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Secondary school students' positive and negative perfectionism as a predictor of career development

Oğuzhan Kirdök

Department of Education Sciences, Faculty of Education, Cukurova Univesity, Turkey.

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The purpose of this research is to examine secondary school students' positive and negative perfectionism as a predictor of career development. 487 students from five different secondary schools in a city located in Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean Region participated in this study. Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale (PNPS) and Childhood Career Development Scale (CCDS) were used as data collection tools in the study. The results show that positive perfectionism was a predictor of career development total score with six dimensions (curiosity / exploration, information, key figures, time perspectives, planning and self-concept). No relationship was found between career development and locus of control as well as interests dimensions. There was also no relationship between negative perfectionism and career development and dimensions.

Key words: Career development, positive and negative perfectionism, secondary school student.

INTRODUCTION

Career decision making is the process whereby people identify their future through a developmental process. This process called career development starts from the beginning of school and continues for life. Even if career development process starts at an early childhood, most studies focus more on high school-age children and young adults. The secondary school period is a period in which students have to make important decisions to choose their profession and their personalities develop in a multifaceted way. This is a period when they recognize high school categories relevant to their career development and make decisions accordingly. Super (1990) stated that supporting career development in childhood constitutes the basis for career development in the future. There are many social and individual differences that

affect this developmental process. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between positive and negative perfectionism, which is related to individual difference feature, with career development in secondary school children, within the framework and dimensions of Super's career development model. For this reason, theoretical information on Super childhood career development model is given below.

Super's childhood career development

An individual's professional decision-making usually takes place during adolescence and young adulthood. Nevertheless, the professional development process

E-mail: okirdok@gmail.com.

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begins long before this. Defining the career development process as a growth stage in children, Super (1990) developed a child career development model consisting of various dimensions that contribute to the professional awareness and decision making of children. These dimensions contain curiosity, exploration, information, key figures, and development of interests, locus of control, time perspective, self-concept and planning. According to this model, curiosity and fantasy constitute the basis for children's career development.

Children satisfy their curiosity through exploration. Games and activities for children are an expression of exploration behavior. Events related to exploration enable information to be obtained and acquired. While curiosity is the will to acquire information, exploration is transforming this desire into behavior. Children can gain information in different ways. The most important information source for children is key figures. Key figures are adults that are role models to children. These are primarily parents, peers, teachers and celebrities. Interests are awareness of things that a person likes or dislikes, and this awareness develops through key figures and information around children. Locus of control is the degree to which one feels control over the present or the future. As children mature, they begin to control their behavior. When children fulfill their assigned tasks, the locus of control evolves. As children increase their control over their behavior, they become aware of what they really like and do not like. Time perspective is the awareness of how the past and present is and how to plan for future events, and children need to develop a time perspective or future sense to be able to make a career decision. It is useful to support planning behavior for the development of the concept of time. Children become more conscious of themselves as they discover their knowledge, skills and personality traits that distinguish them from others. This situation improves their self-concept. Self-concept contributes to children's exploration behavior, gaining information about occupations, imitating key figures around them, and developing their interests (Schultheiss, 2008; Sharf, 2013).

Considering the related literature, there are studies that focus on relations between career development and demographic factors (Işıklar and Bozgeyikli, 2010), parental attachment (Bacanlı and Dursun, 2011), decision making styles (Yayla and Bacanlı, 2011), life satisfaction and state anxiety (Işık, 2014), emotions (Oliveira, et al., 2015), hope and career adaptation (Peila-Shuster, 2018). There are few studies regarding childhood career development that has been examined in child career development (Andrews et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2014; Watson et al., 2015).

Positive and negative perfectionism

Career development is closely associated with many

aspects of personality (Pişkin, 2013). Many individual differences affect career process. There are studies on the relationship between perfectionism, one of these individual characteristics, and career-related outputs (Lehmann and Konstam, 2011; Park et al., 2011; Andrews et al., 2014; Stober et al., 2016; Eryılmaz and Kara, 2017; Gnilka and Novakovic, 2017). Students set goals for themselves during the process of career development by setting standards. They have intense desires to achieve these goals and to be successful so that they can be recognized, approved and supported by their family and school. They also strive to meet expectations in adulthood. Littauer and Littauer (2008) call this process perfectionism.

While the concept of perfectionism is more associated with a one-dimensional and negative concept (Hewitt and Flett, 1991; de Jonge and Waller, 2003), the number of studies addressing perfectionism both positively and negatively has been on the rise (Ashby and Rice, 2002; Stumpf and Parker, 2000; Glynn-Owens and Slade, 2008; Egan et al., 2011; Kung and Chan, 2014). Positive perfectionists have high personal standards and can exhibit a flexible attitude in accordance with their current needs and can achieve their performance even if they do not reach the high standards they have set. Negative perfectionists set formidable and unattainable goals and have ambivalence and high anxiety. They are not satisfied with their performance (Enns et al., 2002). According to Kottman and Ashby (2000), positive perfectionism is a developmental feature since it entails setting high standards and having the need of being in order, having the impulse that enhances performance. Positive perfectionists do not have to worry about achieving high standards, so if they cannot reach their goals, they will not feel devastated. Negative perfectionists are overly concerned about reaching their expectations, and if they cannot reach perfection, they feel devastated. There are also researchers that define the concepts of positive and negative perfectionism as adaptive-maladaptive (Rice and Preusser, 2002; Lo and Abbott, 2013), healthy-unhealthy (Parker, 2000; Chan, 2012) or normal-neurotic (Hamachek, 1978; Davis, 1997).

Considering the related literature, there are a lot of studies showing that positive and negative perfectionism characteristics are related to career related outputs. For example, Frederiksen (2009) found that negative perfectionists showed more career choice anxiety than positive perfectionists in a study done on university students. Park et al. (2011) found that maladaptive perfectionism is correlated with greater levels of ambiguity stress. Page et al. (2008) show that adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism significantly predicts career-decision-making and self-efficacy levels in their study of university students. Ganske and Ashby (2007) have found that individuals with adaptive (positive)

perfectionism have a higher level of self-efficacy than those who have the maladaptive (negative) perfectionism feature and those who are not perfectionists. Similar results have been found in different studies (Andrews et al., 2014). Sarı and Şahin (2014) showed that personal standards and order dimensions, the positive side of perfectionism (Stoeber and Otto, 2006) predicted career decision making self-efficacy in a study of high school students, while other dimensions referring to negative perfectionism were not predicted.

Considering researches on career development, it is clear that there are few studies on career development of children, since most of them focus on high school and university student sampling (Şekerli, 2016). Studies of perfectionism in the literature do not seem to dwell on early years of career development. The relevance of a personality trait, such as perfectionism, to the dimensions of career development in children is considered necessary to characterize career development process. For this reason, the purpose of this research is to examine secondary school students' positive and negative perfectionism as a predictor of career development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The study comprised 487 (248 female, 239 male) students from five different secondary schools in a city located in Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean Region. The ages of the students ranged from 9 to 15 (Mean = 12.47, Sd = 1.20).

Data collection tools

Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale (PNPS-Kırdök, 2004) and Childhood Career Development Scale (CCDS-Schultheiss and Stead, 2004; adapted by Bacanlı, Ozer and Sürücü, 2006) were used as data collection tools in the study.

Positive and negative perfectionism scale (PNPS)

Developed by Kırdök (2004), PNPS is a 4-point Likert-Scale that measures the positive and negative perfectionism of secondary school students. The scale consists of 17 items and two subscales. 10 items measure positive perfectionism subscale and 7 items negative perfectionism subscale. Positive perfectionism subscale Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient is .81 and item total score correlations range from 0.43 to 0.55; while negative perfectionism subscale Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient 0.78, and item total score correlations ranged from 0.48 to 0.55. Test-retest reliability coefficients of the scale are 0.75 for positive perfectionism subscale and 0.78 for negative perfectionism subscale. The points that can be taken from the positive perfectionism subscale of the PNPS range from 10 to 40, and the points that can be taken from the negative perfectionism subscale range from 7 to 28. There is no total score to be obtained on the scale. The higher the score to be taken on both subscales, the higher the perfectionism level (Kırdök, 2004). In this study, Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficients were 0.84 for

positive perfectionism and 0.71 for negative perfectionism.

Childhood career development scale (CCDS)

The scale developed by Schultheiss and Stead (2004) was adapted by Bacanlı et al. (2007) to identify the career development levels of the students. The theoretical basis of CCDS is based on Super's (1990) model of childhood career development. CCDS is a 3-point likert type scale consisting of 52 items and 8 sub-dimensions. These dimensions comprise planning (awareness of importance of future planning), 11 items; self-concept (awareness of self-knowledge), 6 items; information (awareness of the importance or use of occupational information), 6 items; interests (awareness of likes), 6 items; locus of control (degree to which one feels an internal sense of control over's life), 7 items; curiosity/ exploration (inquisitive thoughts and behaviors), 7 items; key figures (acknowledged role model for people whom one look up to), 5 items; time perspective (thoughts about the future time perspective), 4 items.

To identify the reliability of the Turkish form of CCDS, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and internal consistency coefficients for all of the scale and subscales were calculated. Cronbach Alpha values for all the Turkish CCDS and subscales were the whole scale ($\alpha = 0.78$), information ($\alpha=0.64$), curiosity/ exploration ($\alpha = 0.60$), interests ($\alpha = 0.64$), locus of control ($\alpha=0.76$), key figures ($\alpha=0.49$), time perspective ($\alpha=0.65$), planning ($\alpha=.81$) and self-concept ($\alpha=.73$).

Procedure

The necessary permission was received from the schools, and the scales were administered to the volunteers in five different schools. Brief information on how to fill in the scales and the purpose of the research was presented before the application. The scales were administered by school counselors.

Data analysis

The relationship between the variables in the study was examined by Pearson Moments Multiplication Correlation. In addition, linear regression analysis was used to examine the dimensions of positive perfectionism as a predictor of the dimensions of career development. The level of significance in the statistics was accepted as 0.05.

FINDINGS

Positive and negative perfectionism, which are the variables of research, and dimensions of career development were analyzed and normal distribution was examined. Then, descriptive statistics values of variables and the relationships between the variables were examined by Pearson Moments Multiplication Correlation and the results are shown in Table 1. The table shows that there was no correlation between negative perfectionism and CCDS-total, while positive correlation was found between positive perfectionism and CCDS-total ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). The career development dimension that showed the highest correlation with positive perfectionism was planning ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$),

Table 1. Statistical and correlation values of positive and negative perfectionism and career development scores of students.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Curiosity/ Exploration	-										
2. Information	0.38**	-									
3. Interests	0.08	0.01	-								
4. Locus of Control	0.15**	0.11*	0.10*	-							
5. Key figures	0.26**	0.22**	0.14**	0.09*	-						
6. Time perspective	0.16**	0.25**	0.17**	0.14**	0.20**	-					
7. Planning	0.38**	0.21**	0.14**	0.09*	0.17**	0.17**	-				
8. Self-concept	0.22**	0.08	0.24**	0.21**	0.23**	0.07	0.27**	-			
9. CCDS-Total	0.68**	0.52**	0.31**	0.49**	0.53**	0.40**	0.67**	0.50**	-		
10. Positive perfectionism	0.36**	0.25**	0.06	0.08	0.13**	0.18**	0.51**	0.13**	0.45**	-	
11. Negative perfectionism	0.01	0.09	0.01	-0.04	0.05	-0.02	0.00	-0.07	0.02	0.03	-
Mean	16.22	17.03	17.27	18.15	11.51	11.28	29.40	16.62	137.48	33.03	17.54
Sd	1.81	2.51	0.98	2.62	3.17	1.39	8.59	5.29	5.16	5.29	5.16

p<0.01, n=487.

Table 2. simple linear regression analysis of positive perfectionism as a predictor of career development dimensions.

Dependent variable	Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	R	R ²	F
Curiosity/ Exploration	(Constant)	11.475	0.673		17.052**			
	PP	0.168	0.020	0.355	8.359**	0.355	0.125	69.870**
Information	(Constant)	13.377	0.504		26.543**			
	PP	0.086	0.015	0.251	5.718**	0.251	0.061	32.690**
Key figures	(Constant)	9.823	0.596		16.476**			
	PP	0.051	0.018	0.129	2.867**	0.129	0.017	8.220**
Time perspective	(Constant)	10.207	0.274		37.295**			
	PP	0.033	0.008	0.178	3.977	0.178	0.032	15.819**
Planning	(Constant)	19.412	0.785		24.720**			
	PP	0.302	0.023	0.505	12.881**	0.505	0.255	165.910**
Self- concept	(Constant)	15.482	0.395		39.244**			
	PP	0.034	0.012	0.132	2.923**	0.132	0.017	8.542**
CCDS-Total	(Constant)	113.625	2.207		51.477**			
	PP	0.722	0.066	0.445	10.944**	0.445	0.198	119.778**

**p<.01, PP: Positive Perfectionism.

curiosity ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$), information ($r = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$), time perspective ($p < 0.01$) and self-concept ($r = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$). There was no relationship between the interest and locus of control dimensions of career development and positive perfectionism. There was also no relationship between negative perfectionism and any

dimension of career development. In order to investigate the positive perfectionism as a predictor of the career development dimensions associated with positive perfectionism in these results, a linear regression analysis was performed with each one and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that positive perfectionism predicts the CCDS-total score and the six subscales of career development at different levels. For positive perfectionism, most predictive career development dimension is planning ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.26$). Positive perfectionism accounted for approximately 26% of variance in planning. Another career development sub-dimension predicted by positive perfectionism is curiosity ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.13$). Positive perfectionism accounted for approximately 13% of variance in curiosity. Positive perfectionism is also predictive of the variables of information ($\beta=0.25$, $p<0.01$, $R^2=0.06$), key figures ($\beta=0.13$, $p<0.01$, $R^2=0.02$), time perspective ($\beta=0.18$, $p<0.01$, $R^2=0.03$) and self-concept ($\beta=0.13$, $p<0.01$, $R^2=0.02$), but these ratios are below 1%. Positive perfectionism seems to be a predictor for CCDS-Total ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.20$). Positive perfectionism accounted for approximately 20% of variance in CCDS-Total.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between the positive and negative perfectionism features and the total score and dimensions of career development of secondary school students. In addition, positive and negative perfectionism was also investigated as predictors. The results show that positive perfectionism was a predictor of career development total score and six dimensions (curiosity/exploration, information, key figures, time perspectives, planning and self-concept). No relationship was found between career development and locus of control as well as interests dimensions. There was also no relationship between negative perfectionism and career development and dimensions.

Positive perfectionism is expressed as a normal and healthy type of perfectionism, and is defined as the ability to achieve satisfaction from the result of intensive effort (Stoltz and Ashby, 2007). In this study, positive correlation between positive perfectionism and planning was found and positive perfectionism was found to be a strong predictor of planning. The importance of making plans is important in that it helps realize the planning dimension in career development. Children reach this level only at the end of the developmental period (Super, 1994). One of the features of positive (adaptive) perfectionists is planning. (Slaney et al., 2002). Positive perfectionism, often termed personal standards, is characterized by the setting and striving toward ambitious goals, and a preference for order and organization (Kelly et al., 2014). Slaney et al. (2001) defined personal standards and order dimensions as two dimensions of positive (adaptive) perfectionism. Personal standards refer to the level of standard and expectation that individuals sets for themselves and the order refers to the

need for order and organization of individuals. The definition of personal standards, the concepts of order and organization are closely related to planning. Setting standards, the effort to achieve these standards and constituting order always entail planning. Ram (2005) also found a positive relationship between positive perfectionism and planning, a dimension of coping with positive perfectionism. It is possible that secondary school students with positive perfectionists will also develop awareness and skills in planning for the future to achieve the aims and standards they have established for them.

Another career development dimension that positive perfectionism strongly predicts is curiosity / exploration. Curiosity is the need to learn and the need to incline toward research. The need for curiosity in children is very evident. Exploration involves behaviors of gathering information about one's surrounding and exploration. A curious child explores the environment, home, school and etc. Curiosity is the desire to learn while exploration is taking action (Super, 1994). According to Adler (2011), we have a sense of inferiority from the first breath in life, and people show striving for superiority to overcome this feeling. Curiosity and exploration are manifestations of superiority in daily life. Individuals are in need of curiosity from a young age, constantly examining and searching to recognize and understand the environment. It is also the source of positive perfectionism at the same time as the supremacy attempt to compensate for imperfection and be complete (Hewitt et al., 2017). As can be understood from this, both concepts have common features. Positive perfectionist secondary school students will be more likely to demonstrate superiority in their everyday behavior, which will enable students to demonstrate their curiosity and exploration behavior.

Positive perfectionism correlates with the dimensions of childhood career development, such as information, key figures, time perspectives, and self-concept, and explains their variances below 1%. The reason for this relationship is the concepts related to career development based on the theoretical explanations of Super (1990). The development of one dimension affects other dimensions as well. As a matter of fact, there are correlations between the dimensions of career development as shown in Table 1. Positive perfectionism, in fact, strongly predicts the career development total score (20%), which is the sum of all dimensions. Super et al. (1996) have described four developmental tasks in the growth stage, including the childhood career development process. These tasks are composed of becoming concerned about their future, increasing control over one's own life, developing awareness of the importance of achieving in school and work, and gaining competent work habits and attitudes. Positive (adaptive) perfectionism involves the setting of high goals and personal standards and striving for the reward associated with achievement while

retaining the ability to be satisfied with one's performance (Enns et al., 2002). As can be seen, positive perfectionism has a definition that includes tasks that need to be accomplished in childhood career development.

The results of this present study show that there was no relationship between negative perfectionism and career development dimensions. Negative (maladaptive) perfectionism is characterized by the setting of inflexible and / or unattainably high standards, and the inability to take pleasure in one's performance and uncertainty or anxiety about one's capabilities (Enns et al., 2002). Negative perfectionists are afraid of failure; they focus on avoiding mistakes, and have high anxiety about tasks (Enns and Cox, 2002). In this case a negative relationship with career development was to be expected, but no relation was found. In line with the findings of this study, Andrews et al. (2014) were unable to find a relationship between negative (maladaptive) perfectionism and career decision making self-efficacy in their study with college students. Ganske and Ashby (2007) also found no difference between negative perfectionists and non-perfectionists in terms of career decision, making self-efficacy scores in a study of university students. However, a lot of studies have shown a relationship between career related outputs and negative perfectionism (Page et al., 2008; Park et al., 2011).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

These conflicting results show that there is a need for research involving different variables, especially relating to childhood career development and perfectionism. Studies in childhood career development are few in the literature. Concepts such as perceived social support (Çam et al., 2014), parental attitudes (Işıklar and Bozgeyikli, 2010) and parental characteristics (Can and Taylı, 2014) related to career development are also related to perfectionism (Oran-Pamir, 2008; Cenkseven-Önder and Kirdök, 2009; Işık, 2014). Studies that may involve these concepts, along with career development and perfectionism concepts, will examine models in which these variables are treated as moderators or mediators, which might help to better understand the nature of children's career development. This study indicates that positive perfectionism is a strong predictor of children's career development. Curiosity / exploration, which in particular represents the beginning of the process, is an important predictor of planning dimensions that take place in the final stages. For this reason, practices and activities that aim to contribute to children's career development will help students to be success-oriented, to set high goals for themselves and to be flexible in reaching these standards.

This study naturally has some limitations. First, only the students from a city located in Turkey's Eastern

Mediterranean Region were involved in the study. Sampling from different regions is also needed. Besides, an interdisciplinary study such as sociology of children and childhood can be used to examine children's career development. In recent years, the importance of sociology of children and childhood has also been recognized in Turkey (Aydoğmuş-Ordem, 2014). In addition, childhood career development has been taken into consideration based on only the perspective of Super. For example, future studies considering different childhood career development theories such as those developed by Gottfredson or Roe can be performed.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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