals in a holistic and developmental understanding of the role of work/career in one's life and assist in making connections to other mental health factors. Career development approaches and interventions often target self-actualization as an optimal level of attainment in career development. Given the inherent dangers of COVID-19, this may be a misaligned goal. Though some people may have the ability to focus on this high-ordered level of functioning, many may be concerned with the basic needs of ensuring they have adequate resources for self-sustainment and are physically safe from the dangers of the virus. With this in mind, career services and CPs must mirror the needs of those they serve.

Given the notable increases in mental health concerns, CPs must be aware of signs of mental illness or pain that their clients might be exhibiting, especially signs of anxiety and depression. Practically speaking, this might result in changes on intake forms to include questions about anxiety, loneliness, and depression, or proactively asking clients about the presence of these. If a client indicates being anxious or depressed, further questions, ranging from scaling questions (e.g., on a scale of 1–10, with 10 being the highest, how anxious are you?) to asking questions about specific symptoms (e.g., impact on eating, sleeping, and motivation), to using inventories such as a depression inventory, to best determine how impactful the mental health concern is. In addition, asking clients about supports they have and are using is an important component of career service delivery, and even more so when capabilities are diminished and complexities heightened. Having a list of community and online resources is also recommended. CPs might also need to shore up their training and/or the training of those they supervise to recognize and respond to indicators of mental illness, as well as seeking clarity about their organization's rules and policies for treating mental health concerns that arise in the process of providing career services. While CPs should also operate within the boundaries of their competence, they should be knowledgeable of and ready to refer to other professionals when those boundaries are exceeded (NCDA, 2015).

Implications for career service delivery

Career counselors, with their ability to integrate mental health and career issues, are uniquely positioned to serve clients during a pandemic where unemployment, depression, and anxiety interact. The difficulty, however, is how will enough practitioners with both mental health counseling and career counseling expertise be available to meet increasing demand. Use of traditional 1-h appointment-

based service-delivery designs are unable to serve large numbers of clients (Sampson et al., 2017). In other words, how does counseling and career development scale up to meet increased demand during a pandemic?

One option for solving this problem is to use a differentiated service delivery model, such as cognitive information processing theory in the design of combined mental health and career services (Sampson, 2008; Sampson et al., 2020, Toh & Sampson, 2019). The differentiated service-delivery model uses screening readiness for career decision-making assessment to match level of client need (low, moderate, and high) with the level of counseling support provided (self-help, brief staff-assisted, and individual case-managed services). This approach aims to avoid overserving or underserving clients and thus makes the most cost-effective use of resources to serve the largest number of clients possible. By providing the majority of services with less counselor-intensive intervention, more time is available for intensive case-managed interventions necessary to deal with the more serious combinations of mental health and career concerns resulting from a pandemic. Ensuring the appropriate degree of support is provided to those in need enacts a socially just framework for the allocation of resources.

The differentiated service delivery model is also equally applicable in both face-to-face and distance delivery modes. With the closing of many offices to slow the spread of COVID-19, many career services were shifted to distance delivery, which also occurred at the Florida State University Career Center (Osborn et al., in press). The instructional design approach that was used to create CIP theory-based career resources, including assessments, resource guides, information handouts, written exercises, and individual learning plans (Sampson, 2008; Sampson et al., 2004), made it easier to work collaboratively with clients by sharing screens and resources during Zoom sessions. Little adaptation of existing resources was needed, and services were provided at all levels including, self-help, brief-assisted, and individual case-managed. Through shifts such as these, online career service delivery that attends to clients' varying needs have weathered the initial and enduring storm created by the pandemic, and provide a possibility of continued delivery in this vein in the future. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of career services delivered via self-help (Kronholz, 2015), brief-staff assisted (Osborn, Kronholz, et al., 2016), and individual counseling (Whiston et al., 2017) in face-to-face settings; future research will need to examine the efficaciousness of these online career service delivery modes.

Implications for training

The current crisis has implications for career training programs, organizations, and research. Each have important roles to play in the prevention, treatment, and advocacy efforts facilitated by CPs, both currently, and looking to a postpandemic time. Training in career development is a core tenet of counseling and a key focus of professional organizations such as the National Career Development Association (NCDA), the Society of Vocational Psychology, the American School Counselor Association, and the Association for Counselor Educators and Supervisors. Given the present and likely long-term effects that COVID-19 will have on the mental health, physical health outcomes, and career development of individuals across the lifespan, it is important that training programs and professional associations integrate curriculum specific to COVID-19 (and consideration of future pandemics), into courses and training activities. Discussions, trainings, and professional presentations should address how the crisis has influenced the intersecting components of mental health, racial disparities, employment, and economic consequences for all groups (e.g., K12 students, young adults, un- or underemployed, marginalized groups). Current CPs and those in training need to have knowledge of both the symptoms of mental illness, as well as evidence-based approaches to support clients who are experiencing mental health concerns. Moreover, the role of counselors for prevention, remediation, and advocacy must be explored and emphasized.

Implications for research

Understanding the unique ways in which the COVID-19 crisis has affected the career development of high school and college students, as well as unemployed and underemployed adults is crucial. Research is needed to elucidate career-related needs that these different groups may have. COVID-19 specific variables using well-established career development theories should be examined to inform the development of career development interventions. Racial and social class differences as well as generational and age differences should be considered. Studies examining connections between career outcomes and mental health are needed, as the COVID-19 pandemic has affected both.

Implications for practitioners

COVID-19 is causing an increase in unemployment, illness, and deaths in the United States and with that an increase in mental illness-related symptoms seeing rises in post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) like symptomology (Galea et al., 2020). Specifically, people are experiencing isolation, anxiety, and depression due to the separation that is necessary to remain safe and keep others safe during COVID-19 (Saltzman et al., 2020). During this time, many people will be diagnosed with some sort of adjustment-related disorder from the impact of COVID-19 on financial security, loss of income, or employment (Kazlauskas et al., 2020). Self-care during this time of crisis is pertinent for clients and clinicians. In discussing the value of self-care, self-compassion, and awareness, Coleman et al. (2016) emphasize the reality of counselor burnout and state that it is vitally important for counselors to model what they want clients to partake in (self-care) to avoid burnout and secondary traumatization. Coaston (2017) explains self-care as an awareness of one's needs and meeting them to prevent burnout.

Provider self-care is a co-requisite for practitioners desiring to provide effective help to those with mental health needs (Canady, 2020). CPs need to adhere to their routines (sleeping, eating, and exercising) to decrease stress and increase coping and stress management (Canady, 2020). Having support, finding time to relax, breathe, and decompress is pertinent to maintaining overall wellness during this period of increased social isolation and fear felt by many. For many, additional demands of informing clients of safety practices and creating/maintaining a safe place can lead to heightened feelings of anxiety, thus making self-care even more pertinent (Canady, 2020). Using online resources (e.g., National Alliance of Mental Illness) and purposely seeking connection with and supervision from other practitioners can contribute to CP self-care during this time.

Self-compassion or looking at oneself honestly and kindly in a positive manner (Coaston, 2017) can be considered a self-care strategy. Self-compassion stresses appreciation of one's uniqueness and appreciating being alone with oneself, an important skill during COVID-19 as isolation for safety and wellness is emphasized (Coaston, 2017). Self-compassion leads to recognizing that everyone has faults and that all people experience suffering, thus creating a feeling of universality and decreasing feelings of isolation. This concept, once practiced, decreases feelings of aloneness in suffering by knowing others are suffering during COVID-19 and recognizing they are not alone in experiencing feelings of fear, inaptitude, and being overwhelmed, as a clinician and person (Canady, 2020; Coaston, 2017).

True self-care requires applying what works best for an individual, as not all self-care techniques are beneficial for all. Mindfulness is being in the moment and choosing to be present in a restorative manner (Bradley et al., 2013). Intellectual stimulation, that is, the investment and development of learning a new skill or engaging oneself cognitively through a critical thinking activity, can be self-care (Skovholt et al., 2001). Another self-care activity is engaging in intrapersonal reflection through bullet or reflective journaling to deepen self-awareness and insight during stressful times and to decrease depression, anxiety, or feelings of being overwhelmed or fearful (Lent, 2009; Utley & Garza, 2011; Warren et al. 2010). Physical activity and exertion provide distraction, improve physical health and wellness, and releases endorphin (Bradley et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2011). Spirituality provides

an internal place of peace for individuals and can provide comfort during stressful times, such as COVID-19 (Cashwell et al., 2007; Sori et al., 2006). Regardless of strategies CPs and clients draw on for self-care and wellness, attention and focus on these needs will be important as both practitioners and clients deal with continued challenges post pandemic.

SUMMARY

COVID-19 has presented CPs with multiple challenges, including client mental health concerns and the need to adapt service delivery adaptations to best meet client needs in an ethical manner. In order to best support clients, CPs must engage with the intersecting identities, including vocational identity. CIP offers a framework for addressing these issues and identifying strategies CPs can use to better help individuals manage the complexity in their lives and support the improvement of their capability to make vocational decisions during these challenging times. Exploration of issues related to work stress and career decisions will be commonplace in the future as individuals navigate return to work protocols and workplace changes. Furthermore, COVID-19 brought to light a monumental need for career counseling services, the intersectionality of career and mental health, and the necessity of being adaptable when providing services. CPs' understanding of the significance of interaction among career and mental health concerns will be paramount in helping clients navigate work and career uncertainty going forward. The changes brought forth in light of COVID-19 while numerous, and challenging, will hopefully have long-lasting positive impacts on the career counseling field, service delivery to clients, and the future of CIP.

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