



EFFECTIVENESS OF A GROUP GUIDANCE PROGRAM ON REALISTIC STUDY FIELD CHOICE AMONG FIRST YEAR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

(GRUP REHBERLİĞİNİN LİSE 1. SINIF ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN ALAN TERCİHLERİNDE GERÇEKÇİ DAVRANMALARINA ETKİSİ: ALGILANAN İLGİLER AÇISINDAN)

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ABSTRACT

In this research, the effectiveness of a group guidance program in terms of assisting first year high school students to choose realistically their study field was examined. The research was carried out with 40 children who were randomly selected among the first year students at Özel Ferda Lisesi in Ankara during the academic year 2001-2002. The subjects were separated into two groups: the experimental group which attended the group guidance program and the control group which did not. Both groups were tested before and after the guidance program was implemented. The program developed by the researcher was mainly based on the cognitive-behavioral approach with a substantial emphasis on informational and interactional techniques. The independent variable of the research was the group guidance program that was applied to the experimental group. The dependent variable of the study was the students' interest points. The program consisted of 12 sessions and they were administered every five days. Each session lasted for about 90 minutes. After the last session of the program, a student evaluation scale, which was developed by Kuzgun, was given to both the experimental and the control group members. In order to test this hypothesis, the dependent-samples t-test was used. The results indicated that the experimental group members' score both in the aptitude and interests test was closer to their teachers' rating after the group guidance program, while the control group members score did not change from the first to the second application of the test.

Keywords: high school students, group guidance, vocational guidance, choose realistically, interest

ÖZ

Bu araştırmada, grup rehberliğinin lise 1.sınıf öğrencilerinin alan tercihlerinde gerçekçi davranmalarına etkisi incelenmiştir. Araştırma, 2001-2002 eğitim-öğretim yılında Ankara Özel Ferda lisesinde öğrenim gören lise 1.sınıf öğrencileri arasından yansız olarak seçilmiş 40 denekle yürütülmüştür. Araştırmada öntest- sontest kontrol gruplu desen kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada gerçekçi alan tercihi yapma grup rehberliği programı, ağırlıklı olarak bilişsel-davranışçı yaklaşım temel alınarak; bilgilendirmeye ve etkileşime dayalı olarak hazırlanmış bir programdır. Deney grubunun son test öntest fark puanları ile kontrol grubunun son test ön test fark puanları hesaplandı daha sonra deney grubunun fark puanları ortalaması ile kontrol grubunun fark puan ortalamaları arasındaki fark t testi ile test edilmiştir. Fark puanları ortalamaları arasındaki fark 0.05 düzeyinde önemli bulunmuştur. Deney ve kontrol grubunun fark puanları parametrik test varsayımlarını yerine getirdiğinden iki ortalama arasındaki farkı test etmek amacıyla t testi kullanılmıştır (Kaptan, 1992). Araştırmada öğrencilere Kuzgun tarafından geliştirilen Öğrenci Değerlendirme Ölçeği (ÖDÖ) algılanan ilgi alanlarını belirlemek için uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen verilerin analizinde t-testi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın bulguları, deney grubundaki öğrencilerin deney sonrası algılanan ilgi puanlarının, ölçüt olarak alınan gözlenen ilgi puanlarına, uygulanan grup rehberliği programının etkisiyle yaklaştığını, kontrol grubundaki öğrencilerin puanlarının ise değişmediğini göstermiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: lise öğrencisi, grup rehberliği, mesleki rehberlik, gerçekçi alan tercihi, ilgi.

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INTRODUCTION

Choice of future profession is a major decision by the individual shaping his/her future life. An individual's selection of a suitable profession will bring personal satisfaction as well as lay the groundwork for substantial contribution to social development. Choosing the right profession requires self-awareness of one's own personal attributes as well as the educational opportunities and professions offered by society.

On the identification and measurement of interests as well as exploration into the dynamics of desires and needs, the data provided by guidance and psychological counseling as a science is gradually developing, adding to our insight into the individual. Similarly, there is an ever-increasing number of institutions studying both professional and educational choices in terms of their qualifications and opportunities.

Contemporary approaches to counseling particularly underline that the individual should discover his/her interests and needs so as to identify the corresponding professions, among which s/he will choose the most suitable one (Kuzgun, 1984). Guidance services are provided in two forms, namely, individual and group guidance.

The group guidance experience lays particular emphasis on openness, honesty, self-reporting, individual responsibility, empathy and awareness of one's self, and physical attributes. The interaction established in the course of this experience constitutes a therapeutic assistance and sort of training for a more effective use of individual capacity. Finding the opportunity to know himself/herself better through the interaction experienced in group guidance, an individual could develop awareness of his/her latent strengths, interests, abilities and needs. Furthermore, the sharing atmosphere in the group guidance experience could also help the individual discover new ways of problem solving. In the process of group guidance, the individual enjoys the chance to test himself/herself in interpersonal relations, allowing him/her to better familiarize with his/her personality in a social setting (Schutz, 1962 cited in Ülkü, 1976).

Past research indicates that, for individuals engaging in impulsive decisions without developing self-awareness and awareness towards their environment, group guidance will serve a useful role in acquiring the skills of making rational, effective and realistic choices (Mendonca and Siess, 1976; Krumboltz et al., 1986; Gelatt, 1989; Kivlighan, 1990; Meier, 1991).

The group guidance experience provides the individual with a suitable environment for developing a more realistic self-recognition, which basically takes place through the following four processes: 1) The individual develops self-recognition through the words s/he uses about himself/herself (during self-description), 2) The individual develops self-recognition through the feedback of others concerning his/her traits. The present study discusses the

effect of group guidance on developing a more realistic self-recognition by first-year high school students, and thus, more realistic behaviors in field selection. Since first-year high school students are an adolescent group, drawing upon the feedback they receive during a group guidance experience, they could compare themselves with other participants and acquire more realistic knowledge of their own selves. For adolescents, the feedback of their peers is necessary and essential for developing self-recognition. 3) The individual develops self-recognition through the interest inventories administered. In this method, to increase the level of self-recognition, the individual is presented with various activity names and asked about his/her responses, which are generally in the form of either like or dislike. Examining his/her response groupings, the individual is then provided with further knowledge on his/her self. 4) The individual develops self-recognition through the aptitude tests administered. This method assesses an individual's particular attribute, first considering his/her performance in tasks related to that particular attribute.

The study results and perspectives on the subject in question suggest that, for individuals with inadequate levels of realistic and rational decision-making behavior, group guidance increases the realistic level of their interest perceptions, thus providing a better understanding of the self, and helps them alleviate possible anxiety in the face of a given decision-making situation through in-group sharing. This in turn motivates the individual to analyze his/her environment and minimize unrealistic choices and behaviors, thereby helping the individual acquire the skills of making rational, effective and realistic decisions and choices (Kuzgun 1977, Ülkü 1976, Öncü 1991, Aksaz 1992, Aksel 1993).

Applying the principles of the individual-centered approach to group guidance experience, it is possible to help individuals acquire the skills of making rational, effective and realistic choices. The psychological counselor's role in such environment is described as helping the individual clarify his/her "self-concept" (Tyler, 1961; Greenwald, 1978, Peavy, 1981; Patterson and Eisenberg, 1983; Miller, 1988; George and Dustin, 1988; Gazda, 1989).

In the individual and group guidance practices administered by Krumboltz et al. (1986), Leong, Leong and Hoffman (1987), and Beyth-Marom et al. (1989), individuals are provided with a non-judgmental, non-criticizing environment to help them cope with the uncertainty and anxiety they face in a given decision-making situation. Following such an experience, individuals unable to make realistic choices in their previous experiences engage in more realistic decision-making behaviors thanks to in-group interaction. Similarly, a group guidance program administered to first-year high school students is expected to increase the realistic level of their interest and aptitude perceptions, which will provide them with the assistance they need in the more realistic course of action regarding the field selection,

because the feedback received during in-group sessions provides the individual with information about his/her own self, and thus, with the chance to make more suitable choices.

The first year of high school is the “orientation year” in the Turkish educational system. With the aim of helping the individual to develop self-recognition, engage in self-testing and take more realistic decisions, guidance support at this grade level is crucially important for students to select their future fields on the basis of realistic decision-making, because such a choice will determine not only the individual’s field of study at high school but also his/her future undergraduate program and therefore future profession.

This study was deemed necessary to observe the effect of group guidance on the realistic field selection by first-year high school students. For this reason, vocational guidance services in the psychological guidance and counseling units of schools serve a more important function, because high school students are oriented to the undergraduate programs they desire to study in the first year of their high school education. According to the undergraduate programs they would like to attend, students are required to choose between the Equally-Weighted (TM), Social Sciences (TS) or Applied Sciences (MF) fields from the second year onwards. As field selection also means choosing their future undergraduate program and therefore future profession, selecting the proper field is crucial for the individual.

As this study performs research on an adolescent group, it is based on group guidance practice, because through the feedback they receive from their peers, adolescents can both acquire self-recognition and compare themselves with other group members to acquire more realistic knowledge of their own selves.

This study is important in that it allows us to observe the effect on realistic field selection by first-year high school students in Turkey due to group guidance sessions offered prior to the field selection decision to increase the realistic level of student interest perceptions.

The aim behind the present study is to develop a group guidance program that would promote the efficiency of guidance services for first-year high school students.

A question that deserves research was identified as whether group guidance has any effect on the realistic field selection decisions of first-year high school students. To this end, the following hypotheses were formulated.

First-year high school students taking part in group guidance application will be more realistic in perceiving their interests compared to non-participants. Within this framework:

- 2.1 In comparison to their pre-guidance scores, the post-guidance interest scores of the experiment group students will be significantly closer to the student interest scores observed by teachers.

- 2.2 There will not be a significant posttest change in the difference between the pretest interest perception scores of the control group students and their interest scores observed by teachers.
- 2.3 When compared to the control group students and the pre-application levels, the post-application interest perception scores of the experiment group students will be closer to the student interest scores observed by teachers.

METHOD

Research Model

This paper is an experimental study intended to determine the effect of group guidance on the realistic field selection of first-year high school students.

The study employs the pretest-posttest control-group split-plot pattern. In the pattern, the first factor is denoted by various experimental procedure conditions (experiment-control groups), while the second factor is denoted by the pre-and post-group guidance application measurements (pretest-posttest). The dependent variable of the study is the interest levels of students. The interest measurements were obtained from students themselves prior to and after the application. Furthermore, the student interest scores observed by teachers (criteria) were also obtained. The study further investigates whether group guidance application constitutes an important factor in the approximation of students' perceived interests to the observed values as the criteria values.

Table 1 presents the experimental processes administered to the study groups.

Table 1. Experimental Processes Administered to Study Groups

GROUPS	PRETEST (SAS)	PROCESS	POSTTEST (SAS)
EXPERIMENT	X	Group guidance on realistic field selection (12 sessions)	X
PLACEBO CONTROL	X	Placebo activity (8 sessions)	X

Application Process

The application of the study consisted of the following stages, according to groups.

Following the granting of permission by the school administration, the Student Assessment Scale (SAS) was administered to each student and all their teachers at the beginning of the study.

With the intention of ensuring sincerity in the responses of teachers and students, the participants were presented with information on the study. Not content with a simple reading by the students of the instructions in the scales while rating the SAS, the researcher personally attended to each and every student.

At the application stage of the group guidance program, the experiment group students were administered the vocational guidance program, which helps the individual develop recognition of the self and his/her traits, with an interval of five days between each 12 sessions of 90 minutes.

An important requirement to ensure the experimental quality of the research is to keep under control the effects of confounding variables potentially affecting the internal and external validity, which have an impact on the dependent variable but are beyond the scope of the present paper. The results could only be evaluated in the context of causality (Hovardaoğlu, 2000). This is the reason why the study employs a control group.

In the study, containing an experiment and a placebo control group, the former was informed about the content of the group guidance program as dictated by its requirements. On the other hand, the placebo control group was exposed to a placebo (ineffectual) activity of 8 sessions, which was irrelevant to the group guidance program on realistic field selection. However, during the preliminary interviews held with the placebo control group, they were informed that this would be an activity with a potential effect on realistic field selection. Therefore, the researcher aimed to keep under control the confounding variables (the willingness of the subjects to provide the researcher with support in return for the efforts exerted and the time spent for their good; the food and drinks served at the end of the sessions, in-group experiences with sincere relations based on respect; dedicating time and effort to the sessions; and having been chosen for a group and having received a particular scale that could potentially affect the realistic behavior levels of students in field selection).

Following the implementation of the group guidance program which was applied to the experiment group on realistic field selection, the experiment and control groups were administered the Student Assessment Scale (SAS) as the posttest, with the aim of testing whether the perceived (SAS) posttest scores of the groups were closer to their observed (SAS) scores.

Subjects

The study was conducted with a total of 40 randomly-selected students, 20 for the experiment and 20 for the control group, studying in the first grade at Ferda High School in Ankara in the education year 2000-2001. The reason for conducting the study in the mentioned school was the relatively small number of students at the school, the fact that most of the students in the first

grade graduated from the same primary school, and the long and close familiarity between teachers and students.

Before forming the groups, all students in the first grade were informed that 40 students were needed to work with a study to be conducted, and that the difference scores in the assessment scale would be the criteria for student selection; thus, not all the first-grade students administered the student assessment scale (SAS) will be included in the current study.

The procedure for subject selection was as follows. All first-grade students (a total of 55 students) and their teachers (of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Turkish Language, Foreign Language, Geography, and History) were administered the SAS. The results of the SAS rated by students constituted the perceived pretest scores, while the results of the SAS rated by teachers constituted the observed scores. The difference between the results of SAS as administered to teachers and students was determined and the students were selected by listing them in order starting from the one with the highest difference. Subsequently, students were chosen on a random basis (by flipping a coin) and the first student with the highest difference score was placed in the experiment group and the second student in the control group. In this way, 20 students were placed in the experiment group, and another 20 in the control group. 15 students with the lowest difference scores were not included in any of the groups.

Table 2. Numerical Distribution of Students in Experiment and Control Groups

Group	Number
Experiment	20
Placebo Control	20
Total	40

Data Collection Instruments

The study used as the data collection instrument the Student Assessment Scale (SAS) developed by Kuzgun (1993).

Student Assessment Scale

Developed by Kuzgun (1993) and used in the present study by taking expert opinion, the Student Assessment Scale (SAS) consists of two questionnaires to measure interest scores for all subjects. The questionnaire includes ten criteria that could be considered in assessing interest. The rating procedure for the questionnaires is explained in the section on “Rating of the Student Assessment Scale”. The scale was administered to students and their teachers. Administered twice to the students as pretest and posttest, the scale

forms the “pretest and posttest scores in perceived interest” of the students. As administered only once to teachers, the scale forms “the observed interest scores of students”. While treating the scores, the difference between the “pretest and posttest scores in perceived interest” and “the observed interest scores of students” was taken into consideration. In the case of the difference between the “posttest scores in perceived interest” and the “observed interest scores” being lower than the difference between the “pretest scores in perceived interest” and the “observed interest scores”, this result was taken to indicate the impact of the group guidance program on the realistic self-awareness of students (awareness of their interests).

Rating of the Student Assessment Scale

The Student Assessment Scale (SAS) consists of two different questionnaires, one of which indicates ability scores, and the other shows interest scores. The scale is different from others yielding similar results in that it consists of a questionnaire that gives interest scores and it can also be administered to both students and teachers due to its low number of items, and thus it can show both the perceived and observed interest scores for a particular student. The content of the questionnaires and the procedure for rating is explained below.

Interest Questionnaire of the Student Assessment Scale (SAS)

The scale was rated through five-point choices in which for interest level, 1 indicated “never”, 2 “occasionally”, 3 “sometimes”, 4 “often”, and 5 “always”. There are ten criteria for assessing interest in the SAS interest questionnaire. The score value for the items in the interest questionnaire is 1. The lowest possible interest score for a student is 10 and the highest is 50.

Data Collection

Among the instruments used, the Student Assessment Scale (SAS) consists of two questionnaires, one of which indicates ability scores, and the other shows interest scores for school subjects. The students were administered the SAS interest questionnaire for each subject and the total interest scores were calculated for each student. Teachers filled in the same questionnaires for each student. The scores obtained from the teachers and students formed the “perceived” and “observed” student interest scores in the student assessment scale.

Data Analysis

The dependent groups t-test was used to test the hypotheses of the study that “for the students in the experiment group participating in the group guidance program on realistic field selection, their self-perceived interest scores after the application will be closer to their observed interest scores

reported by their teachers when compared to their scores before the application”.

In the data analysis, a significance level of $p=.05$ was adopted and those considered as significant are shown in the table as $p<.05$.

The General Scope and Qualities of the Group Guidance Program on Realistic Field Selection

The group guidance program on realistic field selection developed by the researcher is a program conducted with a structured group to provide information on the factors that affect and maintain realistic behavior in field selection, to raise awareness on realistic field selection, and to help students acquire self-recognition skills as well as the skills of recognizing their environment. Thus, the program could be defined as one based on informing and interaction.

The group guidance program on realistic field selection was designed to ensure that first-year high school students who are uncertain and anxious about the personal suitability of their field selection recognize themselves through sharing their feelings, ideas, and behaviors with their peers and by giving and receiving feedback to and from each other, and thus help them acquire awareness of their behaviors concerning a suitable field selection and help them make self-evaluation from different perspectives as well as raise self-awareness, and thereby acquire the skill for realistic field selection. The program content includes exercises for these purposes. If properly applied, the program aims to help those first-year high school students who have difficulty in selecting a realistic field that is suitable for themselves acquire a broader perspective towards themselves and the fields they should select, and finally, reach a level of competency to select a suitable field for themselves.

Group Guidance Program

The group guidance program aims to help self-improvement of group members among their peers in a warm, non-judgmental, comfortable, and embracing environment. Within this reassuring atmosphere, the group members are expected to tolerate uncertainty in making decisions and share their experiences about the decision-making process with the other group members, thereby helping them feel relaxed. Studies on the issue argue that helping an individual cope with uncertainty about a choice and alleviate his/her feelings of worry will help him/her make realistic and effective decisions that are suitable for him/herself (Mendonca and Siess, 1976; Gelatt, 1987). Greenwald (1978) underlined the close relationship between the psychological counseling process and decision-making and suggested that group guidance programs in particular would be effective in improving the ability to make realistic choices among the participants.

Therefore, the group guidance program was administered to the experiment group of the study. Group applications were conducted by the researcher. The group guidance program consisted of 12 weekly sessions with a duration of 90 minutes each. The group guidance program applied in the study aimed to reach the following objectives, which also targeted other guidance groups:

1. To help individuals better recognize their own interests and opportunities, and raise self-awareness towards their potential and interests within the group.
2. To help individuals test themselves in interpersonal relationships and recognize their own personality in a social environment among their peers.
3. To help individuals discover new and rational ways of problem-solving and decision-making in the sharing environment of a group experience.

In order to attain these main objectives, the group leader must perform certain roles and responsibilities. In line with the results of the study, the role of the group leader is defined as follows:

1. To create a group environment in accordance with the predefined goals.
2. To ensure that all group members participate by freely sharing their feelings and ideas.
3. To help all group members have the opportunity for self-recognition and self-improvement.

During the group guidance program employed for this study, the researcher, as the group leader, first aimed to help the group members recognize their self-perceptions in accordance with the principles of the individual-centered approach.

The sessions of the group guidance program applied on the experiment group were of a semi-structured character. The researcher first performed an extensive literature review and examined similar programs. Subsequently, he developed an interactive group program in accordance with the research objectives, which comprised exercises that are appropriate for the skills aimed to be acquired by the participants. The applications regarding the group guidance program were conducted in the psychological counseling and guidance service of Ferda High School in Ankara.

FINDINGS

In order to test the research hypotheses, the Student Assessment Scale (SAS) was administered to the students in the experiment and control groups twice as pre- and posttests and once to teachers prior to the application.

An examination was made on the pre- and posttest scores regarding self-perception of interests of the first-year high school students participating in the group guidance program on realistic field selection (experiment group) and the non-participants (control group), as well as on the scores that reflect teacher observations on student interests. Afterwards, the difference was examined between the student posttest scores and the teacher scores taken as the criteria.

The Perceived and Observed Interest Scores for All Subjects

Table 3 shows the arithmetic means of the pretest-posttest scores on self-perception of interests of the students in the experiment and control groups as obtained from all the subjects of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Turkish Language, Foreign Language, Geography, and History, and the teacher observation scores on their abilities.

Table 3. Means of Pretest and Posttest Scores in Perceived Interest among Experiment and Control Groups and Their Observed Interest Scores (Entire Group)

Group	N	Interest		
		Perceived pretest	Perceived posttest	Observed
Control	20	299.80	302.85	218.00
Experiment	20	303.90	265.25	220.00

An examination of Table 3 reveals that the mean self-perception scores of the control group was $\bar{x}=299.80$ in the pretest, and 302.85 in the posttest; and that the arithmetic mean of the experiment group scores was 303.90 prior to the group guidance application and 265.25 after the application.

The mean of the teacher scores that indicate their observations on the interests of the students in the control group was 218.00, while the same score was 220.00 for the students in the experiment group.

Comparison of the Pretest and Posttest Interest Perception Scores of the Experiment Group with the Observation Scores of Teachers

Table 4 shows the results of the dependent groups t-test which was performed to test the research hypothesis (2.1) that in comparison to their pre-guidance scores, the post-guidance interest scores of the experiment group

students would be significantly closer to the student interest scores observed by teachers.

Table 4. Results of Dependent Groups T-Test for Significance of Difference between Pretest and Posttest Interest Perception Scores of Experiment Group and Observation Scores of Teachers (All Subjects)

Measurement	N	X	S	Sd	t	P
Difference 1 (pretest- observed)	20	83.90	45.59	19	7.86	.000
Difference 2 (posttest- observed)	20	45.25	35.13			

An examination of Table 4 reveals that the arithmetic mean of the difference between the self-perceived interest scores of the experiment group students prior to the group guidance program and the teacher observation scores on their interests was 83.90, while the mean decreased to 45.25 after the administration of the group guidance program; and that this difference between the two difference means is significant ($t(19)=7.86, p<.001$).

It is observed that the difference between the experiment group scores in self-perceived interests prior to administration of the group guidance program and the teacher observation scores on student interests significantly declined after the administration of the group guidance program. That is, the posttest self-perceived interest scores of the students approached teacher observation scores on their interests.

Comparison of the Pretest and Posttest Interest Perception Scores of the Control Group with the Observation Scores of Teachers

Table 5 shows the results of the dependent groups t-test which was performed to test the research hypothesis (2.2) that there would not be a significant posttest change in the difference between the pretest interest perception scores of the control group students who did not participate in the group guidance program and their interest scores observed by teachers.

Table 5. Results of Dependent Groups T-Test for Significance of Difference between Pretest and Posttest Interest Perception Scores of Control Group and Observation Scores of Teachers (All Subjects)

Measurement	N	X	S	Sd	t	P
Difference 1 (pretest- observed)	20	81.80	44.23	19	-3.49	.002
Difference 2 (posttest- observed)	20	84.85	44.98			

An examination of Table 5 reveals that the arithmetic mean of the difference between the self-perceived interest scores of the students in the control group and the teacher observation scores on their interests was 81.80

in the pretest and 84.85 in the posttest; and that this difference between the two difference means is significant ($t(19) = -3.49, p < .05$).

Thus, it is observed that the change that occurred in the control group students who were not administered any program to help them perceive their own interests more realistically was divergent from teachers' observation scores.

Comparison of the Pretest and Posttest Interest Perception Scores of the Experiment and Control Groups with the Observation Scores of Teachers

Table 6 shows the results of the independent groups t-test performed to test the research hypothesis (2.3) concerning the significance of the difference between changes occurring in the experiment (Table 4) and control (Table 5) groups.

Table 6. Results of T-Test on Significance of Difference between Pretest and Posttest Interest Perception Scores of Experiment and Control Group and Observation Scores of Teachers (Entire Group)

Group	n	X	S	Sd	t	P
Control	20	-3.05	3.89	38	-8.35	.000
Experiment	20	38.65	21.98			

As observed in Table 6, the arithmetic mean of the difference between the control group's pretest perception interest scores and teachers' observation scores, and the change in the posttest difference between the teachers and students was -3.05 , while the arithmetic mean of this change was 38.65 for the students in the experiment group. The difference between the mean scores for these two difference scores obtained from the experiment and control groups was found to be significant ($t(38) = -8.35, p < .001$).

This finding indicates that when compared to the control group students and the pre-application levels, the post-application interest perception scores of the experiment group students were significantly closer to the student interest scores observed by teachers.

These results reveal that if all subjects are evaluated together, the research hypotheses 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 are supported.

DISCUSSION and INTERPRETATION

The present study aimed to determine the impact of a group guidance program structured for realistic field selection on more realistic interest perceptions by first-year high school students. Within this framework, the research hypotheses suggested that the students participating in the group guidance program will have a more realistic self-perception towards their

general interests (for all subjects considered together) after the program; however, no change will be observed in the interest perception levels of the students who did not participate in the mentioned program.

The obtained findings generally indicate that when all subjects are considered together on a non-discriminating basis, the research hypotheses were confirmed; in other words, the group guidance program developed by the researcher led the students to acquire a more realistic self-perception of their interests to make more realistic field selections.

The result of the present study, that students participating in group guidance programs acquire more realistic self-perceptions towards their interests, is consistent with the findings of numerous researches conducted abroad and at home (Uysal 1970; Pallone and Hosinsky 1966; Burgoyne 1979; Kuzgun 1983; İzci 1986). These studies observed that students base their vocational choices on their ideal selves, not on their self-concepts. In other words, this implies that most students perceive their own interests as they want them to be, not as they actually are. As a matter of fact, many studies conducted in Turkey also show that students are significantly affected by the proposals and suggestions of people around them while selecting their fields and vocations (Uysal 1970; Yıldırım 1972; Kuzgun 1978; Toker 1978; Oral 1983).

Kuzgun (1984) argues that one's decision of choosing a vocation is primarily based on his/her self-concept regarding his/her interests; that is, his/her level of perceiving and evaluating his/her interests. Self-reported interests are also an expression of one's self-concept regarding his/her interests.

As supported by Kuzgun's (1982) findings, these views have also been put forward by certain counseling psychologists such as Bordin and Super (cited in Kuzgun 1984). Drawing upon the idea that one's behaviors are defined by his/her self-concept, these theoreticians argue that behavior of selecting a vocation is also defined by one's self-concept; to put it another way, they suggest that individuals tend to choose vocations which include activities conforming to their self-concepts while selecting a vocation. Bordin asserts that just as an individual's general self-concept and self-perceptions might change with experience, his/her more well-defined perceptions towards his/her interests can also change, as a result of which the individual with changing self-evaluations might reject or reaffirm his/her previously-selected vocation (cited in Kuzgun 1983, 1984). Super (1963, 1970) claims that vocation selection occurs when there is a compatibility between the attributes an individual believes s/he possesses and the attributes s/he ascribes to the vocation s/he considers selecting.

Knowledge on one's self and vocations plays a crucial role in the process of selecting a vocation. The more one knows about him/herself and various vocations, the more probable it is that s/he will choose a suitable

vocation. Self-recognition is only possible through a process in which an individual observes him/herself in various activities and thus, s/he raises self-awareness about his/her traits (Ener 1980; Cromwell 1972; Woodworth 1972). Self-reported interests and abilities are an expression of one's self-concept regarding these interests and abilities. Kuzgun (1978) asserts that one cannot assign any meaning to his/her interests and abilities in a passive position; and that his/her self-concepts regarding his different abilities could only develop while s/he is acting in a role, a situation, a position or while performing a task in a certain system of relationships. Tan (1986) believes that one's vocational behavior is defined by his/her self-concept, and that s/he is in search of a role that conforms to his/her self. Furthermore, Rosey states that compatibility between one's self and experiences enhances his/her maturation process, as well as his/her adaptation skills (cited in Kuzgun 1984).

As indicated above, the findings of the present study reveal that the administered group guidance program has a significant impact upon building more realistic self-perceptions by students.

As a literature review on the studies conducted abroad and at home suggests, the lack of any field studies that examine the effects of group guidance programs on building more realistic self-perceptions by students on the basis of subjects makes any comparison with regard to the issue impossible.

However, in combination with the findings of similar previous research in the field, the results of the present study contribute to previous research findings by offering new evidence for experimental findings on the effectiveness of a group guidance program for field selection.

The present study contributes to the field of psychological counseling and guidance by pointing to the limited number of referential works on realistic field selection in Turkey. Furthermore, it could also be argued that the structured group guidance program developed for the study and proved to be effective on students' more realistic recognition of their interests will contribute as a guide for various programs to be developed in similar fields.

CONCLUSION and SUGGESTIONS

1. It was observed that the group guidance program on realistic field selection, which was developed within the scope of the study, approximates the students' perception-based interests to the observed interests adopted as criteria; and further helps them develop a more realistic self-perception. In cooperation with the Ministry of National Education, it is possible to use the program at schools, with confirmed effectiveness within the scope of vocational guidance.
2. The results of the study indicate that the group guidance program on realistic field selection developed within the scope of the study proved

to be effective in raising among the experiment group students a more realistic self-recognition of their interests. Hence, it follows that teachers can develop a more realistic self-recognition among their students by providing them with relevant information during lessons and with observation-based feedback on their interests.

3. The effectiveness of the present group guidance program on realistic field selection could be tested through a shorter application duration (8-10 sessions) and by developing a more easily applicable content.
4. The efficiency of the group guidance program on realistic field selection developed within the scope of the study can be prepared with richer content and tested on lower-grade students (6th, 7th and 8th grades).
5. In order to obtain more reliable data regarding the Student Assessment Scale (SAS) as the measurement instrument of the study, this instrument can also be used in comparative studies using samples obtained from the students of technical and vocational high schools that offer a different kind of education.
6. More solid evidence can be obtained regarding the long-lasting effect of the program through monitoring second-year high school students in order to observe the appropriateness of the field selection on experiment group students who participated in the group guidance program on realistic field selection and on the control group students who did not participate in the program.
7. It is possible to prepare a more detailed and comprehensive group guidance program by considering the relationship between the field and vocational selections of students, and the cultural and economical level of their families, as well as the number of their siblings.
8. Should school psychological counselors identify students' awareness level of their own selves and professions, it could then be possible to develop and investigate the effectiveness of special activity programs presenting information about students themselves and vocations.

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