

## Who seeks career counselling? A prospective study of personality and career variables among Swiss adolescents

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**Abstract** This study investigated whether career adaptability, personality, attitude towards career counselling and some demographic variables predict the help seeking behaviour in career counselling among 330 Swiss adolescents in eighth grade. The results indicated that boys were less likely to seek help and that career related variables and attitude but not personality significantly predicted help-seeking. Specifically, help seeking related positively to undecidedness and positive perception of career counselling. Implications for school and career counsellors and suggestions for future research are presented.

**Résumé.** **Qui fait appel à l'orientation professionnelle? Une étude prospective de la personnalité et de variables vocationnelles chez des adolescents suisses.** Cette étude investigate si l'adaptabilité, la personnalité, les attitudes face au conseil en orientation et quelques variables démographiques prédisent le comportement de recherche d'aide à l'orientation parmi 330 adolescents suisses de huitième année. Les résultats indiquent que les garçons recherchent moins d'aide et que les variables vocationnelles et les attitudes, mais pas la personnalité, prédisent de manière significative la recherche d'aide à l'orientation. Plus spécifiquement, la recherche d'aide est positivement reliée à l'indécision et à une perception positive de l'orientation professionnelle. Les implications pour les conseillers en orientation, ainsi que des suggestions pour de futures recherches sont présentées.

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**Zusammenfassung.** **Wer benutzt die Berufsberatung? Eine prospektive Studie von Persönlichkeit- und Laufbahnvariablen bei Schweizer Jugendlichen.** Diese Studie untersuchte, ob Laufbahnadaptabilität, Persönlichkeit, Einstellungen gegenüber Berufsberatung sowie einige demographische Variablen das Aufsuchen der Berufsberatung bei einer Gruppe von 330 Schweizer Jugendlichen in der achten Klasse vorhersagen würden. Die Resultate zeigen, dass Knaben weniger häufig Hilfe aufsuchen und dass Variablen der Laufbahnentwicklung und Einstellungen aber nicht Persönlichkeit signifikant Verhalten zur Hilfesuche beeinflussen. Im Speziellen war das Aufsuchen der Berufsberatung positiv mit Unschlüssigkeit und einer positiven Wahrnehmung der Berufsberatung verbunden. Implikationen für Bildungs- und Berufsberater sowie Vorschläge für zukünftige Forschung werden präsentiert.

**Resumen.** **¿Quién busca recibir Orientación para la Carrera? Un Estudio Prospectivo de variables de personalidad y profesionales entre adolescentes suizos.** En este estudio se investigó si la adaptabilidad, personalidad y actitud hacia la orientación para la carrera, así como algunas variables demográficas predicen el comportamiento de búsqueda de orientación profesional entre 330 adolescentes suizos en grado octavo (*N.T. edad media en este curso- 13 años*). Los resultados indicaron que los chicos muestran menos tendencia a buscar ayuda y que las variables profesionales y la actitud, pero no las de personalidad, predicen significativamente la búsqueda de ayuda. En concreto, la búsqueda de ayuda se relacionó de forma positiva con la indecisión y con una percepción positiva de la orientación para la carrera. Se presentan las implicaciones para los orientadores escolares y profesionales, así como unas sugerencias para investigaciones futuras.

**Keywords** Help seeking in career counselling · Career adaptability · Adolescent career development

## Introduction

With historical roots in the emergence of counselling profession, career development has demonstrated extensive growth in both theory and practice (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2008). However, we still do not have enough information about the extent to which people actually seek help from career counselling services. The available literature across countries shows that a limited number of research studies examined the utilization of career counselling services (e.g., Fouad et al., 2006; Friehe & Aune, 1996; Shivy & Koehly, 2002), and yet specifically, our understanding of the characteristics distinguishing people who seek help from the ones who do not is very limited (Di Fabio & Bernaud, 2008; Fouad et al., 2006; Rochlen, Mohr, & Hargrove, 1999). Although there are related areas of research such as clients' expectations, anticipations, and preferences for career counselling (e.g., Niles, 1993; Shivy & Koehly, 2002; Tinsley, Tokar, & Helwig, 1994) and attitudes toward career counselling (e.g., Di Fabio & Bernaud, 2008), these studies

did not examine diverse demographic, personality and career related variables in relation to actual help seeking behaviour, especially for a young adolescent population. The present study seeks to fill this gap by examining the links between a group of demographic, personality, and career related variables and actual help seeking behaviour of eighth grade adolescents in Switzerland with relatively unique and challengingly diverse career development needs.

### Switzerland's educational system

The Swiss educational system places a strong emphasis on vocational education and training so that about 70% of all students continue to one of over 200 2- to 3-year vocational or professional apprenticeships after ninth-grade compulsory education is completed (Bundesamt für Berufsbildung und Technologie, 2007). Thus, these students have to apply for an apprenticeship by the end of eighth grade just until the beginning of ninth grade. Students may freely apply to the vocational program(s) of their choice; however, vocational education apprenticeships differ remarkably in availability and personal requirements and are offered on a competitive basis by private companies, which require thorough career preparation prior to this transition (Hirschi, 2009). The approximately 30% of students that continue to high-school (in preparation for later university-level education) also has to apply and take entry exams for these schools during the same time period. Within this time frame, eighth-grade teachers introduce all students, regardless of their aspired career path, to career services. Students from the seventh grade are not yet allowed to use the career counselling services in the region of Switzerland where the study was conducted; students in the ninth grade, on the other hand, visit career counselling much more seldom and typically only when facing difficulties in finding an apprenticeship, thus expecting more help in job searching and less so for career decision-making or career preparation. This is because in applying for apprenticeships by the beginning of ninth grade, they are expected to have finished their career decision-making preparation by the end of eighth grade.

These tasks required by the educational system imply that preparation for career decision making is crucial for the adolescent population in Switzerland. Considering the cultural practices and situational constraints of the Swiss educational system, eighth grade is an ideal time to consider Swiss adolescents' career development and which individual determinants promote their help-seeking behaviours from career counsellors.

### Adolescent career development

According to Super's (1990) life-span, life-space approach to career development, adolescence corresponds to two important career development stages. The first stage, growth, includes the developmental task of searching for information about work, as well as about one's interests and capacities: This process improves the sense of self and opens a variety of educational and occupational possibilities. The early tasks of the second stage, exploration, lead adolescents to crystallise their occupational preferences based on the information they acquired in the growth

stage. Super proposed that this exploration stage continues until the age of 24 when late adolescents or emerging adults start to implement their career choices. However, most Swiss adolescents make their career decisions earlier and implement their career choices either by choosing specific vocational training programs, or different high school tracks that determine further educational paths. In other words, adolescents' career *maturity*, which refers to the achievement of career development tasks in each stage to prepare for career decision making (Super, 1990), is crucial at this developmental stage. This is particularly true in societies such as Switzerland, which require early selection of an educational path (educational tracking at the end of 5th grade, specific career choice by the end of 8th grade).

On the other hand, career maturity is not an end status in career development. It also represents the readiness to cope with the changing work and environmental conditions in future career decision making, which Super referred to as *career adaptability* in adult career development. Recently, some researchers have suggested that the notion of career maturity be replaced with career adaptability for children and adolescents, as well (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2008; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2008; Savickas, 1997). This suggestion emerged from the critiques addressing the notion that different and changing environmental experiences influence not only adults, but also children and adolescents according to their life contexts and specific obstacles (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2008). Moreover, most adolescents across the world do not wait until their twenties to implement their career choices due to individual, familial, or systemic requirements such as those faced by the participants in the present study.

Thus, according to Savickas's (1997, 2002) career adaptability model and consistent with Super's theory (1990), major dimensions of adolescent career development (i.e., career exploration, decision making, and planning) will be considered along with other demographical, personality, and career related variables to understand who actually seeks help from career counsellors and what distinguishes them from the adolescents who do not. Because help-seeking in career counselling is a relatively new research area, the groups of variables in the present study will be discussed in light of the limited number of research studies previously published and implications drawn from relevant theories.

### Related variables

*Career decision making, career planning, and career exploration.* Although there are research studies which report that adolescents with higher career adaptability regarding career decision making, planning, exploration, and confidence beliefs are more competent in dealing with vocational transitions (e.g., Creed, Muller, & Patton, 2003; Germeijs & Verschueren, 2007), there is not any research which examined any potential relationship between these career development variables and help-seeking behaviour.

*Perceived barriers.* Social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Brown & Lent, 1996) emphasizes the role of contextual influences, including perceived barriers, in shaping self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goal setting. SCCT and the influence of perceived barriers in career development are supported by various

research studies (e.g., Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Brown & Lent, 1996; McWhirter, 1997). Although there are studies that indirectly show the influence of perceived barriers through self-efficacy and outcome expectations in predicting career exploratory intentions (e.g., Ochs & Roessler, 2004), the relation of perceived barriers to actual help-seeking behaviour has not yet been examined directly.

*Attitudes toward career counselling.* There is limited research on attitudes toward career counselling, and no study with a similar age-group of adolescents. Rochlen et al. (1999) indicated that college student populations had positive attitudes toward career counselling, including feeling more value and less stigma for career counselling as compared to psychotherapy in general, and that men felt higher stigma related to career counselling compared to women. Thus, gender may be important to examine in future studies. Another study investigated the influences of attitudes and career counsellor attractiveness on intention to seek career counselling in both a high school and a college student sample (Di Fabio & Bernaud, 2008). High school students' intention to seek career counselling was higher than that of college students, which was interpreted as a possible consequence of greater career decision making distress in the school-to-university or workforce transition. Also, consistent with Rochlen et al.'s results, boys reported higher levels of preoccupation about stigma, along with less value for career counselling than girls did. On the other hand, Rochlen et al. found that attitudes toward career counselling, and specifically the value dimension, predicted the intention to seek career counselling whereas counsellor attractiveness did not. Although these researchers reported poor generalizability and did not examine help-seeking behaviour, their results provided a sound rationale for investigating the influence of attitudes toward career counselling on actual help seeking, as suggested by the researchers of this and other related studies (e.g., Fouad et al., 2006; Shivy & Koehly, 2002).

#### Personality: self evaluations

*Self-efficacy beliefs.* As discussed earlier, SCCT (Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Brown & Lent, 1996) addresses the importance of self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations, and self-efficacy has been the focus of most research about SCCT (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2008). Self-efficacy beliefs were reported as strong predictors of many career related variables including career decision making and career exploratory behaviour (Hackett, 1997) along with outcome expectations (Ochs & Roessler, 2004). Yet, research has not paid attention to the potential role of this widely studied and supported notion in use of career counselling and actual help-seeking behaviour. Contrary to the proposition in SCCT, within the present study self-efficacy will be considered in its generalized form, representing a personality characteristic of positive competence self-evaluation (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002).

*Locus of control.* Locus of control refers to the degree one considers oneself as the source of reinforcement (Luzzo & Ward, 1995). As summarized by Taylor (1982), people with an internal locus of control may engage in more exploration and decision making activities by taking the responsibility for these career development

tasks, while people with an external locus of control may allow their belief in chance factors to limit their efforts to take action for these tasks.

A number of studies also support the idea that students with internal locus of control have a higher level of career development and career maturity (Luzzo & Ward, 1995). Moreover, SCCT sheds light on the potential role of locus of control or externalization beliefs in career development indirectly through self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and perceived barriers. Locus of control may play an important role in adolescents' career decision making when they perceive their contextual factors as barriers or have poor or irrational self-efficacy beliefs. In these cases, they may avoid career exploration and make immature, foreclosed decisions by not seeking help from career counsellors. The relation between locus of control and help-seeking from career counsellors has not been addressed in previous research.

### Demographic variables

*School type.* The participants in the current study represent students from two different school tracks in Switzerland: general requirements (Realschule, leading to a vocational apprenticeship) and advanced requirements (Sekundarschule, leading to vocational apprenticeships or high school entry). Students are separated into these tracks based on their general scholastic achievement in elementary school (after sixth grade). The advanced requirements track opens up more vocational possibilities and also allows students to attend high school, which directly prepares them for and allows them access to college education. Therefore, attending a general-track school presents career development challenges to students who aspire to certain professional positions because access to university-level programs is harder to obtain and their vocational apprenticeship options are more restricted.

*Gender.* The general help-seeking literature shows that girls have a greater tendency to seek counselling (Rochlen et al., 1999) whereas the limited numbers of studies about help-seeking in career counselling indicate conflicting results. For example, Di Fabio and Bernaud's (2008) research did not find gender to be a significant predictor of the intention to go to a career counsellor, but the men in Rochlen et al.'s study reported more stigmas about career counselling, which led to less positive attitudes toward career counselling. Suggestions in the literature highlighted the need for more studies that examine the role of gender in predicting help-seeking behaviour in career counselling.

*Nationality.* Some participants in the present study who immigrated from southeastern Europe, may have different attitudes and help seeking behaviours in career counselling due to cultural differences or socio-economic conditions. As discussed earlier, the limited number of studies about attitudes toward career counselling and general help-seeking address the necessity of attending to more diverse groups, especially to underrepresented populations whose needs may be in conflict with the potentially different value they ascribe to career counselling (Rochlen et al., 1999).

Overall, the discussed theories, constructs, and specific educational context in Switzerland suggest that it is important to attend to career development tasks and effective decision making for this population of eighth grade adolescents. Also, the research reviewed has suggested that there is a need for studies that explore the factors

related to actual help seeking behaviour. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to examine the predictors of actual help seeking behaviour in career counselling among a comprehensive list of career related, personality, and demographic variables.

## Method

### Participants

Students from a German-speaking region of Switzerland participated in this study ( $N = 330$ ) as well as a previous study (i.e., Hirschi & Läge, 2008). All students were eighth graders and most were 14 years of age with a range from 12 to 16 years ( $M = 14.09$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) at the first time of measurement. The age range comes due to possible different individual times of entry into the schooling system or repetition of single elementary grades by some students. There was an equal number of girls and boys ( $n = 165$ ); 120 (36.4%) students attended a general-track school (Realschule) while the others ( $n = 210$ ; 63.6%) attended an advanced-track school (Sekundarschule). Fifty-seven students (17.3%) were immigrants, mostly from southeastern Europe, and the others ( $n = 273$ ; 82.7%) were Swiss nationals. The distribution of gender, school track, and immigration background was representative of all Swiss students in this grade (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2006).

### Instruments

*Career exploration* was assessed with the second part of the Career Exploration Scale from the German version of the Career Development Inventory (Seifert & Eder, 1985; Super, 1990; Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Jordaan, & Myers, 1981). This scale consists of 13 items that represent sources for gaining information regarding career development (e.g., my father, my teacher, job-shadowing). Students are asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale how much useful information they have already obtained from the sources ranging from 1 (*no information*) to 5 (*very much information*). Higher scores represented that students conducted more career exploration. Studies supporting the construct validity of the scale showed positive relations to career knowledge and decidedness, and to completion of the major one pursues at university (e.g., Seifert, 1993; Seifert & Eder, 1985). Cronbach's alpha was .78 in the present sample.

*Career decidedness*. The German version of the Career Decidedness/Commitment Scale from the Career Maturity Inventory (Crites, 1973; Seifert & Stangl, 1986) was administered to participants. The scale consists of 12 items (e.g., "I don't know exactly what to do in order to choose the right occupation") and answers are indicated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from *not true* to *true*. In order for higher scores to represent more decidedness, the final scale scores were inverted in the present study, so that higher scores indicated more career decidedness and commitment. Supporting the construct validity of the scale, studies have shown a significant relationship to vocational identity (Hirschi & Läge, 2007), positive career attitudes, more active application for an apprenticeship after school, and

more success in actually finding an apprenticeship (e.g., Bergmann, 1993). Cronbach's alpha in the present study was .87.

*Career planning* was measured by the Career Planning Scale of the German version of the Career Development Inventory (Seifert & Eder, 1985; Super et al., 1981). The scale consists of 22 items and assesses time and effort invested in career planning and in gaining knowledge about preferred occupations (e.g., "Talking about career plans with an adult who knows something about me"). Answers are given on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very few*) to 5 (*a lot*) with higher scores indicating more career planning. Studies supporting the construct validity of the scale reported positive relations to career knowledge and decidedness, or likelihood to obtain an apprenticeship after school (e.g., Seifert, 1993; Seifert & Eder, 1985). Cronbach's alpha in the present was .89.

*Generalized self-efficacy and locus of control.* Generalized self-efficacy (GSE) was assessed with the Inventory for the Measurement of Self-Efficacy and Externality (FKK; Krampen, 1991). The FKK includes 16 items measuring GSE on a 6-point Likert-type scale. The responses range from 1 (*very wrong*) to 6 (*very true*) (e.g., "I can determine very much of what happens in my life") and higher scores indicate a higher level of GSE. Cronbach's alpha in the present study was .73. Externality of control beliefs was measured with 16 items (e.g., "Much of what happens in my life depends on luck") on a 6-point Likert type scale. The responses range from 1 (*very wrong*) to 6 (*very true*). Cronbach's alpha in the present study was .79. Support for the scale's construct validity in terms of significant relations to school motivation, personality traits, psychological disorders, or well-being is available from samples of adolescents from Germany (e.g., Krampen, 1991) and New Zealand (e.g., Anderson, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2005).

*Perceived barriers.* Barriers to career decision-making and career development were assessed with the respective sub-scale of the German version of the My Vocational Situation Scale (Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980; Jörin, Stoll, Bergmann, & Eder, 2004). The 6-item scale asks students to indicate how much certain statements resemble their personal vocational situation (e.g., "The education for my vocational aspiration is too expensive or too time-consuming") on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Answers range from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*completely*). Higher scores indicate the presence of more perceived barriers. Support for content validity of the scale includes negative correlations to vocational identity, as well as positive relations to increased counselling needs (Jörin Fux, 2006). Cronbach's alpha within the present sample was .71.

*Attitude towards career counselling.* The degree to which students perceived career counselling as useful and to which they had a positive attitude was assessed with one item from the Career Exploration Attitudes Scales of the German version of the CDI (Seifert & Eder, 1985). The scale asks students which people or information sources they would turn to in order to become clearer about their career plans. Different sources are presented (e.g., parents, books, career counsellor) and responses are on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*certainly not*) to 5 (*certainly*). Answers to the item *career counsellor* were taken as indication of positive attitudes towards career counselling. Because there is no validity and reliability data on this measure, its use creates a limitation (discussed later).



*Demographic questionnaire.* The demographic questionnaire asked for information regarding gender, nationality, and school.

### Data collection procedure

Data collection took place in August at the beginning of the 2006/2007 eighth-grade school year in school classes under the supervision of students' teachers. Data regarding counselling attendance were recorded continuously throughout the year by counselling session and obtained in July at the end of the school year. Researchers consulted with the teachers directly involved and school directors from the participating schools and obtained their support for conducting the survey. In this region of Switzerland, no formal permission from research boards or school system administrators was required for this type of research. Passive consent from students' parents/guardians was obtained by informing parents/guardians with a letter about the general nature of the study before data collection. Student participation was voluntary and students gave active consent for the use of all sources of data, including that which was collected in collaboration with a local career counselling centre for those students who actually used career counselling services ( $n = 205$ ; 62%); all personal data and answers from the questionnaires was kept strictly confidential.

### Data analysis procedure

Because the present study was based on the prediction of a dichotomous outcome (whether students sought help or not), data analysis required a hierarchical logistic regression analysis. The first block of predictive variables were demographical ones, which were school type, gender, and nationality considering the importance of checking and controlling these basic variables. The second model examined the personality variables (self-efficacy and externality of control beliefs) because of the empirical evidence on the influence of these basic variables on career development and decision making. The third model included career development variables, specifically career adaptability dimensions, which were career decidedness, planfulness, and exploration, as well as perceived barriers. In the fourth model, attitudes toward career counselling was entered into the analysis as the last predictor variable because it was the variable most closely tied to help-seeking according to the review of literature. Data from nine students were excluded from the regression analysis because they did not completely or correctly fill out all measures.

## Results

### Correlations

As Table 1 shows, boys had less of a tendency to seek career counselling than girls. Other demographic variables (nationality and school track) and personality variables (i.e., self-efficacy, locus of control) did not relate to help seeking. Among

**Table 1** Bivariate correlations among the measured variables ( $N = 330$ )

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Career counselling	–										
2 Gender	-.14**	–									
3 Schooltype	-.05	-.05	–								
4 Nationality	.01	.06	.19**	–							
5 Self-efficacy	.03	.14**	.16**	.04	–						
6 Externality	.00	-.01	-.18**	-.07	-.31***	–					
7 Decidedness	-.14*	.16**	.06	.19**	.35***	-.29***	–				
8 Planning	-.11	.06	-.08	.01	.38***	-.15**	.58***	–			
9 Exploration	.03	.02	-.20**	-.04	.16**	.12*	.14*	.38***	–		
10 Barriers	.02	-.07	-.14**	-.26***	-.19***	.36***	-.55***	-.23**	-.012	–	
11 Counselling attitude	.16**	-.10	.02	-.02	.04	.031	-.11*	.02	.13*	.15**	–
<i>M</i>					64.20	50.21	24.23	73.60	42.40	11.86	4.10
<i>SD</i>					8.14	9.35	6.32	12.68	9.70	3.74	0.99

*Note.* Coding: Career counselling: 0 = did not attend, 1 = did attend; Gender 0 = girls, 1 = boys; Schooltype 0 = basic scholastic requirements, 1 = advanced scholastic requirements; Nationality 0 = other (non-Swiss), 1 = Swiss

Correlations for variables 1–4 are Spearman all other Pearson; \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

the career variables, decidedness related negatively to help seeking; students who were less decided about their career choices had a greater tendency to seek career counselling. Attitudes about career counselling related positively to help seeking; students who had positive attitudes about seeking help went more often to career counselling.

### Prediction of help seeking

Model 1 in Table 2 shows that the demographic variables did not significantly predict help seeking,  $\chi^2(3, n = 321) = 6.88, p = .08$ . Personality variables in Model 2 did not explain help-seeking above and beyond the demographical variables of Model 1,  $\Delta\chi^2(2, n = 321) = 1.4, p = .49$ . However, the addition of career related variables significantly improved the fit of the model  $\Delta\chi^2(4, n = 321) = 10.88, p = .03$ . Finally, a comparison of the model  $\chi^2$  statistics for Model 3 and Model 4 suggested that the addition of the attitudes measure significantly improved the fit of the model,  $\Delta\chi^2(1, n = 321) = 5.04, p = .03$ . Overall, the final regression model explained nearly 10% of seeking help from career counselling, and correctly predicted help seeking for 62% of the students.

## Discussion

Due to the gap and suggested directions about help-seeking research in the career development literature, the present study examined the factors that predict help seeking in career counselling. Based on Super's (1990) developmental career approach, Savickas's (1997) relatively recent assumptions of the promising career adaptability model, and SCCT (Brown & Lent, 1996), this study considered a list of demographical, personality, and career development variables as potential significant predictors: gender, school track, nationality; self-efficacy, externality of control beliefs; and career decidedness, planfulness, exploration, perceived barriers, and attitude towards career counselling.

The results provided partial explanation for the research question. Correlation results indicated that being a girl, less career decided, and having positive attitudes toward career counselling were positively related to help-seeking in career counselling. The significant relation between being a girl and seeking help from career counsellors is consistent with the results in the general help-seeking literature (e.g., Fischer & Farina, 1995), as well as the research about attitudes toward career counselling (Rochlen et al., 1999). On the other hand, while Rochlen et al. suggested that the reasons for men's less positive attitudes toward career counselling may be due to stigma or shame feelings rather than ascribing less value to it, Di Fabio and Bernaud (2008) did not report any significant gender difference in either value or stigma dimensions of attitudes toward career counselling. Most of the research, including the cited examples, is based on college student samples, and the general help-seeking literature for adolescents report contradictory findings (Kuhl, Jarkon-Horlick, & Morrissey, 1997). Thus, more research is needed to examine gender differences in both attitudes and actual

**Table 2** Logistic regression models predicting odds of seeking career counselling ( $n = 321$ )

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	$\beta$	SE	OR	$\beta$	SE	OR	$\beta$	SE	OR	$\beta$	SE	OR
School type												
Advanced	-.36	.25	1.43	-.42	.26	1.52	-.53	.27	1.70	-.61*	.28	1.84
Lower ( <i>ref</i> )	-			-			-			-		
Gender												
Boy	-.52*	.24	1.69	-.58*	.24	1.78	-.58*	.25	1.80	-.56*	.25	1.74
Girl ( <i>ref</i> )	-			-			-			-		
Nationality												
Swiss	.18	.32	.83	.18	.32	.84	.19	.33	.83	.16	.34	.86
Non-Swiss ( <i>ref</i> )	-			-			-			-		
Self efficacy	-			.02	.02	1.02	.04*	.02	1.04	.04*	.02	1.04
Externality	-			-	.01	.10	-	.01	.10	-	.01	.10
Career decidedness	-			-			-.05	.03	1.05	-.04	.03	1.04
Planfulness	-			-			-.02	.01	.98	-.02	.01	.98
Exploration	-			-			.01	.01	1.01	-	.01	1.00
Perceived barriers	-			-			-.06	.04	.95	-.07	.04	.94
Attitudes	-			-			-			.28*	.12	1.32
Constant	.18	.19	1.20	-.80	1.39	.45	-1.09	1.79	.34	-1.72	1.82	.18
-2 Log likelihood	416.41			415.01			404.13*			399.10**		
Nagelkerke $R^2$	.03			.04			.08			.01		
OR odds ratio												

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

help-seeking behaviour in career counselling. Moreover, increased help-seeking of girls may be an indicator of their greater career concerns, needs, or barriers, which is another area that needs more research especially for adolescent populations.

The results of hierarchical logistic regression analyses showed that demographical and personality variables did not significantly explain differences in help seeking behaviour. This indicated that the degree to which adolescents evaluate themselves as competent and in control of their lives does not relate to seeking help in career counselling. Conversely, the career variables significantly predicted variance in help seeking. Specifically, career decidedness is negatively correlated with help-seeking in career counselling. Students who were more undecided about their career choice were more likely to seek help in career counselling. This somewhat contradicts the findings from Rogers, Creed, and Ian Glendon (2008), who showed that students who had more goal clarity were more likely to actively plan and explore their career options. It is possible that this positive orientation towards career exploration and planning does not necessarily translate into seeking help from career counsellors as also incited by the nonsignificant relationship between planning and exploration to help seeking in the present sample.

The significant relation between positive attitudes toward career counselling and actual help-seeking behaviour is consistent with previous studies about the importance of attitudes in explaining help seeking (Rochlen et al., 1999; Di Fabio & Bernaud, 2008). As the regression results showed, taking into account the attitude towards career counselling explains significant variance in help seeking above and beyond variables tapping the degree of career development and perceived barriers.

### Limitations and implications

One limitation of this study is the measurement of attitudes toward career counselling. The response to a one-item question was considered as an indication of attitudes. Accordingly, the results of this study do not shed light on what dimensions of the attitudes, values or stigmas, are related to actual help-seeking. Future research should use psychometrically advanced scales to measure attitudes toward career counselling (e.g., Rochlen et al., 1999) to examine its relation to actual help-seeking.

Another limitation concerns the inclusion of some predictor variables. The selection of career development variables included some of the most prominent variables of career development according to Savickas's (1997) career adaptability model or of Brown and Lent's (1996) SCCT model. However, other constructs, such as, career decision-making self-efficacy were not included in this study. Considering the importance of detailed career adaptability notion for the participants of this study, future research should apply other multidimensional measures of career adaptability (e.g., Hirschi, 2009). This approach might be especially useful because the variables included in the present study could only explain a modest amount of variance in help seeking. However, this modest effect can also be explained by the skewed distribution of students regarding help seeking. Most did seek help in career

counselling and only a minority did not. This leads to a reduced power in logistic regression analysis.

The present study took into account the major situational and contextual factors due to the Swiss educational system and accordingly focused on the eighth grade students for whom the career decision making is crucial, as well as constrained with the time frame and availability of the career services in the eighth grade. Furthermore, the aim of the study was to examine the personality and career development factors that predict help-seeking behaviour. Therefore, this study did not take into account some other potential situational dimensions and social aspects of help-seeking (e.g., pressure from peers, family or teachers, value and stigmatization of using career counselling). Attention to both personality and social-situational determinants of help-seeking behaviour in future studies might contribute to our understanding of what distinguishes students who seek help from a career counsellor from those who do not.

A major strength of the study was its prospective design with the behavioural outcome measure of actual help seeking. However, all other variables relied upon self-report measures, which induce shared method-bias. Though the Swiss educational system is similar to that in other European countries, this study relied on the use of a convenience sampling, which might limit the generalizability of the results to the specific Swiss eighth grade context.

Despite the limitations, the results of the present study provide support for the importance of career adaptability for this adolescent population, which related significantly to help-seeking in career counselling as an explanation to the research question. This has important implications for both counsellors and overall educational policy in schools. Because these adolescents face career development and decision making tasks at a relatively young age and in a competitive system, their career exploratory behaviour should also be encouraged and supported starting from earlier ages and grade levels.

Students should work on more guidance activities that will provide awareness, comfort, and skills for career exploratory behaviours in order to develop career adaptability, such as learning about the educational and vocational system and transitions, the actual opportunities and barriers of the system and individuals, decision-making skills, and the importance of help-seeking from professionals. Such classroom guidance or group work activities can help students develop career adaptability and encourage their help-seeking from a counsellor by communicating the importance of making informed decisions. Also, the students who do not go to counsellors to seek help may benefit from classroom guidance, where they may have the chance to build relationships with school counsellors and become more comfortable in seeking one-to-one interactions later in the process.

Interventions and policies should also take into account the contextual limitations in the lives of these adolescents, and more research should examine what characteristics and barriers distinguish adolescents who seek help from those who do not. The present study can provide an initial empirical reference for the examination of adolescents' actual help-seeking in career counselling.

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