

## CAREER ADAPTABILITIES IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: EXAMINING THE PREDICTION OF CAREER GOAL FEEDBACK AND LIFE GOALS

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to examine the predictive of career goal feedback and life goals on career adaptabilities. The research using the relational screening model, which is one of the quantitative research methods, was carried out on university students. The participants of the research group consist of 277 (175 women, 102 men) university students studying at a public university in a province in the Southeastern Anatolia Region (Turkey) in the 2017-2018 academic year. Personal information form, Career Goal Feedback Scale, Career Adapt-abilities Scale, and Life Goals Scale-Short Form were used as data collection tools in the study. The data were analyzed using Pearson Moments Multiplication Correlation and path analysis techniques. Research findings showed that career goal feedbacks and internal life goals are important predictors of career adaptabilities. The findings are discussed within the framework of the literature and suggestions are presented.

**Keywords:** Career Goal Feedback, Career Adaptabilities, Life Goals, Internal Life Goals, External Life Goals.

### INTRODUCTION

Individuals are expected to adapt to the economic, social, and technological changes happening in the world. Many career concepts in recent years emphasize the need for individual responsibility and successful career adaptability in career (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Career adaptabilities has been seen as an important source for successful career development in recent years; it activates individuals positively against many difficulties in the career and work field and increases their well-being (Johnston, 2018).

Career adaptabilities is defined as the ability to cope with the expected or unexpected situations related to the changes in work conditions (Savickas, 1997). In addition, career adaptabilities refers to individuals' inner sources such as coping with developmental tasks and participating in work life (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Career adaptabilities, which involves not **only individuals' transition from school to work** but also life-long skills, expresses the sources needed by individuals to cope with the role transitions (Santilli, Nota, Ginevra & Soresi, 2014; Sharf, 2017). Career adaptabilities could also be

defined as the changing quality of an individual in the transitions experienced in the career process in order to adapt to new and changing conditions without experiencing major difficulties (Savickas, 1997).

### ***Career Goal Feedback and Career Adaptabilities***

Career adaptabilities is expressed as self-regulation strength or capacity that individuals can use in order to solve unusual, complicated and poorly-defined problems presented by the professional tasks, transitions, and work traumas (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Self-regulation is known to be an active and constructive process in which individuals try to regulate their cognition, motivation, and behaviors (Pintrich, 2000). Individuals who support self-regulation strategies and have career adaptabilities are conceptualized as individuals who are interested in their professional future, take the control of preparing their professional future, show curiosity by investigating situations in the future and strengthen their confidence in fulfilling their desires (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Hence, it could be stated that individuals who have career adaptabilities could manage the process by using their self-regulation strength in coping with transitional and developmental tasks. Therefore, self-regulation strengths seem to **have an important place in an individual's career adaptabilities**.

Career Goal Feedback is another career concept that is based on the self-regulation approach and is **related to individuals' career process. People are reported to actively identify their own** goals according to the self-regulation approach and consciously or unconsciously regulate their behaviors in order to reach these goals (Bandura, 1991; Latham & Locke, 1991). Career Goal feedback provides feedback about the relevance of individuals' career goals, the sufficiency of the improvement of the career goals, and the changes needed for reaching these goals (Hu, Creed & Hood, 2017). Adolescents and young adults who are at the stage of setting their careers are reported to learn whether they are acting in line with their career goals through the feedback provided and regulate their career goal behaviors (Kerpelman & Pitmann, 2001).

Career adaptabilities based on the self-regulation approach and career goal feedback seem to use an active and constructive process in which individuals regulate their cognition, motivation, and behaviors. Both concepts seem to position the individual in a structure that makes him/her take an active and constructive role in the career process. Therefore, understanding the relationship between these two concepts and revealing the nature of the relationship could contribute to the field in terms of **understanding the individual's career processes and coping with the potential problems in these processes**. An analysis of the studies in the literature indicates that there are no studies that investigated these two concepts based on similar approaches in tandem. There seems to be a need for understanding the relationship between these two concepts that might be associated with each other (Korkmaz & Kirdök, 2019).

### ***Life Goals and Career Adaptabilities***

Goals have been a source of motivation in many fields in people's lives. Hence, goals are reported to be **meaningful if they are used for individuals' personal, social and professional development. It is reported** that while individuals approach the activities that are the source of energy of their behaviors and that are related to their goals more, they move away from the activities that are not related to their goals (Eryilmaz, 2010, 2012). **Life goals, considered in terms of long-term goals (Eryilmaz, 2012), include individuals' desires for building general life structures** such as career, family, and a specific lifestyle and shaping their life (Roberts & Robins, 2000). Life goals, which are reported to be an important feature in individuals' adaptation to life, are defined as situations desired to be reached with the help of individuals' cognitive and behavioral strategies (Emmons, 1999). A review of the related literature shows that life goals are divided into two as intrinsic and extrinsic goals. While goals more relevant to human nature such as health, interpersonal relationships, and self-development are intrinsic goals; goals such as richness, position, fame, and being attractive are extrinsic goals (King, Richards & Stemmerich, 1998). Extrinsic life goals are not primarily related to the individual; they are mainly related to the admirable

results in society (Kasser & Ryan, 2001). More importance given to extrinsic life goals is reported to lead to less positive emotions, more negative emotions, and less psychological adaptation (Sheldon & Kasser, 2008). Hence, having more intrinsic life goals could be associated with more positive results for individuals.

Definitions about self-regulation show that the goals have an important place within this approach (Pintrich, 2000; Risemberg & Zimmerman, 1992; Zimmerman, 1989). According to Risemberg and Zimmerman (1989), self-regulation is setting goals, developing strategies to realize these goals, and monitoring things gained from these strategies. When the definition is analyzed, goals seem to form and direct self-regulation behaviors. Hence, they could have important roles in the career adaptabilities, which is also defined as the self-regulation strengths or capacities (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) because confidence, which is the sub-dimension of the career adaptabilities, refers to the individual's endurance for their desires and goals even in the face of obstacles and difficulties (Savickas et al., 2009).

Although the related literature includes no studies that investigated the relationship between career adaptabilities and life goals, it is known that there is a positive relationship between career adaptabilities and goal-seeking (Johnston, 2018). Hence, a potential relationship is also considered between career adaptabilities and life goals. This study involved university students. Various studies in literature reported that individuals at this age need help or experience problems about career-related issues (Aluede, Imhonde & Eguavoen, 2006; Bilgin, 2000; Schweitzer, 1996; Türküm, Kızıldağ & Sarıyer, 2004). Individuals enrolled in university should have solved these career-related problems or gained the skills to solve these problems so that they can be successful in their careers in the future. Career adaptabilities, which enhances to solve career-related problems, could be considered as an important concept in this regard (Johnston, 2018). Although career goal feedbacks and life goals with career adaptabilities are considered to have important relationships that would contribute to the literature, the lack of studies that investigated the relationships between these variables is an important gap in the related literature. This study is of importance in terms of identifying the relationship between career adaptabilities, an important concept for university students getting prepared for life, career goal feedbacks and life goals. In light of this information, the purpose of this study is to investigate the predictiveness of university students' career goal feedbacks and life goals on career adaptabilities. In line with this purpose, the study sought answers to the "Do career goal feedbacks and life goals significantly predict career adaptabilities in university students?" question.

## METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in the relational screening model to examine the predictability of university students' life goals and career goal feedbacks on their career adaptabilities. This model describes a situation or event as it is. It also shows the relationships and effects between variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Karasar, 2005).

### *Participants and Procedure*

The research was carried out a public university in a province in the Southeastern Anatolia Region in Turkey. The study group consisted of a total of 277 (63% female, 37% male) students studying in the 1<sup>st</sup> (18%), 2<sup>nd</sup> (25%), 3<sup>rd</sup> (29%) and 4<sup>th</sup> (28%) classes who voluntarily participated in the research. The age ranged of participants is 18-29 (Avg. = 21.52, Sd = 1.81). 5% of the students in the study group stated that they have low socioeconomic status, 91% are middle and 4% are high.

Before starting analysis, missing value analysis was performed for each scale to solve the problem of missing value in data sets. As a result of the missing value analysis, it was observed that the missing value included in the CGFS and CAAS were not randomly distributed. Therefore, data belonging to 35 participants in total, 16 from CGFS and 19 CAAS, were removed from the dataset. As a result of the missing value analysis, it has been observed that the missing value in LGS-SF were randomly distributed. For this reason, the average of the series is assigned to the missing value in LGS-SF.

In order to determine the extreme values in the data set, the z scores of the total scores of the participants were created. Z scores other than +/-3 are accepted as extreme values. According to the calculated z scores, data from 31 participants in total, 7 from the CGFS, 3 from the CAAS, 17 from the internal goals sub-dimension of LGS-SF and 4 from the external goals sub-dimension of LGS-SF, were excluded from the analysis. Statistical analyzes were carried out on a data set of 277 students.

Pearson Moments Multiplication Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between **participants' career adaptabilities, career goal feedbacks, and life goals**. In addition, descriptive statistical analysis and reliability analysis were carried out. In order to answer the research question, a path model was created to test the causal relationships between the variables. The created path model is made with latent variables. It is known that the model created with latent variables is more reliable than the path model made with the observed variables (Meydan & Şeşen, 2015). In the model, the scores of the CAAS were used as indicators and latent variable were created. The sub-dimensions of LGS-SF were considered as the observed variable.  $\chi^2/df$ , RMSEA, GFI, CFI fit values were taken as criteria for the acceptability of the model created in the path analysis (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Marcoulides & Schumacher, 2001; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

### **Measures**

Personal information form created by researchers, Career Goal Feedback Scale (CGFS – Hu, Creed & Hood, 2017; Korkmaz & Kirdök, 2019), Career Adapt-abilities Scale (CAAS-Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2014) and life Goals Scale-Short Form (LGS-SF- İlhan, 2016) were used as a data collection tool in the research.

**Career goal feedback:** Career Goal Feedback Scale, developed by Hu, Creed and Hood (2017) and adapted to Turkish by Korkmaz and Kirdök (2019), was used to measure the feedbacks about the career goals of the participants. The scale prepared in 5 point-Likert type (1: Strongly Disagree, 5: Strongly Agree) consist of 24 items. The scale, adapted in the high school and university sample, consist of six dimensions named as "Internal: How to Improve", "External: How to Improve", "Internal: On Progress", "External: On Progress", "Internal: Goal Suitably", "External: Goal Suitably". The sub-dimension and total score of the scale can be calculated. The possible total scores that can be obtained from the scale vary between 24 and 120. The high score obtained from the scale indicates that the individual is not acting in line with their career goals. Two exemplary items from the scale are: "I do not think that my chosen career would be good for me." and "People tell me that I have chosen a career direction that does not really suit me.". In the data set of university students, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated .88. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated with the data collected within the scope of this research was found .87.

**Career adaptabilities:** The scale was developed by Savickas and Porfeli (2012) and adapted to Turkish by Büyükgöze-Kavas (2014). The scale, which aims to measure individuals' career adaptabilities, consist of a 5-point Likert-type rating (1: Not strong, 5: Very strong) and 24 items. There are four sub-dimensions in the scale: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. The sub-dimension score and total score of the scale can be calculated. The high score that can be obtained from the scale means that the individual sees career adaptabilities as strong. In addition, the higher the total score in the sub-dimensions, the individual sees the more powerful herself/himself. Two items from the scale are: "Thinking about what my future will be like", "Working up to my ability". It was determined that the four-factor original structure of the scale, which was adapted in the high school and university sample, was preserved as a result of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis. It was found that the fit values of the analysis were within acceptable limits ( $\chi^2 = 833.063$ ,  $df = 248$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 3.36$ ; RMSEA = .060; SRMR = .049; CFI = .90). Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .91 for the total scale. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated with the data collected within the scope of this research was found .92.

**Life goals:** The scale was developed by İlhan (2016) in order to determine the life goals of the participants in the sample of university students. The scale prepared in 7-point Likert type (1: None, 4:

Moderate, 7: Quite) consist of 14 items. The scale has two sub-dimensions: internal and external life goals. The total score of the sub-dimension can be calculated. Two exemplary items from the scale are: "Being useful to people" and "Being attractive". The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated for the sub-dimensions of the scale was found .84 for both sub-dimensions. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated by the data used in this study was found .79 for internal life goals and .81 for external life goals.

**RESULTS**

The descriptive statistics of the variables and the correlation values between variable are given in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Correlation Values and Descriptive Statistics Between Variables*

Variables	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4
1. Career Adaptabilities	91.36	12.76	-.15	-.45	-			
2. Career Goal Feedback	60.74	14.58	.15	-.25	-.45*	-		
3. Internal Life Goals	51.23	4.39	-.82	-.16	.33*	-.15**	-	
4. External Life Goals	28.27	7.02	-.22	-.31	.03	.10	.13**	-

*N* = 277. \**p* < .001, \*\**p* < .05

According to the analysis results in Table 1, it is seen that there is a moderately negative relation between career adaptabilities and career goal feedbacks ( $r = -.45, p < .001$ ), and a moderately positive relation between internal life goals and career adaptabilities ( $r = .33, p < .001$ ). In addition, there is no significant relation between career adaptabilities and external life goals.

Goodness of fit values were examined for the suitability of the research model. It can be said that the **goodness of fit indices** ( $\chi^2 = 113.79, p < .001, df = 51, \chi^2/df = 2.23$ ; RMSEA = .07; GFI = .94; CFI = .92) calculated as a result of the analysis made with two modifications are within the acceptable fit limits (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993; Kline, 2005; Marcoulides & Schumacher, 2001; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996).

Maximum likelihood method was used to reveal the effects of career goal feedbacks and life goals of university students on their career adaptabilities. Path analysis findings are shown in Figure 1.

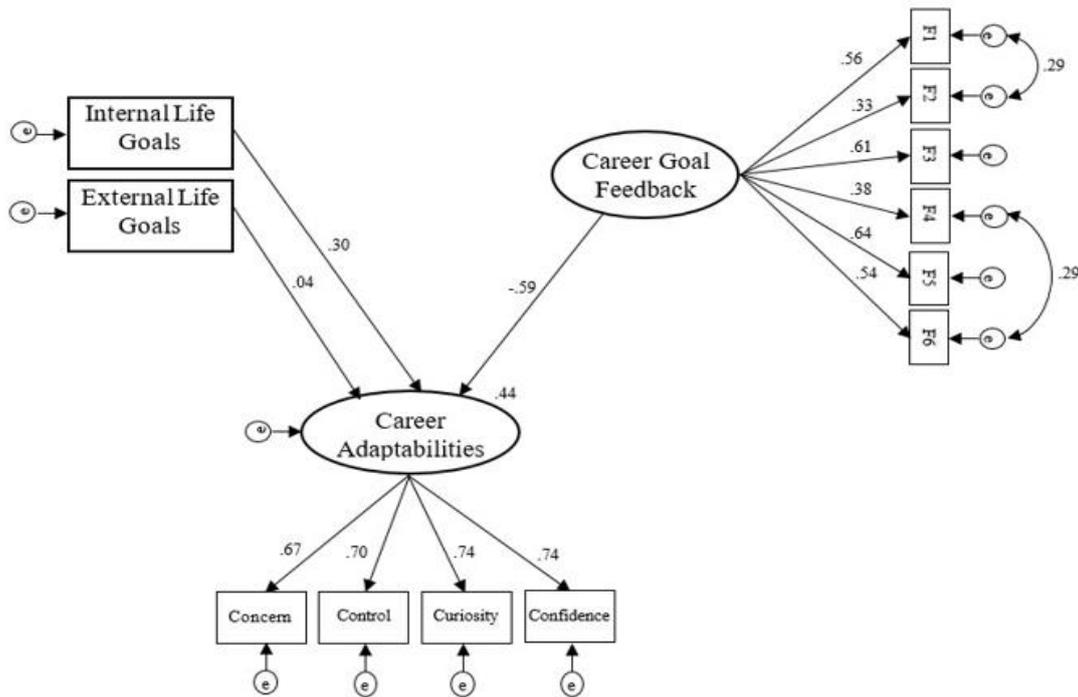


Figure 1. Career goal feedbacks and sub-dimensions of life goals as predictors of career adaptabilities. The coefficients for the path analysis are given in Table 2.

Table 2  
Path Analysis Coefficients of Career Goal Feedbacks and The Sub-Dimensions of Life Goals as Predictors of Career Adaptabilities

	B	S. E.	C. R.	Beta	p
Career Adaptabilities ← Career Goal Feedback	-.87	.15	-5.78	-.59	.000
Career Adaptabilities ← Internal Life Goals	.19	.04	5.10	.30	.000
Career Adaptabilities ← External Life Goals	.02	.02	.77	.04	.44

As seen Table and Figure 1, career goal feedbacks ( $\beta = -.59, p < .001$ ) and internal life goals ( $\beta = .30, p < .001$ ), which is the sub-dimension of the life goals, were found to be predictors of career adaptabilities. However, it is seen that external life goals ( $\beta = .04, p > .001$ ), which is another sub-dimension of life goals, are not a predictor of career adaptabilities. It is seen that the variable strongest predicting the career adaptabilities is the career goal feedbacks. The variables included in the analysis explain 44% of the variance of career adaptabilities ( $R^2 = .44, p < .001$ ).

**DISCUSSION**

This study investigated the predictiveness of university students’ career goal feedbacks and life goals on their career adaptabilities. The findings indicated a negative relationship with the career adaptabilities and career goal feedbacks and a positive relationship with intrinsic life goals among life goals. No significant relationship was found between the extrinsic life goals among life goals and career adaptabilities. Analysis results show that career goal feedbacks and intrinsic life goals levels predicted university students’ career adaptabilities levels significantly. Based on this, it could be concluded that university students’ career adapt-abilities will increase as they act consistently with career goals and mainly have intrinsic life goals.

A negative relationship was indicated between career goal feedbacks and career adapt-abilities, which means that individuals can cope with predictable or unpredictable difficulties in career transitions as

their career goal feedback level decreases; namely, as they act consistently with career goals. The lack of a study that has investigated the relationship between these two concepts is an important gap in the literature. However, when the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that there are relationships between career goal feedback and individual's career characteristics such as occupational self-efficacy, career exploration, career planning (Hu, Creed & Hood, 2017; Hu, Hood & Creed, 2018; Jawahar & Shabeer, 2019). The findings of this study are believed to provide valuable contributions to the literature because career goal feedbacks were found to be the strongest variable that predicted the career adapt-abilities, which indicates that this relationship is notable and requires an explanation. A reason for the strong and significant relationship between the career goal feedbacks and career adapt-abilities could be caused by the fact that both concepts had the sources in the individual-environment interaction. Career adapt-abilities are present in the individual-environment intersection rather than the inner person (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). On the other hand, career goal feedbacks use feedbacks obtained from both individuals and the environment. Another potential reason for the relationships between the concepts is that both concepts are based on self-regulation. Career adaptabilities has self-regulation strength or capacity (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and career goal feedback is in the context of setting goals and regulating behaviors according to the self-regulation approach (Bandura, 1991; Hu, Creed & Hood, 2017; Latham & Locke, 1991), which shows that the relationship between the career adapt-abilities and career goal feedbacks is in a way of strength/capacity and the ability to use it.

While there was a positive relationship between career adapt-abilities and intrinsic life goals, no relationships were found between extrinsic life goals. This finding of the study indicates that individuals will cope with the difficulties in career transitions more easily and have more successful transitions as they begin to have more goals such as interpersonal relationships, self-development, and health, which are more relevant to their nature. Intrinsic life goals have an active and constructive structure related to the concepts such as autonomy, need for relationships, and personal development, which provides psychological satisfaction in human nature (Kasser & Ryan, 2001). Given that career adaptabilities also uses an active and constructive process based on the self-regulation approach, the relationship between **these two concepts is important and significant in terms of the individual's career processes. Another finding of the study is that extrinsic life goals do not predict career adapt-abilities. The goals acquired and formed by the individual could have been external-oriented. Individuals' being directed by focus other than self usually results in negative effects on their performance (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998). Therefore, the life goals determined by focus other than self might not be effective in the career adaptabilities behaviors where the individual is in an active and constructive process.**

The literature indicates no studies that indicated a relationship between life goals and career adapt-abilities. However, **there are studies that investigated goals and individuals' career processes (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Buddeberg-Fischer, Klaghofer, Abel & Buddeberg, 2006; Dik, Sargent & Steger, 2008; Flores, Ojeda, Huang, Gee & Lee, 2006; Patton, Bartrum & Creed, 2004). Goals, which are the sources of motivation in many fields in people's lives (Eryilmaz, 2010), could have an important place in individuals' careers because life goals include an individual's desires for building general life structures and forming their life, including the career (Roberts & Robins, 2000). In this regard, people's intrinsic goals identified in relation to their lives, have a feature of directing them about their career.**

## CONCLUSION

The study results revealed the importance that university students should behave more consistently with their career goals and have more intrinsic life goals so that they can improve their career adapt-abilities. This could be realized through psychoeducation to be conducted by the psychological counseling and guidance centers or career centers. In addition, career counseling to be provided to counselees who apply to the related unit of universities could identify what kinds of goals they have and whether they behave in line with their goals in a consistent way. Career counseling could include career goal behaviors and life goals contributing to coping with the difficulties experienced in the career process.

The present study has some limitations. The study investigated the predictiveness of only university students' **career goal feedbacks and life goals on their career adapt-**abilities. However, it is important to conduct similar studies with individuals in the high school years, which involve setting career goals and decision-making processes related to the rest of life. The present study is the only study that investigated the relationship between the mentioned variables; thus, the generalizability of the study results requires similar studies to be conducted with different samples and cultures.

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