

Vocational High School Students' Views on Career Awareness

Mustafa ÖZDEMİR

ORCID: 0000-0002-6082-6854

Karatay Mesleki ve Teknik Anadolu Lisesi, Konya, Türkiye, mozdemirpdr1@gmail.com

Article Information

ABSTRACT

Publication:

28.12.2022

Keywords:

Career Awareness
Career Planning
Career Decision
Vocational High School

In this study, it was aimed to examine the views of 11th grade students of Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School on career awareness. For this purpose, phenomenological model, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. In order to explore the career awareness of 18 participants on the subject, 6 questions were asked as a result of the literature review and face-to-face data were obtained by interview/interview method. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed and themes were determined. The themes obtained in the research were formed as "career, professions, personal characteristics, professional value, challenges and future life". For the analysis of the data, the methods of disjunctive analysis and content analysis were used. Finally, the data were discussed and recommendations were presented.



"This article is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (CC BY-NC 4.0)"

INTRODUCTION

Career is defined by TDK as "the stage, success and expertise achieved through time and work in a profession" and has been defined by different researchers by emphasizing different dimensions of the concept of career (TDK, 2022). In the traditional understanding of career, the word career is sometimes used in the sense of a profession and sometimes in the sense of promotion in a profession. In addition to covering the experiences related to the professional tasks undertaken by the person for many years, it is not only a job-specific concept in modern career understanding. Career is an occupation that an individual is engaged in throughout his/her life and a goal that he/she wants to reach (Avcı, 2020; Dessler, 2019, Özer et al., 2019).

According to Özyürek (2021), career is the whole of the process that covers the whole life related to the roles of individuals such as employee, student, child, spouse, citizen, which they undertake throughout their lives, and which affects the lifestyle, where work life, which can sometimes be interrupted, occupies an important place, and can also include activities such as leisure time activities and community service, mostly for money.

According to Tutar (2020), career planning and management is important both in terms of the performance of human resources and organizational efficiency, and because work life covers one third of human life, it is important not only for the individual to work and get paid for it, but also to meet the psychological and social needs of the person.

A comprehensive and well-thought career plan enables the individual to discover what his/her talents, interests and values are, to realize how they can be transformed into a profession, to learn which skills he/she needs to acquire and which educational processes he/she needs to go through in order to work in this profession, and thus to make a more accurate career decision, rather than making career-related decisions instantly without enough thought and research on the options (Yalçın et al., 2022; Oesch & Bower, 2009).

Since career is a broad category that includes a lifelong process, variables such as personal characteristics, occupational requirements, work environment and working conditions must complement each other in order to make the right career plans and decisions. Whether people have this information is expressed by the term career awareness (Siyez & Mutlu Çaykuş, 2020; Öztürk, 2020).

Career awareness is particularly essential in the early stages of career development. It involves determining one's knowledge and insight about the current career opportunities and the possibilities they have, the skill requirements of the chosen profession, occupational change and new trends, the steps of progression in the profession, and the skills that are necessary and necessary to develop in order to make progress (Nasir & Lin, 2013; Yaşar, 2019).

In the 21st century, the changing and developing global society, the development of new business lines with technological changes and innovations, and the freedom of people to make decisions have made the correct and effective use of human resources necessary (Chaiyama & Kaewpila, 2021, Bozgeyikli et al., 2016). In order to benefit from these developments at the highest level, it is very important to develop and encourage people with high life skills and help them prepare for economic and social life. Determining the career awareness of individuals in order to increase their life skills is essential for the effective use of existing human resources (Chaiyama & Kaewpila, 2021). This research is important because it reflects the career awareness of students studying at Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School.

METHOD

In this study, phenomenology/phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. In phenomenological research, the researcher, who tries to explain situations or phenomena that are not foreign to daily life but whose meaning cannot be fully revealed, is interested in the personal experiences and thoughts of the participant and examines the perceptions of the individual and the meanings they attribute to events (Yüksel, Yanık & Ayazlar, 2015; Ocak, 2019).

DATA COLLECTION TOOL AND DATA COLLECTION

Within the scope of the reviewed literature, questions were determined in order to determine high school students' views on career awareness and 6 questions were determined by taking the opinions of experts working in this field and the study was carried out with the interview/interview technique. The questions are set out below:

1. What does the concept of career mean to you?
2. Which profession do you think is suitable for you in your career planning?
3. What are your personal characteristics that influence you in deciding on this profession?
4. Which characteristics of a profession are effective in your preference for that profession?
5. Which aspects of these professions do you think might be challenging for you?
6. What kind of a life will you have in the future if you say that you have chosen the right profession?

In order to analyze the data, first of all, every word spoken in the interview recordings was transcribed word by word, and descriptive analysis and content analysis were used to extract themes in the analysis of the data.

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings revealed by content analysis and descriptive analysis methods are presented with frequency values showing how many participants mentioned the specified theme and category. While forming the themes, it was observed that in some questions, participants expressed opinions that would indicate more than one category in a theme. While analyzing the research findings, the opinions of some of the participants were included. The real names of the participants were not used and the codes P1, P2, P3 P18 codes were used to represent each participant.

1. What does the concept of career mean to you?

As a result of the content analysis, 6 categories were formed from the "Career" theme. These categories are Process/Plan, Work/Vocation, Independence, Goal, Future and Making Money.

Table 1. Categories of the Career Theme

Theme	Categories	f	Sample Reviews
Career	Process/Plan	6	(D6: Career means a process in which I can stand on my own feet, take care of my family and meet my own needs.)
	Work/Vocation	4	(P11: It means a good life for my future, a good profession, a good job, earning money.)
	Independence	3	(P10: For me, the concept of career means standing on your own feet, not being dependent on anyone, only making your own plans and acting with your own thoughts.)
	Goal	2	(P2: ...my goal is my career in a sense.)
	Future	2	(P9: The concept of career means a future for me. For example, it means standing on my own feet, not being dependent on others.)
	Making Money	2	(P1: I think a career is a profession where you can earn the money you need to live the way you want)

When Table 1 is analyzed, it is seen that the participants focus on the concept of career as a process related to what will happen in the future, profession and independence.

2. Which profession do you think is suitable for you in your career planning?

As a result of the content analysis, 8 categories were created from the "Professions" theme. These categories were created as Law, Psychology/ Psychological Counseling, Nurse, Preschool Teacher, Fine Arts and Editorial Manager.

Table 2. Categories for the Professions Theme

Theme	Categories	f	Sample Reviews
Professions	Law	7	(P4: ... I think that some things should be stopped. The prosecutor is an authorized profession in this regard.)
	Psychology/ Psychological Counseling	4	(P1: I want to study Psychology or PDR because it is attractive to touch people and contribute to solving their problems.)
	Nurse	4	(P3: I want to be an operating room nurse. I have always wanted to be in the operating room and help people there.
	Preschool Teacher	3	(P13: I love children very much, so my priority is to become a preschool teacher.)
	Sosyal Hizmetler	2	(P11: I think social work and nursing is a profession that suits me.)
	Fine Arts	2	(P18: I want to study fine arts because I have a talent for painting).
	Editorial Manager	1	(P12: I think that the profession of a chief clerk is suitable for me. ... I know it as the superior of the minutes clerks in the courthouse.)

Some of the participants indicated a preference for this field (Lawyer, Judge, Prosecutor) because they studied Justice in vocational high school and it was seen that the department they studied affected their profession preferences. During the interviews, it was understood that some of the participants preferred verbal or associate degree departments due to their low academic achievement.

3. What are the personal characteristics that influenced you to decide on this profession?

As a result of the content analysis, 8 categories were formed from the "Personal Characteristics" theme. These categories were Fair, Honest, Determination, Good Listener, Creativity, Memorization, Good Communication and Helpfulness.

Table 3. Categories for the Personal Characteristic Theme

Theme	Categories	f	Sample Reviews
Personal Characteristics	Fair	4	<i>(P6: I can't stand injustice. When a person does an unjust act in front of my eyes, I instinctively want to intervene. I want to defend the people I think are right.)</i>
	Honest	3	<i>(P2: I think I am honest and I think honest lawyers are needed to ensure justice).</i>
	Determination	3	<i>(P14: I am a strong-minded and decisive person and I can speak up in a justified situation.)</i>
	Good Listener	2	<i>(P1: I am good at listening to people and suggesting different points of view.)</i>
	Creativity	2	<i>(P5: It was effective that I can usually design things and I like to design new things. I have designed a few things since childhood, so when I think about it, I know that I have a tendency to design things.)</i>
	Memorization	2	<i>(P7: I like my field courses and I have memorization skills, I think I can memorize laws etc. easily)</i>
	Good Communication	2	<i>(P10: I think my communication with children is good or my communication with people in general is good.)</i>
	Helpfulness	1	<i>(P11: I like helping people, so I chose these professions (Nursing and Social Work))</i>

When Table 3 is examined, it is understood that the participants who prefer justice-related departments point to the categories of "fair, honest, decisive and memorized", while those who prefer departments such as Psychology and Social Work point to the categories of "good listener, good communicator and helpful".

4. Which characteristics of a profession influence your preference for that profession?

As a result of the content analysis, 6 categories were formed from the "Professional Value" theme. These categories are Status/Respectability, Leadership, Working Conditions, Financial Gain, Professional Advancement and Free Thought.

Table 4. Categories for the Professional Value Theme

Theme	Categories	f	Sample Reviews
Professional Value	Status/Respectability	7	(P9: ... high status is what appeals to me.)
	Leadership	4	(P4: Definitely leadership. If there is a group work to be done, I think that something will go wrong, so I think that if I take it completely in my hands and manage it, those things will not go wrong, or if I don't trust the other person, I do the work completely myself.)
	Working Conditions	3	(P5: There is no gloomy environment, I think there are more flexible working conditions because it is design-oriented).
	Financial Gain	3	(P17: Financial gain is at the forefront as I dream of a more comfortable life in the future.)
	Professional Advancement	2	(P3: ...besides, it is important for me to rise in the profession.)
	Free Thought	1	(P18: In the professions I mentioned (fine arts and kindergarten teaching), when we look at it, it is a little more free thinking and more comfortable than other professions.

Occupational value can be defined as the criteria that an individual seeks in a profession. These values are also related to the principles that people take as a basis in their lives (Çelik & Üstüner, 2017). When Table 4 is analyzed, it is determined that the participants have professional values such as "status/respect, leadership, working conditions, financial gain".

5. Which aspects of these professions do you think might challenge you?

As a result of the content analysis, 8 categories were formed from the "Challenges" theme. These categories were formed as Inability to Earn, Workplace, Monotony, Being Unemployed, People in the Environment, Minimum Error Requirement, Exhaustion and Failure.

Table 5. Categories for the Challenges Theme

Theme	Categories	f	Sample Reviews
Challenges	Inability to Earn	4	(P11: I think it will be difficult to win these departments, and because it is, I have a fear of not winning. If I win, I think I will not have difficulties in business life.)
	Workplace	3	(P6: I think that constantly dealing with forensic cases may wear me out psychologically.)
	Monotony	3	(P5: If I prioritize work a little more and put other things on the back burner, I may not feel very happy.)
	Being Unemployed	3	(P4: In today's conditions, I may have difficulties in issues such as being left open or being unemployed. I will study now, I will finish, but at what age will I be able to take my profession in my hands and start earning money...)

People in the Environment	2	(P15: Another issue that comes to mind is that the environment can challenge me. When I say that I want to do this profession, negative comments and criticisms such as "What will you benefit from it, it is very unnecessary, very tiring" force me.)
Minimum Error Requirement	2	(P11: When you are a nurse, you help people, but you can also make wrong interventions, you can also harm the patient and cost his/her life, the lack of fault tolerance can be a challenge for me.)
Exhaustion	2	(P18: After designing something, I may experience the situation of repeating myself. I may have difficulty in finding new ideas.)
Failure	2	(P8: Not being able to provide justice, not giving the guilty people the punishment they deserve can be difficult for me.)

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that one of the main difficulties perceived by the participants is not being able to win the department they want. During the interviews, it was understood that the low academic achievement of the participants reduced their self-confidence and motivation to achieve their goals.

6. What kind of life will you have in the future if you think you have made the right career choice?

As a result of the content analysis, 7 categories were formed from the theme of "Future Life". These categories are Success, Going to Work with Love, Happiness, Making Time for Yourself, Serving Justice, Order and Environment.

Table 6. Categories for the Future Life Theme

Theme	Categories	f	Sample Reviews
Future Life	Success	7	(P1: If I feel that I am good at my job and I am useful to people...)
	Going to Work with Love	4	(P10: If I love my job and get up every morning with excitement...)
	Happiness	3	(P13: If I am happy in my private life at the same time, I say I have chosen the right path). (P2: I don't think anyone should have a life of constant work. I think I should also have time to spare time for myself. One can earn money only by working, but one cannot be happy only by earning money.)
	Making Time for Yourself	2	(P4: If I can serve justice or if I can punish bad people, people who are unjust, people who do wrong and make them turn towards the right, then I have made the right decision).
	Serving Justice	2	(P7: If I have a regular and healthy life, I think I have chosen the right profession.) (P8: ... the profession I choose will also affect the people around me, if there are good people around me who have really educated themselves, I will say that I am in the right profession)
	Order	2	
	Environment	2	

When Table 6 is analyzed, it is understood that the participants think that having variables such as "success, going to work with pleasure, happiness in private life" in their future lives will cause them to think that they have made the right career choice.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this article, it is aimed to determine the views of vocational high school students on career awareness. The study group of the research consists of 18 11th grade students from different grades and achievement levels studying at Karatay Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School in the 2022-2023 academic year. Descriptive analysis and content analysis were used in data analysis. The themes obtained in the research were determined as "career, professions, personal characteristics, professional value, challenges and future life.

Considering the departments in which students from vocational high schools have won the university, it is seen that they generally win the programs with low scores, although there are exceptions. In fact, the rate of students who come to classes fondly and make realistic plans about their career is quite low (Birtül, 2011). The fact that the participants stated that they do not think much about their career awareness and career plans supports this data.

It is thought that the participants may have chosen their career decisions because they were exposed to the terms of these professions in the department they studied. It is debatable whether the participants have the personality traits they stated or whether they stated the traits that should be in the professions they stated.

It was observed that the participants had difficulty in identifying possible difficulties. In addition, it is seen that the criteria they stated in the categories that they thought they would understand that they chose the right profession in their future lives are abstract. It is thought that this may be due to the lack of knowledge about the working conditions and environments of the professions they mentioned.

Even if individuals talk about career and have not thought about it, asking their opinions by bringing these issues to the agenda will cause the person to start thinking about this issue. While conducting interviews in this study, some participants stated that they realized how little they had thought about this issue. Thus, it is expected that the interviews may create uncertainty in the minds of the participants and increase their career awareness.

Creating and supporting the career awareness of young people, especially those with low socioeconomic and educational levels of their families, increases the importance of vocational and career guidance services.

As a result, it was understood that the participants did not think much about the possible difficulties that they paid attention to a few criteria about the difficulties they would face in

professional life in their career decisions, which they determined under the influence of being exposed to the terms of these professions in the department they studied. Likewise, they had difficulty in determining the criteria for happiness in the future life and summarized their realization in subjective terms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An individual's professional and career development starts in early childhood and continues throughout life (Yılmaz, 2021). In order to make the right career decision, individuals need to have skills appropriate to their career development periods.

There are many students in the last grades of high school and even university who cannot decide what they want to be, do not know themselves, do not determine their intelligence type, do not know their professional values, and do not know their professional interests (Coşkun, 2015).

Öztürk (2020) in his doctoral dissertation titled "The Effect of University Career Development Program on Students' Career Awareness, Decision Making Competence and Stress" found that individuals' career awareness has a direct effect on their decision making competence. In this study, it was realized that the career goals set by the participants were superficial in terms of their knowledge about their own characteristics, the requirements and difficulties of the profession. Therefore, it is recommended that students at all levels should be supported in increasing their career awareness and self-knowledge levels.

According to Brown and Lent (2005), when providing career development assistance to individuals in the target group, it should be ensured that they gain awareness about their current situation and future careers. In order to achieve this, positive thinking about professions should be developed, career goals should be determined, self-knowledge should be provided, self-efficacy should be developed, weaknesses and strengths and professional values should be discovered.

Families, teachers and psychological counselors should contribute to the acquisition of skills appropriate to the career development periods of individuals and thus increase their level of awareness, which will enable them to make more accurate career decisions.

REFERENCES

- Akkaş Baysal, E., & Hocoğlu, N. (2019). Nitel araştırma modelleri-desenleri. G. Ocak (Ed.). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri* Inside (126/153). Pegem Academy.
- Avcı, K. (2020), *Sağlık sektöründe insan kaynakları yönetimi* (1st Ed.). Ankara: Gazi Publishing.

- Bırtıl, F. S. (2011). *Kız meslek lisesi öğrencilerinin akademik başarısızlık nedenlerinin veri madenciliği tekniği ile analizi*. Unpublished Master Thesis. Afyon Kocatepe University, Afyon.
- Bostancı, H. (2014). *Kariyer farkındalığı geliştirme amaçlı grup rehberliği programının 7. Sınıf öğrencilerinin kariyer gelişim düzeylerine olan etkisinin incelenmesi*. Unpublished Master Thesis. University Of Aegean, İzmir.
- Bozgeyikli, H., Derin, S., & Toprak, E. (2016). Üniversite öğrencilerinin mesleki değer algıları. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies (IntJCES)*, 2(1), 139-156.
- Brown, S. D. & Lent, R., W. (2005). *Career development and counseling: putting theory and research to work*. (1st ed.). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Chaiyama, N., & Kaewpila, N. (2021). The development of life and career skills in 21st century test for undergraduate students. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 11(1), 51- 68.
- Coşkun, S. (2015). *Çocuğumun eğitim ve kariyer koçuyum* (1st ed.). Ankara: Pegem Academy.
- Çelik, O. T., & Üstüner, M. (2017). Ortaöğretim öğretmenleri için mesleki değerler ölçeği geliştirme çalışması. *Uşak Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi/UUSBİD*, 10(2), 151- 170.
- Dessler, G. (2019). *İnsan kaynakları yönetimi* (İ. Şener, & M. E. Karabay, Çev.). Ankara: Palme Publishing. (Original work published 2017).<https://sozluk.gov.tr/> Erişim Tarihi: 27.11.2022
- Nasir, R. & Lin, L. S. (2013). The Relationship between self-concept and career awareness amongst students. *Canadian Center of Science and Education*, 9(1) 193-197.
- Oesch, M. ve Bower, C. (2009). *Cirriculum Guide: Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE & ESOL Classroom*. NCTN & SABES.
- Özer., M. A., Sökmen., A., Akçakaya., M., & Özaydın., M. M. (2019). *İnsan kaynakları yönetimi*. (2nd ed.). Ankara: Gazi Publishing.
- Öztürk, M. (2020). *Üniversite kariyer gelişim programının öğrencilerin kariyer farkındalığı, karar verme yetkinliği ve stresi üzerindeki etkisi*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Universty of Marmara, İstanbul.
- Özyürek, R. (2022). *Kariyer psikolojik danışmanlığı kuramları: çocuk ve ergenler için kariyer rehberliği uygulamaları* (3rd ed.). Ankara: Pegem Academy.
- Tutar, H. (2020). *Kariyer planlaması ve yönetimi*. Ankara: Seçkin Publishing.
- Yalçın, S. B., Koyuncu, E. & Avşaroğlu, S. (2022). Lise öğrencilerinin kariyer güçlükleri, riskli davranış düzeyleri ve kariyer seçiminde aile etkisi arasındaki ilişki. Hacıgökmen, A. A. & Akdağ, H. *Eğitimde ve kültürde akademik çalışmalar I* Inside (210/229). Tablet Publishing.
- Yanık, A. (2019). Fenomenolojik araştırma ve süreçleri. A. Yüksel, A. Yanık & R. A. Ayazlar (Ed.). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri kavramlar-analizler-araştırmalar* İçinde (161/167). Seçkin Publishing.
- Yaşar, O. M. (2019). *Spor eğitimi alan üniversite öğrencilerinin kariyer farkındalıklarının incelenmesi*. Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi. Universty Of Ankara, Ankara.