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Career Exploration: Family and Teacher Support

Coşkun Arslan[1]
Necmettin Erbakan University

Süleyman Barbaros Yalçın[2]
Necmettin Erbakan University

Batuhan Çakırbilgiç[3]
Ministry of National Education

Abstract

The study aims to reveal the relationship between secondary school students' career exploration, adolescent-parent career congruence, and career-related teacher support. Career Exploration Scale, Adolescent-Parent Career Congruence Scale, and Career-Related Teacher Support Scale were used as data collection tools. Data were collected from 336 students through a questionnaire. The findings of the study were analyzed using Spss 27 software. Career exploration, adolescent-parent career congruence, and career-related teacher support were analyzed according to various demographic variables. Accordingly, female students had higher teacher support scores than male students. The decrease in adolescent-parent career congruence and teacher support as the grade level increases are among the remarkable findings. According to the results of the correlation analysis, significant positive relationships were found between career exploration, adolescent-parent career congruence, and career-related teacher support. According to the regression analysis results, it was found that the established model explained 29% of career exploration. At this point, it was concluded that parental congruence and teacher information support are critical in career exploration.

Key Words

Adolescent-parent career congruence • Career exploration • Secondary school • Teacher support

[1] Necmettin Erbakan University, Konya, Türkiye. E-mail: coskunarslan@erbakan.edu.tr, **ORCID:** 0000-0003-0247-9847
[2] Necmettin Erbakan University, Konya, Türkiye. E-mail: barbarosyalcin@erbakan.edu.tr, **ORCID:** 0000-0001-8818-8252
[3] **Correspondance to:** Ministry of National Education, Konya, Türkiye. E-mail: cakirbilgicbatuhan@gmail.com, **ORCID:** 0000-0002-3533-0734
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Introduction

Career development is a dynamic process that involves the interaction of educational, economic, psychological, sociological, physical, and coincidental factors that shape individuals' lifelong career behaviors (Savickas, 2013; Sears, 1982; Super, 1990). This process is a lifelong development journey in which individuals continuously adapt in line with environmental interactions and personal values (Brown, 2002; Super, 1980). In this context, career exploration comes into play as an important part of the career development process; it means understanding one's interests, abilities, and professional tendencies, gathering information about career options, and shaping one's career through observations and experiences in one's internal and external environment (Blustein, 1992; Porfeli & Lee, 2012; Zikic & Khele, 2006). While early career exploration helps individuals to develop awareness, expectations, and interests about occupations, it also strengthens personal identity formation and social ties and plays a critical role as a stage that forms the basic building blocks of career development (Hartung et al., 2005; Zikic et al., 2006).

As a part of lifelong career development, childhood is considered a period of active participation in terms of concerns about the future, a sense of personal control, career decision-making concepts, and the process of developing self-confidence in career choices (Savickas, 2002). Focusing on career development learning during this period enables children to make inferences about careers from their interactions with people and the world around them in their daily experiences. Children gain ideas about occupations, gender roles, and abilities by observing the people and work life around them (McMahon & Watson, 2022). Such incidental observations and interactions support children to make various inferences about their career development. In this context, childhood is an ideal period to encourage career exploration, because career-related learning processes can be more free and exploration-oriented during this period when there is no need to be tied to career choice (Porfeli & Lee, 2012).

During adolescence, an increase in career exploration behaviors is observed (Noack et al., 2010). In this period, adolescents exhibit behaviors such as considering career goals, obtaining information about career options, creating temporary career goals, forming vocational preferences, and narrowing vocational preferences (Hartung et al., 2005; Super, 1957). While making various occupational choices in terms of their likes and interests, they gradually start to include realistic elements in these choices. While objectively evaluating their capacities, they also become aware of internal and external factors (Ginzberg et al., 1951). In this period, while adolescents are still dependent on the information provided by their parents and teachers, they also seek independence (Gottfredson, 1981). On the other hand, it becomes important to understand the relationship between school, real-world, and job opportunities (Niles & Trusty, 2004). At this point, students often confuse career goals with occupations (Schaefer et al., 2010).

Parental and teacher support has a crucial place in preventing such confusion and maintaining healthy career development (Keller & Whiston, 2008; Kracke, 1997; Turner & Lapan, 2002; Wong et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2018). Parental support in the career development process includes behaviors such as supporting the exploratory behaviors of the child/adolescent, helping him/her to access the career information he/she needs, and making suggestions (Guan et al., 2015). Therefore, the more parental support adolescents receive, the more they engage in career exploration behaviors (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Maftei et al., 2023; Turan et al., 2014).

Another effective factor in adolescent career development and exploration is the teacher (Metheny et al., 2008; Paa & McWhirter, 2000). The support given by teachers to their students facilitates them to increase their motivation and reach their goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). At this point, teachers carry many features such as setting career goals, working towards the goal, choosing career paths according to their abilities and interests, informing about employment, transferring current data to their students, motivation, and encouragement, and guiding career paths (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013; Lent, 2012; Perry et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2021).

In this study, the career exploration behaviors of secondary school students are examined. The variables of parental congruence and teacher support, which are thought to affect career exploration, are also discussed. As a result of the literature review, it was realized that there are very limited studies on career exploration in secondary school students. At the same time, parental congruence and teacher support in secondary school students have also been less studied compared to other grades. This study aims to shed light on the career exploration journey of secondary school students, to examine its relationship with various socio-demographic variables, and to explain the effect of parental congruence and teacher support on career exploration. It is thought that the findings will guide researchers, parents, teachers, and psychological counselors.

Method

Participants of the Study

A total of 336 secondary school students aged between 10 and 14 participated in this study. Data were collected from fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students who wanted to participate in the study by obtaining permission from school administrations. Of the participating students, 150 (44.6%) were boys and 186 (55.4%) were girls. Power analysis of the research sample was performed using G Power 3.9.1.7. program. According to the results of the power analysis of the sample group of 336 people, f^2=.40, power=1, and p=.05. This power analysis shows that the sample size is sufficient for multiple regression analysis and the model has a high probability of detecting a significant effect.

Table 1

Socio-demographic characteristics of participating in the study

Sociodemographic Variables	**f**	**%**
5th Grade	112	33.3
6th Grade	67	19.9
7th Grade	74	22
8th Grade	83	24.7
Total	**336**	**100**
Mother Education Level		
Primary Education	181	53.9
High School	104	31
University	51	15.2
Total	**336**	**100**
Father Education Level		
Primary Education	126	37.5
High School	118	35.1
University	92	27.4
Total	**336**	**100**

Data Collection Tools

Career Exploration Scale

The original scale was developed by Tracey et al. (2006). The scale has a total of 10 items and is in the form of a five-point Likert scale, and higher scores mean higher career exploration. There are no reverse items in the original scale and there are no sub-dimensions. The internal consistency coefficient of the original scale has an acceptable value of .80. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was carried out by Özaydın and Siyez (2022). In the adaptation phase, one item was removed and the scale was adapted as 9 items. The internal consistency coefficient of the adapted scale was found to be .83 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was found to be .87. In the current study, the cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as .75 and the omega value was calculated as .74. This shows that the internal consistency is sufficient (Bland & Altman, 1997).

Adolescent-Parent Career Congruence Scale

The original scale was developed by Sawitri et al. (2012). In the original version of the scale, there are 12 items in a six-point Likert scale. The higher the scores obtained from the scale, the higher the level of adolescent-parent career congruence. Although there are no reverse items, the scale has two sub-dimensions. These are supplementary and complementary sub-dimensions. In the original scale, the total internal consistency coefficient was found to be .87. The internal consistency coefficient of the sub-dimensions was reported as .80 for the similarity sub-dimension and .83 for the complementarity sub-dimension. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was carried out by Bacanlı et al. (2018). In the adaptation study, one item was removed from the scale and evaluated as 11 items. The internal consistency coefficient for the entire adapted scale was reported as .82 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was reported as .89. The sub-dimensions of the adapted scale were translated into Turkish as similarity and complementary congruence. While the internal consistency coefficient for the similarity sub-dimension was found to be .73, the internal consistency coefficient for the complementary sub-dimension was found to be .77. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and omega value for the whole scale were found to be .86. The cronbach alpha coefficient of the similarity sub-dimension of the scale was .67, and the cronbach alpha coefficient of the complementarity sub-dimension was .85.

Career Related Teacher Support Scale

The original version of the scale was conducted by Zhang et al. (2021). In the original version of the scale, there are 16 items in total on a five-point Likert scale. The higher the scores obtained from the scale, the higher the teacher support. There are no reverse items in the scale and it has three sub-dimensions. These include self-exploration, informational and emotional support subscale. The internal consistency coefficients of each sub-dimension of the original scale ranged between .90 and .92. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was carried out by Küçükaydın (2023). The internal consistency coefficients of the adapted scale ranged between .90 and .94. In this study, the cronbach alpha coefficient and omega value of the whole scale were found to be .91. The cronbach alpha coefficients of the self-discovery development sub-dimension, information support sub-dimension and emotional support sub-dimension were .83, .79 and .82, respectively.

Analysing the Data

Spss 27 program was used for data analysis. Career exploration, adolescent-parent career congruence, and career-related teacher support variables were analyzed according to gender and grade level variables. Independent sample t-test was used for the relationship between these variables and gender. For career exploration, it was seen that the variances were not equally distributed and the Welch test was applied and it was seen that there was no significant difference between career exploration and gender. It was confirmed that adolescent-parent career congruence and career-related teacher support provided homogeneity in Levene's test. The relationship between the variables and grade level was analysed by One Way Anova test. Since career exploration did not provide homogeneity, Tamhane's T2 analysis was applied. In another stage of the study, multiple regression analyses were performed between career exploration, adolescent-parent career congruence, and career-related teacher support. In the regression analysis, it was determined that the variances were normally distributed with QQ-Plot and histogram graphs. Durbin Watson value was calculated as 2 and independence of errors was ensured. Linearity between the variables was observed with scatter plots.

Results

Table 2

Descriptive statistics related to variables

Variables	x̄ (sd)	Skewness	Kurtosis
Career exploration	23.6 (6.6)	.48	.29
Adolescent-parent career congruence	38.5 (9)	-.01	.26
Similarity congruence	12 (3.8)	-.14	-.68
Complementary congruence	26.4 (6.2)	-.79	.29
Career-related teacher support	46.8 (14)	-.41	.26
Self-exploration	16.8 (5.8)	.03	-.64
Information support	12.7 (4.9)	.32	-.54
Emotional support	17.2 (5.3)	-.49	-.49

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics according to the variables. Accordingly, kurtosis and skewness values of each variable are presented. It is seen that the kurtosis and skewness values of all variables vary between -1 and +1. This indicates that normality is ensured in the distribution of the data (Mishra et al., 2019).

Table 3

Examination of variables by gender

	Gender	n	x̄	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Career exploration	Girl	186	23.8	.47	333	.65	.04
	Male	150	23.5				
Adolescent-parent career congruence	Girl	186	38.9	.99	323	.32	.10
	Male	150	38				
Career-related teacher support	Girl	186	49.6	4.2	334	.00	.46
	Male	150	43.4				

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that there is no significant difference in career exploration and adolescent-parent career congruence according to gender. However, in career-related teacher support, female students scored higher than male students and this difference was statistically significant. It was noticed that female students scored

higher than male students in all three sub-dimensions of career-related teacher support. Accordingly, it can be said that teachers' career-related support has a more positive effect on female students.

Table 4

Examination of variables according to grade level

	Grade	n	x̄ (sd)	F(X²)	p	η²	Post-Hoc Tests	Significant Difference
Career exploration	5th Grade	112	24.7 (7.5)	4.5	.00	.03	Tamhane's T2	5-7 7-8
	6th Grade	67	22.7 (6.9)					
	7th Grade	74	21.6 (5.6)					
	8th Grade	83	24.7 (5.5)					
Adolescent-parent career congruence	5th Grade	112	41.1 (7.9)	9.4	.00	.07	Tukey	5-7 5-8 6-7 6-8 7-8
	6th Grade	67	40.3 (7.8)					
	7th Grade	74	35.1 (10)					
	8th Grade	83	36.5 (9.2)					
Career-related teacher support	5th Grade	112	52.5 (12)	11.5	.00	.09	Tukey	5-6 5-7 5-8 7-8
	6th Grade	67	45.4 (14)					
	7th Grade	74	45.6 (12)					
	8th Grade	83	41.4 (14)					

Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference between career exploration and grade level. This difference was found to be between 5th grade and 7th grade and between 7th grade and 8th grade. Accordingly, career exploration scores of 5th grade students were higher than 7th grade students. Similarly, 8th grade students had higher career exploration scores than 7th grade students. This shows that students in the first and last grades of middle school are more active in career exploration. A significant difference was also found between adolescent-parent career adaptation and grade level. This difference is between 5th grade and 7th and 8th grade; 6th grade and 7th and 8th grade; 7th grade and 8th grade. When we look at the average scores of middle school students' adolescent-career adjustment, it is seen that it gradually decreases. This indicates that as the students' grade level increases, their career compatibility with their parents decreases. It was also noticed that there was a significant difference between career-related teacher support and grade levels. Similarly, when the mean scores of the students are analyzed, it is seen that the support perceived by the students from their teachers decreases as the grade level increases.

Table 5

Correlation relationship between variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Career exploration	1							
Adolescent-parent career congruence	.44**	1						
Similarity congruence	.32**	.84**	1					
Complementary congruence	.45**	.94**	.61**	1				
Career-related teacher support	.42**	.40**	.25**	.44**	1			
Self-exploration	.39**	.39**	.24**	.41**	.90**	1		
Information support	.40**	.29**	.21**	.30**	.87**	.72**	1	
Emotional support	.30**	.37**	.20**	.42**	.84**	.61**	.59**	1

*p<.01***

Table 5 shows the correlation calculations between the variables and their sub-dimensions. Accordingly, there is a moderately significant relationship between career exploration and adolescent-parent career congruence. Accordingly, it can be said that career exploration increases as adolescent-parent career congruence increases. Similarly, a moderate significant relationship was found between career exploration and career-related teacher support. Therefore, it is seen that career exploration will increase with the increase in career-related teacher support. It was also found that there was a moderate significant relationship between adolescent-parent career congruence and career-related teacher support. It can be said that these two variables affect each other positively.

Table 6

Multiple regression coefficients on career exploration

Variables	B	Std. Error	β	t	p	Zero-order correlation	Partial correlation	Part correlation
Constant	8.2	1.4		5.5	.00			
Similarity congruence	.11	.10	.06	1.1	.26	.32	.06	.05
Complementary congruence	.34	.06	.31	4.9	.00	.45	.26	.22
Self-exploration	.09	.08	.08	1.1	.25	.39	.06	.05
Information support	.35	.09	.26	3.7	.00	.40	.20	.17
Emotional support	-.06	.07	-.05	-.8	.42	.30	-.04	-.03

R=.53 R^2=.29 Durbin-Watson=2

When Table 6 is analyzed, it is concluded that similarity congruence, self-exploration support and emotional support do not have a significant effect on career exploration. Complementary congruence, on the other hand, shows an effect of .34 units on career exploration and is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be said that the complementary congruence sub-dimension plays an important role in career exploration. On the other hand, the information support sub-dimension was similarly found to have a statistically significant effect on career exploration. At this point, it can be said that the information support provided by the teacher plays an important role in students' career exploration. In the overall model, it was found that the independent variables explained 29% of the variance in career exploration. As a result, it can be said that the model has an average explanatory power.

Discussion, Conclusion & Suggestions

In this study, the effects of career exploration, adolescent-career congruence and career-related teacher support on middle school students were examined. According to the first findings of the study, it was concluded that the career support received by female students from their teachers was higher than male students. In a study conducted by Kenny and Bledsoe (2005), it was found that the social support perceived by female students from their teachers positively affected their school identity and contributed to higher career expectations and planning. The research conducted by Wall et al. (1999) supports the findings. According to the study, it was reported that female students perceived more teacher support than male students and had higher career expectations than male students. There are also studies with different findings. While no significant difference was found between career exploration and gender in our study, in a different study conducted by Patton et al. (2004), career exploration scores of female students were higher than male students. In studies conducted by different researchers, it was found that female students engaged in career exploration behaviors more than male students (Kracke & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2001; Lazarides et al., 2016).

In the other stage of the research, it was investigated whether career exploration, adolescent-parent career congruence, and career-related teacher support differed according to grade level. Accordingly, remarkable data were found. It was found that fifth and eighth grade students were more motivated about career exploration. At this point, the reasons for the low career exploration scores of sixth and seventh grade students are intriguing. In a study conducted by Esters (2008) on university students, it was found that senior students had higher career exploration scores than freshmen. In the study conducted by Lazarides et al. (2016), the difference between the career exploration scores of seventh and tenth grade students was examined. The career exploration scores of the tenth-grade students were found to be higher. Accordingly, it can be said that career exploration increases as the grade level increases.

It is known that adolescent-parent career congruence increases future career exploration in students and plays an important role in determining career expectations and goals (Sawitri et al., 2014). In this context, it can be expected that as the students' grade level increases, their parental career congruence will also increase. However, in our study, a decrease in parent-career congruence was observed as the grade level increased. No research findings were found on grade level and adolescent-parent career congruence. Therefore, this situation can be considered as an issue that should be addressed by future research.

Similarly, career-related teacher support decreases as the grade level increases. For example, in a study conducted by Kenny et al. (2010) with high school students, it was found that 11th grade students received more teacher autonomy support than 10th grade students. This situation emphasizes that as students get older, teachers provide more independence in decision-making processes and students should take more responsibility. In a different study conducted by Perry et al. (2010), no significant increase or decrease in teacher support was found from 7th to 12th grade. On the other hand, it has been observed that there are not enough studies on teacher support and grade level in literature. There is a need for cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on this issue.

Other findings of the study include correlation and regression analyses. Accordingly, it is seen that career exploration, adolescent-parent career congruence and career-related teacher support positively and significantly affect each other. Sawitri and Dewi (2015) found a significant positive correlation between career exploration and adolescent-parent congruence in their study on university students, and this finding coincided with the results of our study. Çelik (2019) reached similar results in his study on middle school students. In our study, it was determined that the complementary sub-dimension is an important factor affecting adolescents' career exploration. Accordingly, the more compatible adolescents' career expectations and their parents' career expectations are, the more career exploration behaviors of adolescents will increase.

Statistically positive and significant relationships were found between career exploration and teacher support. Metheny et al. (2008) stated that perceived teacher support is very important in students' professional development. The study by Perry et al. (2010), although not directly addressing career exploration, shows that teacher support increases students' career readiness and commitment to school.

In our research, it is seen that teacher support related to career exploration comes to the forefront especially in the information support sub-dimension. It was noticed that middle school students prioritized information support more

than emotional support from their teachers in the career exploration process. In their study, Tennant et al. (2015) stated that emotional support of the teacher came to the forefront. In a different study conducted by Lazarová et al. (2019), it was reported that students evaluated teacher support primarily within the framework of issues related to school success and career development.

In conclusion, the study shows that parental and teacher support play a critical role in career exploration. The findings provide important clues for researchers, educators and parents. To strengthen the knowledge in career development, it would be useful for future studies to address the relationships in more depth and support them with longitudinal studies. On the other hand, the role of guidance teachers/psychological counselors working in schools is critical. At this point, individual and group counseling can be organized for students who experience career stress at school. Mental health supportive studies can be carried out for students experiencing career stress. As a result of the research, it was realized that teacher and parent support is also very effective in career stress. Therefore, informative studies to be conducted for teachers and parents in a career perspective may also be useful.

Ethic

In this study, scientific, ethical and citation rules were followed; it has been committed that no falsification has been made on the collected data and that all responsibility belongs to the authors for all ethical violations to be encountered.

Author Contributions

Both authors contributed equally to each section of this article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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