

*The Social Roots of Suicide: Theorizing How to Reduce Risk Factors of Depression  
Among University Students*

Nicole Codd, University of Utah Asia Campus, South Korea  
Jaina Lee, University of Utah Asia Campus, South Korea  
David W. Burnett, University of Utah Asia Campus, South Korea  
Yunah Cho, University of Utah Asia Campus, South Korea

The Asian Conference on Psychology & the Behavioral Sciences 2023  
Official Conference Proceedings

**Abstract**

The importance of mental health has become an increasingly popular topic of discussion in South Korea. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), South Korea ranks first in suicide rates as of 2020 at a staggering rate of 24.1 deaths per 100,000 people. College students in South Korea are especially vulnerable, with suicide rates having increased by 60% over the past six years. Since depression is a significant risk factor when predicting suicidal ideation, it is important to look at the factors that put college-age students at risk for depression. Through an examination of existing literature, it has been identified that stress related to future employment is a large contributor to depression in Korean undergraduate students. Using evidence-based methods of reducing stress related to employment, we have created a hypothetical intervention based on the Social Cognitive Theory of Learning. This intervention proposes a series of workshops combining the traditional skills needed to obtain employment with the mental health modalities of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) to aid in emotion and stress regulation. In addition, career advisors should utilize DBT strategies to cultivate emotional coping skills in students. This hypothetical intervention should serve as a potentially novel method to address depression in college-age students. We expect that if university career centers implement DBT in their services and coaching, then there will be a reduction in stress related to the job searching process, which in theory has the potential to reduce depression rates.

Keywords: Mental Health, Suicide Rates, Depression, DBT, SCCT, South Korea

**iafor**

The International Academic Forum  
[www.iafor.org](http://www.iafor.org)

## **INTRODUCTION**

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among young adults in South Korea. Yoon (2022) presented that the suicide rate of people aged 20-29 accounted for 56.8% of deaths in that age group (Statista). Because depression and suicide are closely linked (Koo, 2018), it is necessary to investigate the risk factors related to depression, specifically in college-age students. South Korean college students have been identified as having a higher risk of depression and stress compared to their non-student, same-age counterparts (Yang et al., 2012). The Korean Council for University Education conducted a national survey in 2018 on college students' mental health conditions. The survey showed that 72.5% of Korean college students were at-risk for anxiety disorder symptoms, 43.2% had experienced depression symptoms, and 14.3% were at elevated risk of suicidal onset (Lee & Shin, 2022). Because unemployment is known to negatively affect mental health, these high rates can partially be explained by Korea's high young adult (aged 15-29) unemployment rates and the stress that comes with seeking employment (Lim et al., 2018; Ha & Park, 2022). According to the Ministry of Science, ICT, and Future Planning's report, youth unemployment rates in 2017 were estimated to be as high as 34% (Kim et al., 2022). To combat the impact of unemployment on mental health, Ha and Park (2022) suggested universities play a larger role via the development of programs aimed at assisting students in finding jobs post-graduation (Ha & Park, 2022).

This recommendation has been mirrored in several studies, which have also identified the need for an interconnected career counseling and mental health approach (Pace & Quinn, 2000; Tang et al., 2021; Kim, 2022). This recommendation, however, fails to adequately take attitudes and beliefs on mental health into account. Studies show that Korean students may be more hesitant to seek out mental health resources because of stigma (Kim & Park, 2014; Nam & Lee, 2015). These combined factors indicate the need for a culturally sensitive, integrated intervention of career services and mental health modalities to tackle the issue of depression in Korean students. In addition, creating a program that focuses on developing students' self-efficacy may help to build self-identity which has been reported to increase career decision-making skills. Numerous evidence-based models and mental health modalities exist to address the separate issues of unemployment and depression; however, few interventions utilize these in conjunction, particularly for Korean university students. Through research, the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), (which is based on the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)), and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) have been identified as suitable frameworks that can be used to create a cohesive, long-term intervention to increase students' job preparedness as well as their emotional coping skills. With this in mind, this paper explores the creation of a hypothetical intervention utilizing aspects of SCCT and DBT to increase Korean undergraduate students' self-efficacy related to the job search process and therefore, theoretically, reduce depression and suicide rates in this population.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the risk factors associated with depression in Korea, gain a better understanding of the current practices of Korean career centers, and compile known strategies to address the joint issues of unemployment and depression in undergraduate students. Based on the following review of literature, we have developed a hypothetical intervention for Korean undergraduate students, a proposal to prepare them for

the life challenges that may lead to depression. Before discussing these factors, it is important to define key terminology and frameworks related to our paper.

## **1.1 Key Terminology**

### **Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)**

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was developed by Albert Bandura in the 1960s and is a landmark model used to understand human motivation and action. The theory outlines what factors influence an individual's behavior (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). Key components of SCT include self-efficacy, reciprocal determinism, behavioral capability, and observational learning. Self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to perform a desired behavior. Self-efficacy is a key theme throughout this paper and will be frequently referred to in the literature review as well as the intervention. Reciprocal determinism refers to the reciprocal relationship between an individual, their environment, and behavior. Behavioral capability is the actual skills and abilities an individual has to perform a behavior. Lastly, observational learning refers to the social learning component where an individual learns through observation of others (Riley et al., 2016).

### **Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)**

SCCT is a model based on SCT that incorporates SCT's self-efficacy concept with other career development theories to provide a comprehensive understanding of how individuals develop career interests and goals and make career-related decisions (Lent et al., 2002). An individual's background and learning experiences all contribute to their self-efficacy (Kelly, 2009). Self-efficacy is thought to influence the beliefs and expectations an individual has over their career interests which inform their career goals. These goals then help to guide an individual's actions which then lead to actionable items related to their career interests. Formation and completion of career goals can provide a feedback loop for self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

### **Dialectical Behavior Theory (DBT)**

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is an evidence-based therapeutic modality that has been utilized to address mental health issues such as Borderline Personality Disorder, depression, and suicidal ideation. DBT was developed by Marsha Linehan in the 1970s and incorporates aspects of Albert Bandura's behavioral and social learning theories (Linehan & Wilks, 2015). DBT is a heavily skill-based therapy that is broken into four modules: mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation, and distress tolerance. Therapy sessions are conducted in a group setting and participants are encouraged to continue building behavioral capabilities outside of class through the completion of skill-based homework.

## **2.0 Risk Factors**

Depression and suicidal ideation are considered major risk factors leading to suicide. Evaluating risk factors for depression as they pertain to Korean university students are important because risk factors point to potential points of intervention. Risk factors for Korean university students can be divided into three categories: school-related, cultural (family), and individual factors.

## **2.1 School-Related Factors**

In South Korea, the education system demands excessive studies to prepare students for college entrance exams (Lee et al., 2022). Students often concentrate on doing well for these entrance exams and often forgo considering career interests. For this reason, school and the education system play a significant factor in the lack of self-identity. Due to the rigorous academic pressure Korean college students deal with from an early age, students have little preparation for future career planning, career decision-making, or the career preparation process in general. The lack of career preparation has been associated with difficulties exploring careers, setting goals, and executing actions to prepare for careers (Lee et al., 2022). Anxiety over the preparation process and failure to cope with these difficulties have led to psychological and social difficulties like depression (Kim et al., 2022).

In addition, high schools often have organically linked systems between schools, homes, and communities for mental health services. However, this system becomes disconnected once a student enters college increasing their risk for mental health disorders which may exacerbate a number of risk factors for depression (Han & Lee, 2021). Among school-based risk factors, stress related to employment stands out prominently (Han & Lee 2021; Kim et al., 2022). Several contributing reasons include high unemployment, a competitive job market, and economic polarization (Han & Lee, 2021). Having invested in their education, Korean students fear that they will not be able to find quality employment. Without consistent interaction and guidance from the career center, students may feel ill-equipped to manage feelings of stress and depression resulting from the job searching process.

## **2.2 Cultural Factors**

Self-perception of students' own mental health and their willingness to seek treatment are also influenced by cultural risk factors. While there are shifting cultural views, mental health disorders like depression are still stigmatized. According to the Korean Statistics Research Institute, stigma has indirectly prevented mental health services from being widely implemented in Korea (Mun & Ahn, 2020). Addressing mental health before they leave university may be an effective way of getting support while in school. Public perception plays a significant role in developing an individual's help-seeking behaviors. In Korea, they have shown avoidant and anxious behaviors that contribute to their fear of seeking care (Choi et al., 2013; Lee & Shin, 2022). These fears stem from the risk of damaging their reputation. A study by Bathje et al. (2014) found that students who don't seek care avoid it to keep their "face" aka prevent their reputation from being tainted. The unknown risks associated with getting help for their mental health are a reason for the prevalence of these avoidant behaviors (Mun & Ahn, 2020; Nam & Lee 2015). Additionally, this stigma has elevated these avoidant behaviors which have made suicide and mood-based disorders more acceptable among university students (Kim & Park, 2014; Nam & Lee, 2015). As a result, this may prevent them from seeking out care. To address depression, interventions must account for culture-specific factors that help increase feelings of self-efficacy in seeking out mental health services (Kwak & Ickovics, 2019; Ko et al, 2016; Lee et al, 2022).

## **2.3 Individual Risk Factors**

As a result of academic, cultural, and family stressors, students from an early age experience excess anxiety which contributes to low self-esteem and increased negative self-perception. These factors can reduce an individual's self-efficacy. Having low self-efficacy can further

increase the risk of depression by creating self-doubt about one's ability to cope with daily stress (Han & Lee, 2021; Nam & Lee, 2015). Individuals with negative views of mental health services are also less likely to seek them out. These individual factors make it difficult for people to manage the growing anxiety they feel due to other outside influences (school-related and cultural influences). Therefore, building programs in university systems that help students establish their own personal identities and self-efficacy will help students develop as individuals who are able to make stronger career decisions and face fewer career decision difficulties (Lee et al., 2022).

### **3.0 Known Strategies**

Several career interventions exist to prepare students for the job-seeking process and have been found to be highly efficacious in increasing employment rates and building self-efficacy. A 2014 meta-analysis conducted by Liu et al. (2014) found that participation in job interventions increased the odds of employment by 2.67 over those who did not participate. While the structure and delivery of the interventions varied widely, interventions that focused on job search skills, improved self-efficacy, goal-setting, and social support were shown to be more effective than interventions that did not include those components (Liu et al., 2014). Furthermore, a 2019 study completed by Palaez-Fernandez et al. highlighted the connection between emotional intelligence, core self-evaluations, and psychological distress in the unemployed, finding that low levels of emotional intelligence and core self-evaluations were correlated with increased levels of depression, stress, and anxiety. Because emotional intelligence and self-evaluations are directly linked to the regulation of emotions (such as stress and anxiety) and the ability to build self-efficacy and self-esteem, it can be hypothesized that interventions including a focus in this area may increase the effectiveness of the other intervention components (i.e. job search skills or self-presentation).

A number of studies and interventions have evaluated the efficacy of incorporating aspects of mental health modalities in the job search process. One landmark intervention (entitled the JOBS intervention) was conducted in 1989 by Caplan et al. In this study, the researchers conducted a randomized field experiment primarily focused on building self-efficacy in relation to job-searching skills. Their intervention included building the skills that are required to “anticipate situations where setbacks or relapses are likely, generate alternative methods for overcoming the dysfunctional responses to setbacks, and acquire the skills needed to cope with setbacks (Caplan et al., 1989).” Initial results of the study indicated that those who received the intervention saw higher rates of re-employment and increased motivation as compared to those who were in the control group (Caplan et al., 1989). Later evaluations of the intervention found that those in the experimental group obtained better-paying and better-quality jobs, as well as identifying reductions in the incidence and prevalence of severe depressive episodes among those labeled as high-risk (Vinokur et al., 1991; Price et al., 1992). Additionally, the JOBS intervention was used as a model in Finland, where it was also successful at increasing employment and reducing psychological distress, providing further evidence for its efficacy (Vuori et al., 2002).

Similar interventions have been successful when implemented with Korean university students, providing evidence that interventions focused on career development can be generalized to our population of interest. A 2010 study conducted by Lim et al. utilized Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to improve the career attitude, maturity, and self-esteem of nursing students at a Korean university. The intervention utilized CBT-based modalities such as the identification of irrational beliefs, monitoring of thoughts and feelings,

and the planning of new behaviors, which resulted in improved self-esteem and career attitude maturity among the nursing students. A 2022 experimental study conducted by Kim found that an online career adaptability program targeted toward Korean undergraduate students successfully increased the career adaptability of those in the experiment group. The intervention consisted of three domains: knowledge and recognition of self and work environment, self-directed coping related to career behavior, and environmental interaction for career decisions and adaptation. The workshop activities included a mix of job-search-related skills (e.g. career skills exploration, learning how to network), as well as skills targeted towards emotion regulation (e.g. coping strategies and crisis skills). The results of the study indicated that those in the experimental group had increased abilities to cope with career-choice crises, coordinate career goals, cope with environmental stressors, and utilize social resources (Kim, 2022). The findings of these studies provide evidence for the efficacy of career interventions incorporating mental health modalities with Korean university students.

Common themes among the interventions reviewed include the method of delivery, emphasis on skill-based learning, and the incorporation of a social aspect. The interventions took place through a limited series of workshops that were led by trained facilitators providing structure and accountability. The development of self-efficacy was emphasized through the teaching and practicing of pre-defined skills. Social support and vicarious learning were encouraged via group settings. The success of these interventions indicates that a similarly structured intervention may be effective with Korean university students.

Interestingly, Lim et al. and Kim both highlighted the need for a broader range of career intervention programs for university students. Lim et al., whose study focused strictly on nursing majors, suggested that career interventions should begin at an earlier stage of a student's life cycle. They discussed the importance of developing continuous career consulting and CBT programs that would span the students' tenure (Lim et al., 2010). Kim, whose study focused on first-year undergraduate students, identified the need for customized interventions based on a student's major and education level (Kim, 2022). These findings suggest that a more comprehensive intervention, spanning the lifecycle of the student may be more advantageous.

### **3.1 Career Development Frameworks**

SCCT will be the primary career development framework for this paper. This framework can be broken down into the Interest Model, Choice Model, and Performance Model. According to Lent et al. (1994), the Interest Model hypothesizes that self-efficacy beliefs are predictive of outcome expectations, and these then inform differing career interests (Lent & Brown, 2019). When exposed to different activities, individuals will receive positive or negative reinforcement. These reinforcements, in turn, influence the individual's confidence in their ability to perform these activities, creating interest. Therefore, self-efficacy and outcome expectations help to inform interest.

The Choice Model takes the interests developed in the Interest Model and maintains that these interests heavily influence the goals people develop for their careers (Lent & Brown, 2019). When goals are completed successfully, there is a positive feedback loop for self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Lastly, the Performance Model hypothesizes that the ability and quality of past performance further predict future performance and persistence. Since the introduction of this model, there is a general consensus of support for the

hypotheses generated by SCCT for self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent & Brown, 2019).

SCCT and its associated models have been used to build better career development programs and to identify points of intervention during the transition from school to work. For example, a study by Lee et al. (2022) applied SCCT to Korean university students to analyze the relationship between career decision-making self-efficacy, career preparation behavior, and career decision difficulties within South Korea's cultural contexts. The results showed that there was a positive relationship between students who participated in career preparation activities and their career-making self-efficacy skills. Additionally, students who had poor self-efficacy had greater difficulty in making career-related decisions. These correlations may explain why Korean students struggle to choose careers and have higher rates of failure during career preparation processes (Lee et al., 2022). Lee et al. recommended career centers expand their services to include strategies that help develop a student's career identity and self-efficacy.

This study was also able to show that even if services for career placement and career preparedness are available, Korean students may underutilize them because of low self-efficacy. In addition, depression is also known to be a barrier to developing one's self-efficacy. Considering that Korean career centers lack exploratory and self-efficacy-building resources, interventions that can build a student's identity, address depression, and teach coping strategies early on will be crucial for future career centers.

SCCT has been excellent in identifying gaps in career development in high school students, university students, and during transitions from high school to the work environment. Using SCCT as a framework might guide a comprehensive career development intervention for Korean college students as well.

### **3.2 Depression Frameworks and Evidence-Based Practices**

Among the many evidence-based treatments available for depression, DBT was identified as an effective method for undergraduate students because of its overall efficacy, ease of implementation in groups, and proven effectiveness with university and non-clinical populations. DBT was originally designed to treat Borderline Personality Disorder, but it has since shown success with non-clinical populations (Narimani et al., 2016; Üstündağ-Budak et al., 2019), as well as with university students (Pistorello et al., 2012; Uliaszek et al., 2016; Üstündağ-Budak et al., 2019). A 2019 study conducted in Turkey evaluated if the use of DBT with non-clinical university students could be a successful preventative or resilience-enhancing intervention (Üstündağ-Budak et al., 2019). Results of the study indicated that students enrolled in the intervention experienced improved well-being, with many students expressing the usefulness of the skills in their everyday lives. Based on these findings, the authors of the study suggested that DBT-based programs be implemented in universities in an effort to equip students with lifelong skills (Üstündağ-Budak et al., 2019).

DBT is focused on building a "life worth living" and skills are broken into four modules: mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation, and distress tolerance. Sessions are generally conducted in group settings, providing the opportunity for observational learning. Each session focuses on a new skill and students are encouraged to complete homework outside of sessions. This allows clients the opportunity to build their self-efficacy in real-world settings. Clients are also provided detailed handouts and worksheets which

provide helpful guidance while working through the skills, further building behavioral capabilities.

Because of DBT's modular format, practitioners can easily focus on the skills that are most relevant to their clients. Linehan has even advocated for this approach, suggesting the inclusion or withdrawal of aspects of protocols based on the disorder (Linehan & Wilks, 2015). This flexibility makes DBT an ideal modality for career centers, as facilitators can focus on the skills that will be most effective in the job market. Furthermore, the DBT core modules (mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation, and distress tolerance) align with the needs of undergraduate students, particularly those who are searching for employment. Building these skills should, theoretically, increase students' ability to cope with stressors related to school and employment.

### **3.3 How SCCT and DBT Fill the Gap**

A number of studies have identified the need for an interconnected career counseling and mental health approach (Pace & Quinn, 2000; Multon et al., 2001; Hinkelman & Luzzo, 2007; Lim et al., 2010; Üstündağ-Budak et al., 2019; Tang et al., 2021; Kim, 2022). While many studies piloted aspects of a combined intervention, our review of the literature did not identify any fully integrated (mental health and career counseling), long-term approaches that are generalizable to the Korean undergraduate population. Because students have varying needs across their university experience, it is important to incorporate levels for advancement within the program. Since Korean students are less likely to seek mental health support, distress-coping, and emotional regulation skills should be integrated into skills-based workshops, making them more accessible. Students may be more willing to engage with a service that incorporates more than just mental health. Finally, SCCT and DBT suggest emphasis be placed on building self-efficacy in order to increase competency in both the emotional and career-related realms. Based on this, we hypothesize that a long-term intervention utilizing a combination of SCCT and DBT will be a beneficial way to address these gaps.

## **4.0 Hypothetical Intervention**

As identified in the literature review, Korean university students offer an opportunity for a combined intervention that addresses the development of job-searching skills, as well as emotion regulation and stress management. This hypothetical intervention proposes the use of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) in combination with Dialectical Behavior Theory (DBT) to meet these needs. By combining these two modalities, students will develop skills such as resume building and interviewing while also enhancing their ability to manage the stressful emotions related to the job-search process.

### **4.1 Intervention Structure**

The proposed intervention consists of a three-year, tiered certification program, each year focusing on different components of SCCT and DBT. The intervention is designed to be managed by the career center, with guidance provided by experts trained in DBT. The intervention is intended to be delivered through a series of regular workshops given over three years. Utilizing SCCT as the framework, Year One will focus on the Interest Model, Year Two will focus on the Choice Model, and Year Three will build off years prior, focusing on the Performance Model. DBT components will be integrated similarly, with Year



One focusing on mindfulness, Year Two focusing on emotion regulation and distress tolerance, and Year Three focusing on interpersonal effectiveness.

Students will not be required to complete all three years; however, they will receive differentiated certificates based on the number of years they choose to complete. To motivate students to engage in the program, certification levels will be indicated on their transcript and can be used on resumes to showcase a high level of skill and dedication. To meet certification requirements, students will complete a specific set of deliverables (Table 1). The 3-year intervention is explained in more detail in the following sections.

#### **4.2 Year One - The Interest Model and Mindfulness**

Year One seeks to accomplish two goals: 1) to help students develop a deeper understanding of their interests and 2) how these can apply to potential career paths. Additionally, students will learn to become more aware of their emotions and recognize patterns of emotional activity.

*SCCT* - The Interest Model focuses on developing career interests via exposure to varying activities. By identifying areas of strength, one can build self-efficacy, which then creates interest (Lent & Brown, 2019). Workshops will focus on helping students explore their strengths, weaknesses, and overall interests. Students will identify their career expectations, providing a foundation for identifying jobs of interest. Students will be encouraged to explore available classes and majors and gain first-hand exposure to the job market through informational interviews and job shadowing. Upon completion of the first year, students should have a basic understanding of potential career paths they may be interested in.

*DBT* - Year One will serve as an introduction to the concept of DBT. Students will be introduced to the components of mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness; however, special emphasis will be placed on mindfulness. In DBT, mindfulness is considered a core skill and is a critical first step in developing emotional awareness (Linehan & Wilks, 2015). Students will be taught DBT mindfulness skills, such as Wise Mind and Observe and Describe, and will be encouraged to practice these skills in connection with their career discovery process. Self-efficacy and observational learning will be enforced through the workshop setting. At the end of Year One, students should be able to recognize feelings of activation and employ basic strategies to regulate these feelings.

#### **4.3 Year Two - Choice Model, Emotion Regulation, and Distress Tolerance**

Year Two focuses on three goals: 1) the development of interests identified in Year One, 2) the creation of career-related goals, and 3) an associated action plan. Throughout Year Two, students will learn to recognize and regulate feelings of frustration that may arise during the career planning process.

*SCCT* - Expanding on Year One, students will begin to develop career goals and create an action plan for achieving them. *SCCT*'s Choice Model posits that career goals are based on an individual's interests, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations (Lent & Brown, 2019). Lent and Brown (2019) also suggest that an individual's support systems and barriers impact career decision-making. As such, workshops in Year Two will focus on career-oriented goal setting and identifying barriers that may inhibit success. Students will learn how to incorporate

problem-identification and solving skills into their career action plans. Upon completing Year Two, students should feel they have a secure yet flexible career action plan.

*DBT* - Similar to Year One, Year Two will incorporate aspects from all DBT components; with an emphasis placed on emotion regulation and distress tolerance. As students move through the SCCT Choice Model and begin to identify barriers related to career development, feelings of frustration and distress may arise. In order to successfully implement a career action plan, students must possess the skills to regulate these feelings. Emotion regulation focuses on recognizing vulnerability to specific triggers and learning how to downregulate the emotional response (Linehan & Wilks, 2015). Distress tolerance focuses on developing a repository of self-soothing techniques that can be employed when traditional downregulation is unsuccessful (Linehan & Wilks, 2015). As in Year One, skills will be taught in conjunction with the career modules, and students will be encouraged to apply these skills in their career development process. At the end of Year Two, students should be able to identify activation patterns related to specific cues and successfully employ skills to downregulate these emotions.

#### **4.4 Year Three - Performance Model and Interpersonal Effectiveness**

Year Three focuses on the end goal: 1) for students to gain confidence in their ability to navigate the job search and application process. Students will gain the interpersonal skills required to advocate for themselves as they apply and interview for jobs.

*SCCT* - SCCT's Performance Model states that the achievement of performance goals is based on ability and persistence, both of which are heavily influenced by self-efficacy (Lent & Brown, 2019). As such, Year Three will focus on building an individual's self-efficacy related to their career aspirations. Workshops will become more focused on application and interview skills further buoying self-efficacy. At the end of Year Three, students should feel equipped with the skills needed to enter the job market.

*DBT* - Year Three will place an emphasis on interpersonal effectiveness. As students begin to apply and interview for internships and jobs, communicating effectively becomes critical. Interpersonal effectiveness focuses on building skills related to assertive yet respectful communication (Linehan & Wilks, 2015). Students will learn how to identify their needs and boundaries and clearly communicate them in a healthy manner, as well as how to evaluate situations that may not have gone as planned. Students will be encouraged to practice these skills in conjunction with other DBT skills from the mindfulness, distress tolerance, and emotion regulation modules. The opportunity to develop self-efficacy in these skills will be provided through mentoring responsibilities and mock interviews. At the end of Year Three, students should be able to communicate effectively and advocate for themselves as they navigate the job market.

#### **5.0 Discussion: An Integrated Intervention and Conclusion**

While many interventions exist to target career preparedness and depression separately, few attempt to tackle the interconnected nature of the two. Failing to address the overwhelming nature of emotions related to career uncertainty, the application process, and rejection is a notable limitation in many intervention designs. The incorporation of DBT into the intervention serves as a novel approach to help students regulate these emotions. Furthermore, DBT skills are highly applicable to everyday life, and students will likely feel

more equipped to handle non-career-related stressors. A suggested next step would be to pilot this intervention at Korean University, testing its acceptability and effectiveness.

This hypothetical intervention aims to empower students with feelings of confidence and control as they navigate their post-graduation job searches. We hypothesize that through this intervention, rates of both post-graduation employment and depression will be improved, resulting in happier and more productive college-aged students at lower risk for post-graduation suicide. In light of South Korea's high suicide rates, it is evident that an intervention that tangibly addresses risk factors that contribute to high rates of depression and depression-related suicide promise to make this intervention an effective method of reducing suicide attempts among university students suffering from depression.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We would like to thank and extend our sincere gratitude to the following for their support in this study: Professor Blake Waters, professor in the Department of Family & Preventive Medicine, Shakerra Bartley, student in the Masters of the Public Health program, Professor Brandy Bippes, professor in UAC Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies, and the University of Utah (Department of Family and Preventive Medicine / CEPH Certified Program).

## Appendix

**Table 1.**  
*Framework for Certificate Program*

Year	Goals & Focus Area	Example Workshop	Deliverables
<b>Year 1 (Interests Model)</b>	1. Develop deeper understanding of interests & how these apply to potential career paths 2. Begin to explore emotional patterns & develop understanding of DBT components 3. Mindfulness skills emphasized	1. Use Myers-Briggs test to determine personality types and explore career paths that may be a good fit 2. Utilize test to also explore how it relates to different stressors and emotions to explore concepts of Wise Mind, Emotional Mind, & Rational Mind	1. Entrance interview w/ career center 2. One informational interview w/ job of interest 3. Reflection paper from informational interview
<b>Year 2 (Choice Model)</b>	1. Develop attainable goals related to interest areas from Year 1 2. Develop relationships w/ mentors & introduce skills needed to successfully obtain a job 3. Develop deeper understanding of DBT components, emphasis on emotion regulation & distress tolerance 4. Learn how to apply skills in stressful situations	1. Students practice interview skills and evaluate their performance & how to improve skills through utilization of DBT Chain Analysis skills  2. Students learn importance of goal setting & organization through the DBT Goal Setting skill	1. Meet w/ mentor at least three times 2. Complete mock interview 3. Have resume & cover letter
<b>Year 3 (Performance Model)</b>	1. Develop expertise in skills needed to obtain a job, & put into practice through internships & peer mentorship 2. Create plan of action for post-	Learn how to handle salary conversations using interpersonal effectiveness skills of <i>DEAR MAN</i> & <i>Observing &amp; Describing Interpersonal</i>	1. Have internship (either external, w/ a faculty member, or as a peer mentor in the career center program) 2. Final portfolio containing

	graduation 3.Exhibit high competency of all DBT components 4.Interpersonal effectiveness skills are emphasized	<i>Situations</i> are utilized to help students articulate their needs	deliverables from throughout certification program 3.Final mock interview
--	--	--	--

*Note.* This is a hypothetical framework that can be used to design a certificate program that targets early intervention starting ideally at a student's first year in college. Students receive recognition on their transcript upon completion of each year.

## References

- Bathje, G. J., Kim, E., Rau, E., Bassiouny, M. A., & Kim, T. (2014). Attitudes toward Face-to-Face and Online Counseling: Roles of Self-Concealment, Openness to Experience, Loss of Face, Stigma, and Disclosure Expectations among Korean College Students. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling, 36*(4), 408–422. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-014-9215-2>
- Caplan, R. D., Vinokur, A. D., Price, R. H., & Van Ryn, M. (1989). Job seeking, reemployment, and mental health: A randomized field experiment in coping with job loss. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 74*(5), 759–769. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.74.5.759>
- Choi, B. Y., Lee, J. H., Kim, A., Kim, B., Cho, D., & Lee, S. M. (2013). The Economic Value of Career Counseling Services for College Students in South Korea. *Career Development Quarterly, 61*(2), 168–178. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2013.00045.x>
- Ha, J., & Park, D. (2022). Suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among university students in South Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic: The application of interpersonal-psychological theory and early maladaptive schema. *PeerJ, 10*, e13830. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.13830>
- Han, H., & Lee, J. (2021). The relationship between Korean university students' suicidal ideation and risk factors: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 26*(1), 405–420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2021.1974901>
- Hinkelman, J. M., & Luzzo, D. A. (2007). Mental health and career development of college students. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 85*(2), 143–147. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2007.tb00456.x>
- Kelly, M. E. (2009). *Social cognitive career theory as applied to the school-to-work transition*. <https://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2438&context=dissertations&httpsredir=1>
- Kim, J. (2022). Development and effectiveness verification of an online career adaptability program for undergraduate students. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 857111. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.857111>
- Kim, J., Oh, J., & Rajaguru, V. (2022). Job-seeking anxiety and job preparation behavior of undergraduate students. *Healthcare, 10*(2), 288. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare10020288>
- Kim, K., & Park, J.-I. (2014). Attitudes toward suicide among college students in South Korea and the United States. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems, 8*, 17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1752-4458-8-17>
- Kindicator. (2022, September 27). *Suicide rate*. K Indicator. <https://www.index.go.kr/unify/idx-info.do?idxCd=8040>

- Ko, J. W., Park, S., Yu, H. S., Kim, S., & Kim, D. M. (2016). The Structural Relationship Between Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes in Korea. *The Asia - Pacific Education Researcher*, 25(1), 147–157. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-015-0245-2>
- Koo, S. K. (2018). Depression status in Korea. *Osong Public Health and Research Perspectives*, 9(4), 141. <https://doi.org/10.24171/j.phrp.2018.9.4.01>
- Kwak, C. W., & Ickovics, J. R. (2019). Adolescent suicide in South Korea: Risk factors and proposed multi-dimensional solution. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 43, 150–153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2019.05.027>
- Lee, H.-S., & Bae, S.-Y. (2019). Analysis of Convergent Influence of Job Seeking Stress, Academic Burnout and Anxiety on Depression among College Students using Structural Equation Model. *Journal of the Korea Convergence Society*, 10(5), 71–78. <https://doi.org/10.15207/JKCS.2019.10.5.071>
- Lee, S., Jung, J., Baek, S., & Lee, S. (2022). The Relationship between Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy, Career Preparation Behaviour and Career Decision Difficulties among South Korean College Students. *Sustainability*, 14(21), Article 21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142114384>
- Lee, J.-Y., & Shin, Y.-J. (2022). Using the Theory of Planned Behavior to Predict Korean College Students' Help-Seeking Intention. *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*. [https://doi.org/DOI 10.1007/s11414-020-09735-z](https://doi.org/DOI%2010.1007/s11414-020-09735-z)
- Lent, R. W., & Brown, S. D. (2019). Social cognitive career theory at 25: Empirical status of the interest, choice, and performance models. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 115, 103316. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.06.004>
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45(1), 79–122. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1994.1027>
- Lim, A. Y., Lee, S.-H., Jeon, Y., Yoo, R., & Jung, H.-Y. (2018). Job-Seeking Stress, Mental Health Problems, and the Role of Perceived Social Support in University Graduates in Korea. *J Korean Med Sci*, 33(19). <https://doi.org/10.3346/jkms.2018.33.e149>
- Linehan, M. M., & Wilks, C. R. (2015). The course and evolution of dialectical behavior therapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 69(2), 97–110. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.psychotherapy.2015.69.2.97>
- Liu, J. (2020). Need to establish a new adolescent suicide prevention programme in South Korea. *National Library of Medicine*, 33(4). <https://doi.org/10.1136/gpsych-2020-100200>
- Luszczynska, Aleksandra & Schwarzer, Ralf. (2015). Social Cognitive Theory. In M. Connor & P. Norman (Eds.) *Predicting Health Behaviour* (3rd ed.). 127-169. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284667057\\_Social\\_Cognitive\\_Theory/citation/download](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284667057_Social_Cognitive_Theory/citation/download)

- McCauley, E., Berk, M. S., & Asarnow, J. R. (2018). Efficacy of Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Adolescents at High Risk for Suicide: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 75(8), 777-785. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2018.1109>
- Ministry of Health and Welfare. (2022, June 14). 2022 Suicide Prevention White Paper. *Korea Policy Briefing*. <https://www.korea.kr/archive/expDocView.do?docId=40007>
- Multon, K. D., Heppner, M. J., Gysbers, N. C., Zook, C., & Ellis-Kalton, C. A. (2001). Client psychological distress: An important factor in career counseling. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 49(4), 324-335. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2001.tb00960.x>
- Mun, G.-S., & Ahn, J.-Y. (2020). Journal of the Korean Official Statistics | Press Releases. Statistics Korea Statistics Research Institute, 25(4), 79-97. <https://doi.org/10.22886/jkos.2020.25.2.1>
- Nam, S. K., & In Park, H. (2015). The Construct Validity of Attitudes Toward Career Counseling Scale for Korean College Students. *Journal of Career Development*, 42(6), 478-492. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845315575735>
- Nam, S. K., & Lee, S. M. (2015). The Role of Attachment and Stigma in the Relationship Between Stress and Attitudes Toward Counseling in South Korea. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 93(2), 212-224. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2015.00197.x>
- Narimani, M., & Salehi, M. (2016). The Effectiveness of Dialectical Behavior Therapy on Stress Reduction and Increasing Self-Efficacy among Nurses [Abstract]. *Journal of Health and Care*, Vol. 17(No. 4), 270-280. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327164003\\_The\\_Effectiveness\\_of\\_Dialectical\\_Behavior\\_Therapy\\_on\\_Stress\\_Reduction\\_and\\_Increasing\\_Self-Efficacy\\_among\\_Nurses#fullTextFileContent](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327164003_The_Effectiveness_of_Dialectical_Behavior_Therapy_on_Stress_Reduction_and_Increasing_Self-Efficacy_among_Nurses#fullTextFileContent)
- OECD. (2021). *Suicide rates*. OECD Data. <https://data.oecd.org/healthstat/suicide-rates.htm>
- Pace, D., & Quinn, L. (2000). Empirical support of the overlap between career and mental health counseling of university students. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 14(3), 41-50. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J035v14n03\\_06](https://doi.org/10.1300/J035v14n03_06)
- Peláez-Fernández, M. A., Rey, L., & Extremera, N. (2019). Psychological distress among the unemployed: Do core self-evaluations and emotional intelligence help to minimize the psychological costs of unemployment? *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 256, 627-632. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2019.06.042>
- Pistorello, J., Fruzzetti, A. E., MacLane, C., Gallop, R., & Iverson, K. M. (2012). Dialectical behavior therapy (Dbt) applied to college students: A randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 80(6), 982-994. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029096>



- Price, R. H., Ryn, M. V., & Vinokur, A. D. (1992). Impact of a preventive job search intervention on the likelihood of depression among the unemployed. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 33(2), 158. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2137253>
- Riley, W. T., Martin, C. A., Rivera, D. E., Hekler, E. B., Adams, M. A., Buman, M. P., Pavel, M., & King, A. C. (2016). Development of a dynamic computational model of social cognitive theory. *Translational behavioral medicine*, 6(4), 483–495. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13142-015-0356-6>
- Tang, M., Montgomery, M. L. T., Collins, B., & Jenkins, K. (2021). Integrating career and mental health counseling: Necessity and strategies. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 58(1), 23–35. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joec.12155>
- Uliaszek, A. A., Rashid, T., Williams, G. E., & Gulamani, T. (2016). Group therapy for university students: A randomized control trial of dialectical behavior therapy and positive psychotherapy. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 77, 78–85. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2015.12.003>
- Üstündağ-Budak, A. M., Özeke-Kocabaş, E., & Ivanoff, A. (2019). Dialectical behaviour therapy skills training to improve turkish college students' psychological well-being: A pilot feasibility study. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 41(4), 580–597. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-019-09379-5>
- Vinokur, A. D., Van Ryn, M., Gramlich, E. M., & Price, R. H. (1991). Long-term follow-up and benefit-cost analysis of the Jobs Program: A preventive intervention for the unemployed. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76(2), 213–219. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.76.2.213>
- Vuori, J., Silvonon, J., Vinokur, A. D., & Price, R. H. (2002). The Työhön Job Search Program in Finland: Benefits for the unemployed with risk of depression or discouragement. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 7(1), 5–19. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.7.1.5>
- Yang, E., Sang, M., Lee, S., & Ahn, S. (2012). Career Centers in Higher Education in South Korea: Past, Present, and Future. *Asian Journal of Counselling*, 19.
- Yoon, L. (2022, September). *Main causes of death in South Korea in 2021, by age group*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1267450/south-korea-main-causes-of-death-by-age/>
- Zhu, Y., Nam, S., Quan, L., Baek, J., Jeon, H., & Tang, B. (2022). Linking suicide and social determinants of health in South Korea: An investigation of structural determinants. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, 1022790. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.1022790>

**Contact email:** nicole.codd@utah.edu