

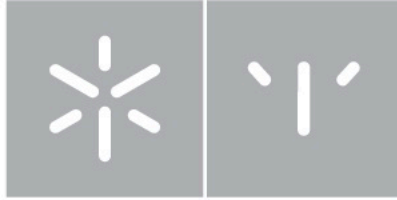


Universidade do Minho

Escola de Psicologia

Adriana da Silva Quintão

**Life Career Profiles: Values' Functions,
Career Exploration and Satisfaction in
International Students**



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Dissertação de Mestrado
Mestrado Integrado em Psicologia

Trabalho realizado sob orientação da

Professora Doutora Maria do Céu Taveira

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Assinatura Adriana da Silva Quintão

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Perfis de Vida e Carreira: Funções dos Valores, Exploração de Carreira e Satisfação em Estudantes Internacionais

Resumo

Os valores afetam todas as áreas da vida das pessoas, inclusive a vocacional. O processo de desenvolvimento de carreira acontece ao longo da vida, tendo particular importância em transições, como estudar numa universidade estrangeira. Este estudo visa analisar as relações simultâneas entre valores de vida, exploração de carreira e satisfação académica e social em estudantes internacionais a estudar em Portugal. Participaram 96 estudantes internacionais (54 mulheres e 42 homens), com uma média de idades de 26.5 anos ($SD = 7.1$), que responderam a um questionário online composto por questionário demográfico, Questionário de Valores Básicos, *Career Exploration Survey*, Questionário de Satisfação Social e Questionário de Satisfação Académica. Os resultados de uma análise de clusters permitiram identificar dois perfis de vida e carreira distintos. O perfil exploratório caracteriza maiores pontuações nas subfunções valorativas suprapessoal, existência e interativa, comportamentos exploratórios elevados, maiores níveis de satisfação social e académica e maior envolvimento em atividades não académicas. O perfil conformista caracteriza pontuações elevadas nas subfunções valorativas suprapessoal, existência e interativa, comportamentos exploratórios reduzidos e menor satisfação. As variáveis de exploração de carreira foram as que melhor permitiram discriminar os perfis. Conclui-se que existem especificidades no ajustamento de estudantes universitários internacionais a estudar num país estrangeiro.

Palavras-chave: valores humanos, exploração da carreira, satisfação académica, satisfação social, ajustamento

Life Career Profiles: Values' Functions, Career Exploration and Satisfaction in International Students

Abstract

Values affect every area of people's lives, including the vocational one. The career development process takes place throughout life, having particular importance in transitions, such as studying at a foreign university. This study aims to analyse the simultaneous relationships between life values, career exploration and social and academic satisfaction in international students studying in Portugal. Participants included 96 international students (54 women and 42 men), with a mean of ages of 26.5 years ($SD = 7.1$), who answered an online questionnaire composed by demographic questionnaire, Basic Values Questionnaire, Career Exploration Survey, Social Satisfaction Questionnaire and Academic Satisfaction Questionnaire. The results of a cluster analysis allowed the identification of two distinct life career profiles. The exploratory profile features higher scores on suprapersonal, existence and interactive valorative subfunctions; high exploratory behaviours; higher levels of social and academic satisfaction; and higher involvement in non-academic activities. The conformist profile features high scores on suprapersonal, existence and interactive valorative subfunctions; reduced exploratory behaviours; and lower satisfaction. Career exploration variables were the best in discriminating the profiles. It was concluded that there are specificities in the adjustment of international college students studying in a foreign country.

Keywords: human values, career exploration, academic satisfaction, social satisfaction, adjustment

Life career profiles: Values' functions, career exploration and satisfaction in international students

Human values are considered important goals or standards that work as guiding-principles in people's lives (e.g., Coelho, Gouveia, & Milfont, 2006; Schwartz, 2012). One of the reasons why values are so important is their impact on behaviour, since people's natural way of searching for values is to behave in a way that expresses or promotes them (Athayde, 2012). The development process of values meets individual's needs, considering the different social and cultural contexts (Brown, 2002b), therefore, values affect every area of a person's life, including the vocational one. Hence, values assume an important role in theories of career decision-making and career development processes.

According to Holland (1959), when people are making a vocational choice that decision will be the result of the interaction of several factors, like their own heredity and their cultural and personal backgrounds, and through this experience they will develop a hierarchy of habitual methods to respond to the environment. Thus, Holland (1959) created and later developed the theory of vocational choice, a comprehensive theory that integrates knowledge that existed by the time in other theories. Holland's theory considers six different personality types (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional) and the same six types of environment. Although there are six personality types, most people can relate to more than one, if not all of the types to a certain level (Brown, 2002a). Each type represents specific values, beliefs, personal tastes and behaviours; therefore, people are naturally dragged to both people and environments of the same type as theirs. When an environment pattern resembles a person's personality it encourages stability of behaviour and makes it more likely to be successful and satisfied within that environment, on the other hand, when a person's personality is different from the environment type it causes incongruent interactions that can lead to changes in the person's behaviour (Brown, 2002b).

Super (1953) proposed the theory of vocational development, defending a broader approach of career and integrating concepts as choice, preference and adjustment, highlighting the role played by cultural factors and personal values in guiding behaviours in different fields of a person's life. This theory considers the different roles played by people in the course of their lives (e.g., child, student, worker), as well as the five stages of development they go through (growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, decline) (Super, 1980). During their life span, people will be affected by personal, situational and environmental determinants that will affect their experiences. People's abilities, personalities and interests are different, which leads to different preferences regarding career occupations that can change over time. The vocational development leads to a development in the self-concept, i.e., the way people see themselves. Thus, it is important for work and life satisfaction that

people can find an occupation that matches their own personalities and values, where they can use their abilities and play the role they find appropriate at the time. Therefore, an occupational career is defined, in this theory, as the sequence of positions held throughout a lifetime (Super, 1980). Super's theory has informed several studies and intervention regarding the vocational field (e.g., Ferrari, Nota, Schultheiss, Stead, & Davis, 2017; Smart, 1998) and also new theoretical formulations as, for example, Savickas' career construction theory (2005) and theory of vocational behaviour and development (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986; Vondracek, Ford & Porfeli, 2014), although further validation studies are still needed.

Another important career theory and with big impact on career research and practices is the social cognitive career theory (SCCT), developed by Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994). The SCCT is based on Bandura's social cognitive theory but with a specific focus on career domain. It highlights the importance of three particular social cognitive mechanisms: (a) self-efficacy beliefs, (b) outcome expectations, and (c) goal representations. This theory aims to explain how academic and career interests develop, how choices in these contexts are made and how subsequent satisfaction and success are achieved (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). Self-efficacy was defined by Bandura as the belief a person holds regarding the power to affect situations and it can predict a change in behaviours (Deer, Gohn, & Kanaya, 2018). Therefore, self-efficacy beliefs are changeable throughout time and concern specific activities. The SCCT defends that people develop interest in, choose to pursue and adapt and perform better when they have strong self-efficacy beliefs about an activity, but only if they also feel like they have the skills the activity demands and environmental support. When defining goals, people consider their personal competences as well as the outcomes they expect from the action, making these beliefs and expectations factors that can determine success. However, cultural norms play an important role on the range of opportunities one has access to, i.e., in some cultures being man or woman determines the type of activities a person is exposed to. So, although a person's interest may affect choice goals, sometimes cultural values limit the role these personal interests can play in career choice (Lent et al., 2002).

As literature shows, over the years different theories have been highlighting the role of values in career processes and the need of studying the functions of values regarding career behaviours and results. One of the theories that allows studying values concerning their function in human lives is the functional theory of values (FTV), proposed by Gouveia and associates (2009; 2011; 2012; 2014; 2015). The FTV is an integrative proposal that considers values are (a) concepts or categories, (b) about desirable states of existence, (c) concepts that transcend specific situations, (d) assume different levels

of importance, (e) guide a selection or evaluation of behaviours or events, and (f) represent cognitively the human needs (Gouveia, Milfont, Fischer, & Coelho, 2009). The focus of the FTV are the functions of these values (Souza, Gouveia, Lima, & Santos, 2015). Two primary functions have been identified: guiding actions and expressing needs (Gouveia, Milfont, & Guerra, 2014).

The function of guiding human behaviours is identified by the dimension 'orientation type', which can be social, central or personal. If individuals are guided by social values they are oriented to the community and interpersonal relationships; while those who are guided by personal values are self-centred, with an intrapersonal focus (Fischer, Milfont, & Gouveia, 2011). The third group, central values, is located between personal and social values once they are relevant to explain or support these values, being the basis from which the others are defined (Ardila, Gouveia, & Medeiros, 2012). The function of expressing human needs is represented by the dimension of 'motivation type', from which derive the materialistic values (pragmatic) and the idealistic values (humanitarian). The materialistic values are related to practical ideas, suggesting an orientation towards specific goals and normative rules. Individuals guided by these values usually care about biological survival, prioritizing and assuring their own existence. On the other hand, idealistic values express a universal orientation, based on more abstract ideas and principles with an innovative spirit (Medeiros et al., 2012).

These two dimensions (orientation and motivation), when brought together, lead to six subfunctions. Each subfunction will be described, considering its type of orientation and motivation. Existence subfunction: represents a central orientation in the materialistic motivational domain. It concerns the basic physiologic needs, the need for security and personal stability. Its purpose is to assure the basic conditions for a biological and psychological survival. Promotion subfunction: represents a personal orientation in the materialistic motivation. These values, like needs of self-esteem, have origin in a personal principle while materialistic realizations are very important. Individuals oriented by these values emphasize hierarchy when it is based on the demonstration of personal competence, appreciating an organized and structured society and being practical on their decisions and behaviours. Normative subfunction: it has a social orientation and a materialistic motivation. Represents the need to control and the essential preconditions to satisfy needs. It reflects the importance of preserving the culture and conventional norms. Endorsing these normative values shows a vertical orientation, in which compliance to authority is important. Suprapersonal subfunction: presents a central orientation indicating an idealistic motivation. Its values represent the aesthetic and cognition needs as well as the higher need of self-actualization. Suprapersonal values help to organize and categorize the world consistently, giving clarity and stability to the person's cognitive organization, focusing on the relevance

of abstract ideas, with less emphasis on concrete and material matters. Excitement subfunction: it has a personal orientation with an idealistic motivation. Represents the physiological need of satisfaction or the inclination towards the principle of pleasure. It is less pragmatic in the search for a social status or assuring social harmony and security; its values contribute to promote changes and innovations on the structure of social organizations. Interactive subfunction: it has a social orientation in the idealistic motivational domain. Represents the needs of belonging, love and affiliation, therefore, its values are essential to establish, regulate and maintain interpersonal relationships. Social contacts are a goal in themselves, emphasizing more affective and abstracts attributes.

As literature has been showing, values guide or motivate human behaviour and attitudes. When people think about their values they try to understand what is important for their own lives. Each value has a different level of importance in people's lives and this also varies for a person to another, i.e., a person may consider a specific value very important and another one may consider it unimportant (Schwartz, 2006). One of the most important domains of human behaviour and development is the career and vocational domain. In this context, career exploration is an important process, whether for decision making and choices or to know how to handle changes and transitions and how to adapt to new work environments. Career exploratory behaviours are guided by intentions or attempts to reach goals and needs associated with life roles and facilitate the acquisition of information about occupations, enlightening about choices and decisions and orienting career plans and goals more realistically, being on the basis of a greater confidence to deal with vocational tasks during life and adaptation to new work environments during transition moments (e.g., Ireland & Lent, 2018; Lent et al., 2002).

The process of career exploration is carried out through our whole lifetime and includes adaptative functions, thus, it might be related with adaptability. While in the process of career exploration, people gain understanding on the environment and the self that can be useful in career development (e.g., Blustein, 1997; Cheung & Jin, 2015; Restubog, Florentino, & Garcia, 2010). This career understanding can lead to greater decision self-efficacy and career decidedness (Cheung & Jin, 2015). Career decidedness can be defined by the level of confidence an individual has to follow a particular career path (Fearon, Nachmias, McLaughlin, & Jackson, 2018).

The attention that has been given to personal and contextual factors and their influence in career exploration has been increasing. Brown (2002b, p.1) defended that "cultural values, particularly social relationships values, play an important role in the career development process". People are more likely to choose careers in organizations that are aligned with their personal values. These values have

become an essential part in career choices and career self-management and can determine career's development and success (Abessolo, Rossier, & Hirschi, 2017). According to Schwartz theory (2006), individuals who portray readiness for change are most likely to value autonomy and stimulation in their careers, rejecting values linked to security, conformity and tradition (i.e., normative values according to Gouveia's theory). Therefore, in order to feel satisfied and make congruent choices, it is important to take into account individual or personal values when making a career decision (Abessolo et al., 2017).

Values also provide the basis for people to evaluate themselves and others and play an important role in establishing personal goals (Brown, 2002b). Despite values' importance in choosing, feeling satisfied and pursuing a career, there are also other variables that interact with values to affect career choices and its outcomes (Brown, 2002b). Research has been showing that when people pursue activities or interests that are congruent with their career goals (e.g., academic major) it can predict academic satisfaction (Lent et al., 2016), which suggests the role of self- and environment exploration in career decision-making and adjustment (e.g., Soares, 1999; Stringer, Kerpelman, & Skorikov, 2012). Students' academic satisfaction has been also predicted by academic self-efficacy, goal progress and environmental support. College students feel more academically satisfied when they consider themselves making progress towards their goals and feel social support towards their efforts (Lent et al., 2014). Although people might feel supported in the roles they play (e.g., student), they may not feel supported in their career development attitudes and behaviours. For example, in some societies, the academic achievements are far more recognized and encouraged by families than career development behaviours, such as career exploration (e.g., Cheung & Jin, 2015). Besides social support, being involved in extracurricular activities seems to influence positively academic success and self-confidence in one's intelligence (Othman et al., 2009), which are important factors of career development processes such as decision making and adjustment (e.g., Gottfredson, 2005; Nasir, 2012a).

Going abroad for graduation purposes or as an academic experience is another important context to study these career processes, given the challenges and opportunities associated with this transition. One of the advantages of mobility programs and exchanges of students is that they bring cultures together and enhance the understanding and respect for different values, beliefs and norms. Besides, international students are considered to be very concerned in future careers, being that of the reasons to go abroad, in order to increase their future opportunities (Arambewela & Hall, 2013). On the other hand, when moving to another country, students can face some issues, like adjustment problems to the new culture. Evidence has been suggesting that cultural and social adjustment can have an effect in several areas of life, including the academic field (e.g., Nasir, 2012a; Nasir, 2012b; Sumra, 2012). The

level of adjustment to the host society can affect student's academic performance, therefore, students with greater ability of adjustment and coping skills may perform better than those who possess less ability (Nasir, 2012a). Research supports that problems in academic adjustment of international students tend to be related to language issues, which can lead to a lower academic satisfaction (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Nasir, 2012a). Mastering the host language is related to social and academic adaptation and to social satisfaction and with the overall international experience (Perrucci & Hu, 1995). International students report greater difficulty and less social support than local students, which can be explained by the distance from their families and friends and, although most international students might have some difficulty in creating close friendships with local students, findings support that the bigger the interaction, the better the adjustment (Andrade, 2006). Both for international and local students, self-confidence in their abilities helped the adjustment process (Andrade, 2006). Social support was considered the main predictor of stress and life satisfaction (Cho & Yu, 2015). While studying academic adjustment, Lent, Taveira, Sheu and Singley (2009) found that positive academic adjustment can predict life satisfaction in college students, which can be explained by the centrality this domain has in their lives. The results also suggested that academic adjustment could be predicted by academic self-efficacy and environmental support.

The continuous contact with a second culture can lead to changes in a person's values and behaviours. When people enter a new culture, it is very important to have sociocultural adaption, i.e., respecting the norms, understanding the beliefs and having sensibility towards the values of the culture. It does not necessarily involves accepting those beliefs as their own, but, instead, being aware of the differences and being able to deal with them. Lack of knowledge about the cultural values and norms of the host country can lead to anxiety and affect negatively international students (Sumer, 2009). It has been studied the role of media in educating international students on their host countries' cultures. Research shows that media exposure is the most effective and fastest way to pass on information and understand the society once it is a source of information on cultural norms and values. It may also provide information on how to communicate with locals, helping the adaptation to the new environment (Shafaei & Razak, 2016).

Other difficulties faced by international students when arriving in a host country can be integration into society due to cultural differences, accommodation, family life, unfulfilled expectations and life satisfaction (Pan, Yue, & Chan, 2010). Cultural values may represent a barrier for international students at several levels, including learning, understanding and communication. An international student's satisfaction can be determined by 4 factors: social status (e.g., gender), individual resources

(e.g., self-esteem), social resources (e.g., exposure to host's culture) and the student's perception of the social context (e.g., discrimination) (Perrucci & Hu, 1995).

Studies found that supervisor's feedback was also linked to a greater level of satisfaction in higher education international students, as well as internal university environment (e.g., quality of education; facilities) and external university environment, i.e., the social dimension of academic life outside campus (e.g., Memon, Salleh, Baharom, & Harun, 2014). Considering the importance international students give to their experience abroad for their careers, the reputation of the institution they are going to and the teaching quality (e.g., internal environment) are factors that affect their satisfaction but also their security towards future careers (Memon et. al, 2014). There is also evidence supporting the mediating role of personal values in the significant relationship between internal and external university environments (Arambewela & Hall, 2013).

Hence, the aim of this investigation is to analyse the simultaneous relationships between life values, career exploration and academic and social adjustment in international students attending Portuguese higher education institutions. This study can contribute to identify life-career clusters in international students and to understand if specific life values can be related with career exploration and how and at what extent these two variables relate to social and academic satisfaction in international college students. Lastly, particular demographic information will also be crossed with these variables in order to complement the description of the students concerning their life priorities and career exploratory and adjustment behaviours.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 96 international college students, 54 women (56.3%) and 42 men (43.8%) enrolled at public and private higher education institutions in Portugal. Participants were aged between 19 and 52 ($M = 26.5$, $SD = 7.1$) and 65 of them (67.7%) filled the questionnaire in Portuguese. Regarding participants' nationalities, 52 were Brazilian (54.2%), 5 Spanish (5.2%), 5 Japanese (5.2%), 4 Italian (4.2%), 3 Turkish (3.1%), 3 Colombian (3.1%), 3 Cape Verdean (3.1%), 3 Belgian (3.1%) and 18 participants had other nationalities (18.8%). In terms of marital status, most participants were single ($n = 79$; 82.3%), 10 were married (10.4%), 4 were married in fact (4.2%), 1 was divorced (1.0%) and 2 had other status (2.1%). Concerning participants' professional experience, 32 of them had no professional experience (33.3%), while 64 had experience (66.7%). Of the latter, 12 participants had less than a year of professional experience (18.75%), 17 had between 1 and 3 years of professional experience (26.56%), 8 had between 3 and 5 years (12.5%) and 27 had more than 5 years

of professional experience (42.19%). Regarding moving to Portugal, 57 of the participants came by themselves (59.4%), while 39 came with someone (40.6%; e.g., friend, teacher, member of family). Concerning the reasons to move to Portugal, 36 participants came to obtain a degree (37.5%), 53 to do a mobility program (55.2%) and 7 participants pointed out other reasons (7.3%; e.g., develop a research study, immigrate legally, get away from the country crisis). Most participants moved to Portugal in the school year 2017-2018 ($n = 77$; 80.2%), thus, they have been living in the country for less than a year, and 88 of the participants were attending to University of Minho (91.7%). Concerning the participants' overall academic performance, 12 considered their performance "sufficient" (12.5%), 30 "good" (31.3%), 43 "very good" (44.8%) and 11 "excellent" (11.5%). While in Portugal, 15 participants considered their academic performance "sufficient" (15.6%), 39 "good" (40.6%), 32 "very good" (33.3%) and 10 "excellent" (10.4%). Most participants did not have any extracurricular activities ($n = 75$; 78.1%), and 33 participants had no hobbies (34.4%).

Instruments

Demographic questionnaire. To collect demographic information from each participant it was designed a 26-item questionnaire regarding participants' personal, professional and academic information. The focuses were basic information (e.g., sex, age, nationality, marital status), academic performance, professional experience, extracurricular activities and hobbies.

Basic Values Questionnaire (BVQ; Gouveia et al., 2009). The BVQ is a self-report questionnaire, designed to measure human values, composed by 18 items that must be answered on a scale from 1 (*totally unimportant*) to 7 (*highest importance*). Each item measures a specific value (sexuality, success, social support, knowledge, emotion, power, affection, religiosity, health, pleasure, prestige, obedience, personal stability, belongingness, beauty, tradition, survival, and maturity), representing the six valorative subfunctions of Gouveia's and associates (2009) functional theory of values. Each value is represented by two short phrases (e.g., "success: to reach your goals; to be efficient in everything you do"). The total score was obtained by adding up the answer to the three values included in each subfunction, being 21 the highest score in every subfunction. Among the six subfunctions, the one that scores highest is the one that better defines the individual. The Cronbach's alphas of the values subfunction scales were calculated, these varied between .54 (suprapersonal and excitement) and .74 (promotion). Although the values obtained were not optimal, the reliability conditions for research purposes were met.

Career Exploration Survey (CES; Stumpf, Colarelli & Hartman, 1982, adapted for adolescents by Blustein, 1988). The Portuguese version of the CES for adolescents (Taveira, 1997) was used in this

study. The CES is a self-report questionnaire to assess the vocational exploration of an individual. This questionnaire includes three principal components (which divide in twelve dimensions of vocational exploration): exploration beliefs, exploration behaviours and affective reactions. For this study, only 12 from the original 53 items of the CES were used to assess the intentional and systematic nature of exploratory behaviours (2 items, e.g., “during the past 3 months, I sought opportunities to demonstrate skills”), and self (5 items, e.g., “during the past 3 months, I thought of myself in various career roles that I have been considering”) and environment (5 items, e.g., “during the past 3 months, I investigated career possibilities”) sources of exploratory actions of the participants in the last 3 months. The person should answer in a Likert scale, from 1 (*very few times*) to 5 (*oftentimes*). The score was obtained by adding up the value of each answer to the items, higher values show the presence of more positive beliefs or reactions to exploration and a greater activation of the exploratory process (Taveira et al., 2010). The Cronbach's alphas for the three scales used were calculated, these varied between .58 (intended-systematic exploration) and .80 (environment exploration), thus, the reliability conditions have been met for research purposes. The lower values can be explained by the reduced number of items in the scales.

Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ; Lent, 2004). The AAQ is a questionnaire to assess several dimensions of academic adjustment, concerning both social and academic experiences, and it is divided in 16 scales. For this study, only two of these measures were used, the Social Satisfaction Questionnaire (SSQ; Lent et. al, 2005; Portuguese version by Ramos & Paixão, 2010) and the Academic Satisfaction Questionnaire (ASQ; Lent, 2004; Portuguese version by Taveira & Lent, 2004). The SSQ was used to assess participants' satisfaction with their social experiences, composed by 6 items (e.g., “during the past week, how often have you enjoyed talking with or being with friends or relatives?”), answered in a Likert scale from 1 (*not at all or never*) to 5 (*frequently or all the time*). The ASQ assessed participants' academic experiences and it was composed by 7 items (e.g., “I feel satisfied with the decision to major in my intended field”), answered in a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). For each scale, the total score should be obtained by summing up the response to each item and dividing it for the number of items in the scale, wherein higher scores corresponded to more positive experiences. The Cronbach's alpha for SSQ was .77, which is considered acceptable, and for ASQ was .91, which is considered excellent (Field, 2009).

Procedure

To participate in this study, the subjects had to be international students, currently attending to a higher education institution in Portugal. At this moment, it was important to understand

the differences between being an international student and a foreign student. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2018), international (or internationally mobile) students are, by definition, “students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin” (e.g., obtaining a degree). On the other hand, foreign students usually go abroad under a mobility or exchange program for a limited amount of time, shorter than the length of their degrees (e.g., Erasmus)¹.

In order to find individuals who fitted the requirements, several contacts were made, with the board and the International Relations Office of University of Minho, and Erasmus Student Network, asking for help in this process. These services suggested relevant and helpful contacts of other services within the university to make to get to participants. Therefore, it was contacted the International Relations Office and then, via e-mail sent by a responsible of the International Relations Office, all the students in a mobility program at University of Minho were invited to participate in this study. This e-mail contained all the information explaining the goals and purpose of this investigation and assuring them that, if they proceeded and decided to participate, all the data collected would be confidential and used for investigation purposes only. In this e-mail, the subjects also received the link redirecting them to the online questionnaire. It was also contacted a responsible from Academic Services of University of Minho who provided the contacts of all students who entered the institution in the current school year to get a degree, totalling 1694 students. After getting these contacts, the same e-mail was forwarded to these students. Later, it was also contacted Erasmus Student Network Portugal and its 13 local offices in order to share the online questionnaire and forward it to international students. Besides these institutional contacts, some contacts were also made through colleagues, to share the questionnaires or fill it, according to the circumstances.

Once the individuals decided to proceed and fulfil the online questionnaire, they would find the informed consent, both in Portuguese and English, where, once more, was described the purpose of the investigation as well as the goals, thanking them for participating and assuring total confidentiality, reminding that their participation was voluntary, thus, they could drop out at any time. It also had the contacts of the investigators, so they can reach out in case of doubt or questions. By proceeding to next page of the questionnaire the participants were told they were accepting the terms of the research. The

¹ Despite the differences in the definitions of international and foreign student, in this study the term international student was used to classify students without Portuguese citizenship, who were studying in Portuguese universities, in order to obtain a degree, do an exchange program or another situation.

first question the participants were asked was if they would rather fulfil the survey in Portuguese or English. After that, considering the selected option, they would be redirected to the questionnaire in Portuguese or English. This online survey was composed by five questionnaires: first, the demographic questionnaire; followed by the BVQ; after that, the CES; then the Social Satisfaction Questionnaire; and, the last one, the Academic Satisfaction Questionnaire. The order of presentation of the five questionnaires was not balanced on purpose. The demographic questionnaire was the first one to provide basic information and get to know the participant, then the Basic Values Questionnaire was presented because values affect attitudes and the following three questionnaires were about attitudes.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data, those were treated and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 24. The participants' answers to the demographic questionnaire were converted into numerical values and these were labelled. The BVQ items were divided and computed into new variables according to the six subfunctions. With the CES items were created the three different exploration scales. All the SSQ items were put together as well as the ASQ items to create the two satisfaction scales. Posteriorly, reliability tests were performed in each variable to find the Cronbach's alpha. For data analysis, all total scores were used but once the 11 scales had different minimums and maximums due to the number of items and also Likert range, the scores were standardized and normalized into scales from 0 to 100 to make comparison easier. Afterwards, the descriptive statistics for the 11 variables were made, followed by a k-means cluster analysis in order to categorize the data in different groups. The cluster analysis was performed with three clusters but there were considerable differences in clusters' sizes, thus it was carried out with two clusters. It was given a number to each participant, 1 or 2 according to the cluster they were in, and it was applied a filter to perform descriptive statistics and frequencies in each group regarding demographic characteristics.

Results

After data were standardized, the scores of BVQ's subfunctions could vary from 14.28 to 100, wherein 14.28 corresponded to answering the lowest score to all items of that subfunction on the questionnaire and 100 to answering the highest score to all items. On CES, values could go from 20 to 100. The scores in SSQ could vary between 19.98 and 100 and in ASQ between 20.02 and 100.

The descriptive statistics of all 11 variables are presented in table 1. Regarding the mean scores of the variables, the existence subfunction had the highest ($M = 83.08$; $SD = 12.73$) and environment exploration had the lowest ($M = 51.13$; $SD = 21.33$). Among QVB subfunctions, the existence subfunction scored the highest and normative subfunction scored the lowest ($M = 63.19$; $SD = 17.62$).

Between CES' variables, self-exploration scored the highest ($M = 60.08$; $SD = 19.42$) and environment exploration the lowest. Social and academic satisfaction mean scores were similar (see table 1 below).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Excitement Subfunction	19.04	100.00	69.05	14.01
Promotion Subfunction	14.28	100.00	68.75	14.54
Suprapersonal Subfunction	33.33	100.00	81.35	10.33
Existence Subfunction	14.28	100.00	83.08	12.73
Interactive Subfunction	23.80	100.00	78.67	13.36
Normative Subfunction	14.28	100.00	63.19	17.62
Self-Exploration	20.00	100.00	60.08	19.42
Environment Exploration	20.00	100.00	51.13	21.33
Intended-Systematic Exploration	20.00	100.00	54.90	23.84
Social Satisfaction	46.66	100.00	77.67	13.16
Academic Satisfaction	22.87	100.00	78.67	14.41

Note. Minimum and maximum values correspond to the lowest and highest scores given by the sample in each scale. M = Mean. SD = standard deviation.

In table 2 are presented the means (centres), F statistics and p -values for each variable. Both clusters have the same size, 48 participants each. In general, cluster 2 is composed by participants with higher means in all variables. The biggest differences in the means between clusters can be found in the three exploration variables. Intended-systematic exploration is the variable that most discriminates the clusters ($F = 103.971$) but the other two exploration variables also had high F scores. The variable that less differentiates the clusters is the excitement subfunction ($F = 0.691$). The p -values show that variation between means is significant in all variables, once p -value < 0.05 , except in excitement subfunction, social satisfaction and academic satisfaction (see table 2).

Table 2

Cluster Centres, F Statistics and p -Values

Variables	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	F	p
Excitement Subfunction	67.86	70.24	.691	.408
Promotion Subfunction	65.08	72.42	6.470	.013*
Suprapersonal Subfunction	78.57	84.12	7.405	.008**

Existence Subfunction	79.76	86.40	6.944	.010**
Interactive Subfunction	75.10	82.24	7.316	.008**
Normative Subfunction	57.94	68.45	9.293	.003**
Self-Exploration	49.00	71.17	46.098	.000***
Environment Exploration	37.75	64.50	61.934	.000***
Intended-Systematic Exploration	37.71	72.08	103.971	.000***
Social Satisfaction	75.14	80.21	3.662	.059
Academic Satisfaction	76.02	81.32	3.330	.071

Note. F = F statistic. p = p value. * p < 0.05. ** p < 0.01. *** p < 0.001.

According to table 2, cluster 1 includes subjects with the lowest levels of normative values, intentional and systematic career exploration, self and environment exploration and lower satisfaction, both social and academic. From the results obtained through frequencies for demographic characteristics, cluster 1 is composed by participants from 19 to 49 years old ($M = 26.35$; $SD = 6.72$). From all the group, 62.5% are women, 75% of them chose to answer the questionnaire in Portuguese, 58.3% are Brazilian, 79.2% are single, 58.3% moved to Portugal alone, 91.4% are only studying (i.e., do not have any part-time or full-time job), 75% have professional experience and from these 40.5% have over 5 years of experience while 32.4% have between 1 and 3 years of experience. Regarding their overall academic performance, 14.6% consider it “sufficient”, 33.3% “good”, 41.7% “very good”, 10.4% “excellent”. Concerning academic performance while in Portugal, 22.9% consider it “sufficient”, 39.6% “good”, 31.3% “very good” and 6.3% “excellent”. In this cluster, 16.7% of the subjects have extracurricular activities and 58.3% have hobbies. The profile characterized by this cluster was named conformist profile, due to the low scores in the three variables of career exploration and reduced involvement in non-academic activities and hobbies.

According to the frequencies for demographic characteristics, cluster 2 includes participants from 19 to 52 years old ($M = 26.63$; $SD = 7.51$). From all, 50% are women, 60.4% answered the questionnaire in Portuguese, 50% are Brazilian, 85.4% are single, 60.4% moved to Portugal alone, 79.2% are only studying (i.e., do not have any part-time or full-time job), 58.3% have professional experience and from these 42.9% have over 5 years of experience while 21.4% have less than a year. Regarding their overall academic performance, 10.4% consider it “sufficient”, 29.2% “good”, 47.9% “very good” and 12.5% “excellent”. Concerning academic performance while in Portugal, 8.3% consider it “sufficient”, 41.4% “good”, 35.4% “very good” and 14.6% “excellent”. In this cluster, 27.1% of the subjects have extracurricular activities and 72.9% have hobbies. The profile characterized by this cluster

was named exploratory profile, due to the high scores in the three variables of career exploration and higher involvement in non-academic activities and hobbies.

When comparing both groups, cluster 1 has more women, more subjects who answered the questionnaire in Portuguese, more homogeneity in the nationalities (i.e., a larger group of the same nationality), more subjects with professional experience and who are only studying. On the other hand, cluster 2 has more subjects who are single and who have extracurricular activities and hobbies. Subjects from cluster 2 rated their academic performance, both the overall and while in Portugal, as higher than in cluster 1. The two groups have very similar age means and number of subjects who moved to Portugal by themselves.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyse the simultaneous relationships between life values, career exploration and academic and social adjustment in international students attending Portuguese higher education institutions. It was intended to contribute to identify life-career profiles in international students and to understand if specific life values can be related with career exploration and how and at what extent these two variables relate to social and academic satisfaction in international college students. Demographic information was also crossed with these variables to complement the description of the students concerning their life priorities and career exploratory and adjustment behaviours.

According to the results obtained, the sample was characterised by a high level of satisfaction, both social and academic. Previous studies suggest that language is one of the main barriers students face when they go abroad and that being able to speak the host language is associated with greater academic and social satisfaction and adaptation (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Nasir, 2012a; Perrucci & Hu, 1995). In this study, more than half of the participants answered the questionnaire in Portuguese (i.e., host language), meaning they understand the host language, which can be related with the high levels of satisfaction. Speaking the host language can assure international students' communication with locals and facilitate social bond (Nasir, 2012a). Plus, in academic context, it allows the students to understand the teachers and colleagues, allowing them to perform better and be less anxious (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

The central values, representing values related to life purpose, also scored high, highlighting the important role of these values as basis and support for all others. Central values include subfunctions of existence, that represents the basic needs, security, stability and survival; and suprapersonal, that represents the self-concept, both aesthetically and intellectually, and the need of self-actualization.

When going away from their home, these students have to become more independent due to distance, so they start to be the utmost responsible for their own survival, security and health, which can explain the high score in existence subfunction in this population. Regarding the suprapersonal subfunction, it can be explained by the concern international students share about their future careers (Arambewela & Hall, 2013). If one of the reasons to go abroad is to increase the amount of opportunities they can have in the future, it is natural they seek self-actualization, personal growth and new information. Exploration variables scored the lowest on the questionnaire which can be explained by how and what behaviours society is reinforcing. In most societies, it is very important to see results rather than explore options that is why the value given to career exploration processes is lower than the value given to academic success (e.g., Cheung & Jin, 2015). This may cause students to explore less at the expense of better grades to meet society norms, therefore, as exploration means are the lowest of all variables, academic satisfaction is among the highest. Nevertheless, having exploratory attitudes has been considered an important part of the career adaptation process that enables collecting information about the environment and the self (Taveira, 2000). This sample allowed the creation of two distinct profiles – exploratory and conformist.

Students' involvement in extracurricular groups and other activities alike has been linked to academic success and self-confidence in previous research (e.g., Othman et al., 2009). The exploratory profile reported more extracurricular activities and hobbies than the conformist profile and rated their academic performance as superior, which reinforces the previous findings. One of the explanations for this difference could be the student status, but, although the conformist profile had more individuals with professional experience, it also had more subjects with "only student" status than the exploratory profile. When students are successful in other activities beyond academic they build confidence in their own skills and competencies and transpose that confidence to other areas of their lives, like academic and vocational. This group also scored higher in all career exploration variables, being these the ones that most differentiate the two groups. These results may suggest an association between extracurricular activities and career exploration. According to Astin (1984), a student's involvement can take many forms (e.g., extracurricular activities) and the bigger the involvement, the better the personal development and learning in college. Therefore, in the process of development, students can explore their vocational interests and opportunities as well as the environment. These concern to maintain the self-confidence level and to feel competent may explain the higher score in the promotion subfunction in the exploratory profile rather than the conformist. Promotion values are related to self-esteem and

competence. This personal ambition for success, power and prestige might explain why the person gets involved in other activities in the first place.

It's undeniable the role cultural values play in career choices and development, causing, sometimes, people to readjust their goals or interests to fit these values (Brown, 2002b). The exploratory profile high values on exploration might be affected by normative values, being that the subfunction that most differentiates the two groups. People with normative values tend to follow the conventional norms and values and to comply with rules because of the importance they attribute to authority (Gouveia, 2009). Their social orientation implies preserving the culture and obeying. Hence, when students with normative values are faced with another culture, they may work towards meeting the standards of that culture (i.e., have results that are seen as successful in that culture). Furthermore, and although several efforts are being made to change this conception, in most cultures success still corresponds to a good job (e.g., Jencks, Perman, & Rainwater, 1988; Spencer, Walsh, Liang, Mousseau, & Lund, 2016). So, in order to correspond to social expectations, students with normative values will explore their options and work on their development in order to be successful. Evidence shows that young adults engage in career exploration before career establishment, gaining confidence through the process and working on their flexibility to fit career expectations later in their lives (Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012).

Literature suggests that while some students may consider important having vocational goals and exploratory behaviours, they do not take action, i.e., they have a weak activation of the exploratory process (Taveira, 2000). This may be a possible explanation for low exploration in the conformist profile, since intended-systematic exploration had the lowest mean and it is associated with frequent exploratory behaviour.

Interactive subfunction was the second better subfunction to tell both groups apart, being higher in the exploratory. The interactive values are essential to establish and maintain relationships and people with these values prioritize the sense of belonging and social contacts. A higher value on this subfunction may be related to the higher value presented in social satisfaction since social support was considered the main predictor of life satisfaction (Cho & Yu, 2015). Findings suggest that the bigger the interaction international students have, the greater the adjustment to the host country (Andrade, 2006).

In this study were defined two types of students, both with similar satisfaction values. However, the conformist profile is characterised by less exploratory behaviours and lower scores in all values' subfunctions. The exploratory profile, on the other hand, revealed more exploratory behaviours and higher scores in all subfunctions, particularly normative, promotion and interactive. Data suggests that

people who are involved in more activities (e.g., extracurricular groups) have higher satisfaction, which leads to better adjustment, and more exploratory behaviours.

One of the limitations of this study was the procedure of data collection because if, on one hand, recurring to online questionnaires saves times and makes it easier to reach more people at the same time, on the other hand, the response rate is very little because it is not created any type of commitment or bond between the researcher and the participants. Another limitation was the sample size. For future studies it would be very interesting to study a bigger sample and try to define more career profiles based on human and vocational behaviours. It would also be important to understand the students' status regarding their enrolment in the university (i.e., if they are in the host country to obtain a degree, to do a mobility program or another situation).

Regarding future interventions and practices to use with college students, it may be helpful to associate career purposes with social activities (e.g., college open days). In this kind of activities, individuals who are more social, interactive and experimental may participate, to fulfil their social satisfaction, but, unconsciously, it would be promoted career exploration towards them and it would be a way to pass them vocational information. It could be important to provide career management programs that consider different profiles, where students can have support in gathering information and understanding their interests and be guided towards their goals. For example, for the exploratory profile it could be important to plan, set goals and define specific interests. For the conformist profile, it would be important to explore the environment, getting to know the different opportunities available and decide which ones to try. As literature shows (e.g., Silva, Taveira, Bernardo, & Moreno, 2014), universities still lack policies to integrate international students. It would be useful to develop interventions that could bring national and international students together, promoting interaction and bonding, providing information about the host country on culture, services and important places. Another intervention that could be interesting and bring positive results is the creation of a buddy or tutoring system, where a national student would be paired with an international student and would be responsible, for example, to explain how the university works and show the student around, but also provide social support and introduce the student to the host country.

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