A comparative analysis of the career maturity level and career indecision of the first grade high school students

Cem Birol\textsuperscript{a} *, Yeliz Kiralp\textsuperscript{a}

\textsuperscript{a} Faculty of Education, Near East University, Nicosia, Turkish Republic of North Cyprus

Received January 14, 2010; revised February 6, 2010; accepted March 29, 2010

1. Introduction

Men throughout their lives make decisions and choices. Career decision is one of the most important decisions that individuals make. Career choice influences the whole life of the individuals and also shapes their future. The career chosen by the individuals determines their life style, their way of looking at life, working environment, social and economical environment and even partner selection.

Appropriate career decision of individuals improves their sense of self-satisfaction, life styles and also contributes to the advancement of societies. For this reason, for appropriate career choice individuals should be aware of their personalities, the characteristics of the career which they consider and various possibilities of their environment.

Specifically, technological achievements, industrialization and increasing new job areas make career choice more difficult and complicated. Therefore career choice becomes an important problem area that needs attention. Individuals need to evaluate all career options and choose the most appropriate one for their needs (Kuzgun, 1982).

Looking at the early years of career counselling, it could be seen that career choice was the last decision students made when they had to choose their career or attend any career foundation programs. Yet later research studies in this area showed that career behaviours increasingly mature through a natural development process. Career decision shows different characteristics in the physiological and mental developments of the individuals in different age groups. Developmental psychologists see career choice as a process which individuals start at an early age and continue until they leave their jobs (Kuzgun, 1991).

The career choice theories emphasize individuals’ skills, interests, values and personality traits. Yet, recently career choice is considered as a developmental process and therefore the concept of career maturity has gained wide currency like other variables. For appropriate career choice individuals should reach a certain level of career maturity.

Super (1955) has been studying in this field since he has defined the concept of career maturity (Patton and Creed, 2002). This concept has a great place in developmental theories. Super (1957) has divided career development into stages. He also defined developmental tasks for each stage. An individual who completes these

* Cem Birol.
E-mail address: cbirol@neu.edu.tr.
developmental tasks successfully is considered to reach career maturity and is ready for accurate and logical career choice. According to Kuzgun (2003) career development is a systematic, progressive and interconnected process. Crites (1969) argues that individuals, who could not reach an expected career maturity in their developmental stage unpleasant factors, may influence their career decisions.

Every adolescent is expected to choose their career. In the early years of Super’s the exploration age (14-24) individuals recognize their skills, interests and values, and develop a consistent self-concept. At this stage adolescents are expected to crystallize their career preferences. Individuals between ages 14-18 explore careers in terms of their level and scope, eliminate most of these careers and choose one or two among them. Yet these individuals are expected to choose only one career. Choices can be general and blurry at the beginning. Yet as his knowledge about himself and his environment increases he evaluates his inclinations more accurately and make more realistic preferences (Kuzgun, 2000, 159).

The completion of career development tasks of the individuals has more influence on their effective decision-making. At this stage society expects from the individuals to acquire career attitudes and behaviours to make their own decisions about their career and bear the responsibilities of these decisions. It is thought that limited career developmental tasks make it difficult for the individual to make career decisions (Crites, 1969; Luzzo, 1998).

Individuals confront some difficulties due to ineffective career choice services. The problems which are faced in the process of decision making make individuals postpone their decision-making responsibilities, transfer their responsibilities to other people and avoid decision-making (Gati and Noa, 2001). If an adolescent reached the age of career choice and is not able to do it, then it is possible to talk about indecision (Kuzgun, 2000). If a person reached the age of career choice and has limited knowledge about his own personality traits and under the pressure of other people can face serious indecision problems.

Various reasons can cause individuals to face career indecision. If individuals have high potential in more than one career field, they may go through approach-approach conflict and can have difficulties in making career decisions. Sometimes individuals cannot differentiate between their interests and skills, and therefore can face difficulties in their career choices. Besides, individuals can have problems if they make career choice not through their self-concept but only implementing the ideal self-concept. In our society indecision is commonly caused by approach-avoidance conflict that stems from incongruence between the individual’s own interests and the interests of his mother, father and his environment.

The relevant literature on career choice indecision shows that career indecision is a personality trait (Larson, Heppner, Ham and Dugan, 1988, Newman, Gray and Fugua, 1999). Some research studies indicate that career indecision is closely related to problem solving skills (Larson and Heppner, 1985), chronic anxiety (Santos, 2001), depressive mood (Smith, 2001) and dysfunctional thoughts (Kleiman, Petterson, Sampson and Reardor, 2004). Career indecision is also related with the demographic variables of age (Guerra and Reiker, 1999; Kinner, Brigman and Noble, 1990) and gender (Rojevski and Hill, 1998; Watson and Stead, 1994) (Cited in Hamamcı and Hamurlu, 2005). These research studies imply that career indecision can also be caused by individuals’ low self-esteem and anxiety problems. In addition, limited knowledge of career can cause individuals to face career indecision. For this reason as stated by Bacanlı and Sürücü (2006), in order to improve individuals’ decision-making skills, first of all trainings on how to improve decision-making strategies should be planned. Decisions to be made by the individuals at this stage can also influence their future lives a great deal. Therefore, individuals, who have indecision problems and could not reach maturity level, should be assisted to make correct and healthy decisions through counselling and guidance services in schools gain importance.

This research aims to determine the maturity and career indecision levels of first grade high school students and see if there is a significant gender difference between maturity and career indecision levels.

2. Method

2.1. Population and Sample

The population of the study covers 192 first grade high school students studying in Near East College (NEC) in the academic year of 2008-2009. The researchers did not select a sample, but tried to reach the whole population. Yet on the day the scales were administered in the school some students did not come. Besides, the students, who gave
wrong answers, and left some questions unanswered on the scale and foreign students, whose native language was not Turkish, were not included in the study. Therefore 72 students were left out of the study.

2.2. Data Collection Instruments

In this research in order to determine the students’ career maturity level, “Career Maturity Scale” developed by Kuzgun and Bacanli (1992) was utilized. “Decision-making strategies Scale” developed by Kuzgun (2005) was used to test students career indecision.

2.3. Career Maturity Scale

The scale includes items on career attitudes and behaviours. In the scale there are statements which measure attitudes and behaviours related to career choice. The scale is 5 point Likert type scale: “not at all like me” (1), “not much like me” (2), “somewhat like me” (3), “like me” (4), “very much like me” (5)

The minimum score that could be obtained on the scale is 40, the maximum score is 200. The student who reached the raw score of 143 shows that the student reached the career maturity level that is expected from him. Yet this student needs to reach the score of 155 in order to be able to implement the appropriate career attitudes and behaviours as expected from him. Therefore the student who could not obtain the raw score of 143 is considered having low level of career maturity. Students who reached the score between 143 and 155 have the need to improve their career maturity levels. Students who obtained the score of 155 are considered having high level of career maturity.

In order to measure the discriminating power of the items located in the preliminary form of the career maturity scale item analysis was made and the differences between mean scores of low and high groups of students were assessed using independent t-test. The scale factor is 1. The Cronbach alpha reliability score was found to be .89. The correlation coefficient which was calculated using test re-test method was found to be .82. This result shows that the scale is reliable for measuring the intended variables (Kuzgun and Bacanli, 1996).

2.4. Decision-making Strategies Scale

The decision-making strategies scale is composed of independent 4 subscales (dependent decision-making, logical decision-making, indecisive decision-making and impulsive decision-making) and 40 items. Each subscale includes 10 items. The internal consistency of the “Decision-making Strategies Scale” was calculated using Cronbach Alpha formula. The alpha coefficients of the subscales are as follows: Impulsive: 0.74, Logical: 0.72, Dependent: 0.55, Indecisive: 0.70. To assess if the scale did strong assessment, the correlation coefficients between the scores obtained from the scale which was administered twice to 70 students. The coefficients of the subscales were found as follows: Impulsive: 0.81, Logical: 0.80, Dependent: 0.52, Indecisive: 0.86 (Kuzgun, 2005).

In order to assess the validity of the “Decision-making Strategies Scale”, the scale’s ability to differentiate the groups, which were thought, having differences in terms of decision-making strategies, was evaluated. For this reason the decision-making strategies scores of female and male students, adults and students were compared. The comparison revealed the following t scores of the mean differences of male and female students: Dependent: 3.22 (p<0.01), Logical: 3.38 (p< 0.01), Indecisive: 2.32 (p<0.05) and Impulsive: 2.32 (p<0.05). The t scores of the mean differences of adults and students and female students are as follows: Dependent: 0.37, Logical: 1.54, Indecisive: 1.92 and Impulsive: 0.47. These scores show that there is no statistical difference in the decision making strategies of students and adults.

2.5. Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data arithmetic mean, percentages and t-test were used. The data were analysed in SPSS 15. P value < 0.05 was taken as the level of significance.
3. Findings

This research aims to examine the career maturity and career indecision levels of the first grade high school students and find if there was any significant gender difference.

3.1 Findings related to the career maturity levels of the first grade high school students

3.1.1 Frequency and Mean Scores of Students’ Career Maturity Levels

The frequency and mean scores of students’ career maturity levels are shown in Table 1 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 1 120 students (75 male and 45 female students) participated in the study. The general mean scores obtained from the career maturity scale are 62.5 for male students and 37.5 for female students.

3.1.2 Findings related to the career maturity levels of students in terms of gender

Mean, standard deviation and t-test scores of the first grade high students’ career maturity levels in terms of gender are presented in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>140.79</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>140.33</td>
<td>16.95</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>0.654</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 2 there are no significant gender differences (p>0.05). Yet the mean scores of male students were found to be higher than those of female students (140.79>140.33).

3.2 Findings related to Career Indecision Levels of the First Grade High School Students

3.2.1 Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Career Indecision Levels of the First Grade High School Students

The mean and standard deviation scores of career indecision levels of the first grade high school students obtained from the career indecision scale are shown in Table 3 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOGICAL</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>25.92</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPULSIVE</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>24.13</td>
<td>4.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPENDENT</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>21.75</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDECISIVE</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>22.05</td>
<td>5.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3 the arithmetic mean scores of logical and impulsive decision making strategies which are the subdimensions of “Decision-Making Strategies Scale” are very close (Logical: 25.92, Impulsive: 24.13). The
arithmetic mean scores of the subdimensions of dependent and indecisive decision making strategies are also very close (Dependent: 21.75, Undecided: 22.05). The standard deviation of logical decision making was found to be 3.94, the standard deviation of impulsive decision making was found to be 4.82, and the standard deviation of indecisive decision making was found to be 5.36.

3.2.2 T-test Scores related to Independent Decision-Making Strategies of the First Grade Students High School in terms of Gender

T-test scores related to independent decision-making strategies of the first grade high school students in terms of gender are shown in Table 4 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>22.45</td>
<td>4.844</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>0.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>21.01</td>
<td>4.015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4 no statistically significant gender differences were found (p>0.05). The mean scores of dependent decision-making strategies of male and female students were found to be 22.45 and 21.01 respectively.

3.2.3 T-test Scores Related to Indecisive Decision-Making Strategies of the First Grade High School Students in terms of Gender

T-test scores related to indecisive decision-making strategies of the first grade high school students in terms of gender are shown in Table 5 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>22.46</td>
<td>5.550</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>21.62</td>
<td>5.170</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 5 no significant gender differences were found (p>0.05). The mean scores of indecisive decision making strategies of male and female students were found to be 22.46 and 21.62 respectively.

3.2.4 T-test Scores Related to Logical Decision-Making Strategies of the First Grade High School Students in terms of Gender

T-test scores related to logical decision-making strategies of the first grade high school students in terms of gender are shown in Table 6 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>25.98</td>
<td>4.119</td>
<td>0.824</td>
<td>0.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>25.86</td>
<td>3.794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in Table 6 no significant gender differences were found (p>0.05). The mean scores of logical decision making strategies of male and female students were found to be 25.98 and 25.86 respectively.

3.2.5 T-test Scores Related to Impulsive Decision-Making Strategies of the First Grade High School Students in terms of Gender

T-test scores related to impulsive decision-making strategies of the first grade high school students in terms of gender are shown in Table 7 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>24.33</td>
<td>4.922</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>23.91</td>
<td>4.747</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 7 no significant gender differences were found (p>0.05). The mean scores of impulsive decision making strategies of male and female students were found to be 24.33 and 23.91 respectively.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The research findings show no significant differences between career maturity levels of high school students and gender. The international and national research studies show that there are two results regarding the career maturity levels of female and male students. In these research studies the career maturity levels of females are found to be higher than those of males. Besides, gender was found to have no influence on the career maturity level. Zeren (1999), Sahrac (2000), Lee and Hudley (2001) and Sürücü (2005) in their research studies on high school students did not find any significant differences between career maturity and gender. Yet Luzzo (1995); Lee (2001); Patton and Creed (2001; 2003) and Keller (2004) found high maturity level in favour of females. Different results of these research studies imply that gender variable interacts with different variables and in further research studies gender variable should be studied in relation with variables such as socio-economic level, future expectations.

Indecision which is faced in the process of career choice has a significant place in the field of psychological counselling and guidance. Career indecision, which is studied in relation with various variables, its relation with gender revealed different results.

The findings of this research did not reveal any significant differences between male and female students in terms of dependent decision-making, indecisive decision-making, logical decision-making and impulsive decision-making. Hartman et al (1987) in their comparative study on career indecisions of female and male students found no significant gender differences. These results support the results of this current study. Yet in literature there are different findings regarding this issue. In this research significant gender differences were expected to be found. Specifically, different results were expected due to gender role differences in Turkish culture, children upbringing with the values of Turkish culture and so on. The proliferation of mass media, increasing education level of parents and their democratic attitudes towards their children, and raising children with more tolerance and consciousness are thought to affect the results of this study.

Regarding the results of this study the following implications were made for further studies.

1. There are limited studies on the issues of career maturity and career indecision in the TRNC. For this reason more studies on the career maturity levels of high schools students and the use of effective strategies should be conducted. It is thought that such studies will contribute to counselling services in this area.

2. Further research studies should deal with career maturity and career indecision of high school students in relation to the variables such as mother-father attitudes, grade and different age groups.
3. Psychological counsellors in schools should prepare vocational guidance programs to help students make accurate career decisions.

References


