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Investigation of the relationship between the perceived career prospects and self-efficacy: Comparison of demographic characteristics

Algılanan kariyer beklentisi ve özyeterlilik arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi: Demografik özelliklerin karşılaştırılması

Canan Baysal¹, Muhsin Halis^{2*}, Duygu Sav³

¹Kocaeli University, Social Sciences Institution Kocaeli, ORCID: 0000-0003-3308-9809

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ABSTRACT

In this study, it is aimed to investigate the relationship between university students' perceived career prospects and self-efficacy perceptions. In this context, data were collected from 375 students, receiving their undergraduate and graduate education at Kocaeli University during the 2017-2018 academic year fall semester. In the study, career futures inventory and self-efficacy scale were used. SPSS program was used in the analysis of questionnaires. Nonparametric tests were performed since the study data has a non-normal distribution. Nonparametric correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between the variables, and a statistically significant and positive relationship was found between the perceived career prospects and self-efficacy perceptions differ in terms of demographic characteristics (generation, nationality and gender). According to the test results, the self-efficacy perceptions of the participants differ statistically between Turkish students and foreign students. The knowledge levels of male participants on the labor market differ significantly from that of female participants. Considering the generation variable, career adaptation and career optimism dimensions differed significantly between Generation Y and Generation Z.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada, üniversite öğrencilerinin algılanan kariyer olanakları ile öz yeterlik algıları arasındaki ilişki araştırılmaktadır. Bu kapsamda, 2017-2018 akademik takvim güz dönemi boyunca Kocaeli Üniversitesi'nde lisans ve yüksek lisans eğitimine devam eden 375 öğrenciden veri toplanmıştır. Araştırmada kariyer gelecekleri envanteri ve öz yeterlik ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Anketlerin analizinde SPSS programı kullanılmıştır. Çalışma verileri normal olmayan dağılıma sahip olduğu için parametrik olmayan testler uygulanmıştır. Değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek için parametrik olmayan korelasyon analizi yapılmış olup algılanan kariyer beklentileri ile öz yeterlik arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı ve pozitif bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, katılımcıların algılanan kariyer beklentilerinin ve öz yeterlik algılarının demografik özellikler (nesil, milliyet ve cinsiyet) açısından farklılık gösterdiğini belirten hipotezleri test etmek için Mann-Whitney U testi yapılmıştır. Test sonuçlarına göre, katılımcıların öz yeterlik algıların Türk öğrenciler ile yabancı öğrenciler arasında istatistiksel olarak farklılık göstermektedir. Erkek katılımcıların işgücü piyasasındaki bilgi düzeyleri kadın katılımcılardan önemli ölçüde farklılır. Nesil değişkeni göz önüne alındığında, kariyer adaptasyonu ve kariyer iyimserliği boyutları, Y kuşağı ile Z kuşağı arasında önemli farklılıklar göstermiştir.

1. Introduction

Various fields of activity emerge gradually in accordance with increasing differentiation of working conditions, technological progress and social needs. Individuals work in jobs to ensure their livelihoods, and have to perform various tasks during this process. Theoretical knowledge gained by individuals in their educational life, acquired skills of practice,

competencies in interpersonal interaction have started to be taken into consideration in the job recruitment, or during the selection phase in other words. As a requirement of modern life, employers are looking for a workforce that has a wider perspective, has a wide range of competence areas, and can use communication skills efficiently and effectively (Korkut and Keskin, 2016). One of the important decisions that shape the future of individuals is their career preferences. In this

Kocaeli University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences / Abant Izzet Baysal University, Faculty of Communication. Bolu. mimhalis@gmail.com

²Kocaeli University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences / Abant Izzet Baysal University, Faculty of Communication. Bolu, ORCID: 0000-0001-9495-5083

³Istanbul Esenyurt University. Istanbul, ORCID: 0000-0002-0736-243X

^{*} Corresponding author/Sorumlu yazar.

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preference, it is important for the individual to set clear goals and determine the profession that he/she will perform in the future, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of his/ her abilities. In general, career is the concept that expresses the positions in the individual's working life and the experience and skills in this position, as well as the continuous progress in his/ her work (Arık and Seyhan, 2016). In short, career is not a static condition, but a part of the development process. The past life of the individual, relationship with his/her family, socio-economic level of the family, environment, values, beliefs and attitudes, expectations, personality and opinions about the future of the job are the social and psychological factors influencing the career choice (Karadaş et al., 2017). It is known that the family and cultural elements that are effective in university students' career decisions are also prominent determinants in career preferences (Kozak and Dalkıranoğlu, 2013).

1.1. Conceptual Framework

The concept of career is described in the glossary as "The seniority, success and expertise achieved in time by working in a profession" (TDK, August 22nd, 2018). The perceived career prospects is explained by individual's career adaptation, career optimism and knowledge about the labor market. According to Rottinghaus et al. (2005), career adaptation is the individual's adaptation to the changing business conditions in the face of an unexpected situation related to the job. Career optimism refers to individual's belief that there will be positive things in the future about his/her career. The knowledge perceived on the labor market, however, is about how well people perceive the labor market and employment.

It is observed that the concept of career adaptation is expressed in different ways by different researchers in the field. Super and Klasse (1981) express the career adaptation as the state of being prepared to deal with the changing business and working conditions, while Savickas (1997) express the concept as the preparedness of an individual against the potential problems that may be faced when preparing for a professional role, in addition to being prepared to deal with unexpected changes resulting from working conditions or the work itself. Kalafat (2012), however, defines as career adaptation as the individual's ability to deal with future changes and benefit from these changes, the level of self-comfort in the face of new job responsibilities and the ability to take control in the face of unexpected events that have led to the change of career plans. Some studies on career adaptation show that people with higher level of career adaptation are more capable of finding better job opportunities, achieving success in job promotions, and achieving quality employment (Siyez and Belkıs, 2016).

The concept of optimism is generally known as feeling positive in the face of a situation or event. According to Carver and Scheier (2001), the concept of optimism is defined as "the generalized tendency to maintain a positive view that there will be better events and less negative events in the future." According to Kalafat (2012), career optimism is the individual's expectation that there will always be positive results with regard to his/her career development, or that feeling comfortable in the career planning process by focusing on the most positive aspects of the events. In particular, optimism has an important

impact on the perception of career control, which emphasizes the importance of individuals taking responsibility for career choices. On the other hand, pessimistic individuals strive less for achievement and personal success than optimistic individuals (Güngör et al., 2017). In the knowledge on the labor market dimension, the perceptions of individuals about their understanding of the labor market conditions and employment trends are evaluated (Rottinghaus et al., 2005).

The concept of self-efficacy beliefs, which is one of the important concepts of social cognitive theory, is expressed by Bandura (1994) as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how individuals think, feel, behave and motivate themselves. Luszczynska et al. (2005) express the perceived self-efficacy as the belief in one's competence to tackle difficult or novel tasks and to cope with adversity in specific demanding situations.

According to Bandura (1986, 1997), individuals with higher self-efficacy do not escape from the difficulties they face and the problems they have to deal with, and are very determined to achieve successful results. For this reason, it can be said that the perceived self-efficacy acts as a catalyst that drives the individual so that the individual can make sense of his/her life. Regardless of the individuals' potential and the advantage, he or she may have difficulty initiating and sustaining the action unless he/she feels a competence in a specific subject (Erol and Temizer, 2016). Individuals with a low perceived self-efficacy tend to avoid difficult works, give up quickly and feel under stress and perform poorly (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001).

1.2. Generations

The concept of generation is defined in the TDK dictionary as the individuals born in the same periods, sharing the same conditions and hence similar problems and distress of the same period, and who are obliged to do similar duties, whereas it is defined sociologically as a group of individuals who form age groups of approximately twenty-five to thirty years (www.tdk. gov.tr, 2018). The members of generations born in different periods have different viewpoints and perceptions against the events in ever-changing and developing world. In this context, a large part of Generation Y members are actively involved in business life and a small part of them are studying at a university. However, people born after 1995 are considered Generation Z according to some researchers, and some other researchers consider people born after 2000 as the Generation Z, which constitute the majority of students studying at a university.

According to Broadbidge et al. (2007), Generation Y is the common name given to those born between 1980 and 2000. This generation is also known as the Internet generation, echoboomers, millennials and nexters. These definitions are used to indicate the difference between the Generation Y and the preceding generations. The members of Generation Y have a leadership personality and aim for the best in their careers. The Generation Y that grew up with multi-channel television has adapted easily to the Internet. They are always willing to study and learn. They are willing to take responsibility and do not like to take direct orders and to be a subordinate. They prefer

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to work with flexible and understanding managers and expect their ideas to be asked and respected (Göktaş and Çarıkçı, 2016).

The most basic feature that distinguishes members of Generation Z, who were born in 2000 and later, when technology has progressed all over the world and reached a high level, from other generations is their ambition. Another difference of the Generation Z from other generations is their materialist thoughts and their faster comprehension and capability to analyze and interpret information very quickly (Kırık and Köyüstü, 2018). However, the fact that the Generation Z has not yet taken steps in the business life makes these thoughts hypothetical. It is observed that the personality traits of the generation members have not yet been separated by clear boundaries by the researchers. Although the strengths and weaknesses associated with the business life of this generation has not been clearly identified yet, the estimates show that Generation Z members can be unfaithful to brands and organizations they work with, and can easily give up since they are bored quickly. In this context, the Generation Z members do not want to do standard work, but rather want to personalize everything (Aydın and Başol, 2014).

2. Methodology

This study investigate the relationship between university students' perceived career prospects and perceived self-efficacies. In addition, it is aimed to investigate whether the perceived career prospects and the self-efficacies of the students differ in terms of demographic characteristics (gender, generation, nationality) before they embark on professional life.

The survey method was used to collect the data used for analysis in the study. In this context, the study was discussed with the approach of relational screening. In sampling selection, the convenience sampling method was preferred. The hypotheses developed for the purpose of the research are as follows:

H1: There are significant differences between a) the gender, b) nationality, and c) generation variables and career future perceptions of the participants.

H2: There are significant differences between a) the gender, b) nationality, and c) generation variables and self-efficacy perceptions of the participants.

H3: There is a statistically significant and positive relationship between career future and self-efficacy.

H4: There is a statistically significant and positive relationship between the sub-scales of perceived career prospects (career adaptation, career optimism, and knowledge on the labor market) and self-efficacy.

Data collection tool used in the research consists of three parts. In the first part of the questionnaire, a total of 6 questions for demographics were prepared in order to collect participants' gender, parental educational status, generation, faculty and nationality information. The items of the requested information were presented in options and they were asked to mark the appropriate option and fill in the required places.

In the second part, the Career Futures Inventory (CFI), developed by Rottinghaus, Day and Borgen (2005) and adapted to Turkish by Kalafat (2012) was used to assess the positive career planning attitudes of individuals, was used. The scale consists of 25 items and 3 sub-scales, including career adaptation (CA), career optimism (CO) and perceived information on the labor markets (PI). The Likert-type scale is scored with 1-5 scale. Responses to the items are rated as, 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

In the third part, the General Self-Efficacy scale (GSE) developed in 1979 by Schwarzer and Jarusalem in Germany was used. The scale, which consists of 20 items in its initial form, has reduced to 10 items by corrections in 1981, finalized in 1995 and adapted to Turkish by Aypay (2010). The scale consisting of all positive 10 items is prepared in a 4-point Likert type scale, scored with: 1 = Not at all true, 2 = Hardly true, 3 = Moderately true, 4 = Exactly true.

The results of the reliability analysis of the Career Futures Inventory (CFI) used in the research are shown in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis Results of the Scales Used

	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Number of items
Career adaptation	0.797	11
Career optimism	0.787	11
Knowledge on the labor market	0.740	2
Self-efficacy	0.946	10

The results of the reliability analysis of the sub-scales of the career futures inventory are presented in the table. According to the table, Cronbach's alpha value of the career adaptation sub-scale was 0.797, Cronbach' alpha of the career optimism sub-scale was 0.787, and the Cronbach's alpha of the knowledge on the labor market sub-scale was 0.740. These values indicate a high degree of reliability in the literature. The total Cronbach's alpha value of the scale was calculated as 0.856. According to the table, the Cronbach's alpha value of the self-efficacy scale was calculated as 0.946. This indicates a very high reliability. As a result of the analyses, the data did not show normal distribution and nonparametric tests were performed to test hypotheses.

3. Results

Analyses of the variables determined to test the research hypothesis were performed using the demographic information collected within the scope of the study.

3.1. Frequency Distribution of Demographic Profile of Participants

The Table 2 shows that 34.9% of the participants was female, 65.1% was male, 53.9% was in the Generation Y, 46.1% was in the Generation Z, 61.1% was Turkish national, and 38.9% was foreign national. In addition, 29.3% of the participants was from the faculty of engineering, 15.5% was from the faculty of law, 4.0% was from the faculty of medicine, 22.9% was from

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the faculty of economics and administrative sciences, 6.7% was from the faculty of communication, 1.6% was from the school of physical education and sports, 2.4% was from the faculty of arts and sciences, 5.9% was from the faculty of education, and 3.2% was from the faculty of architecture. Considering the parental education status, high-school and bachelor's degree (32.5%) had the highest rate in the paternal education status, whereas elementary school (48.5) was the highest in the maternal education status.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Female	131	34.9
Male	244	65.1
Generation		
Y	202	53.9
Z	173	46.1
Nationality		
TC Nationals	229	61.1
Foreign nationals	146	38.9
Paternal education status		
Illiterate	4	1.1
Elementary School	101	26.9
High School	122	32.5
Bachelor's degree	107	32.5
Master's Degree	31	8.3
PhD	10	2.7
Maternal education status		
Illiterate	5	1.3
Elementary School	182	48.5
High School	109	29.1
Bachelor's degree	66	17.6
Master's Degree	10	2.7
PhD	3	0.8
Faculty of		
engineering	110	29.3
law	58	15.5
medicine	15	4.0
Economics and Administrativ Sciences	re 86	22.9
communication	25	6.7
Physical Education and Sports	s 6	1.6
science and literature	32	8.5
Education	9	2.4
technology	22	5.9
architecture and fine arts	12	3.2
Total	N:375	100

3.2. Testing Research Hypotheses

As shown in Table 3, there was a statistically significant difference between the nationality of the participants and the career adaptation sub-scale of the career futures inventory at a level of p<0.05 significance. After comparing the averages to determine which group causes this significant difference, foreign students were found to have higher career adaptation than Turkish students. The H1 hypothesis was partially accepted.

Another important finding is that there was a statistically significant difference between the self-efficacy perception and the nationality (p<0.05). According to this, Turkish students' perceptions of self-efficacy were higher than foreign students. The H2 hypothesis was partially accepted.

When we look at Table 4, there was a statistically significant difference between the levels of knowledge about the labor market sub-scale of the career futures inventory in terms of the gender variable (p<0.05). Accordingly, male students follow the trends in the labor market more closely than female students, and it is possible to conclude that they are more conscious than female students in career planning. The H1 hypothesis was partially accepted.

Table 5 shows the significant differences between the groups (Y and Z) of the participants in terms of career adaptation and career optimism at a level of p<0.05 significance. Accordingly, career adaptation was higher in the Generation Z than in the Generation Y. In addition, the career optimism in the Generations Z was higher than the Generation Y. The H1 hypothesis was partially accepted.

There was no statistically significant difference between the self-efficacy perceptions of participants in terms of generations (p>0.05). The H2 hypothesis was partially accepted.

In the correlation analysis, the relationship between the research variables was analyzed. In this study, correlation analysis was performed using Spearman's coefficient due to non-normal distribution of the data. The relationship between the perceived career prospects and self-efficacy was found to be significant (R=.231, p<0.001).

According to the correlation analysis between the variables, a positive and low-level correlation was found between perceived career prospects and the self-efficacy (p=0.00, r=.231**). Since the p value is less than 0.01 (p=.000), the hypothesis "H3: There is a statistically significant and positive relationship between career future and efficacy." was accepted. In short, perceived career prospects of the participants increase as their self-efficacy perceptions increase.

Table 3: Mann-Whitney U Test Results of the Self-Efficacy and Career Future Sub-Scales of the Participants According to the Nationality Variable

Variable	Groups	N			p
Career adaptation	Turkish	229	178.26	14486.0	.029
	Foreigner	146	203.28		
Career optimism	Turkish	229	192.76	15627.0	0.286
	Foreigner	146	180.53		
Knowledge on the labor market	Turkish	229	183.76	15745.5	0.336
	Foreigner	146	194.65		
Self-efficacy	Turkish	229	203.09	13260.5	0.001

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Table 4: Mann-Whitney U Test Results of the Career Future Labor Market Knowledge Sub-Scale of the Participants according to the Gender Variable

Groups	N	Row Avg.	U	p
Female	131	168.65	13447.0	.010
Male	244	198.39		

Table 5: Mann-Whitney U Test Results of the Career Future Sub-Scales of the Participants according to the Nationality Variable

	Groups	N	Row Avg.	U	p
Career adaptation	Z	173	200.95	15233.5	0.032
	Y	202	176.91		
Career optimism	Z	173	202.44	14975.5	0.017
	Y	202	175.64		
Knowledge on the labor market	Z	173	186.21	17163.0	0.764
	Y	202	189.53		
Self-efficacy	Z	173	196.44	16013.0	0.163

Table 6 shows the relationship between the career future sub-scales (career adaptation, career optimism, and knowledge on the labor market) and self-efficacy.

Table 6: Findings Related to the Correlation Analysis between Perceived Career Future Sub-Scales and Self-Efficacy

	1	2	3	4
1. Career adaptation	1	0.09	.496**	0.006
2. Career optimism		1	106*	.191**
3. Knowledge on the labor market			1	-0.082
4. Self-efficacy				1

According to the correlation analysis between the variables, a positive and low-level correlation was found between career optimism and the self-efficacy at a level of 0.01 significance (r=.191**). Since the p value is less than 0.01 (p=.000), it is possible to say that there is a statistically significant relationship between career optimism and self-efficacy. There was no correlation between the other sub-scales and the self-efficacy. In this case, "H4: There is a statistically significant and positive relationship between career future and self-efficacy." hypothesis was partially accepted.

4. Conclusion

Before proceeding to the conclusions of this study, we discuss the conditions that are seen as a limitation in the research. Whether there is a difference in career planning perspectives of the university students who maintain their education life together in multi-cultural societies has been an issue of concern, and the lack of research in the literature addressing the career planning views of the individuals from the nationality perspective constitutes the fundamental rationale of our study. Based on this idea, we tried to reach students with different nationalities studying at the Kocaeli University in the 2017-2018 academic calendar fall semester, but failed to reach a level of sampling sufficient for comparison due to the time

and cost constraints. Thus, the dataset was generalized and the Turkish nationality - Foreign nationality distinction was made. The heterogeneous structure of the foreign nationality sample group (Afghani, Somalian, Uzbek, Yemen, German, Pakistani, Syrian, Ethiopian, Azerbaijani, etc.) also has various considerations. This is an important limitation of the study. Therefore, for future studies, researchers need to expand the sample group in order to be able to obtain more generalized results.

In this study, the research was carried out with the relational screening model and correlation analysis was performed in order to determine the relationship between the perceived career prospects and self-efficacy. Nonparametric tests were performed since the study data has a non-normal distribution. Nonparametric correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between the variables, and a statistically significant and positive relationship was found between the perceived career prospects and self-efficacy. Individuals with higher self-efficacy do not escape from the difficulties they face and the problems they have to deal with, and are very determined to achieve successful results. Therefore, it can be said that the perceived self-efficacy acts as a catalyst that drives the individual so that the individual can make sense of his/her life, and it can be concluded based on this that individuals make choices with high levels of awareness when making their future career plans. In addition, when the relationship between the sub-scales of the career future inventory and the self-efficacy was examined, a significant relationship was found between the career optimism sub-scale and the self-efficacy. In short, it can be stated that individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to maintain a positive view that there will be better events and less negative events in the future.

In addition, Mann-Whitney U test was carried out to test the hypotheses, regarding the differences between participants' perceived career prospects and self-efficacy perceptions in terms of demographic characteristics (generation, nationality and gender). According to the test results, the self-efficacy Baysal et al. To & Re 2019, 1 (1) 38-43

perceptions of the participants differ statistically between Turkish students and foreign students. The analysis results shows that the self-efficacy levels of foreign students were higher.

Another demographic difference is that the level of knowledge of male students about the labor market differs significantly from female students in their career planning. The perceptions and degree of understanding the labor market conditions and employment trends were higher in male students than that of female students included in the study. Therefore, it can be said that female students are more concerned about the labor market and professional life than male students. In their study conducted with university students, Büyükyılmaz et al. (2016) concluded that male students follow trends in the labor market more than female students. This result supports our research findings. Siyez and Yusupu (2013), however, concluded that university students with masculine and androgen gender roles had higher career adaptation and career optimism than university students with feminine and unspecified gender roles. In their study on university students, Balaban and Karademir (2017) concluded that female students had a higher level of career adaptation compared to that of male students. These results do not correlate with our research findings.

Considering the generation variable, there was a statistically significant difference between Generation Y and Generation Z in terms of the career adaptation and career optimism subscales. According to the analysis results, career adaptation and career optimism of the students in the Generation Z were higher than that of Generation Y students.

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