

AMASYA PROVINCE IN THE CENTRE OF ADVANCED LEARNING OF VOCATIONAL MATURITY LEVELS OF STUDENTS ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT VARIABLES

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Abstract: *Choice of profession is a decision which has deep impact on our overall life. Therefore, it is vitally important to make the right decision when we are choosing our profession. The aim of the present study is to investigate vocational maturity of high school students according to different variables. The universe of the research was consisted of high schools in the Amasya City; while the research sample was consisted of 225 students; 110 females and 115 males from 9 different types of high school. The research was relied on “Vocational Maturity Scale” developed by Kuzgun and Bacanlı (1996). In data analyses, descriptive statistic methods, t-test and ANOVA were used. At the end of the research, after investigating high school students based on different variables, it was concluded that there were significant differences among their vocational maturity levels.*

Key words: *vocational maturity, various high schools, vocational guidance.*

1. Introduction

Choice of profession is one of the most vital factors which affect a person’s life. An individual does not only choose his/her career, but choice of profession determines a person’s life. To achieve sufficient level of vocational maturity among individuals, the vocational guidance of students in schools has significant importance.

Vocations allow individuals to achieve economic independency, a status in their life, thus, they are activities that lead individuals to reach their targets to actualize themselves. Individuals choose their vocation according to their talents and interests, based on their skills gained

through education. As it was stated by Gülbahçe [6], making the right choice is the most important factor enabling an individual to live more satisfactorily in the future. In our society, people continue their vocation until the end of their life. This situation legitimizes why we should be careful about choosing our vocation. When a person does not make a right decision concerning his/her vocation, this situation will end up with negative impact on his/her life. A mistaken vocational choice would cause a person to fail in his/her life. If a person is not successful in his/her career and does not like his/her job, it would be hard for him/her to be satisfied with his/her life [7]. Yeşilyaprak states that “Career

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choice is also important in terms of formation of individuals' worldview, daily life style, his/her relationship with others, habits and scheduling labor which would develop society" [16].

Vocational choice is not important only because it is related with what type of work students would like to perform, but it is a decision which determines the life style they would like to achieve as well [14]. Through a correct vocational choice, an individual would be satisfied with his/her life and, accordingly, determines the circle of friends, forms the family structure, designs his/her life according to the income level. According to Kuzgun [10], while a person chooses his/her profession, he/she determines his/her life in the future. When a person makes his/her decision regarding his/her vocation, he/she chooses his/her world-view, spouse in this life, and life style [7].

The vocational interests are first gained in the pre-school period. Vocations reflected in children's dreams and games are not realistic. These are more an attempt to imitate the persons around and a manifestation of envy towards them. They perform this by using vocation as a mean [12]. In this period, Önalın states, there is no purpose for occupational preparation; individuals are introduced with occupations and development of a positive attitude is expected from them [8].

Tan [13] emphasized the requirement that primary school children must develop a positive attitude towards vocations and to know them more closely by telling them relevant stories, by letting them interact with professionals from several vocations and by giving them the chance to visit workplaces. Additionally, in the secondary school, there must be activities designed for students to know themselves better, to reveal their hidden potentials, and to help them comprehend occupations more thoroughly. These ages are the periods

when realistic interests towards an occupation start to form [7]. Gülbahçe indicated that realistic vocational choice is made during high school years. While an individual deals with adolescence issues, he/she has to make a decision to determine his/her future. Whereas an individual who embraced his/her identity during adolescent period could make career decision more conveniently, adolescents having problems related to gaining identity would experience difficulties in making this decision. He stated that high school period is a critical time to make vocational decision. He also indicated that an individual who set of adolescent period takes the first step with his/her decision by selecting a vocational major at school. Vocational preference determines not only work life, but also his/her personal life. He linked to this decision process of a youth in the high school period to completing his/her vocational development sufficiently [2], [5], [8].

Since professional options have been increased in a great deal, making decision in this area has been tougher than ever. Vocational preference not only prepares a student for the future, it is also essential in development of a society. Therefore, an appropriate guidance must be provided so that this decision would be made in a good way [7]. Vocational maturity, according to King [9], is defined as "an individual's talent to select appropriate and realistic vocation for him/her". Savickos indicated that "Persons with higher vocational maturity stickles more during the vocation choosing. They would be more successful and happy because they choose vocations appropriate to their personal characteristics" [8].

It is desired that high school students in our country to reach a certain vocational maturity levels that would enable them to choose majors and vocations appropriate to their socio-economic opportunities.

According to Crites, individuals who struggle to reach a certain vocational maturity level experience certain difficulties while making their decisions. For instance, since vocational maturity of these individuals have not been developed yet, they experience uncertainty in making vocational decision and have hard time to choose appropriate vocation [2]. Therefore, high school students must be provided with guidance and consultancy services regarding vocation options. Bacanlı [3] emphasized the importance of assisting activities to determine and develop vocational maturity levels of students.

In this study there we included two types of schools, five regular high school and five vocational high schools from Amasya. The five regular schools are: Macit Zeren Science High School, Alptekin Anadolu High School, Amasya Anadolu Teachers High School, Atatürk High School and Amasya Anadolu High School. The aim of these schools is to prepare students for higher education. Admission to higher education of graduated students follows government based exam. 80% of students that take the exam registered a programme. In these high schools seminars are given by guidance teachers. Regular high school students' socio-economic level is higher than vocational high school students.

The priority aim of vocational high school is to educate intermediate staff and also prepare students for higher education programme. These vocational high schools are: Religious High School, Fine Arts High School, Sport High school, Girl Vocational High School, Turk Telekom Industrial Vocational High school. Most of the graduated students of these schools enter the profession. However the admission rate to higher education is 25%. The reasons of this rate are: students' socio economic level is low, there are not enough vocational counselors in their schools and

the students want to enter profession immediately.

The present study aims to investigate vocational maturity levels of the high schools students attending various high schools in Amasya City, according to different variables. To that aim, the following questions were probed:

- 1) Is there a significant difference among vocational maturity levels according to high school types?
- 2) Are the vocational maturity levels affected by the gender variable?
- 3) Does the fact that students accessed vocational guidance service affect their vocational maturity levels?

2. Methodology

As this research was a descriptive study with a screening model, the universe of the study consisted of high schools in the Amasya City. The sample consists in a total of 225 students: 110 girls and 115 boys from the nine high schools of different sorts (Science High School, Anadolu Teachers High School, Anadolu High School, Girl Vocational High School, Industrial Vocational High School, Sport High School, Fine Arts High School, Religious High School, Regular High School) in Amasya. The distribution of the sample is presented in Table 1.

2.1. Data collection

In this research, the Vocational Maturity Scale was used. According to Kuzgun and Bacanlı, the Vocational Maturity Scale is developed to measure vocational maturity levels of students in the adolescent period. This scale was developed by Kuzgun and Bacanlı in 1996. It can be used with students as well, but results must be submitted to a psychological consultant or a counselor to interpret. According to the results, the vocational maturity level is

determined and, afterwards, required assistance can be provided. If a student score low on this scale, this means that he/she has not made a right decision in terms of vocation. If a student scores high on this scale, this means that he/she has come to a certain maturity level regarding vocation. That is, he/she has reached a sufficient maturity level in regard to choosing any desired vocation and he/she acquired sufficient skills. Students with low vocational maturity level are given individual or group vocational guidance.

Since vocational preference is an essential factor in an individual's life, students with low score must be taken care off.

According to Çoban [5], this scale using 5-scale Likert model consists in 40 items. This scale includes "Certainly not suitable for me"(1), "Not suitable for me"(2), "A little bit suitable for me"(3), "It is suitable for me"(4), "It is certainly suitable for me"(5) scales. As scores increase, vocational maturity levels increases proportionally. That is, there is direct proportion [7]. While students with score less than 143 are considered that they have low vocational maturity level; the ones

with score between 143 and 155 are considered that they need to develop their vocational maturity; and the ones with a score of 155 or above are considered to have reached a high level of vocational maturity. To determine distinctiveness of the items which are the trial form of the vocational maturity scale, the item analysis was conducted. The differences between bottom and top group score averages were checked by means of the t-test. The vocational maturity scale has a single-factor structure. While the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was found as .89; the correlation level was found .82 by means of the test-retest method. Validation of the Vocational Maturity Scale was determined by investigating whether students' scores have correlation with their academic talents; whether they receive vocational guidance; and whether the year or gender have effect on scores obtained from the Vocational Maturity Scale. As a result of the analyses, it was observed that the utilized scale were sufficiently adequate. The demographical information of students was collected through personal information form.

Sampling data

Table 1

Schools	Gender				Total	
	Girls		Boys		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
1.Macit Zeren Science High School	14	56	11	44	25	11.2
2.Atatürk High School	9	36	16	64	25	11.2
3.Religious High School	13	52	12	48	25	11.2
4.Technical and Vocational High School	25	100	-	0	25	11.2
5.Alptekin Anadolu High School	11	44	14	56	25	11.2
6.Türk Telekom Industrial Vocational High School	-	0	25	100	25	11.2
7.Fine Arts High School	15	60	10	40	25	11.2
8.Sport High School	11	44	14	54	25	11.2
9.Amasya Anadolu Teachers High School	13	52	12	48	25	11.2
Total	110	48.9	115	51.1	225	100

2.2. Data analysis

Students who participated into this research were first informed regarding the study. As a data collection tool, the Vocational Maturity Scale and personal data form were distributed. The variables of the research were: different high school types, gender, and whether they consulted vocational guidance. These factors and students' answer to the Vocational Maturity Scale were entered into the SPSS program. Whereas the t-test was applied to determine the difference in terms of gender; One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to determine the difference between various high school factor and vocational maturity. LSD Post Hoc Test was utilized to compare the

vocational maturity levels of the various sorts of high schools.

3. Findings

Sampling of the research applied to the different sorts of high schools in the Amasya City is presented in Table 1. Findings obtained through data collection tool were interpreted according to sub-problems.

The single-direction analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied in the research to determine whether there is significant difference between the scores at the Vocational Maturity Scale applied to different sorts of high schools; and findings are presented in Table 2.

ANOVA for differences in vocational maturity

Table 2

Vocational Maturity Level for High schools	N	x	SD	F	p
Macit Zeren Science High school	25	133.76	16.46	4.14	< 0.05
Atatürk High school	25	140.00	20.53		
Religious High school	25	122.32	9.41		
Technical and Vocational High school for Girls	25	134.88	15.29		
Alptekin Anadolu High school	25	138.08	15.57		
Türk Telekom Industrial Vocational High school	25	135.64	19.52		
Fine arts High school	25	134.56	13.36		
Sport High school	25	143.44	13.14		
Amasya Anadolu Teachers High school	25	143.36	14.77		
Total	225	136.23	16.52		

As it can be seen from Table 2, when we investigate vocational maturity levels of the high school students from various schools, the variance value regarding the differences among each group was found significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. According to these findings, it is concluded that the differences among the vocational maturity levels of students from different high schools was significant.

To investigate the relationship between gender and vocational maturity, a t-test was conducted. The relevant findings are presented in Table 3.

t-test for gender differences

Table 3

Gender	N	x	SD	t	p
F	110	138.37	16.56	1.92	>0.05
M	115	134.17	16.28		

As it can be seen from Table 3, when we consider the relationship between the vocational maturity and gender, there is no significant difference. When assessing vocational maturity levels of Girls ($x=138.37$) and Boys ($x=134.17$), it can be

concluded that there is no significant differences between them.

To reveal the differences among the different types of high schools, LSD Post Hoc test was conducted. Relevant findings are presented in Table 4.

LSD Post Hoc test regarding the differences between types of high schools Table 4

High schools (I)	High schools (J)	The Difference between Averages (I-J)	Significance level
Religious High school	Science High School	-11.44	p<0.05
	Anadolu High School	-15.76	p<0.05
	Regular High school	-17.68	p<0.05
	Girl Vocational High School	-12.56	p<0.05
	Industrial Vocational High school	-13.32	p<0.05
	Fine Arts High school	-12.24	p<0.05
	Sport High school	-21.12	p<0.05
Science High school	Anadolu Teachers High school	-21.04	p<0.05
	Sport High school	-9.68	p<0.05
	Anadolu Teachers High school	-9.60	p<0.05
Fine Arts High school	Religious High school	11.44	p<0.05
	Sport High school	-8.88	p<0.05
	Anadolu Teachers High school	-8.80	p<0.05
Anadolu Teachers High School	Religious High school	21.12	p<0.05
	Science High school	9.60	p<0.05
	Fine Arts High school	8.80	p<0.05
	Religious High School	21.04	p<0.05

As it can be seen from Table 4, the vocational maturity of the Religious High School was found significantly lower than the levels of students from Macit Zeren Science High School, Alptekin Anadolu High School, Amasya Anadolu Teachers High School, Fine Arts High School, Sport High school, Girl Vocational High School, Türk Telekom Industrial Vocational High school and Atatürk High School. While vocational maturity of the Science High School students was found significantly lower than the students from the Sport High school and Anadolu Teachers High School; it was significantly higher than the students at

the Religious High School. The vocational maturity of the students at the Fine Arts High School was found significantly lower than the ones at the Sport High School and the Anadolu Teachers High School; it was significantly higher than the students at the Religious High School. Vocational maturity of the students at the Anadolu Teachers High School was found significantly higher than the ones at the Science High School, Fine Arts High School and the Religious High School.

The findings regarding whether students, who participated to the research, received guidance concerning vocation

choosing was also a issue of concern. Students who were not offered vocational guidance or just given a limited service have quite low vocational maturity level. This situation was result of scarcity or lack of required specialist personnel in the primary and secondary education periods for guidance.

When answers given to the question which investigated whether students received vocational guidance service were considered, in the schools offering vocational guidance service, the vocational maturity level were markedly higher compared to the others. In 1999, after the ÖSS coefficient difference was brought to vocational high schools and to Religious High Schools, a decrease in preference of these schools were started to be observed; and students who were already attending these schools started to worry about their future. Since students were dealing with their adolescence problems in this period, their vocational maturity levels were found lower compared to the other high schools. Since intelligence levels of students who were admitted to the schools based on their high scores were high, it was observed that the vocational guidance service was not paid much attention. The vocational maturity levels of the students from the Religious High School were found lower than the other high schools in the research. As a reason for this, it was determined that poor given education, student-teacher relationship, failure to build up a vocational consciousness, attitude and behaviors of teachers toward students have a negative impact on students in terms of student psychology.

When the literature was researched on this subject, it can be seen that there are other studies to determine the difference among students' vocational maturity levels according to various high school types. There are significant differences

among schools according to school types. In his research, Akbıyık [1] found the difference between the Religious High Schools and the vocational high schools higher compared to the difference between vocational maturity levels of the Religious High Schools and vocational high schools [7]. In this research performed in the Amasya City, when vocational maturity between the Religious High School and the vocational high school was considered, it was found that vocational maturity of the students from the Religious High School were lower than the ones from vocational high schools.

In the study of Yazar [15], it was investigated whether the school type has an impact on vocational maturity. Conclusively it was reported that regular high schools students' maturity was found higher than vocational high schools ones.

In the research of Barut and Odacı [6] called "Comparison of Vocational Tendencies of Students in Science High Schools and Regular High Schools", it was reported that regular high school students have lower vocational maturity compared to the ones from science high schools [7]. On the other hand, according to the research conducted in the Amasya City, it was determined that vocational maturity levels of the students from science high school were lower than that of the students from the regular high school.

Since intelligence levels of the students from science high school were higher than the students from regular high school, it was thought that science high school students were provided less vocational guidance service compared to the regular high school students and that vocational guidance was not paid adequate attention at science high schools.

In the study conducted in the Amasya City, there was no distinct gender difference in vocational maturity. When the relevant literature was examined, various results were observed. In a research conducted by Healy, significant gender differences were found among vocational maturity levels. In this research, girls presented higher vocational maturity level compared to boys with the same characteristics. According to the research of Super and Nevill, vocational maturity of girls is higher than boys [11].

4. Discussion

Finally, differences were found among vocational maturity levels of students from various high schools in the Amasya City. According to the study results, since students who were admitted to the high schools through central placement exam based on their high score were not given vocational guidance because of their high intelligence capacity, vocational maturity levels of these schools were found lower. Furthermore, vocational maturity of regular high schools was found higher compared to vocational high schools.

Guidance and psychological consulting services are included in every part of life. There are some decisions which could be cornerstone for life. While making these decisions, guidance and psychological consultancy are required more than ever. Choosing a vocation is one of those decisions. Guidance and psychological consulting services are given most intensely during the high school and adolescence periods.

A student who was not placed at any high school by means of central placement exam needs more vocational guidance. To develop vocational maturity

of students at regular schools, vocational guidance service must be offered more extensively and students must be guided adequately. This is the duty of teachers, form teachers and counselors. These students must be supported in terms of vocation fields.

In the research, it was determined that teacher employed in various schools were insufficient regarding vocational guidance from the students' point of view. Teachers working at these schools must be given in-service training under the title of vocational guidance; and they must be educated to support their students in this regard. At schools which pay special attention to vocational guidance, vocational maturity levels are explicitly higher compared to the others.

Vocational choice affects all aspects of individuals' life. Therefore, an appropriate choice is needed for happiness of an individual. Vocational guidance programs must be increased to develop vocational maturity levels of students attending various sorts of schools so as to ensure that they establish a bright future for themselves. Then, students must be encouraged to join these programs.

The vocational guidance must be initiated from the 9th grade. These vocational guidance activities must be reduced to the classroom and age levels; and required attention must be paid to ensure students are not affected by their adolescence issues.

Vocational guidance is not only for students and teachers; students' families must be informed as well. Students must be encouraged and supported to make research on vocations, to determine their interests and talents, and to find out their suitability regarding a certain occupation.

Group psychological consultancy or group guidance regarding the occupations could be applied to the students with low vocational maturity. The researches on the vocational guidance and vocation choosing must be incented; and they must be supported in both material and moral aspects.

Other information may be obtained from the address: ahmet.ustun@amasya.edu.tr.

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