Vocational Concerns

• More than one in three women (nearly 36%) have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003)

• There is a higher percentage of female victims than male victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) (Albargh & Nauta, 2005)

• Women living in the United States collectively lose nearly 8 million days of paid work every year because of IPV (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003)

• Missed work translates into job loss, financial uncertainty and a contributing factor for why victims of IPV remain tightly bound to abusive partner for support (Brown, Linnemeyer, Dougherty, Coulson, Trangsrud, & Farnsworth, 2005)

• Barriers to career decision-making

  • Social isolation may create barriers such as lack of exposure to career information and opportunities (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003)

  • Experience lower career decision self-efficacy as a result of fewer opportunities for positive learning experiences (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003; Brown, Reedy, Fountain, Johnson, & Dichiser, 2000)

  • Allow clients to clarify career and life goals in writing

  • Provide clients with individualized interpretations and feedback

  • Give current information on the requirements and likely consequences of considered career paths

  • Include role models who demonstrate effective planning and coping strategies

  • Help clients develop support networks that facilitate their pursuit of career goals

  • Raise critical consciousness

  • Help clients become more aware of the self (identity), others (context), and the relation of self to others (power dynamics) and accordingly gaining an understanding of control and responsibility in one’s life situations

  • Critical consciousness strengthens commitment to change

  • Additional tools and learning experiences recommended by the literature

  • Workshops and training that improve interpersonal skills (Ballou, Balogun, Gittens, Matsumoto, & Sanchez, 2015)

  • Training in self-expression to enhance independence, assertion, and dominance (Brown, Reedy, Fountain, Johnson, & Dichiser, 2000)

  • One-on-one job supported searches (Ballou, Balogun, Gittens, Matsumoto, & Sanchez, 2015)


Theoretical Framework

• Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994)

  • Career decision-making is viewed as a complex interaction between the person and the environment

  • Self-efficacy is a person’s confidence in his/her ability to successfully complete a task or set of tasks

  • Self-efficacy expectations result from past performance accomplishments and failures, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal

  • Self-efficacy expectations contribute to the development of career interests and the implementation of those interests into goals and choices

Vocational Interventions & Tools

• ACCESS Program (Chronister & McWhirter, 2006)

  • Five sessions, each session lasting two hours, one session per week for five consecutive weeks.

  • Social Cognitive Career Theory framework

  • Focus on increasing self-efficacy and outcome expectations in a specific area to translate interests into career goals

  • Interventions may be most effective when designed to enhance self-efficacy and outcome expectations, reduce barriers, increase supports, and promote the formation of career interests and the pursuit of goals

  • Essential ingredients in four-five sessions (Brown & Krane, 2000)

  • Allow clients to clarify career and life goals in writing

  • Provide clients with individualized interpretations and feedback

  • Give current information on the requirements and likely consequences of considered career paths

  • Include role models who demonstrate effective planning and coping strategies

  • Help clients develop support networks that facilitate their pursuit of career goals

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Implications for Practice

• Focus on short- and long-term career goals

  • Short-term, immediate employment can give some women minimum income to survive independent of their abuser (Brown, Reedy, Fountain, Johnson, & Dichiser, 2000)

  • Be careful of staying focused on the short-term. Short-term employment ignores the developmental nature of the career and educational interests and pursuits, as well as the barriers women face after leaving their abusers (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003)

  • Longer-term opportunities may be essential for women to provide for their family’s needs without the abuser’s contributions, to achieve economic independence, and ultimately to leave the abusive situation permanently (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003)

  • Long-term vocational development provides women with skills and opportunities which help women live free of violence and better able to reach their potentials (Ballou, Balogun, Gittens, Matsumoto, & Sanchez, 2015)

  • Pay attention to the relationship between IPV and career development. A lack of attention to the effects of IPV on career development ignores the complex interrelationships between partnerships, career interests, and achievements (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003)

  • Encourage responsibility among victims’ work expectations. Battered women often have limited exposure to professional and educational opportunities and role models. Most of their exposure is with the health care and social service providers in DV shelter, counseling agencies, hospitals, urgent care clinics, and advocacy centers. See if careers in health and social services truly match the woman’s interests, abilities, and skills, or if there is need for more exposure to the world of work (Brown, Linnemeyer, Dougherty, Coulson, Trangsrud, & Farnsworth, 2005)

Benefits of Working

• Work serves to improve finances, increase self-esteem, promote physical safety, bolster social connections, provide mental respite from abusive environments, and provide meaning in life (Ballou, Balogun, Gittens, Matsumoto, & Sanchez, 2015)

• Work is a facilitator of the healing process, as it promotes mental health and prevents women from returning to abusive relationships (Ballou, Balogun, Gittens, Matsumoto, & Sanchez, 2015)

• Unemployed women are less likely to initiate divorce or separation in comparison to their employed counterparts (Brown, Reedy, Fountain, Johnson, & Dichiser, 2000)

• Women who may or may not be employed and who want to return to school or obtain specialized vocational training

• Women who have been working but who need to find additional or high-paying employment to provide for themselves and their children after leaving an abusive situation

• Women who need to return to work immediately to gain financial resources to support themselves and their children

• Career development for victims of IPV is severely restricted due to difficulties keeping jobs, performing occupational tasks, and earning promotions (Chronister, Wettersten, & Brown, 2004)

• Women who have been working but who need to find additional or high-paying employment to provide for themselves and their children after leaving an abusive situation

• Missed work translates into job loss, financial uncertainty and a contributing factor for why victims of IPV remain tightly bound to abusive partner for support (Brown, Linnemeyer, Dougherty, Coulson, Trangsrud, & Farnsworth, 2005)

Vocational Development for Victims of Intimate Partner Violence

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