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Original Research

The Investigation of Career Stress, Expectations, Decisions of Speech-Language Pathology Students

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Abstract

Objectives: University students may have characteristics such as anxiety and low levels of self-efficacy, and decisions in their career. The aim of the study is to investigate the factors that can affect speech-language pathology (SLP) students' careers.
Materials and Methods: 83 volunteer students of the Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University Department of Speech and Language Pathology participated in this study. Demographic-SES information form, Career Stress Scale, Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale, Vocational Outcome Expectations Scale, Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale were used.
Results: Positive relationship was found among career decision self-efficacy, multidimensional perceived social support, and vocational outcome expectation ($p<0.05$). The results show that SES groups did not make a significant difference in self-efficacy on career decision, social support, career stress, and vocational outcome expectation ($p>0.05$).
Conclusion: The SES Groups of SLP students in this study did not affect factors such as self-efficacy on career decision, career stress, and vocational outcome expectations. Career decisions, vocational outcome expectations, and perceived social support of the SLP students' are in a positive relationship with each other.

Keywords: *career decision, career expectation, students of speech-language pathology, career stress.*

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Introduction

University years are defined as the process of acquiring skills such as socializing with peers, living independently, self-control, and self-discipline for students (Rosenthal & Schreiner, 2000; Adlaf, Gliksman, Demers, & Newton-Taylor, 2001; Pascolo-Fabrici, De Maria, Corigliano, Aguglia, & Gregori, 2001). In addition to these skills, it is also important for students to set goals and make career decisions after graduation. However, students may experience difficulties such as stress and anxiety while making career-oriented decisions (Fouad et al., 2006). The socioeconomic status (SES) of the family can affect career decisions and the results of these decisions, and children of families with lower SES have lower educational and vocational goals (Rojewski, 1997; Rojewski & Yang, 1997). Students may encounter many sources of stress along with financial, social, and academic processes related to the career steps during their university years. Career-related stress is a priority for students (Jang, 2000; Kim, 2003). In general, it was stated that 60% of the students who applied to career counseling had certain problems (Multon, Heppner, Gysbers, Zook, & Ellis-Kalton, 2001). In addition to these problems, the expectations and beliefs of individuals about professional careers can affect career development and can be seen as related to their self-efficacy. For this reason, it is stated that it is important to examine vocational outcome expectations at career steps (Betz & Voyten, 1997).

There are many studies in the literature on the career development of university students. (Pascolo-Fabrici et al., 2001; Işık, 2010; Metheny & Mcwhirter, 2013; Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2014; Özden & Sertel-Berk, 2017). Other studies conducted specifically in certain departments (eg, computer engineering, nursing, pharmacy students) report the results of career prospects or career decision-making skills (Leventhal & Chilson, 1989; McCann, Clark, & Lu, 2010; Wilson, Jesson, Langley, Hatfield, & Clarke, 2006). However, the studies conducted directly with the students of the Speech and Language Pathology (SLP) department are quite limited. In a study conducted with SLP students, it is stated that personal factors and educational characteristics are the main factors in career decision-making (Brodsky & Cooke, 2000). In another study, by examining the expectations and experiences regarding SLP applications in rural areas; it is stated that students should be encouraged to think about working in a challenging and disadvantaged environments (Watermeyer & Barratt, 2013). In another study conducted in recent years, the importance of learning styles is reported by determining the

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expectations, concerns, and needs of SLP students for clinical practice (Plexico, Plumb, Phillips, 2017).

Considering that students in Turkey also have difficulties in self awareness, creating appropriate career goals, and seeing themselves as competent, it is thought that it is necessary to determine the self-efficacy of SLP students in making career decisions, the social support they receive, vocational outcome expectations and career stress (Işık, 2010; Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2014; Özden & Sertel-Berk, 2017). Although career studies have been conducted with SLP students in other countries, there has not been detailed systematic study examining the relationships between these factors in Turkey. From this point of view, the aim of this study is to investigate the factors that may affect the careers of SLP students and there are two hypotheses in this study:

- As the SES level increases, SLP students experience less career stress.
- As the SES level increases, vocational expectations, social support, and self-efficacy in career decision-making increase.
- Career stress is inversely related to social support, vocational expectations, and efficacy in career decision among SLP students.

Methods

Ethics committee approval of this study was obtained from Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University (Decision Number and Date: 24, 16.04.2021, Research Code: 2021/112).

Participants and Study Design

The participants of the present study were Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University Speech and Language Pathology Department students. This sample includes university students with families of different SES levels. The announcement was made through social media (instagram account of the department) and the snowball sampling method was used (Goodman, 1961). Participants who agreed to participate in the study were included in the study by approving the consent form. Then, they continued the form link that consisting of demographic information and SES Information Form, Career Stress Scale, Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale, Vocational Outcome Expectations Scale and Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scales. A total of 120 students were reached. A total of 87 students agreed to participate in the study. A total of 83 students who agreed to participate filled out the form completely. The

students were from 1st grade or 2nd grade of the undergraduate programme of the Speech and Language Pathology Department. Descriptive statistics of the participants are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of respondents (n=83)

Characteristics	**Frequency**	**%**
Gender		
Female	74	89.2
Male	9	10.8
Age	(Mean.=19.9, SD=0.9)	
18	3	3.6
19	26	31.3
20	34	41
21	17	20.5
22	2	2.4
23	1	1.2
Family SES		
High level (A, B)	33	39.8
Middle level (C1, C2)	37	44.6
Low level (D, E)	13	15.7
Working Status		
No	77	92.8
Yes	6	7.2
Institution in which she/he would like to work in the future		
Government hospital		
University	25	30.1
Private clinic	25	30.1
Special education and rehabilitation centre	22	26.5
	11	13.3
Reason for Choosing Department		
Job Opportunities	52	62.6
Other	31	38.4
Person Referring to the Department		
No one	36	43.4
School counselor	17	20.5
Friends	9	10.8
Speech-language Pathologist	7	8.4
University	5	6.0
Relatives	5	6.0
Family	4	4.0
Personal Features in Department Selection		
None	39	47
Helpfulness	25	30.1
Patiency	10	12
Decency	3	3.6
Desire to be a healthcare professional	3	3.6
Interest in to communicate	3	3.6

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Descriptive Statistics

The majority of the students that participated in our study (89.2%) were female. The majority of participants were between the ages of 20 (41%) and 19 (31.3%). With a rate of 44.6%, it was found that the medium SES of the family of the study participants was more prevalent. Government hospitals (30.1%) and universities (30.1%) were stated equally among the institutions that the participants want to work in the future. With a percentage of 92.8%, the vast majority of participants do not hold a second job. More than half of the participants (62.6%) chose the department for a job opportunity.

3.3% of the participants received no referrals to the department. Twenty-five percent of them learned about the SLP department from their school counselor. The majority of participants (47%) claimed that personal traits had no bearing on department choice, whereas 30.1% claimed that being helpful was a factor in department selection. The participants' demographic characteristics were presented in Table 1.

Measurements

Participants' information was gathered in a total of four sections. These measurement tools were demographic information and SES Information Form, Career Stress Scale, Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale, Vocational Outcome Expectations Scale, Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale.

Demographics and SES information

This section included eleven questions to be directed to the participants. These questions were related demographic and SES informations such as age, gender, social and economic status of the family, guidance in choosing a profession (See Appendix-Research Questionnaire). The SES of the family was determined by using the income, education, and occupation variables of the participant's family. While making this calculation, the individual who contributed the most to the household income was taken as a basis. This calculation system is grouped with five in total, A, B, C1, C2, and D, published by the Turkish Researchers' Association (TUAD) in 2012. In the calculation stages, the person who brings the most income to the family, the person's profession and working style, education level information is taken and the result is obtained. For the data analysis, A and B groups were combined to form the high-level SES, C1, and C2 groups were combined to form the middle-level SES, D and E groups were combined to form the lower-level SES group (TUAD).

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Multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS)

This scale was developed by Zimet et al. in 1988 (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). The Turkish adaptation of this scale was made by Eker et al. in 1995 (Eker & Arkar, 1995). The scale consists of 12 items in a 7-point Likert type and higher scores indicate higher social support. Response possibilities included (1) Very strongly disagree and (7) Very strongly agree. The average total mean scores yielded Cronbach's alpha values between 0.80 and 0.95. It was stated that this scale is a valid and reliable tool that can be used in Turkish society.

Career decision self-efficacy scale (CDSE)

Individuals' beliefs and self-efficacy regarding their career decisions can be determined with this scale. The scale was developed by Betz et al. (1996) and adapted to Turkish by Büyükgöze-Kavas (2014). The scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 25 items. On a Likert scale, responses range from “no confidence at all” (1), “very little confidence” (2), “moderate confidence” (3), “much confidence” (4), and “complete confidence” (5). Five separate career choice competencies that were created using a model of career maturity were reflected in the CDSE. The internal consistency coefficients of the sub-dimensions of the original scale ranged from 0.80 to 0.87. Büyükgöze-Kavas (2014) stated that CDSE-Turkish Version is valid and reliable scale.

Vocational outcome expectations scale (VOES)

The scale was developed by McWhirter, Rasheed, and Crothers (2000) to assess individuals' beliefs about the long-term consequences of success related to education or career decision (McWhirter, Crothers, & Rasheed, 2000). This tool consists of 12 items and is graded on a 4-point Likert type. The scores that can be obtained from this scale range from 12 to 48. The Turkish adaptation of this scale was made by Işık in 2010. The scale's Cronbach alpha internal consistency was calculated to be 0.87. The scale's factor load values ranged from 0.45 to 0.81. The VOES-TR is valid and reliable tool for undergraduate students in Turkey.

Career stress scale (CSS)

This scale was developed by Choi et al. in 2011 to evaluate career-related stressors and difficulties experienced by university students (Choi et al., 2011). The scale is 5-point Likert-type and includes 20 items, and consists of 4 sub-dimensions (career uncertainty, lack of knowledge, pressure to find a job, and external conflict). The scores that can be obtained from the scale vary between 20 and 100. This scale was adapted to Turkish by Özden and Sertel-Berk in 2017. The internal consistency coefficient of the Turkish version of the CSS is .94, and

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the item-total score correlations range from 0.44 to 0.80. The test-retest reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.81. The CSS is valid and reliable tool for Turkish undergraduate students (Özden, Sertel-Berk, 2017).

Data Collection

The scales and demographic information form were transferred to 'Google Forms'. During the data collection phase, the short text and consent form giving information about the study was sent to the students' e-mail addresses by the first and second researchers. Then, the survey link was sent to the students who volunteered to participate by responding to the e-mail. During the application of the questionnaire, it was stated to the participants that they could reach the researchers and ask questions. All of these applications took about 15 minutes. The data of our study were collected over two months.

Data Analysis

First, the results of the 'Google Forms' used in our study were converted into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Then, IBM SPSS 24.00 Package program was used for statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics obtained in line with the information received from the participants were tabulated. The family SES levels of the participants were calculated as specified in the measurement tools. After that, the normal distribution properties of the data obtained from the measurement tools used in the study were examined. It is based on the definition that the skewness-kurtosis values of the obtained data are between -3 and +3 in terms of normal distribution (Shao & Zhou, 2002). Accordingly, it was determined that the CSS data did not show a normal distribution among the participants, and it was concluded that the other scales (VOES, CDSE, MSPSS) showed normal distribution. In this direction; Kruskal Wallis Test was applied for the differentiation in the CSS scale scores according to family SES levels, and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used to analyse the VOES, MSPSS, and CDSE scale scores. Relationships between the scale scores were made by Spearman correlation analysis between the CSS and VOES, CDSE, and MSPSS scales. Correlations between MSPSS, CDSE, and VOES were made with Pearson correlation analysis.

Results

The Difference among Career Stress of Family SES Groups

The Kruskal Wallis test was applied to compare the medians of career stresses according to the family SES groups of the participants. Concerning the test results, it is seen that there is

no statistically significant difference between the career stresses of the participants according to the family SES groups (p>0.05). It can be stated that family SES level does not make a difference in terms of the career stress of the participants. The results of this analysis are reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Difference analysis (Kruskal Wallis test) among career stress of family SES groups

	n	**Min**	**Max**	**Median**	X^2**/KW**	***p***
High Level	33	20	78	34	11.431	0.308*
Middle Level	37	20	52	34		
Low Level	13	20	78	42		

(p>0.05)

The Difference Among Multidimensional Social Supports of Family SES Groups

ANOVA was applied to compare the mean MSPSS scores according to the family SES levels of the participants in the study. According to the results of the analysis, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of multidimensional perceived social support according to the family SES level of the participants (F=0.919, p>0.05). Therefore, it is concluded that the family SES of the participants in the study did not affect the multidimensional perceived social support scores. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 3.

The Difference Among Career Decision Self Efficacy of Family SES Groups

ANOVA was applied to compare the mean scores of CDSE scores according to the family SES levels of the participants who agreed to participate in the study. According to the results of the analysis, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of career decision-self-efficacy according to the family SES level of the participants (F=1.891, p>0.05). In this direction; it can be said that the Family SES of the participants in our study did not affect their career decision-self-efficacy scores (Table 3).

The Difference Among Vocational Outcome Expectations of Family SES Groups

ANOVA was applied to compare the mean scores of VOES scores according to the family SES levels of the participants in the study. According to the results of the analysis, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the vocational outcome expectation score averages of the participants according to the family SES level (F=1.207, p>0.05). In this

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direction; It can be said that the Family SES of the participants in our study did not affect their professional career expectations scores (Table 3).

Table 3: Difference among career decision self-efficacy, multidimensional social supports and vocational outcome expectations of family SES groups

		n	$\bar{X}$	SS	F	p
CDSE	High Level	33	83.6	17.6	1.891	0.158*
	Middle Level	37	88.7	13.4		
	Low Level	13	79.5	18.3		
MSPSS	High Level	33	64.5	15.5	0.919	0.403*
	Middle Level	37	59.8	14.4		
	Low Level	13	61.7	16.5		
VOES	High Level	33	38.8	5.1	1.207	0.305*
	Middle Level	37	37.9	4.8		
	Low Level	13	40.3	4.3		

(*p*>0.05*, CDSE: Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale , MSPSS: Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale , VOES: Vocational Outcome Expectations Scale)

The Difference Among the Institutions Students Want to Work and Their Vocational Outcome Expectations

ANOVA was used to compare the mean VOES scores based on the institution where the participants in the study want to work. According to the findings of the analysis, there is no significant difference in the vocational outcome expectations score averages based on the institution where they want to work (F=1.474, p>0.05). As a result, the institution in which the participants in our study wish to work has no effect on their professional career expectations scores. (Table 4).

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Table 4: Difference (one-way ANOVA) among the ınstitutions students aim to work and their vocational outcome expectations

	n	$\bar{X}$	SS	F	p
Government Hospital	25	38.6	4.5	1.474	**0.228**
University	25	37.2	4.1		
Private Clinic	22	39.4	6.0		
Special Education and Rehabilitation Centre	11	40.5	4.1		

(p>0.05)

Correlations

Correlations between the CSS scale and other standard scales used in the study were made via Spearman's analysis. The statistically significant negative correlations were found between the CSS scores and the CDSE scores (r=-0.423, p<0.05); between CSS scores and VOES scores (r=-0.451, p<0.05); between the CSS scores and the MSPSS scores (r=-0.486, p<0.05). It was observed that the three correlation analyses obtained showed similar rates in terms of strength. In summary, it can be stated that there is a negative relationship between CSS and CDSE, MSPSS, and VOES and that as CSS scores increase, the scores of other scales decrease.

Pearson's analysis was used for the correlations between CDSE, MSPSS, and VOES scores. It was observed that there were positive and significant relationships between CDSE scores and MSPSS scores (r=0.321, p<0.05); between CDSE and VOES scores (r=0.547, p<0.05); between VOES and MSPSS scores (r=0.379, p<0.05). As a result, it can be said that there is a positive relationship between the scores of CDSE, MSPSS, and VOES, and as the scores of each specified scale increase, the scores of the other scales also increase.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study; the correlations between career stress, career decision-self-efficacy, social support, and vocational outcome expectations of SLP students at a university were examined and the effect of family SES on these variables was reported. In addition, it has been examined whether the institutions where SLP students want to work make a difference in terms of vocational outcome expectations.

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The majority of the participants in our study were female. It is a possible situation as it is known that the female gender is dominant in the SLP field (Boyd & Hewlett, 2001). It is also seen that the rate in our study is similar to the gender rate in other studies (Greenwood, Wright, & Bithell, 2006; Stone & Pellowski, 2016). It can be stated that the family SES is middle (C1, C2), which is compatible with the Turkish sample (TUAD). In addition, Stone and Pellowski (2016) stated that the SLP students' being helpful in terms of personal characteristics is intense in the selection of the department. In the present study, a large group of students stated the personality trait of being helpful. For this reason, it can be stated that compatible responses were evident between the SLP students in our study and the participants in the study stated by Stone and Pellowski (2016). It can be said that personal characteristics are effective in choosing the SLP department.

Although it was seen that family SES groups did not make a significant difference in terms of career stress, career decision-self-efficacy, multidimensional perceived social support, and vocational outcome expectation, it is noteworthy that the group with low SES has higher average career stress scores. It is thought that this finding serves the same goal as other studies in the literature (Jang, 2000; Kim, 2003). In this study, the fact that family SES did not make a difference in terms of multidimensional perceived social support can be interpreted as being in the opposite direction of the previous study by Faund and Brown (2000). It is thought that the family SES of the participants in our study does not make a significant difference to the multidimensional perceived social support. This contradiction is interpreted as the perceived social support of the participants may be high even though the family SES is low. Although there was no significant difference between the groups in family SES and career decision-self-efficacy skills, similar to career stress characteristics, the group with the lowest average scores consisted of participants with low SES. This finding is also relatively compatible with the literature (Betz et al., 1996; Rojewski, 1997; Rojewski & Yang, 1997).

It is reported that the level of vocational outcome expectation is important for career steps (Betz & Voyten, 1997). In this study, the difference between this information, the level of vocational outcome expectation from family SES groups, and the institutions in which the participants want to work were examined and no meaningful result could be reached. It can be stated that this finding is important in terms of factors that may affect the professional career expectation of SLP students.

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In the literature, it has been reported that there is a relationship between career-related stress and making career decisions, perceived social support, and vocational outcome expectations. In addition, according to the results of previous studies, it is possible to say that career decision-making and perceived social support and vocational outcome expectations are positively affected by each other (Fouad et al., 2006; Jang, 2000; Rosenthal & Schreiner, 2000). In the light of this information, it can be said that the negative significant relationship between career stress and perceived social support, vocational outcome expectation, career decision-self-efficacy skills supports the mentioned studies. Finally, it can be stated that the positive relationship between career decision-self-efficacy, multidimensional perceived social support, and vocational outcome expectation is compatible with studies in the literature (Betz et al., 1996; Betz & Voyten, 1997; Fouad & Brown, 2000).

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has some limitations. In this study, career-related stress, self-efficacy, expectation, and perceived social support processes were investigated within the context of SLP students' family SES and the institutions they want to work in. Furthermore, the majority of our study's participants do not have another job. On the other hand, the students in our study's main reason for choosing the department was 'job opportunities'. For this reason, in future studies, the relationship between career decisions or expectations and the reason for choosing the department can be measured. In our study, due to the imbalance between the groups in terms of gender factor, it could not be examined. In future studies, groups that can represent the population can be created and compared. Finally, data of SLP students in only one university were analyzed in our study. Therefore, it is thought that it would not be appropriate to generalize the results to all SLP students. In future studies, it can be aimed to obtain more general results by working with multicentre data groups.

As a result of the present study, it was concluded that the family SES of SLP students did not affect career decision-self-efficacy, vocational outcome expectation, and multidimensional perceived social support. In addition, although family SES is not statistically significant in terms of career stress, it can be said that it affects students with low SES more. Finally, it was concluded that there is a positive relationship between SLP students' career decisions, vocational outcome expectations, and perceived social support.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest for this study.

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