



The Role of Career Decision Self-efficacy and Career Outcome Expectation in Career Aspirations of High School Students

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Abstract: This study, conducted based on Social Cognitive Career Theory, aimed to explore three key variables, self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals that play a central role in the career development process, and to examine the interrelationships among these variables. The research sample consisted of 374 high school students (237 females and 137 males) from various types of schools. Data were collected using the Career Decision Self-efficacy Scale-short Form, Career Outcome Expectations and Exploratory Intentions Scale, and Career Aspirations Scale. The relationships among the variables were analyzed using correlation and multiple linear regression analyses. For further statistical comparisons, independent-sample t-tests and one-way analyses of variance were applied. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between career decision self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, and career aspirations. Furthermore, career decision self-efficacy and career outcome expectations predicted career leadership, educational, and achievement aspirations, explaining 16%, 27%, and 26% of the variance, respectively, with career decision self-efficacy emerging as the strongest predictor across all the subscales. Other findings indicated that career leadership goals differed by age and gender, while career achievement goals varied according to the type of high school attended by the students. These results were interpreted in light of the existing literature, and recommendations based on the findings are presented.

Keywords: Career aspirations, career decision self-efficacy, career outcome expectation, social cognitive career theory

Lise Öğrencilerinin Kariyer Hedeflerinde Kariyer Kararı Öz-Yeterliği ve Kariyer Sonuç Beklentisinin Rolü

Öz: Sosyal Bilişsel Kariyer Kuramı temel alınarak yürütülen bu araştırmanın amacı, kariyer gelişim sürecinde merkezi bir rol oynayan üç temel değişkeni (öz-yeterlik inançları, sonuç beklentileri ve kişisel hedefler) incelemeyi ve bu değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmanın örneklemini farklı okul türlerinden 374 (237 kız 137 erkek) lise öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Veriler Kariyer Kararı Öz-Yeterlik Ölçeği-Kısa Formu, Kariyer Sonuç Beklentileri ve Açıklayıcı Amaçlar Ölçeği ve Kariyer Hedefleri Ölçeği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiler, korelasyon ve çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizleri kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Diğer istatistiksel karşılaştırmalar için bağımsız örneklem t testleri ve tek yönlü varyans analizleri uygulanmıştır. Sonuçlar, kariyer karar öz-yeterliği, kariyer sonuç beklentileri ve kariyer hedefleri arasında anlamlı ve pozitif ilişkiler olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca, kariyer kararı öz-yeterliği ve kariyer sonuç beklentilerinin; kariyer liderlik, eğitim ve başarı hedeflerini

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sırasıyla %16, %27 ve %26 oranında yordadığı, tüm alt boyutlarda ise kariyer kararı öz-yeterliğinin en güçlü yordayıcı olduğu belirlenmiştir. Diğer bulgular, kariyer liderlik hedeflerinin yaş ve cinsiyete göre farklılık gösterdiğini, kariyer başarı hedeflerinin ise öğrencilerin devam ettiği lise türüne bağlı olarak değiştiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu sonuçlar mevcut literatür ışığında yorumlanmış ve bulgulara dayalı öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kariyer hedefleri, kariyer kararı öz-yeterliği, kariyer sonuç beklentisi, sosyal bilişsel kariyer kuramı

Introduction

With the emergence and evolution of modern industrial organizations, the concept of a career has gained increasing significance. According to Bayraktaroğlu (2006), a career is defined as the process through which an individual progresses in their job, gains experience, and develops skills throughout their working lives. Although career advancement has traditionally been conceptualized within the framework of organizational hierarchies, transformations in the postmodern business environment have led to a shift toward more autonomous and self-directed career trajectories. (Göktaş, 2017). This transformation in the career field has created a structure that prioritizes individual goals and achievements over societal objectives, thereby placing greater responsibility on individuals to manage their own careers (Seçer & Çınar, 2011). In this context, individuals are expected to choose the most suitable job and profession for themselves to ensure fulfilling and successful career development.

Career development is a multifaceted and dynamic process influenced by the interplay of psychological, economic, and sociological variables (Sever Sarıcı, 2020). Career planning plays a crucial role in helping individuals select the most suitable job and profession, thereby enabling them to lead a fulfilling life. Career planning is a broader, more systematic, and comprehensive process than career goal-setting, encompassing the discovery of opportunities, formulation and implementation of strategies, individual evaluations, and analysis of outcomes (Antoniou, 2010). Throughout this process, individuals establish personal goals, plan activities to achieve them, enhance their skills to increase motivation, and improve their adaptation to the work environment (Erdoğan, 2003; Vergiliel Tüz, 2003). Career planning serves as a fundamental component of lifelong career development by integrating various factors that shape decision-making processes, including personal aspirations, traits, and social dynamics (Rogers et al., 2008). Adolescence is one of the most critical periods when the importance of this process becomes particularly evident.

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage during which individuals begin to develop career awareness and explore their vocational interests (Witko et al., 2005). Rogers et al. (2008) examined career planning from a social-cognitive perspective and argued that individuals who demonstrate strong self-confidence in their careers and set ambitious goals are more likely to actively engage in exploring and planning their career paths. Similarly, Novakovic and Fouad (2012) found that effective career planning enables individuals to develop a stronger commitment to their professional and career-related future. Research suggests that effective career planning during adolescence guides individuals toward a professionally fulfilling life. In this process, individuals are expected to explore their interests and abilities, assess career options and opportunities, and set career goals. Once these goals are established, individuals create a plan, implement it, and evaluate the outcomes of their efforts (Çalık & Ereş, 2006). Therefore, establishing career goals is a crucial stage in career planning, which is an essential component of the broader career development process.

A career goal is defined as the professional position an individual aims to achieve in the future (Özden, 2007). Career goals, which encompass elements such as planning, decision-making, personal aspirations, and behavioral choices, play a crucial role in the career development process (Betz & Vuyten, 1997). Establishing career goals enables individuals to regulate and direct their efforts, allowing them to maintain their motivation over time without relying on external support (Lent & Brown, 1996). Moreover, when career planning incorporates realistic goals, the likelihood of attaining the desired outcomes increases (Lent et al., 1994).

Career goals are a key component of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) proposed by Lent et al. (1994). This theory posits that career goals are influenced by an individual's self-regulation skills, past experiences, and environmental factors, which collectively play a crucial role in career development (Lent et al., 1994). SCCT highlights three primary factors that guide career development: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals. These factors are interdependent and shaped by personal, environmental, and experiential influences (Lent et al., 2002). To comprehensively understand the impact of career goals on career advancement, it is essential to examine how self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations interact within the SCCT framework and how they relate to career development.

Career decision self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks related to making informed career choices and decisions (Betz & Hackett, 1981). This belief is critical in determining how a person responds to challenges, negative experiences, or a lack of motivation, as well as the amount of effort they invest in overcoming such difficulties (Bandura, 1977). Schunk (1991) emphasized that individuals with high self-efficacy possess strong confidence in their abilities and deep trust in their capacity to succeed. Consequently, these individuals are better equipped to navigate obstacles and are more likely to invest greater effort in achieving their career goals.

Career outcome expectations refer to an individual's belief in the long-term consequences of their career-related decisions and play a crucial role in initiating and sustaining specific behaviors (Betz & Vuyten, 1997; Lent et al., 1994). These expectations are shaped by anticipated rewards, such as financial gain, power, or personal satisfaction, which significantly influence an individual's motivation to engage in and persist with career-related activities. Research conducted within the SCCT framework has demonstrated that when both self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations are high, individuals are more likely to set challenging goals and maintain consistent efforts to achieve their career aspirations (Lent & Brown, 1996; Schoenfeld et al., 2017). Since both self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations affect goal-setting and regulate career-related behaviors (Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2011), these two factors must be considered when establishing career goals.

The Purpose and Significance of the Research

The establishment of career goals is important throughout life and is typically shaped during high school years (Sharf, 2017). High school education aims to prepare students for university and ultimately equip them for a professional life. During this period, thoughts about career choices and the practice of those careers become especially prominent in their lives. From a developmental perspective, the high school years represent a stage when life philosophies and value systems begin to form and identity becomes more defined. It is also a time when career orientation strengthens (Ilgar, 2003). Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2013) noted that although thoughts about career choices and their practice begin in childhood, they become more pronounced with the transition to high

school. At this stage, students are expected to make career-related decisions, set career goals, and successfully complete a critical phase of their career development. Successfully navigating this stage contributes to a positive and desirable progression in their career paths, whereas failure to do so may lead to negative experiences and outcomes for the students.

According to SCCT, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks (Bandura, 1997; Betz & Hackett, 1986), whereas outcome expectations denote the anticipated consequences of engaging in particular behaviors (Lent et al., 1994). Both constructs play a central role in shaping career goals, which act as motivational guides for future behavior (Nauta, 2007). Empirical evidence suggests that higher self-efficacy is associated with stronger and more clearly defined career goals, and that outcome expectations mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and career pursuits (Lent & Brown, 2013; Sheu et al., 2010). Despite their critical importance, the interactions between these constructs during adolescence remain underexplored.

The career development process in high school should emphasize individual career goals and the factors influencing them, as highlighted by the SCCT, particularly self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations. While previous studies have examined the relationships between career goals and social support (Aktaş, 2018), career decision self-efficacy and career difficulties (Dursun & Kara, 2019; Uçkun et al., 2015), career indecisiveness (Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2011), and academic self-efficacy (Avara, 2015), a notable gap remains concerning the integrated relationship among self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals, which are the core elements of the current research model. Few studies have systematically explored how these three constructs interact in adolescence.

By investigating these relationships, this study aimed to strengthen the theoretical foundations of SCCT while addressing the lack of empirical evidence on their interconnections during this critical developmental stage. Additionally, the inclusion of demographic variables such as age, gender, school type, and socioeconomic background allowed for a focused examination of the contextual influences on students' career aspirations. Previous research suggests that these aspirations may vary according to individual characteristics and educational contexts; therefore, analyzing demographic differences helps identify potential patterns and inequalities. This informs targeted and equitable career counseling strategies for diverse high school populations.

Accordingly, this study aimed to examine self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals in the context of high school students' career development. It also seeks to provide empirical insights into the existing literature and establish a conceptual framework for future research. The main objectives were to investigate the influence of career decision self-efficacy and outcome expectations on students' career aspirations and to explore the relationships between these variables. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions.

- ✓ Do high school students' career aspirations (leadership, achievement, and educational aspirations) differ significantly by age, gender, and type of high school?
- ✓ Is there a significant relationship between high school students' career aspirations, career decision self-efficacy, and career outcome expectations?
- ✓ Do career decision self-efficacy and career outcome expectations significantly predict the factors of the Career Aspirations Scale (CAS) (leadership, achievement, and educational aspirations)?

Method

Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 374 high school students (237 females and 137 males) from various grade levels. The ages of the participants ranged from 14 to 19 years, with a mean age of 16.32 years. When examining the distribution by grade level, 26.5% were 9th-grade students (99 students), 29.7% were 10th-grade students (111 students), 22.7% were 11th-grade students (85 students), and 22.1% were 12th-grade students (79 students). Regarding the distribution by school type, 16.8% of the participants attended Science High Schools (63 students), 18.2% attended Anatolian High Schools (68 students), 24.3% attended Vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools (91 students), 14.7% attended Social Sciences High Schools (55 students), and 25.9% attended Anatolian Islamic High Schools (97 students).

Measures

CAS

The CAS, was originally developed by O'Brien (1996) and later revised by Gregor and O'Brien (2015). It consists of 24 items distributed across three sub-dimensions: leadership, educational, and achievement aspirations. The total possible score ranged from 0–96. The Turkish adaptation of the CAS was conducted for a university student sample by Büyükgöze-Kavas and O'Brien (n.d.), and its psychometric properties were evaluated. Aktaş (2018) examined the psychometric properties of the CAS among high school students and confirmed the construct validity of the scale in its original form. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the subscales were reported as .76 for leadership aspirations, .82 for educational aspirations, and .70 for achievement aspirations. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .83 for leadership aspirations, .86 for educational aspirations, .78 for achievement aspirations, and .91 for the overall scale.

Career Decision Self-efficacy Scale-Short Form (CDSE-SF)

The CDSE-SF was developed to assess individuals' beliefs regarding their ability to perform tasks essential to the career decision-making process (Betz et al., 1996). The scale consists of 25 items distributed across five sub-dimensions: self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving. The possible score range on the scale is 25–125. In the Turkish adaptation study conducted by Büyükgöze-Kavas (2013), the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was reported as .92. To ensure the scale's applicability to high school students in the present study, the construct validity of the CDSE-SF was tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). CFA was performed on the total scores obtained from the CDSE-SF, resulting in an initial χ^2/df ratio of 2.43 ($\chi^2 = 656.07$, $df = 270$) with other fit indices close to acceptable levels (CFI = .89, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .06, and SRMR = .04). Based on the modification indices, covariances were added between items 14 and 22 and 13 and 17, and the CFA was rerun. The revised model demonstrated an improved fit, with a χ^2/df ratio of 2.15 ($\chi^2 = 578.06$, $df = 268$) and other fit indices indicating an acceptable to good fit (CFI = .91, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04). Another study also demonstrated the construct validity of the CDSE-SF for high school students through CFA, showing acceptable model fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 3.822$, GFI = .88, AGFI = .85, RMSEA = .07, NFI = .89, CFI = .92) (Yazan, 2024). In the current study, the internal consistency coefficient was also calculated as .92, which is consistent with the findings of the adaptation study.

Career Outcome Expectations and Exploratory Intentions Scale (OEX-EI)

The OEX-EI is a 14-item instrument consisting of three subscales: career outcome expectations, exploratory intentions, and academic outcome expectations (Betz & Klein-Voyten, 1997). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was conducted by Büyükgöze-Kavas (2011). In this study, only the career outcome expectations subscale was used in alignment with the study objectives. Career outcome expectations reflect an individual's belief that the long-term outcomes of educational or career decisions will be positive. It is suggested that as the score on this scale increases, expectations of positive outcomes also increase (Lent et al., 2017). The possible score range for the subscale is from 4–20. In the Turkish adaptation, the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient for the career outcome expectations subscale was reported to be .81 (Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2011). To ensure the applicability of the subscale for high school students in this study, construct validity was examined using a CFA. The CFA indicated that factor loadings ranged from .69 to .79, all path coefficients were significant, and the model demonstrated excellent fit indices ($\chi^2/df = .14$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00, and SRMR = .00). The OEX-EI has also been administered to high school students in previous studies. For instance, in a study conducted with 695 students from various high schools, the scale was used to measure career and academic outcome expectations (Seker, 2020). In this study, Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency was calculated as .83.

Data Collection and Analysis

The required permissions for using the measurement tools in this study were obtained from the respective authors. This study was conducted with the approval of the Ondokuz Mayıs University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee (Decision No. 2021/72, dated 29.01.2021) and with the research implementation permission granted by the Ministry of National Education (E-47613789-44-25764393). Communication was established with the administrators and school psychological counselors of the participating schools, and the necessary planning was conducted for data collection. Data were gathered both online via Google Forms and in person within classrooms, with the administration of the scales taking approximately 10 min per student. In the data analysis phase, the normality of the dataset was first assessed, and the results indicated that the data were normally distributed. To examine the relationships among career aspirations, career outcome expectations, and career decision-making self-efficacy, a correlation analysis was conducted. Furthermore, multiple linear regression analysis was employed to investigate the effects of career outcome expectations and career decision-making self-efficacy on career aspirations. For additional statistical evaluations, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent sample t-tests were used.

Results

Normality

The data were assessed for normality, and skewness and kurtosis values were calculated for each scale and subscale. The obtained values fell within the ± 3 range (Field, 2009), as presented in Table 1, indicating that the data followed a normal distribution.

Table 1

Normality test results

Scales	Skewness	Kurtosis
Career Outcome Expectations Subscale	-1.40	2.89
CDSE-SF	-.13	.17
CAS		
Leadership Aspirations Subscale	.44	.65
Educational Aspirations Subscale	-.14	-.70
Achievement Aspirations Subscale	.12	.26

Relationships Between Career Aspirations, Career Outcome Expectations, and Career Decision Self-Efficacy

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among career aspirations, career outcome expectations, and career decision self-efficacy in high school students (Table 2).

Table 2

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variables	\bar{X}	Standard Deviation (SD)	1	2	3	4	5
1. Leadership Aspirations	17.52	4.45	1				
2. Educational Aspirations	22.43	5.88	.52**	1			
3. Achievement Aspirations	20.28	4.18	.60**	.63**	1		
4. Career Outcome Expectations	16.02	3.26	.11*	.06	.10*	1	
5. Career Decision Self-Efficacy	89.38	15.21	.40**	.52**	.51**	.04	1

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

As presented in Table 2, low positive correlations were found between career outcome expectations and career leadership aspirations ($r = .11$, and $p < .05$), as well as between career outcome expectations and career achievement aspirations ($r = .10$, and $p < .05$). Additionally, career decision self-efficacy demonstrated statistically significant moderate positive correlations with career leadership aspirations ($r = .40$, and $p < .05$), career educational aspirations ($r = .52$, and $p < .05$), and career achievement aspirations ($r = .51$, and $p < .05$).

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis, conducted to examine the causal relationships among career aspirations, career decision self-efficacy, and career outcome expectations, as well as to evaluate the effects of these variables on career aspirations, Tables 3-5.

Table 3

Multiple linear regression analysis results for the career leadership aspirations subscale

Variables	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	5.18	1.59		3.24	.00
Career Outcome Expectations	.12	0.65	.09	1.96	.05
Career Decision Self-efficacy	.11	0.14	.39	8.31	.00*

$R = .40$, $R^2 = .16$, $F(2, 371) = 37.280$, and * $p < .001$

An examination of Table 3 indicates that all variables included in the model are significant predictors of the career leadership aspirations subscale. A closer analysis revealed that career decision self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.39$, and $p < 0.001$) was the primary factor explaining career leadership. The model accounts for approximately 16% of the variance in leadership aspirations ($R^2 = .16$).

Table 4

Multiple linear regression analysis results for the career educational aspirations subscale

Variables	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	3.26	1.96		3.24	.09
Career Outcome Expectations	.06	.08	.03	1.96	.39
Career Decision Self-efficacy	.20	.01	.52	8.31	.00*

$R = .52$, $R^2 = .27$, $F(2, 371) = 70.880$, and $*p < .001$

An examination of Table 4 indicates that all variables included in the model are significant predictors of the career educational aspirations subscale. A closer analysis of the model demonstrated that career decision self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.52$, and $p < 0.001$) is the primary factor explaining career educational aspirations. The model accounted for approximately 27% of the variance in educational aspirations ($R^2 = .27$).

Table 5

Multiple linear regression analysis results for the career achievement aspirations subscale

Variables	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	6.34	1.41		4.49	.00
Career Outcome Expectations	.09	.05	.07	1.66	.09
Career Decision Self-efficacy	.13	.01	.50	11.32	.00*

$R = .51$, $R^2 = .26$, $F(2, 371) = 66.393$, and $*p < .001$

An examination of Table 5, indicates that all variables included in the model are significant predictors of the career achievement aspirations subscale. A closer analysis reveals that the primary factor explaining career achievement aspirations is career decision self-efficacy ($\beta = .50$, and $p < .001$). The model accounted for approximately 26% of the variance in achievement aspirations ($R^2 = .26$).

Relationships Between Career Aspirations, Age, Gender, and Type of High School

As presented in Table 6, the correlation analysis examining the relationship between high school students' career aspirations and age revealed a positive and statistically significant correlation between career leadership aspirations and age ($r = .13$, and $p < .05$). This finding suggests that as students' age increases, their career leadership aspirations also tend to rise.

Table 6

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variables	\bar{X}	Ss	1	2	3	4
1. Leadership Aspirations	17.52	4.45	1			
2. Educational Aspirations	22.43	5.88	.52**	1		
3. Achievement Aspirations	20.28	4.18	.60**	.63**	1	
4. Age	16.32	1.20	.13*	-.06	-.06	1

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

The independent samples t-test, conducted to examine the relationship between high school students' career aspirations and gender (Table 7), revealed a significant gender difference in career

leadership aspirations ($t_{372} = -2.297$, and $p < .05$). Descriptive statistics demonstrated that the mean score for male students' leadership aspirations ($\bar{X} = 2.27$) was higher than that of female students ($\bar{X} = 2.14$).

Table 7

Comparison of career aspirations scores by gender

Variables	F	p	t	df	p (two-tailed)
Leadership Aspirations	.93	.33	-2.297 .265	372 266.307	.02 .02
Educational Aspirations	.94	.75	1.579 1.580	4.259 284.608	.11 .11
Achievement Aspirations	.37	.54	.504 .510	4.259 293.976	.61 .61

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the relationship between students' career achievement aspirations and the type of high school they attended (Table 8). The results indicate significant differences in career achievement aspirations among the high school types. A Tukey HSD (honestly significant difference) post-hoc test revealed that students from Vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools reported higher career achievement aspiration scores ($M = 2.70$, and $SD = 0.51$) than their peers from Science High Schools ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.54$) and Anatolian İmam-Hatip High Schools ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.50$). These findings suggest that the type of high school may play a role in shaping students' career aspirations.

Table 8

Comparison of career aspirations scores by type of high school

Variables	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p
Leadership Aspirations	Between Groups	1.952	4	.488	1.587	.17
	Within Groups	113.469	368	.308		
	Total	115.421	373			
Educational Aspirations	Between Groups	5.048	4	1.262	2.363	.05
	Within Groups	197.048	369	.534		
	Total	202.096	373			
Achievement Aspirations	Between Groups	4.509	4	1.127	4.259	.00
	Within Groups	97.661	369	.265		
	Total	102.170	373			

Discussion

The research findings revealed positive and statistically significant relationships between career outcome expectations and the two components of the CAS, namely career leadership aspirations and career achievement aspirations. Similarly, positive and statistically significant relationships were found between career decision self-efficacy and all three components of the CAS: leadership, educational, and achievement aspirations. These results suggest that when high school students possess strong career decision self-efficacy, believe in their ability to perform career-related tasks effectively, and maintain a positive outlook on the long-term consequences of their career decisions, their career goals are positively impacted. It was examined whether career leadership goals, achievement goals, and educational goals can be predicted by career outcome expectations and career decision self-efficacy. In all three models, career decision self-efficacy was the primary predictor variable, explaining 16%, 26%, and 27% of the total variance, respectively. However, in all three models, career outcome expectations were not significant predictors of career aspirations. Additionally, it was concluded that as career decision self-efficacy scores increased, scores on all subscales of the Career Aspirations Scale also increased.

These findings indicate that career decision self-efficacy plays a stronger and more consistent role than career outcome expectations in predicting high school students' leadership, educational, and achievement aspirations. The lack of predictive power of career outcome expectations may stem from their abstract and future-oriented nature, encompassing distant rewards such as financial gain, prestige, or personal satisfaction, which may have limited influence on students' immediate goal-setting. High school students' relatively limited exposure to real-world career experiences may also restrict the development of concrete and realistic outcome expectations, thereby weakening their predictive abilities. Within the SCCT framework, career decision self-efficacy exerts a more immediate and tangible influence on goal information, as beliefs about one's ability to perform career-related tasks are more actionable at this stage (Lent et al., 1994; Betz & Hackett, 1981). According to Bandura (1977), the reliability of personal experience enhances perceived self-efficacy, while Schunk (1991) emphasizes that direct performance outcomes provide the most credible basis for self-evaluation. Consistent with these principles, the present study suggests that self-efficacy grounded in concrete experiences and successful task performance has a stronger and more immediate impact on high school students' leadership, educational, and achievement aspirations than the more abstract dimension of career outcome expectations.

Career decision self-efficacy likely empowers students to actively pursue their goals, take initiative, and develop confidence in achieving realistic, performance-oriented objectives, such as educational and academic milestones. Conversely, career outcome expectations primarily serve as an indirect motivational factor, enhancing students' awareness of the value and significance of their goals without directly influencing their perceived attainability. Notably, even when outcome expectations are high, low self-efficacy can hinder students from taking the necessary actions to achieve these goals (Hackett & Betz, 1981). According to Bandura, although both self-efficacy and outcome expectations influence behavior, self-efficacy plays a more decisive role in determining actions. Individuals may avoid performing a behavior even when they anticipate positive outcomes if they doubt their ability to execute it successfully (Lent & Brown, 1996). Overall, these findings highlight that career decision self-efficacy is the key determinant shaping high school students' career aspirations. It guides their engagement with achievable and performance-oriented goals, whereas career outcome expectations function as supportive, motivational beliefs that enhance

students' awareness of potential long-term outcomes but exert a comparatively weaker, indirect effect on their immediate goal-directed behaviors.

Notably, the predictive power of career decision self-efficacy and career outcome expectations varied across the three career aspiration subscales. Specifically, while the models explained 26% and 27% of the variance in achievement and educational aspirations, respectively, only 16% of the variance in leadership aspirations was explained. This relatively lower explained variance for leadership aspirations may stem from the more abstract and long-term nature of leadership goals, which demand complex interpersonal and managerial competencies that high school students may have limited opportunities to develop or experience directly. Furthermore, societal and cultural expectations surrounding leadership roles, particularly for female students, may restrict the expression and formation of leadership aspirations, thereby diminishing the influence of decision self-efficacy and outcome expectations on this subscale. Finally, leadership skills are frequently developed through extracurricular engagement, teamwork, and leadership experiences that are not equally accessible to all students, which may further explain why leadership aspirations are less strongly predicted by these variables than by achievement and educational goals. Collectively, these findings underscore why career decision self-efficacy emerges as a stronger and more consistent predictor of achievement and educational aspirations than leadership aspirations, as the former are more concrete, actionable, and closely tied to students' immediate school experiences and skill development opportunities.

The results of the study indicate that high school students' career leadership aspirations increase positively and significantly with age, with scores rising as students grow older. A review of the literature reveals that few studies have specifically examined the relationship between career leadership aspirations and age. Consistent with the current findings, Singer (1990) reported a positive and significant relationship between these variables. Interpreting similar results, Haber (2012) noted that as students mature, their conceptual understanding of leadership becomes more developed and nuanced, while Hirschi (2010) suggested that career goals evolve in tandem with the ongoing development of interests and personality traits over time. Supporting these perspectives, Ginzberg's career development theory highlights that during the later stages of high school, students nearing the end of their transitional period begin to formulate more realistic career goals (Ayas et al., 2010). In summary, as high school students age, their career leadership aspirations not only increase but also become more clearly defined, reflecting the clarification of their interests and personality characteristics. This process underscores the growing need to set realistic goals in both university entrance preparation and broader career planning, as students progressively refine their understanding of their future leadership and professional paths.

High school students' career leadership aspirations differed significantly by gender, with male students demonstrating higher mean scores than female students. The literature supports these findings, emphasizing the association between gender and career leadership aspirations (Perrone et al., 2001; Gürdoğan & Atabey, 2015). According to SCCT, Lent and Brown (1996) proposed that interests, learning experiences, and performance outcome factors that shape personal career goals tend to vary by gender. Research further indicates that male students are more likely to set leadership-oriented goals that require higher education, social prestige, and managerial authority than female students (Mendez & Crawford, 2002; Singer, 1989). Conversely, female students often perceive their leadership abilities to be lower than those of their male counterparts (Sheppard, 2018). The comparatively lower leadership aspiration scores among female students can also be understood through the sociocultural and political lenses of gender. Societal norms frequently

associate leadership positions with masculine roles, framing them as domains primarily suited for men (Grove & Montgomery, 1999). Supporting this perspective, Marini and Fan (1997) observed that although women have achieved parity with men in terms of education and workforce participation, they remain underrepresented in leadership roles and continue to earn lower wages. Similarly, in his study on gender differences in leadership goals, Singer (1989) found that the only significant gender gap appeared in the "having power and authority" category, which favored men. In summary, these findings suggest that the higher leadership aspiration scores among male students are largely shaped by enduring societal and political influences. Leadership ambitions, such as pursuing managerial roles and positions of authority, are generally more socially reinforced for men, and these gendered expectations are reflected in students' developing leadership aspirations from an early age.

Career achievement aspirations encompass aspects such as taking responsibility, performing well at work, and achieving career advancement. The mean scores of career achievement aspirations were higher for Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School students than for Science High School and Anatolian Islamic High School students. Descriptive statistics were conducted to examine whether the higher career achievement aspiration scores of Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School students compared to other high schools could be attributed to the gender distribution. The analysis exhibited that female students outnumbered male students in the Vocational High School group (68 females and 23 males; total sample: 237 females and 137 males). The higher career achievement aspiration scores of Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School students suggest that this difference is not due to gender. This finding can be explained by the differences in the educational and teaching methods provided by different types of high schools. Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School students receive practical and theoretical education in their chosen fields. Additionally, they specialize in internships and skill-based training. Unlike students from other types of high schools, vocational students begin their training at an earlier stage, allowing them to develop their knowledge and skills in workshop and laboratory settings. This early exposure enhances their ability to assume work-related responsibilities and their profession, helping them adopt aspirations such as performing well in their tasks. The results indicate that these characteristics positively influence vocational high school students' career achievement aspirations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

SCCT underscores the critical influence of self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations on the formation and pursuit of career goals (Betz & Vuyten, 1997; Lent & Brown, 1996). Both the theoretical propositions of SCCT and the findings of this study are corroborated by numerous studies in the literature. When individuals possess strong career-related self-efficacy and outcome expectations, they are more likely to establish clear career goals and exert sustained efforts to achieve them (Rasheed Ali & Saunders, 2008; Schoenfeld et al., 2017). Several studies have further emphasized that high levels of career decision self-efficacy and career outcome expectations are associated with setting more realistic career goals, enhanced performance, and greater success in achieving career objectives (Bahadır, 2018; Fouad & Guillen, 2006; Gore & Leuwerke, 2000; Kuzgun, 2006; Schaub & Tokar, 2005; Waberi & Öge, 2020).

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in SCCT, which emphasizes the interrelated roles of career goals, career decision self-efficacy, and career outcome expectations as key factors influencing individuals' career behavior. These variables were integrated into the

conceptual model developed for this study, and their relationships were examined. The findings reveal significant interconnections among the three variables, thereby supporting the core principles of SCCT and the broader body of existing literature.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made. Encouraging high school students to explore their career aspirations from an early stage may help them make more informed and deliberate career decisions throughout their educational trajectories. Such early engagement can provide students with the necessary guidance and support to make realistic and achievable career choices. Furthermore, the higher career achievement aspiration scores observed among the Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School students indicate that practical training and internship experiences play a crucial role in nurturing career-related skills and aspirations. Based on this finding, it is recommended that similarly structured internships and skill-based programs be implemented more widely for high school students, aligned with their individual career goals. At the policy level, national internship initiatives or school-based vocational training programs could be designed and systematically evaluated to assess their effectiveness in enhancing students' career decision-making self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and engagement in career exploration activities. By providing early and authentic exposure to professional environments, such initiatives could enable students from diverse educational backgrounds to develop stronger and more purposeful career aspirations while better preparing them to navigate future professional challenges.

To enhance awareness of career decision self-efficacy, which is closely linked to learning experiences and effective goal-setting, it is important to create environments where high school students can readily access diverse career-related information. Organizing career days, mentorship sessions, or similar activities can help achieve this goal by exposing students to various professions and educational pathways. To strengthen female students' career leadership aspirations, targeted workshops should be designed to boost self-confidence and leadership skills, alongside broader efforts to promote gender equality in education from an early age. Such initiatives can positively influence career development and aspirations.

It is also essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. It was conducted in a single provincial center and did not include Fine Arts High Schools, Sports High Schools, or private institutions. Future research should involve a more diverse sample to strengthen and compare the generalizability of the findings. Scholars in the fields of career counseling and vocational psychology are encouraged to examine career decision self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and related psychosocial variables across various high school contexts, including Fine Arts and Sports High Schools, and across different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how these constructs evolve over time and influence students' career aspirations. Moreover, the effectiveness of interventions such as career counseling programs, workshops, mentorship initiatives, and digital career guidance tools should be systematically evaluated to ensure gender-sensitive approaches and equitable access to educational opportunities. Finally, exploring the roles of family support, peer influence, motivation, and psychological factors such as stress and anxiety would further clarify the mechanisms through which self-efficacy and outcome expectations shape career goal setting. Overall, such research would extend the findings of the present study and offer practical guidance for developing evidence-based programs that help high school students make informed, confident, and realistic career decisions.

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Geniş Özet

Giriş

Sosyal Bilişsel Kariyer Kuramı (SBKK), bireylerin kariyer gelişimini anlamak ve açıklamak için kapsamlı bir çerçeve sunmaktadır (Lent vd., 1994). SBKK'ye göre kariyer hedefleri, öz yeterlik inançları ve sonuç beklentileri kariyer gelişimini etkileyen üç temel kişisel belirleyicidir. Bu değişkenler birbirleriyle etkileşim içindedir ve kariyer gelişim sürecinde belirleyici rol oynamaktadırlar (Lent ve Brown, 1996). Kariyer hedefi, bireyin gelecekteki mesleki konumunu belirleme sürecidir (Özden, 2007). Kariyer karar öz yeterliği, bireyin kariyer seçimleriyle ilgili görevleri başarıyla yerine getirme becerisine duyduğu güveni ifade etmektedir (Betz ve Hackett, 1981). Kariyer sonuç beklentileri ise mesleki seçimlerin uzun vadeli getirileri (örneğin, finansal kazanç) konusundaki bireysel inançları kapsamaktadır (Betz ve Voyten, 1997). SBKK'ye göre, öz yeterlik inançları ve sonuç beklentileri yüksek olan bireyler, daha gerçekçi kariyer hedefleri belirleme eğilimindedir (Lent ve Brown, 1996; Schoenfeld vd., 2017). Alanyazında kariyer hedefleri ile kariyer karar öz yeterliği (Dursun & Kara, 2019) ve kariyer karar öz yeterliği ile kariyer sonuç beklentileri (Uçkun vd., 2015) arasındaki ilişkileri inceleyen çalışmalar mevcuttur. Ancak bu üç değişkenin birlikte ele alındığı, öz-yeterlik inancı ile sonuç beklentilerinin hedefler üzerindeki etkilerinin araştırıldığı çalışmaların sınırlı olduğu görülmektedir. Bu çalışma ile SBKK'nin öne sürdüğü kişisel belirleyiciler arasındaki ilişkilerin belirlenmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

Yöntem

Bu çalışmada, kariyer hedefleri (liderlik hedefleri, eğitim hedefleri ve başarı hedefleri), kariyer karar öz yeterliği ve kariyer sonuç beklentileri arasındaki ilişkiler korelasyonel araştırma deseni kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın örneklemi, farklı sınıf düzeylerinden ve lise türlerinden toplam 373 lise öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Veriler, Mesleki ve Teknik Anadolu Lisesi, Anadolu Lisesi, Sosyal Bilimler Lisesi, Fen Lisesi ve Anadolu İmam Hatip Lisesi öğrencilerinden elde edilmiştir. Veri toplama sürecinde Kariyer Hedefleri Ölçeği, Kariyer Karar Öz Yeterlik Ölçeği-Kısa Formu, Kariyer Sonuç Beklentileri ve Açıklayıcı Amaçlar Ölçeği ve Kişisel Bilgi Formu kullanılmıştır. Veri analizinde kariyer hedefleri, kariyer sonuç beklentileri ve kariyer karar öz yeterliği arasındaki ilişkileri belirlemek amacıyla Pearson korelasyon analizi uygulanmıştır. Ayrıca, değişkenlerin kariyer hedefleri üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmek için çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Son olarak kariyer hedefleri ile yaş, cinsiyet ve okul türü değişkenleri arasındaki ilişkilerin belirlenmesi amacı ile bağımsız örneklem t-testi ve tek yönlü varyans analizi kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular

Araştırmanın sonuçları, kariyer sonuç beklentileri ile kariyer liderlik ve kariyer başarı hedefleri arasında, kariyer kararı öz-yeterliği ile ise kariyer liderlik, kariyer eğitim ve kariyer başarı hedefleri arasında pozitif ve istatistiksel olarak anlamlı ilişkiler olduğunu göstermektedir. Kariyer liderlik, başarı ve eğitim hedeflerinin kariyer sonuç beklentileri ve kariyer kararı öz-yeterliği tarafından yordanıp yordanmadığı incelendiğinde, üç modelde de kariyer kararı öz-yeterliği temel yordayıcı değişken olarak öne çıkmış ve sırasıyla toplam varyansın %16'sını, %26'sını ve %27'sini açıkladığı belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca, kariyer liderlik hedeflerinin yaşla pozitif yönde ilişkili olduğu, kariyer liderlik hedeflerinin cinsiyete ve kariyer başarı hedeflerinin ise lise türüne göre farklılaştığı bulunmuştur.

Sonuç ve Tartışma

Araştırma bulgularına göre kariyer sonuç beklentileri ile kariyer liderlik hedefleri ve kariyer başarı hedefleri arasında; kariyer kararı öz-yeterliği ile kariyer liderlik hedefleri, kariyer eğitim hedefleri ve kariyer başarı hedefleri arasında pozitif yönde istatistiksel olarak anlamlı ilişkiler bulunmuştur. Ayrıca kariyer sonuç beklentilerinin ve kariyer kararı öz-yeterliğinin kariyer liderlik hedeflerini, kariyer başarı hedeflerini ve kariyer eğitim hedeflerini bir bütün olarak yordayıp yordamadığı incelenmiş, analiz sonuçları analize giren bütün yordayıcıların bir bütün olarak alt faktörleri yordadığı ve her üç modelde de modelin yordayıcı değişkeninin kariyer kararı öz-yeterliği olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Bu çalışmanın bulguları, lise öğrencilerinin liderlik, eğitim ve başarı hedeflerini yordamada kariyer kararı öz-yeterliğinin, kariyer sonuç beklentisine göre daha güçlü ve tutarlı bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir. Sosyal Bilişsel Kariyer Kuramı kapsamında, kariyer kararı öz-yeterliği öğrencilerin kariyerle ilgili davranışları planlama, başlatma ve sürdürme konusunda özgüven kazanmalarını sağlar; bu da eğitimsel başarı ve performans odaklı hedefler gibi somut kariyer hedeflerinin gerçekleştirilmesini doğrudan destekler (Lent vd., 1994; Betz & Hackett, 1981). Buna karşılık, kariyer sonuç beklentileri öğrencilerin kariyer kararlarının uzun vadeli sonuçlarına ilişkin inançlarını yansıtır ve daha çok dolaylı ve motive edici bir rol üstlenir. Uzun vadeli ödüller, prestij veya kişisel tatmin gibi soyut ve geleceğe dönük beklentiler, özellikle karmaşık kişilerarası, yönetsel ve deneyime dayalı liderlik hedeflerinde, öğrencilerin mevcut hedeflerini doğrudan etkileme kapasitesini sınırlayabilir (Betz & Voyten, 1997; Lent & Brown, 2013). Bu nedenle, kariyer kararı öz-yeterliğinin daha güçlü yordayıcı olarak öne çıkması, öğrencilerin ulaşılabilir kariyer hedeflerine aktif katılımını yönlendirmede merkezi bir rol oynadığını; kariyer sonuç beklentilerinin ise destekleyici ancak daha az belirleyici bir rehberlik sağladığını göstermektedir. Bu ayrım, kariyer danışmanlığı müdahalelerinde öz-yeterliğin geliştirilmesinin, öğrencilerin liderlik, eğitim ve başarı hedeflerini etkili biçimde desteklemek açısından önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Kariyer kararı öz-yeterliği, öğrencilerin kendi yeteneklerine güvenmelerini sağlayarak hedef belirleme, planlama ve bu hedeflere ulaşmak için adım atma süreçlerini güçlendirmiş olabilir. Bu bağlamda, yüksek öz-yeterlik, öğrencilerin liderlik rollerinde sorumluluk almaya, akademik performanslarını yükseltmeye ve somut başarı hedefleri belirlemeye daha istekli olmalarını desteklemiş olabilir. Öte yandan, kariyer sonuç beklentileri öğrencilerin uzun vadede elde edebilecekleri ödüller veya prestij gibi soyut kazanımlara ilişkin inançlarını yansıttığı için, özellikle liderlik hedeflerinde veya karmaşık sosyal/kurumsal beceri gerektiren alanlarda öğrencilerin mevcut motivasyonunu doğrudan artırmakta sınırlı kalmış olabilir. Buna ek olarak, kariyer kararı öz-yeterliği öğrencilerin kendi seçimlerini yönlendirme ve karar alma süreçlerinde aktif rol almalarını sağlarken, kariyer sonuç beklentisi daha çok öğrencilerin hedeflerin anlamlı veya değerli olduğuna dair farkındalığını artırmış olabilir. Bu nedenle sonuç beklentisi, öğrencilerin hedeflerini şekillendirmede dolaylı bir rol oynarken, öz-yeterlik hedeflerin uygulanabilirliği ve başarılabirliği üzerinde doğrudan etki göstermiş olabilir. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin liderlik, eğitim ve başarı hedeflerini yordamada başarı ve eğitim hedeflerinin daha somut ve ölçülebilir olmasının, öz-yeterlik ile daha güçlü ilişki kurmalarına olanak sağlamış olması da olasıdır.

Lise öğrencilerinin kariyer liderlik hedefleri puanları yaşla birlikte artmaktadır. Singer (1990) benzer şekilde yaş ile kariyer liderlik hedefleri arasında pozitif bir ilişki bulmuştur. Haber

(2012), öğrencilerin yaşları arttıkça liderlik kavramına yükledikleri anlamın değiştiğini belirtirken, Hirschi (2010) kariyer hedeflerinin ilgi ve kişilik gelişimine paralel olarak yaş ile birlikte şekillendiğini vurgulamaktadır. Ginzberg'in kuramına göre lise yıllarının sonuna doğru öğrenciler geçiş sürecini tamamlayarak daha gerçekçi kariyer hedefleri belirlemektedir (Ayas vd., 2010). Sonuç olarak elde edilen bulgu, yaşın ilerlemesiyle öğrencilerin kariyer ve liderlik hedeflerinin daha net ve bilinçli hale gelmesi ile yorumlanabilir.

Araştırmanın sonuçları, erkek öğrencilerin kariyer liderlik hedefleri puanlarının kız öğrencilere kıyasla daha yüksek olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu bulgu alanyazın ile örtüşmektedir (Atabey, 2015; Lent ve Brown, 1996; Perrone vd., 2001). İlgili alanyazında erkek öğrencilerin liderlik gerektiren ve prestijli kariyer hedeflerine daha fazla yöneldiğini (Mendez ve Crawford, 2002; Singer, 1989), kız öğrencilerin ise liderlik yeteneklerine dair daha düşük algıya sahip olduğunu (Sheppard, 2018) ortaya koyan çalışmalar mevcuttur. Toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin bu farklılığı etkilediği; liderlik pozisyonlarının erkeklerle daha fazla ilişkilendirilmesinin (Grove ve Montgomery, 1999) ve kadınların liderlik rollerinde yeterince temsil edilmemesinin (Marini ve Fan, 1997) bu durumu desteklediği düşünülebilir; erkek öğrencilerin kariyer liderlik hedefleri puanlarının daha yüksek olması, toplumsal ve kültürel faktörlerle açıklanabilir.

Mesleki ve Teknik Anadolu Lisesi öğrencilerinin kariyer başarı hedefleri puan ortalamaları, Fen Lisesi ve Anadolu İmam Hatip Lisesi öğrencilerine kıyasla daha yüksektir. Bu fark, meslek lisesi öğrencilerinin erken yaşta mesleki eğitim alarak teorik ve pratik bilgi edinmeleri, staj deneyimi kazanmaları ve iş sorumluluğu üstlenmeleriyle açıklanabilir. Meslek lisesi eğitimi, öğrencilerin iş hayatına yönelik becerilerini geliştirmelerinin, kariyer başarı hedeflerinin yükselmesi ile sonuçlandığı düşünülmektedir.

SBKK'nin bireyin kariyer davranışını şekillendirmede birbirleri ile ilişkili oldukları ifade ettiği değişkenler (kişisel hedefler, öz-yeterlik inancı ve sonuç beklentileri) kariyer ile ilişkili olarak bu çalışma kapsamında oluşturulan bir modelde yer almış ve aralarındaki ilişkiler lise öğrencileri üzerinde incelenmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda her üç değişkenin de birbirleri ile pozitif yönlü ilişkiye sahip olduğu, kariyer sonuç beklentilerinin ve kariyer kararı öz-yeterliğinin kariyer hedefleri üzerinde belirleyici rol oynadığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları SBKK'nin temel görüşlerini ve alanyazını desteklemektedir (Fouad ve Guillen, 2006; Gore ve Leuwerke, 2000; Rasheed Ali ve Saunders, 2008; Schaub ve Tokar, 2005; Schoenfeld vd., 2017; Lent vd., 1994; Waberi ve Öge, 2020). Çalışmanın bulgularına dayanarak, gelecekteki araştırmalar ve uygulamalar için çeşitli öneriler sunulabilir. Lise öğrencilerinin kariyer hedeflerini erken dönemde keşfetmelerini teşvik eden programlar geliştirilerek, kariyer kararlarını daha bilinçli yönetmeleri sağlanabilir. Kariyer psikolojik danışmanlığı ve rehberlik hizmetleri, öz-yeterliği ve sonuç beklentilerini destekleyecek şekilde kariyer araştırma faaliyetleri üzerine yapılandırılabilir. Ayrıca, kız öğrencilerin kariyer liderlik hedeflerini güçlendirmek için toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini destekleyen farkındalık eğitimleri planlanabilir. Bu çalışmanın belirli bir il merkezi ile sınırlı olması ve Güzel Sanatlar Lisesi ve Spor Lisesi gibi yeteneğe dayalı öğrenci kabul eden okulların çalışmaya dahil edilmemiş olması araştırmanın sınırlılıkları olarak düşünülebilir. Bu nedenle, gelecekte daha geniş örneklemle gerçekleştirilecek araştırmaların bulguları zenginleştirilmesi önerilmektedir.