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# Evidence in Action

## *A K20 Center Research Brief*

### **Assessing Career Decision-Making Interventions: Effects of Career Courses and Group Counseling on High School Students**

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#### **Introduction**

This intervention brief explores the findings of the research article titled "Assessing Career Decision-Making Interventions: Effects of Career Courses and Group Counseling on High School Students" by Hang Zeng and Congfen Ma published in 2025. The study investigates the impact of career courses and group counseling on career decision-making self-efficacy and difficulties among Chinese high school students. The authors highlight the importance of career decision-making in shaping students' academic and professional trajectories, particularly in the context of China's rapidly evolving labor market and educational reforms. The study aims to address gaps in career education programs and provide insights into effective interventions for supporting career decision-making.

#### **Methodology**

##### **Research Design:**

The study employs a pre-posttest design to evaluate the effects of career courses and group counseling on career decision-making self-efficacy and difficulties. Two separate studies were conducted.

##### **Sample:**

**Study 1** - The sample consisted of 308 first-year high school students (approximately 16 years old) from an urban high school in Guangdong Province, China. The sample included 155 adolescent women and 153 adolescent men.

**Study 2** - The sample consisted of 40 first-year high school students from the same region, divided into an experimental group (20 students) and a control group (20 students). The experimental group received both career courses and group counseling, while the control group received only career courses.

##### **Data Analysis:**

The study used MANOVA and mixed-design ANOVAs to analyze the effects of the interventions on career decision-making self-efficacy and difficulties. The analyses included checks for normality, homogeneity of variance, and sphericity.



## Results

### Study 1:

**Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy:** The career course significantly increased self-efficacy among participants. Adolescent men reported higher self-efficacy than adolescent women both before and after the intervention.

**Career Decision-Making Difficulties:** The career course did not significantly reduce decision-making difficulties overall. However, gender differences were observed: adolescent men reported increased difficulties and adolescent women showed a decreasing trend.

### Study 2:

**Combined Intervention:** The combined intervention of career courses and group counseling significantly reduced career decision-making difficulties for both genders. The experimental group showed a significant decrease in difficulties, but the control group did not show any significant change.

These findings suggest that career courses effectively boost self-efficacy, but adding group counseling helps address practical and emotional challenges in career decision-making.

## Application into Practice

To replicate this intervention in a school context, educators and administrators should focus on the following components:

- **Career Courses:** Implement structured career education courses that cover self-assessment, exploration of career options, decision-making skills, and planning for future career paths. Ensure that these courses are delivered by experienced instructors.
- **Group Counseling:** Supplement career courses with group counseling sessions that emphasize interactive and experiential learning. These sessions should provide emotional support, enhance self-awareness, and foster practical problem-solving skills in a collaborative setting.
- **Gender-Responsive Strategies:** Develop tailored interventions that consider the distinct challenges faced by adolescent men and women. This includes addressing emotional and self-esteem issues for adolescent women and focusing on skill development and goal setting for adolescent men.
- **Comprehensive Support:** Create a flexible approach that combines career courses and group counseling to provide both foundational knowledge and practical skills. This ensures that interventions are responsive to the varying needs of students.

By implementing these components, schools can effectively support students' career decision-making processes, helping them navigate academic and professional trajectories with confidence and reduced difficulties.



## Work Cited

Zeng, H., & Ma, C. (2025). Assessing career decision-making interventions: Effects of career courses and group counseling on high school students. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 73(1), 68-78. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cdq.12371>