

The Impact of a Career Development and Planning Course on University Students' Career Adaptability Levels

Esra ATILLA BAL

Acıbadem Üniversitesi
Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, Psikoloji Bölümü
İstanbul
esra.bal@acibadem.edu.tr

Selma ARIKAN

İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi
Edebiyat Fakültesi, Psikoloji Bölümü
İstanbul
selma.arikan@medeniyet.edu.tr

Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the effect of a Career Development and Planning course on university students' career adaptability levels. A pretest–posttest quasi-experimental design with a control group was used to examine the relationships between the variables. The sample group consisted of 41 undergraduate students enrolled in the psychology department of a foundation university in Istanbul. 21 students took part in the experimental group, and the rest of the students were in the control group. The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) was used in the study to determine the career adaptation levels of the participants. Moreover, qualitative data regarding the benefits of the course were gathered via an open-ended question from the participants in the experimental group. In order to examine the effect of the Career Development and Planning course that was applied to experimental group, the Mann Whitney U test and Wilcoxon signed ranks test were used for making comparisons between the measurements. To analyze the qualitative data, the descriptive analysis technique was used. The quantitative analyses did not yield a significant impact of the course regarding students' adaptability scores. However, the qualitative analysis results support the theoretical framework and reflect an enhancement in the career adaptability levels of students that went through the intervention. Overall, the research results entail suggestions that can contribute to future educational interventions and support the school-to-work transition of young adults.

Key Words: School to work transition, career adaptability, career planning and development.

Kariyer Gelişimi ve Planlaması Dersinin Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Kariyer Uyum Düzeylerine Etkisi

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı Kariyer Gelişimi ve Planlaması dersinin üniversite öğrencilerinin kariyer uyum düzeylerine olan etkisini ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmada ön ve son-test ile kontrol gruplu yarı deneysel yöntem kullanılmış, araştırmanın örneklemini İstanbul'da bir vakıf üniversitesinin Psikoloji bölümünde öğrenim gören 41 lisans öğrencisi oluşturmuştur.

Öğrencilerin 21'i deney, geriye kalan 20'si ise kontrol grubunda yer almıştır. Katılımcıların kariyer uyum düzeylerini belirlemek için Kariyer Uyum Yetenekleri Ölçeği kullanılmış, ek olarak deney grubu öğrencilerinden dersin en faydalı yönünü belirtmelerinin istendiği nitel veri formu toplanmıştır. Nicel analizler için Mann Whitney U testi ve Wilcoxon İşaretli Sıralar testi kullanılmış, deney grubundan elde edilen nitel verilerin özetlenmesi ve yorumlanmasında betimsel analiz tekniği uygulanmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda, nicel verilerin analizinde, Kariyer Gelişimi ve Planlaması dersine katılan deney grubunun son-test ile ön-test puan farkları ile kontrol grubunun son-test ve ön-test puan farkları arasında deney grubu lehine manidar fark bulunmamıştır. Ancak, nitel bulgular incelendiğinde kuramsal çerçeveyi ve ilgili araştırmaları destekleyici sonuçlar elde edilmiştir. Bütünsel olarak araştırma sonuçları, hem gelecekteki benzer eğitsel programlarının içeriğinin oluşturulma sürecini, hem de öğrencilerin okuldan işe geçiş deneyimlerini destekleyecek katkılar içermektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Okuldan işe geçiş, kariyer uyumu, kariyer planlaması ve gelişimi.

Introduction

The transition to professional life is a vulnerable period for young adults. Graduating from university involves leaving the educational comfort zone where there are clear rules and expectations. Work life, on the other hand, involves various choices, uncertainties, and challenges for new graduates (Ryan, 2001). When young adults exit college and begin their transition to the working world, they are commencing the first of potentially many career transitions, which will require varying degrees of coping skills and adaptability over time. How easily and effectively young people make this transition depends on the demand for labor, how well prepared they are for the labor market (skills and experience), and the availability of information and assistance on employment opportunities (ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth, 2017).

Globalization, multiculturalism, changing organizational structures, flexible employment patterns, and increased job insecurity (Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey, & Niles, 2009; Biemann, Zacher, & Feldman, 2012) have become the trends of today's work world. In such a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment, human flexibility, adaptability, and life-long learning are becoming increasingly important (Savickas et al., 2009).

People who have higher levels of adaptation are more flexible and have more adaptability to cope with changing conditions (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Hence, many scholars support the notion that career adaptability would be helpful to individuals and provide the necessary psychosocial resources to cope with the transition from school to work (Koen, Klehe, Van Vianen, Zikic, & Nauta, 2010; Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, 2010).

According to career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), career development is driven by an adaptation to a series of transitions from school to work, job to job, and occupation to

occupation, with the goal being person–environment integration. Yet, people develop diverse levels of psychological resources to manage the critical tasks, transitions, and traumas in their career development. To capture this important individual difference, Savickas (1997) proposed the concept of career adaptability, which refers to the “*readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions*” (p. 254).

Recent studies have established robust links between career adaptability and important vocational outcomes such as greater job satisfaction (Koen et al., 2010), lower career worries and apprehension (Creed, Fallon, & Hood, 2009), career satisfaction (Zacher, 2014), coping with career problems (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013), career success (Hirschi, 2010), resilience (Murphy et al., 2010), and better employment quality (Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012).

Career adaptability consists of four psychosocial components: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). *Career concern* means essentially a future orientation, a sense that it is important to prepare for tomorrow. Planful attitudes incline individuals to engage in activities and experiences that promote competencies in planning and preparing for the future (Savickas, 2013). *Career control* involves self-discipline and the process of being conscientious, deliberate, organized, and decisive in performing vocational development tasks and making occupational transitions (Savickas, 2013). *Career curiosity* refers to the inquisitiveness about and exploration of the fit between oneself and the work world. Attitudes and dispositions that favor exploration and openness lead to experiences that increase competence in both self-knowledge and occupational information. This broader fund of information brings realism and objectivity to subsequent choices that will match the self to situations (Savickas, 2013). Finally, in career construction theory, *career confidence* indicates feelings of self-efficacy concerning one’s ability to successfully execute a course of action needed to make and carry out suitable educational and vocational choices (Savickas, 2013). These psychosocial resources are regarded as self-regulation skills that can be used to cope with life challenges (Savickas, 2005).

A review of the Turkish literature regarding career adaptability illustrates that this concept has a significant relationship with various variables such as hope and optimism (Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2014), self-development orientation (Genç, 2016), general self-efficacy beliefs (Karacan Özdemir, 2016), critical thinking skills (Çelik, 2017), career values (Uğurlu, 2007), and career planning (Adıgüzel, 2008; Bektaş & Demir, 2004).

Analysis of the literature also reveals studies involving career group guidance programs aiming to ease the transition of university and high school students to work life with positive results (e.g., Alger & Luke, 2015; Gysbers, 2013; Hooker & Brand, 2010; Raysen & Qiuping, 2016). A review of the Turkish literature on career intervention programs and other psycho-educational vocational guidance group programs also reveals some studies related to the application of these programs to university students' transition. In fact, in Turkey, these types of programs are mostly geared toward primary and secondary school students (e.g., Bostancı, 2014; Kırdök, 2010; Seçer, Gülbahçe & Ateş, 2012). The studies in Turkey that address university students' school-to-work transition—though scarce—have focused on increasing students' career adaptability through career intervention programs (e.g., Erdoğan Zorver, 2018; Kara, 2016; Kepir Savoly, 2017; Ömeroğlu, 2014).

In Turkey, young people between 18 and 25 years of age are at the stage of completing their education and entering work life. Mandatory education lasts 12 years, and for those students graduating from university, this means a major transition from their “student” role, which has lasted for 16 years, into their brand new “employee” role. According to the Turkish Statistical Institution's October 2019 Turkish workforce statistics, the unemployment level for those in the 15–24 age group was 25.3%. For university graduates, this rate was 15.2% (TUIK, 2019). These numbers are higher compared to the previous years' statistical results. For instance, in 2017 the unemployment level for those in the 15–24 age group was 20.2%, and for university graduates, this rate was 13.9% (TUIK, 2017). These statistics illustrate that young people, including those who are university graduates, are facing serious employment problems.

As the trend towards higher unemployment for young people continues, career adaptability, which is conceptualized as a malleable competency that can be developed instead of a fixed attribute (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), is becoming a very important skill for students at the verge of a transition to develop. The current study's value lies in its aim to assist university students in their transition from school to work by improving their career adaptability levels and thus helping them go through a smoother and more efficient transition period.

Aim of Study

This study aimed to find out whether the Career Development and Planning course had a significant effect on the career adaptability levels of university students. The following hypotheses and research question were formulated to test the relationships between the variables:

Hypothesis 1: At the end of the training intervention, the career adaptability levels of the experimental group will be higher than those of the control group.

Hypothesis 2: The training intervention will have a positive effect on the career adaptability levels of the participants of the experimental group, but not on the career adaptability levels of the control group.

Research Question: Does the qualitative data gathered from the training participants reflect an improvement of students' career adaptability factors?

Method

Participants:

Forty-one undergraduates studying at the psychology department of a foundation university based in Istanbul participated in this study. Twenty-one of these students took the Career Planning and Development course (the experimental group), which was offered as an elective course during the Fall 2019 school term, and the remaining 20 students (the control group) were enrolled in another elective psychology course. As the students were not randomly assigned to these groups, our research design can be defined as a quasi-experimental design. The majority of the students in both the experimental and the control group were seniors. The mean age of the experimental group was 21.52 (sd: 1.50), and the mean age of the control group was 22.20 (sd: 2.75). The experimental group comprised 16 female and five male participants, and there were 19 females and one male in the control group. Demographic data are presented in Table 1.

The Research Model:

This is a quasi-experimental study with a pretest–posttest design and a control group that aims to examine the effect of a Career Development and Planning course on the career adaptability levels of students. The dependent variable of the study was career adaptability, and the independent variable was the Career Development and Planning course designed as an intervention. Besides the quantitative data gathered via surveys, in the last session, qualitative data regarding the benefits of the course were also gathered from the students in the experimental group.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Group	Experimental				Control					
	Female		Male		Female		Male			
Gender	16		5		19		1			
Grades	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4		
	0	1	2	18	0	1	0	19		
	μ	Median	σ	Min	Max	μ	Median	σ	Min	Max

Age	21.52	21	1.50	19	26	22.20	21.50	2.75	20	33
------------	-------	----	------	----	----	-------	-------	------	----	----

The Career Development and Planning Course:

The Career Development and Planning course was prepared and conducted by the first researcher during the fall term of 2019. *Career Development and Planning: A Comprehensive Approach* (Reardon, Lenz, Sampson & Peterson, 2009) was used as the main source of the course. The aim of this book is to provide students with a knowledge base drawn from psychology that can be used to solve career problems and make career decisions. The text and related teaching materials provide a comprehensive, integrated system of career learning activities intended to improve learner outcomes.

The class met for 12 weeks for instruction for a duration of 120 minutes in three 40-minute successive sessions. During these sessions; students were exposed to the following four chapters underlying career concepts and applications: “Introduction to Career Planning,” “Knowing about Myself,” “Knowing about My Options,” and “Career Decision-Making.”

As part of the “Introduction to Career Planning” chapter, students were exposed to the idea of a career from a historical perspective, vocational guidance, careers in the present day, career problems, career development terms, factors involved in career decisions, theories of career choice and development, and cognitive information processing. During the discussion of this chapter, the work of major theorists (e.g., Parsons, Holland and Super) and concepts such as the pyramid of information-processing domains in career decision-making and the CASVE cycle of decision-making skills were introduced to the students.

The next chapter, “Knowing about Myself,” focused on values, interests, skills, and ways of improving self-knowledge. During the discussion of this chapter, students had various opportunities to engage in gathering self-knowledge via exercises (e.g., value prioritization, Holland’s party exercise, and success stories) conducted in class as well as assigned homework.

The third chapter, “Knowing about My Options,” introduced students to the concept of occupations and occupational and industrial classifications, as well as how occupations are changing and where occupational information is located. Students were also exposed to the concept of leisure and how this could be an essential part of career development. During the discussion of this chapter, students were encouraged to gather additional information about their options and were assigned to carry out an informational interview project with someone whose job they admired and present this project in class.

The last chapter discussed was “Career Decision-Making,” which introduced students to the kinds of decisionmakers, problems in effective decision-making, and went into detail on the CASVE cycle of decision-making skills (including the phases of communication, analysis, synthesis, valuing, and execution). Methods of improving career decision-making were also discussed during the scope of this chapter.

Each of the above-mentioned chapters took about three weeks to complete, along with the exercises and practical applications conducted in class. Throughout the semester, the instructor also used the following methods to assist her students in their career development and planning process: a diary (which the students were required to write in regarding their engagement and energy levels in carrying out their daily agendas), case exercises (which involved career problems), an invited guest speaker (a senior human resources consultant who talked about emotional intelligence and its impact on professional life), and a biographical book that was required reading called *They Are My Heroes* by psychology professor Doğan Cüceloğlu (2009) about a blind protagonist who overcomes various personal and social barriers to achieve his occupational ideals.

Measures:

Demographic Questions: Three questions were asked to the participants as demographic items. These were presented in the first page of the survey as grade, age, and gender, respectively.

Career Adapt-Abilities Scale: In order to measure participants’ career adaptability levels, the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale, constructed by a team of researchers led by Savickas, including 18 members from 13 different countries (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), was used. This scale incorporates 24 items measuring four career adaptability factors: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence—each of which are measured by six items. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not strong) to 5 (strongest). For the original scale development study, internal reliability analysis of these four factors yielded satisfactory Cronbach’s α coefficients: 0.83 for concern, 0.74 for control, 0.79 for curiosity, and 0.85 for confidence. Turkish adaptation of Career Adapt-Abilities Scale was conducted by Kanten (2012) on 474 Turkish undergraduate students. Confirmatory factor analysis by Kanten (2012) showed that the factor structure of Turkish students’ data was in congruence with the actual factor structure of the original scale (χ^2 : 517.62; χ^2/df : 3.5; GFI: 0.90; NFI: 0.90; CFI: 0.93; RMSEA: 0.074). The Cronbach’s α coefficients of the factors were found to be as follows: concern: 0.61; control: 0.77; curiosity: 0.79; confidence: 0.81. In our analysis, the factor structure mentioned in Kanten’s (2012) study was used. Internal reliability coefficients were calculated for both pretest

and posttest data. Table 2 depicts the Cronbach's α coefficients of the scale and scale factors for both assessments.

Table 2: Internal Reliability Coefficients of the Scale

	Cronbach's α values for Pre-test Data	Cronbach's α values for Post-test Data
Career Adapt-Abilities Scale	0.88	0.89
Concern	0.79	0.66
Control	0.72	0.79
Curiosity	0.76	0.72
Confidence	0.86	0.87

Design, Procedure, and Statistical Analysis:

The research was designed as a quasi-experiment including an experimental and a control group. In order to assess the effectiveness of the 12-session Career Development and Planning course, both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered.

The experimental group took a 12-week training on Career Development and Planning, while the other group took a fourth-year elective psychology course on another topic. At the beginning of the term, both the experimental and the control group were administered the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale as a pretest. This process was repeated for both groups as a posttest after the sessions ended at the end of the term. It took approximately 5 minutes for the students to fill out the forms. Moreover, an open-ended question form was sent to the students in the experimental group 1 week before the last session, which asked them to write about the most useful aspect of the course for them and explain their reasons for this. The students turned in their responses to this question in written form at the last session.

The data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). First of all, internal reliability coefficients of the scale and its four factors were calculated for both pretest and posttest measurements. To test the hypotheses, non-parametrical methods were used, as the number of participants in each group was small. Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to compare the experimental and control groups. Next, the Wilcoxon signed ranks test was applied to examine the difference between the pretest and posttest measurements.

The qualitative data were summarized and interpreted according to the descriptive analysis method. Per this method, the data were examined in a thematic framework whereby students' expressions were identified and interpreted (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). The results

revealed four typical themes in the students' responses. Direct quotes referring to these themes are also included in the qualitative analysis section to enrich the findings.

Results

Results of the Quantitative Data Analyses

First of all, in order to control for the career adaptability levels of the experimental and control groups before the 12-week intervention, a Mann-Whitney U test was administered. As can be seen in Table 3, at the beginning of the intervention, there was no significant difference between the two groups for general career adaptability and its factors. This result was congruent with our expectations, since at the beginning of the intervention, the two groups were expected to be equal in terms of career adaptability levels.

Table 3: Comparison of Experimental and Control Groups before the Intervention

Variable	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Career Adaptability	Exp	21	21.55	452.50	198.50	0.764
	Cont	20	20.42	408.50		
Concern	Exp	21	19.93	418.50	187.50	0.553
	Cont	20	22.12	442.50		
Control	Exp	21	22.05	463.00	188.00	0.561
	Cont	20	19.90	398.00		
Curiosity	Exp	21	19.95	419.00	188.00	0.564
	Cont	20	22.10	442.00		
Confidence	Exp	21	22.45	471.50	179.50	0.420
	Cont	20	19.48	389.50		

To test Hypothesis 1, which stated that at the end of the intervention training, the career adaptability levels of the experimental group would be higher than those of the control group, Mann Whitney U tests were conducted. The results are presented in Table 4. As can be seen, the career adaptability differences between the two groups were statistically insignificant in terms of both total scores and scores for the four career adaptability factors. Hence, Hypothesis 1 was rejected.

Table 4: Comparison of Experimental and Control Groups after the Intervention

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Career Adaptability	Exp	21	18.90	397.00	166.00	0.251
	Cont	20	23.20	464.00		

Concern	Exp	21	17.86	375.00	144.00	0.082
	Cont	20	24.30	486.00		
Control	Exp	21	20.95	440.00	209.00	0.979
	Cont	20	21.05	421.00		
Curiosity	Exp	21	19.81	416.00	185.00	0.511
	Cont	20	22.25	445.00		
Confidence	Exp	21	19.36	406.50	175.500	0.363
	Cont	20	22.72	474.50		

In order to test Hypothesis 2, that the intervention training would have positive effects on the career adaptability levels of the participants of the experimental group, but not on the career adaptability levels of the control group, the Wilcoxon signed ranks test was conducted to compare the pretest and posttest results of both groups. The results are presented in Tables 5 and 6. However, these results do not support Hypothesis 2, and as a result, this hypothesis was also rejected.

Table 5: Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Results for the Experimental Group

	Test	N	Mean	Ranks	N	Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Career Adaptability	Pretest	21	101.57	Neg.	15	9.97	149.50	-1.187	0.235
	Posttest	21	99.67	Pos.	6	13.58	81.50		
Concern	Pretest	21	16.00	Neg.	9	8.17	73.50	-0.770	0.441
	Posttest	21	15.61	Pos.	6	7.75	46.50		
Control	Pretest	21	22.29	Neg.	9	8.00	72.00	-0.208	0.835
	Posttest	21	21.71	Pos.	7	9.14	64.00		
Curiosity	Pretest	21	23.81	Neg.	11	7.41	81.50	-0.545	0.586
	Posttest	21	24.52	Pos.	8	13.56	108.50		
Confidence	Pretest	21	27.29	Neg.	10	10.90	109.00	-1.548	0.122
	Posttest	21	26.24	Pos.	7	6.26	44.00		

Table 6: Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Results for the Control Group

	Test	N	Mean	Ranks	N	Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks	Z	p
Career Adaptability	Pretest	20	100.00	Neg.	5	9.30	46.50	-1.701	0.089
	Posttest	20	103.75	Pos.	13	9.58	124.50		
Concern	Pretest	20	16.80	Neg.	6	7.00	42.00	-1.436	0.151
	Posttest	20	17.15	Pos.	10	9.40	94.00		

Control	Pretest	20	21.60	Neg.	7	8.00	56.00	-0.630	0.529
	Posttest	20	21.95	Pos.	9	8.89	80.00		
Curiosity	Pretest	20	24.45	Neg.	6	8.83	53.00	-0.779	0.436
	Posttest	20	26.30	Pos.	10	8.30	83.00		
Confidence	Pretest	20	25.90	Neg.	6	9.33	56.00	-0.977	0.329
	Posttest	20	26.80	Pos.	11	8.82	97.00		

Results of the Qualitative Data Analyses

The thematic analysis of the open-ended question about the most useful aspect of the career planning and development course for the students yielded the following four major themes: gathering self-knowledge, gathering information about work life, improving decision-making skills, and supporting overall career planning awareness.

1. Gathering self-knowledge: The students stated that one of the most beneficial aspects of the course was that it helped them discover their values, interests, personality, and skills as they relate to work life. They stated that this was made possible by the exercises and methods used during the sessions, such as the diary, the success stories exercise, Holland's typology, the Career Decision-Making Pyramid, Super's Rainbow, and the biographical book. Below are some examples from students' responses regarding this theme.

Student 3: "Writing a diary increased my awareness about the tasks I needed to complete, and I started planning my priorities."

Student 4: "When I wrote my success stories, I realized how I deal with the problems that I encounter."

Student 10: "Thanks to my diary, I realized what I'm good at and what I enjoy/don't enjoy—this raised my self-awareness and helped me make sense of what I experience."

Student 18: "My diary helped me view and evaluate the experiences I go through 'automatically' in my daily life from a different perspective."

2. Gathering information about work life: Another common theme that emerged as a major benefit of the course was gathering information about work life. Students stated that especially the informational interview they conducted, the invited speaker's presentation about emotional intelligence at work, and current news clips shared by the instructor regarding professional life

during class enabled them to access valuable information about work life. Below are some examples from students' responses regarding this theme.

Student 9: "Our invited speaker's presentation on 'Emotional Intelligence' and her examples on this topic from professional life were very inspiring for me. Since we're seniors on the verge of entering work life, it is very impressive for us to have access to an experienced professional's perspective."

Student 4: "The informational interview was the most beneficial part of the course for me. We 'dream' about the job we wish to have when we graduate and always tend to think of its pleasant aspects. Carrying out an informational interview presented a balanced perspective regarding my 'dream' job with its positive and negative aspects. It answered my questions such as 'Can I perform this role for a long time?' or 'Is this really for me?'"

Student 20: "Listening to the invited speaker and her experiences and opinions regarding professional life complemented the theoretical framework we acquired during the course."

Student 7: "The current news clips provided to us by our instructor regarding work life and economic conditions in Turkey raised my awareness of 'the bigger picture' outside our class."

3. Improving decision-making skills: A third common theme that the students found useful as part of the course was improving decision-making and problem-solving skills. The students mentioned that the CASVE cycle of decision-making skills, which includes the phases of communication, analysis, synthesis, valuing, and execution, was especially helpful, as it supported them in realizing their problems regarding decision-making (i.e., at which stage they were stuck) and assisted them in generating alternatives. The students also added that the cases introduced by the instructor which involved fictitious employees who were facing career problems were also helpful in improving their career decision-making skills. Below are some examples from students' responses regarding this theme.

Student 9: "Thanks to the CASVE cycle of decision-making skills, I realized that I get stuck at the analysis stage of decision-making. I need to work on taking calculated risks."

Student 12: "I learned what steps lead to more effective decisions. I saw that it's important to generate alternatives."

Student 11: "The case analyses we worked on helped me see the different perspectives regarding the same problem and assisted me in generating alternatives."

Student 6: "Learning about the CASVE cycle helped me take higher-quality decisions."

Student 8: "After I read the biographical book, I realized the problems I don't take action on and became aware of the issues that I can work on."

4. Supporting career planning awareness: Though not as frequently endorsed as the previous three themes, a final theme that emerged from students' feedback regarding another benefit of the course was an improvement in their overall career planning awareness. The students stated that the course helped them understand what a career meant as a process. Moreover, they added that the course content helped them form a wider perspective regarding their career alternatives and start putting together a career roadmap. Some of the students' comments on this theme are shared below.

Student 14: "This course helped me take a wider perspective regarding my career options."

Student 3: "The course content taught me what kind of roadmap I need for my career plan."

Student 18: "I can say that I formed the base of my future work plans during this course and that this process has encouraged me to take action in order to achieve my goals."

Discussion

This study examines the effectiveness of a Career Development and Planning course on the career adaptability levels of university students. The results are discussed based on the interpretation of both the quantitative and the qualitative data in line with the related literature.

According to the quantitative data analyses' results, the career adaptability differences between the two groups were statistically insignificant in terms of both total scores and scores for the career adaptability factors. Moreover, further analyses showed that the training intervention did not increase the career adaptability levels of the participants of the

experimental group as expected. Hence, the quantitative data results were not congruent with the literature findings (e.g., Barclay & Stoltz, 2016; Erdoğan Zorver, 2018; Kara, 2016; Kepir Savoly, 2017), which point out that career group guidance programs increase the career adaptability levels of participants. These results might be due to several reasons that need careful consideration for future research endeavors which aim to foster students' career adaptability.

Yet, a review of the interventions aimed at university students' career adaptability levels depicted in the literature shows that these training programs were mostly based on the theory of career construction (e.g., Erdoğan Zorver, 2018; Kara, 2016; Kepir Savoly, 2017), which highlights the processes through which individuals direct their vocational behavior and make sense of their careers. Career construction theory conceptualizes resourceful individuals as displaying the four dimensions of coping resources of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas, 2013), as previously mentioned. Thus, in line with the above literature highlights, career trainings that are designed with the aim of improving the career adaptability factors have indeed yielded enhanced results in these factors. Other studies not based on career construction theory that aimed to foster student career adaptability have endorsed career interventions which are predominantly practical in nature, including various methods and practical tools (e.g., Bektaş & Demir, 2004; Çil, 2016; Ömeroğlu, 2014). Thus, the predominance of the practical content of these interventions could be another reason why the expected results were achieved.

The Career Development and Planning course delivered in this study was not based on career construction theory. The main focus of the course was enhancing students' awareness about what the concept of a career entails, as well as presenting them with methods to start their self- and vocational exploration. The course also introduced students to the scientific framework of decision-making skills and aimed to raise their awareness in this area. Thus, the course was designed to provide a balance between theory and practice, with the practical exercises comprising approximately one-half of the assigned time. This might also be one of the reasons why the quantitative data did not yield the expected results for the experimental group.

Moreover, since the class was an elective course, it was not possible to choose from among those students whose career adaptability levels were low to start with. In other words, since the students took this course voluntarily, this might show that they already had higher levels of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence regarding their career planning. This might

also be a reason why there wasn't a significant increase in their posttest scores after they went through the intervention.

The qualitative data analyses regarding students' perceptions of the benefits of the course resulted in the four themes of gathering self-knowledge, gathering information about work life, improving decision-making skills, and supporting overall career planning awareness. The students' remarks regarding these themes and what was effective for them illustrate that the intervention was helpful in raising their overall career adaptability.

The students mentioned specific methods which seem to have helped them raise their career adaptability levels. The diary and the success stories exercise were frequently mentioned by the students as a way of increasing their self-knowledge in terms of their values, interests, personality, and skills. Hence, this typical theme derived from the students' responses might be a possible trigger of their career curiosity, which refers to individuals' strength in exploring various situations and roles (Savickas, 2005). Moreover, the second major theme of gathering self-knowledge through informational interviews, the guest speaker, and current news clips about work life presented a realistic preview of professional life to students. As well as enhancing career curiosity, this theme can also be related to the career concern dimension of career adaptability, which refers to individuals' awareness of their future possibilities and tendency to consider what might be next (Savickas, 2005). The third theme of improving decision-making skills involved the use of the CASVE cycle of decision-making skills, case analyses, and the biography to enhance students' awareness regarding their decision-making styles and how they could make better decisions and generate alternative solutions. This theme is related to the career confidence dimension of career adaptability, since confidence entails individuals' positive perceptions of their problem-solving skills across different situations (Savickas, 2005). Last of all, the supporting career awareness theme, though not as prevalent as the above three themes, is also related to career adaptability, since students stated that due to this course, they had a clearer understanding of what a career is, gained a wider perspective regarding their career alternatives, and were encouraged to take action to achieve their goals. These learning outcomes can be related to career control, which involves being organized and decisive in performing developmental tasks and making occupational transitions, as well as career confidence, which refers to one's belief in one's ability to actualize career aspirations (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Similarly, a review of literature findings regarding experimental studies based on career construction theory reflected that participants' evaluations of the benefits of the interventions

reveal an improvement in their career adaptability levels (e.g., Barclay & Stoltz, 2016; Erdoğan Zorver, 2018; Maree & Symington, 2015).

When the quantitative and the qualitative data are evaluated together, it can be seen that this study offers some merit to assist students in their school-to-work transition process. However, the results also show that for more robust outcomes, the content of the intervention needs to be closely related to the dimensions of career adaptability, and the intervention process needs to be reinforced with various practical exercises aiming to foster these dimensions. The university years are valuable for young adults' work life ahead, and students need support and resources to make their school-to-work transition smoother. As volatile economic conditions result in career uncertainty and ambiguous job roles, career adaptability becomes an increasingly relevant and desirable competency among job-seekers in current times (Coetzee & Harry, 2014; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and is definitely a vital concept to include in interventions aiming to assist students' transitions to professional life.

Future Directions

Individuals' career possibilities are affected by various variables, including their personal attributes; their socialization experiences; and the resources, opportunities, and barriers set by their environments (Lent, 2013). Thus, in future studies, the Career Development and Planning intervention can also address some of these major barriers (e.g., gender discrimination regarding career choice, negative impact of the family, low compensation rates, harsh working conditions) and help students gain certain skills to cope with them. This could be achieved by including competency development content and exercises in the process to foster skills in communication, relationship management, assertiveness, etc. This content would be especially helpful in fostering the confidence factor of career adaptability, which refers to one's belief in one's ability to actualize career aspirations (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Studies conducted on the antecedents of career adaptability mention various factors such as conscientiousness, cognitive flexibility, and career environmental exploration (Wang & Fu, 2015; Murphy et al., 2010). Also, social support has been found to be adaptive for a variety of career-related tasks (e.g., Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005), with social support from family, teachers, friends, and schoolmates contributing significantly to career adaptability (e.g., Karacan Özdemir, 2016). In addition, Genç (2016) found a positive relationship between students' continuous learning attributes and career adaptability. Thus, research into the antecedents of career adaptability will carry important implications on how to improve individuals' readiness and resources for making career choices and transitions.

Finally, Di Fabio (2016) stated that traditional quantitative tools are limited in assessing and portraying the quality of the changes in individuals' career narratives. Thus, future studies can also employ focus group discussions, narrative analysis, and interviews as methods of gathering qualitative data on career adaptability, which may lead to more comprehensive results.

Limitations

The current research was conducted among a sample of students from a foundation university in Turkey; thus, whether the findings discussed above could be generalized to other Turkish university students remains to be examined in future research. In addition, future research should also examine whether the current research findings could be replicated in other cultural settings.

Also, this study included a total of 41 students, 21 of whom participated in the experimental group, and the remaining 20 took part in the control group. In order to raise the reliability of the results, the study needs to be replicated with a larger sample size. The study can also be replicated with the inclusion of students who have low career adaptability scores initially. Moreover, in future studies, the impact of the career intervention can be monitored via follow-up evaluations within different timeframes.

Practical Implications

The findings of the current research carry important practical implications. First, career educators can design their educational interventions based on the concern, control, curiosity, and confidence dimensions of career adaptability and use various practical exercises during the sessions to enhance these dimensions. Moreover, a complementary course delivered as a successor to the career planning course could aim to increase students' competency levels to help them during their school-to-work transition journey. Universities can also increase their efforts to support students in career planning through activities such as establishing a career center, providing guidance and advisory services, incorporating career-related resources, and offering seminars on various topics related to professional life.

Employers can also make young people's transitions from education to employment smoother by getting involved in their university education by acting as guest lecturers, providing job shadowing opportunities, and creating flexible short and long-term internship opportunities at their companies. Finally, professionals working in the field can also act as mentors to students and provide coaching to them during their school years about the expectations and realities of work life.

References

- Adıgüzel, O. (2008). *Türkiye’de gençlerin kariyer planlamasını etkileyen faktörler ve üniversite hazırlık öğrencileri üzerine bir araştırma* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Dumlupınar Üniversitesi, Kütahya.
- Alger, A. L., & Luke, M. (2015). The school counselor perspective: Preparing students to be college and career ready within a comprehensive school counseling program. *The Practitioner Scholar: Journal of Counseling and Professional Psychology*, 4, 17–35
- Amundson, N. E., Harris-Bowlsbey, J., & Niles, S. G. (2009). *Essential elements of career counseling: Processes and techniques*. NJ: Pearson/Merrill.
- Barclay, S. R., & Stoltz, K. B. (2016). The life design group: A case study vignette in group career construction counseling. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 53(1), 78–89.
- Bektaş, Y. D. Demir, A. (2004). Üniversite öğrencileri için mesleki grup rehberliği programı ve programın etkisi üzerine bir çalışma. *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi*, 3(22), 27–34.
- Biemann, T., Zacher, H., & Feldman, D. C. (2012). Career patterns: A twenty-year panel study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 81(2), 159–170.
- Bostancı, H. (2014). *Kariyer farkındalığı geliştirme amaçlı grup rehberliği programının 7. sınıf öğrencilerinin kariyer gelişim düzeylerine olan etkisinin incelenmesi* (Unpublished master’s thesis). Ege Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İzmir.
- Büyükgöze-Kavas, A. (2014). Validation of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale—Turkish form and its relation to hope and optimism. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 23(3), 125–132.
- Coetsee, M., & Harry, N. (2014). Emotional intelligence as a predictor of employees’ career adaptability. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 84(1), 90–97.
- Creed, P. A., Fallon, T., & Hood, M. (2009). The relationship between career adaptability, person and situation variables, and career concerns in young adults. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 74(2), 219–229.
- Çelik, Ö. (2017). *Eleştirel düşünme becerilerinin kariyer uyum yeteneklerine etkisi* (Unpublished master’s thesis). Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, Isparta.
- Çil, A. (2016). *Kariyer kararsızlığı giderme psiko eğitim programının üniversite öğrencilerinin kariyer kararsızlığını giderme üzerine etkilerinin incelenmesi* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). İstanbul Üniversitesi, İstanbul.
- Di Fabio, A. (2016). Life design and career counseling innovative outcomes. *The Career*

Development Quarterly, 64(1), 35–48.

- Erdoğmuş Zorver, C. (2018). Kariyer grup rehberliği programının üniversite öğrencilerinin kariyer uyum düzeylerine etkisi (Doctoral dissertation, Ankara Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara). Retrieved from:
<https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezSorguSonucYeni.jsp>
- Genç, M. (2016). *Öğrencilerin kişisel gelişim yönelimlerinin kariyer uyum yeteneklerine etkisi: Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen Üniversitesi örneği* (Unpublished master's thesis). Karabük Üniversitesi, Karabük.
- Gysbers, N. C. (2013). Career-ready students: A goal of comprehensive school counseling programs. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 61, 283–288.
- Hirschi, A. (2010). The role of chance events in the school-to-work transition: The influence of demographic, personality and career development variables. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 77(1), 39–49.
- International Labour Office. (2017). *Global employment trends for youth: Paths to a better working future*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Hooker, S., & Brand B. (2010). College knowledge: A critical component of college and career readiness. *New Direction for Youth Development*, 127, 75–85.
- Kanten, S. (2012). Kariyer uyum yetenekleri ölçeği: Geçerlilik ve güvenilirlik çalışması. *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 16, 191–205.
- Kara, A. (2016). *Kariyer uyumu programının RPD öğrencilerinin kariyer uyum düzeyleri üzerindeki etkisinin incelenmesi* (Unpublished master's thesis). Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi, Eskişehir.
- Karacan Özdemir, N. (2016). *The factors contribute to career adaptability of high school students* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Middle East Technical University, Ankara.
- Kenny, M. E., & Bledsoe, M. (2005). Contributions of the relational context to career adaptability among urban adolescents. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 66(2), 257–272.
- Kepir Savoly, D. D. (2017). *Okuldan işe geçiş becerileri geliştirme programının kariyer uyumu ve kariyer iyimserliğine etkisi* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Hacettepe üniversitesi, Ankara.
- Kırdök, O. (2010). *Bilişsel bilgiyi işleme yaklaşımına göre geliştirilen mesleki karar verme programının sınanması* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Çukurova Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Adana.

- Koen, J., Klehe, U. C., & Van Vianen, A. E. (2012). Training career adaptability to facilitate a successful school-to-work transition. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 81*(3), 395–408.
- Koen, J., Klehe, U. C., Van Vianen, A. E., Zikic, J., & Nauta, A. (2010). Job-search strategies and reemployment quality: The impact of career adaptability. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 77*(1), 126–139.
- Lent, R. W., & Brown, S. D. (2013). Social cognitive model of career self-management: Toward a unifying view of adaptive career behavior across the life span. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 60*(4), 557.
- Maree, J. G., & Syminton, C. (2015). Life design counselling effects on the career adaptability of learners in a selective independent school setting. *Journal of Psychology in Africa, 25*(2), 143–150.
- Murphy, K. A., Blustein, D. L., Bohlig, A. J., & Platt, M. G. (2010). The college-to-career transition: An exploration of emerging adulthood. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 88*(2), 174–181.
- Niles, S. G., & Harris-Bowlsbey, J. A. (2013). *Career development interventions in the 21st century* (4th ed.). NJ: Pearson.
- Ömeroğlu, S. (2014). *Polis akademisi öğrencilerine yönelik kariyer uyumu programının etkililiğinin değerlendirilmesi* (Unpublished master's thesis). Ankara Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara.
- Raysen, C., & Qiuping, J. (2016). Impact of a career exploration course on career decision-making, adaptability, and relational support in Hong Kong. *Journal of Career Assessment, 24*(3), 481–496.
- Reardon, R. C., Lenz, J. G., Sampson, J. P., & Peterson, G. W. (2009). *Career development and planning: A comprehensive approach* (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Ryan, P. (2001). The school-to-work transition: A cross-national perspective. *Journal of Economic Literature, 39*(1), 34–92.
- Savickas, M. L. (1997). Career adaptability: An integrative construct for life-span, life-space theory. *The Career Development Quarterly, 45*(3), 247–259.
- Savickas, M. L. (2005). The theory and practice of career construction. *Career Development and Counseling: Putting Theory and Research to Work, 1*, 42–70.
- Savickas, M. L. (2013). Career construction theory and practice. *Career Development and Counseling: Putting Theory and Research to Work, 2*, 144–180.
- Savickas, M. L., Nota, L., Rossier, J., Dauwalder, J. P., Duarte, M. E., Guichard, J., . . . Van

- Vianen, A. E. (2009). Life designing: A paradigm for career construction in the 21st century. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 75(3), 239–250.
- Savickas, M. L., & Porfeli, E. J. (2012). Career Adapt-Abilities Scale: Construction, reliability, and measurement equivalence across 13 countries. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80(3), 661–673.
- Seçer, İ., Gülbahçe, A., & Ateş, B. (2013). Mesleki grup rehberlik etkinliğinin ilköğretim 8. sınıf öğrencilerinin mesleki yetkinlik düzeylerine etkisi. *Turkish Journal of Education*, 2(1), 29–38.
- Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu. (2017). *Hanehalkı işgücü istatistikleri, Eylül, 2017*. Ankara: Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu.
- Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu. (2019). *Hanehalkı işgücü istatistikleri, Ekim, 2019*. Ankara: Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu.
- Uğurlu, O. (2007). *Kariyer değerleri: Lise öğrencilerinin kariyer değerleri üzerine bir araştırma* (Term project). Ankara Üniversitesi, Ankara.
- Wang, Z., & Fu, Y. (2015). Social support, social comparison and career adaptability: A moderated mediation model. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 43(4), 649–660.
- Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2013). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri*. Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık.
- Zacher, H. (2014). Individual difference predictors of change in career adaptability over time. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 84(2), 188–198.