



Perceived Social Support and Locus of Control as the Predictors of Vocational Outcome Expectations*

Erkan IŞIK^a

Mevlana University

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships of vocational outcome expectation to social support which is an environmental factor and locus of control which is a personal factor. With this purpose, using Social Cognitive Career Theory as the theoretical framework, 263 undergraduate students completed Vocational Outcome Expectations Scale, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and Rotter's Locus of Control Scale. Results indicated that perceived social support from family, friends and significant others were positively and locus of control were negatively associated with vocational outcome expectations. The results also indicated that within the perceived social support dimensions, family support was the unique significant predictor of vocational outcome expectation. Locus of control significantly predicted vocational outcome expectation scores as well. In the light of these findings, suggestions that interventions targeting to increase vocational outcome expectations of students had better take the family support into consideration and include exercises for families were emphasized and ideas for future research are discussed.

Key Words

Vocational Outcome Expectations, Social Cognitive Career Theory, Perceived Social Support, Family Support, Locus of Control, Undergraduate Students.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) has been one of the most studied career approaches in recent years. SCCT, different from previous trait-factor theories, believe in the necessity to assess interest but additionally, emphasize the importance of developing those career interests. For the career choice process, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994; 2000) proposed a model in which self-efficacy and outcome expectations develop via four sources of information, namely performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and emotional arousal on the grounds of personal inputs (e.g. predispositions, gender, race) and contextual factors (e.g. barriers, support). These beliefs are then translated into interests, choice goals, choice actions, and performances. Thus, self-efficacy

and outcome expectations emerge as two key figures in SCCT due to their importance in explaining career interests, choices, and performances (Lent, 2005; Lent et al., 1994, 2000).

Outcome expectation can be defined as one's beliefs in consequences of an action (Bandura, 1997). Specifically, vocational outcome expectations could be considered as the imagined consequences of performing academic and career behaviors that would be useful to subsequent career options and decisions (Betz & Vuyten, 1997). Two sentences representing these beliefs are "My career/occupation choice will provide the income I need." and "My career/occupation choice will allow me to have the lifestyle that I want."

* This study was orally presented at the XVIII. Educational Sciences Congress.

a **Erkan IŞIK, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor of Guidance & Psychological Counseling. His research areas include school to work transition, Social Cognitive Career Theory, career and family counseling. *Correspondence:* Assist. Prof. Erkan IŞIK, Mevlana University, Education Faculty, Department of Guidance & Psychological Counseling, 235 Yeni İstanbul Street, 42003 Selçuklu, Konya, Turkey. Email: eisik@mevlana.edu.tr Phone: +90 332 444 4243/1210.

The influence of significant people on career development process has received much attention in recent years (Ali, McWhirter, & Chronister, 2005; Constantine, Wallace, & Kindaichi, 2005; Gushue & Whitson, 2006; Lent et al., 2000; Metheny, McWhirter, & O'Neil, 2008). Some qualitative research on social support demonstrated that undergraduate students perceive their family as a significant source of support in their career decisions, career information gathering process, and as a role model (Schultheiss, Kress, Manzi, & Glasscock, 2001; Schultheiss, Palma, Predragovich, & Glasscock, 2002). Students perceive support from their families have less career indecisions, believe that they will be more successful in their chosen career, and easily adapt to the school to work transition (Hamamcı & Hamurlu, 2005; Kenny, Blustein, Chaves, Grossman, & Gallagher, 2003; Philips, Blustein, Jobin-Davis, & White, 2002).

Locus of control makes the distinction whether people feel they possess the control over their life or the control is mostly on factors such as luck or chance, which the former is characterized as internal and the latter as external locus of control (Rotter, 1966, 1990). Within the career developmental field, the construct is associated with career indecision (Woodburry, 1999), career decisional attitudes (Bernardelli, DeStefano, & Dumont, 1983; Rodriguez & Blocher, 1988), career decision-making difficulties (Lease, 2004), career decision-making self-efficacy (Taylor & Popma, 1990), and job search process (Holmes & Werbel, 1992).

Both the role of outcome expectations in predicting career interests, choice and performance goals, career search behavior, career planning, and the chance to achieve career targets, and interests, goals, performance, and satisfaction in specific fields (Betz & Voyten, 1997; Blanco, 2011; Cupani, Richaud de Minzi, Pe' rez, & Pautassi, 2010; Lent et al., 2013; Patton, Bartrum, & Creed, 2004) makes it valuable to conduct research on. However, it was not received much attention as the self-efficacy may be due to the absence of sufficient research instruments (Fouad & Guillen, 2006; Swanson & Gore, 2000). Thus, in a response to the call for further investigations on outcome expectations (Fouad & Guillen, 2006; Gushue & Whitson, 2006; Lent et al., 2000), the purpose of the current study was to examine the potential associations between vocational outcome expectation, social support which is an environmental factor, and locus of control which is a personal factor.

Method

Participants

Participants were selected randomly from Selçuk University School of Foreign Languages as they were thought to better represent the undergraduate students in general from Management, Engineering, Education, Technical Education, Law and Medicine faculties. A total of 280 students completed the packets of instruments but 17 of them were deleted for missing responses on at least one questionnaire, resulting in a final sample of 263 undergraduates. Of the students, 112 were female (42.6%) and 151 were male with a mean age of 19.67 ranging from 17 to 23.

Instruments

Vocational Outcome Expectations Scale (VOE; McWhirter, Rasheed, & Crothers, 2000; Metheny & McWhirter, in press): VOE is a 12 item-scale that measures respondents' level of positive expectations regarding the outcomes of their career choice. Ratings are made on a four-point scale with anchors 1: *Strongly disagree* and 4: *Strongly agree*. Sample items include "I will be successful in my chosen career/occupation" and "My talents and skills will be used in my career/occupation." The range of possible score varies from a minimum score of 12 to a maximum score of 48, higher scores reflecting more positive outcome expectations. The concurrent validity of the scale was supported by the positive correlation ($r = .54$) with another outcome expectation scale (Fouad & Smith, 1996). Coefficient alpha reliability was .83 and test-retest reliability coefficient was .59 after a nine-week interval. This study administered a Turkish version of the VOE (İşık, 2010). The adapted VOE had an alpha coefficient of .87 and test-retest reliability coefficient was .85 after a seven-week interval. Concurrent validity was supported by the positive correlation with Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) and Positive Affect Scale, and negative correlation with Negative Affect Scale (Gençöz, 2000; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) parallel with the previous research (Creed & Patton, 2003; Gushue, 2006; McWhirter et al., 2000).

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988): MSPSS is a 12 item-scale that measures respondents' perception of social support from his/her family, friends, and significant others. These sources of support also constitute the MSPSS's subscales, namely family (Fam), friends (Fri) or

significant other (SO). Ratings are made on a seven-point scale with anchors 1: Very *strongly disagree* and 7: Very *strongly agree*. Sample items include "There is a special person who is around when I am in need." and "My family really tries to help me." The range of possible score varies from a minimum score of 4 to a maximum score of 28 for each subscale, higher scores reflecting more support from each support. Coefficient alpha reliability ranged between .79 and .98 and test-retest reliability coefficient ranged between .72 and .85 after two or three-week intervals. This study administered a Turkish version of the MSPSS (Eker & Arkar, 1995; Eker, Arkar, & Yaldız, 2001). The adapted MSPSS's alpha coefficient ranged between .80 and .95.

Rotter's Locus of Control Scale (RLOCS; Rotter, 1966): RLOCS is a 29-item scale that measures the degree of control individuals feel they possess over their life. Respondents choose the sentence (a or b) which they believe best represents them. The range of possible score varies from a minimum score of 0 to a maximum score of 23, higher scores reflecting external locus of control. This study administered a Turkish version of the RLOCS (Dağ, 1991). The adapted RLOCS' alpha coefficient was .71 and test-retest reliability coefficient was .83. The concurrent validity was supported by positive correlations with other locus of control scales (Dağ, 1991).

Procedures

The packets of instruments were delivered during the class time and only volunteer students participated in the study. Before the completion of the instruments, the participants were briefly informed about the research and ensured that their names will be kept anonymous.

Data Analysis

Research data were analyzed via multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), Pearson moment-product correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analyses.

Results

Prior to analysis, all study variables were examined for accuracy of data entry, assumptions of normal distribution and multivariate analysis for both samples. Skewness and kurtosis values ranged from -1.04 to .27 and -.69 to 1.17 respectively, suggesting that the items conform to the assumptions of multivariate analyses.

A one-way MANOVA was computed to check for potential sex differences on measures of career decision self-efficacy, trait anxiety, and positive and negative affect. The results of MANOVA was not significant ($F_{5,258} = 1.68, p > .05$). No sex differences were seen across any variables. All other analyses were computed using the total sample.

Intercorrelations among vocational outcome expectations, family support, friend support, significant others' support and locus of control were all significant. Specifically, vocational outcome expectations was positively related to family support ($r = .27$), friend support ($r = .25$), and significant others' support ($r = .26$); negatively related to locus of control ($r = -.41$) with small to moderate effect sizes.

Results of multiple regression analyses indicated that family support, friend support, significant others' support and locus of control together accounted for 22% of the variance in vocational outcome expectations $F_{(5, 258)} = 18.31, p < .001$. However, locus of control ($\beta = -.35, p < .001$) and family support ($\beta = -.16, p < .01$) were the only statistically significant predictors.

Discussion

The current study sought to expand the literature on Bandura's (1977, 1986, 1997) social cognitive theory and Lent et al.'s (1994; 2002) SCCT by examining the potential associations between vocational outcome expectation, social support, and locus of control. On one hand, in line with the previous research (Ali & McWhirter, 2006; Ali et al., 2005; Ali & Saunders, 2009; Gushue, 2006; Gushue & Whitson, 2006; Metheny et al., 2008; Wettersen et al., 2005), the results of the study supported the proposed relationships between vocational outcome expectations and social support (as contextual factor in SCCT). Similarly, parallel with previous research (Gianakos, 2002; Judge & Bono, 2001; Lease, 2004; Taylor & Popma, 1990) vocational outcome expectations and locus of control (as a person input in SCCT) were associated significantly. On the other hand, only family support from other support sources and locus of control predicted significantly vocational outcome expectations. One possible explanation for this result may be the preceding importance of support perceived from family (Metheny & McWhirter, in press; Paa & McWhirter, 2000; Whiston & Keller, 2004). For instance, Diemer (2007) found that family support was predictive of vocational outcome expectations even in a two-year period. Similarly, Byars-Winston and Fouad

(2008) found that parental involvement directly and indirectly predicted goals through its strong relationship with outcome expectations.

When the beta weights were examined, locus of control ($\beta = -.348$) accounted for approximately twice as much variance as family support ($\beta = .166$). One possible explanation for this result is the significance of person inputs in shaping learning sources which directly effects outcome expectations (Hartman & Betz, 2007; Schaub & Tokar, 2005; Tokar, Thompson, Plaufcan, & Williams, 2007).

Limitations in this study include the use of a freshmen-based sample only. Future studies using larger samples from other grades of university or high schools are needed for the better generalizability of the results. Another limitation is taking only one variable representing each person inputs and contextual factors in SCCT to predict vocational outcome expectations. Further studies would include other independent variables for person input (e.g. personality, emotional intelligence) and contextual factors (e.g. barriers) for a more comprehensive understanding of the theory.

Overall, the current study converges with the literature and suggests that undergraduate students' vocational outcome expectation is associated with their family support and locus of control. More studies are needed on outcome expectation which is a preceding factor in the explanation of career goals (Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2008; Gore & Leuwerke, 2000; Lent, Brown, Schmidt, Brenner, Lyons, & Treistman, 2003). The importance of participants' locus of control and family support should be taken into consideration when designing interventions targeting vocational outcome expectations by involving families into interventions or developing activities enable parents' involvement and especially for students exhibiting external locus of control.

References/Kaynakça

- Ali, S. R., & McWhirter, E. H. (2006). Rural Appalachian youth's vocational/educational post-secondary aspirations: Applying Social Cognitive Career Theory. *Journal of Career Development, 33*, 87-111.
- Ali, S. R., McWhirter, E. H., & Chronister, K. M. (2005). Self-efficacy and vocational outcome expectations for adolescents of lower socioeconomic status: A pilot study. *Journal of Career Assessment, 13*, 40-58.
- Ali, S. R., & Saunders, J. L. (2009). The career aspirations of rural Appalachian high school students. *Journal of Career Assessment, 17*, 172-188.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*, 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Bernardelli, A., DeStefano, J., & Dumont, F. (1983). Occupational information-seeking as a function of perception of locus of control and other personality variables. *Canadian Counsellor, 17*, 75-81.
- Betz, N. E., Klein, K. L., & Taylor, K. M. (1996). Evaluation of a short-form of career decision making self-efficacy scale. *Journal of Career Assessment, 4*, 47-57.
- Betz, N., & Voyten, K. K. (1997). Efficacy and outcome expectation influence career exploration. *Career Development Quarterly, 46*, 197-189.
- Blanco, A. (2011). Applying social cognitive career theory to predict interests and choice goals in statistics among Spanish psychology students. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 78*, 49-58.
- Byars-Winston, A. M., & Fouad, N. A. (2008). Math and science social cognitive variables in college students: Contributions of contextual factors in predicting goals. *Journal of Career Assessment, 16*, 425-440.
- Constantine, M. G., Wallace, B. C., & Kindaichi, M. M. (2005). Examining contextual factors in the career decision status of African American adolescents. *Journal of Career Assessment, 13*, 307-319.
- Creed, P. A., & Patton, W. (2003). Predicting two components of career maturity in school based adolescents. *Journal of Career Development, 29*, 277-290.
- Cupani, M., Richaud de Minzi, M. C., Pe' rez, E., & Pautassi, R. M. (2010). Argentine middle school students' academic performance in mathematic: A test of social cognitive career theory. *Learning and Individual Differences, 20*, 659-663.
- Dağ İ. (1991). Rotter'in İç-Dış Kontrol Odağı Ölçeği'nin üniversite öğrencileri için güvenilirliği ve geçerliği. *Psikoloji Dergisi, 7* (26), 10-27.
- Diemer, M. A. (2007). Parental and school influences upon the career development of poor youth of color. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 70*, 502-574.
- Eker, D. ve Arkar, H. (1995). Çok boyutlu Algılanan Sosyal Destek Ölçeği'nin faktör yapısı, geçerlik ve güvenilirliği. *Türk Psikoloji Dergisi, 34*, 45-55.
- Eker, D., Arkar, H. ve Yıldız, H. (2001). Çok boyutlu Algılanan Sosyal Destek Ölçeği'nin gözden geçirilmiş formunun faktör yapısı, geçerlik ve güvenilirliği. *Türk Psikiyatri Dergisi, 12*, 17-25.
- Fouad, N. A., & Guillen, A. (2006). Outcome expectations: Looking to the past and potential future. *Journal of Career Assessment, 14*, 130-142.
- Fouad, N. A., & Smith, P. L. (1996). A test of a social cognitive model for middle school students: Math and science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 43*, 338-346.
- Gençöz, T. (2000). Pozitif ve Negatif Duygu Ölçeği: Geçerlik ve güvenilirlik çalışması. *Türk Psikoloji Dergisi, 15* (46), 19-26.

- Gianakos, I. (2002). Predictors of coping with work stress: The influences of sex, gender role, social desirability, and locus of control. *Sex Roles, 46*, 149-158.
- Gore, P. A., & Leuwerke, W. C. (2000). Predicting occupational considerations: A comparison of self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and person-environment congruence. *Journal of Career Assessment, 8*, 237-250.
- Gushue, G. V. (2006). The relationship of ethnic identity, career decision-making self-efficacy, and outcome expectations among Latino/a high school students. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 68*, 85-95.
- Gushue, G. V., & Whiston, M. L. (2006). The relationship among support, ethnic identity, career decision self-efficacy, and outcome expectations in African American high school students: Applying social cognitive career theory. *Journal of Career Development, 33*, 112-124.
- Hamamcı, Z., & Hamurlu, M. K. (2005). Relationship between level of knowledge and attitudes of parents about helping their children for career development and career indecision of their children. *İnönü University Education Faculty Journal, 6* (10), 55-69.
- Hartman, R. O., & Betz, N. E. (2007). The five-factor model and career self-efficacy: General and domain-specific relationships. *Journal of Career Assessment, 15*, 145-161.
- Holmes, B. H., & Werbel, J. D. (1992). Finding work following job loss: The role of coping resources. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 29*, 22-29.
- İşık, E. (2010). *Sosyal Bilişsel Kariyer Teorisi temelli bir grup müdahalesinin üniversite öğrencilerinin kariyer karar yetkinlik ve mesleki sonuç beklentisi düzeylerine etkisi*. Yayımlanmamış doktora tezi, Çukurova Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Adana.
- Judge T. A., & Bono J. E. (2001). Relationship of core self-evaluations traits—self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability with job satisfaction and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*, 80-92.
- Kenny, M. E., Blustein, D., Chaves, A., Grossman, J., & Gallagher, L. A. (2003). The role of perceived barriers and relational support in the educational and vocational lives of urban high school students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 20*, 142-155.
- Lease, S. H. (2004). Effect of locus control, work knowledge, and mentoring on career decision-making difficulties: Testing the role of race and academic institution. *Journal of Career Assessment, 12*, 239-254.
- Lent, R. W. (2005). A social cognitive view of career development and counseling. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (pp. 101-130). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 45*, 79-122.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (2000). Contextual supports and barriers to career choice: A social cognitive analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 47*, 36-49.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (2002). Social cognitive career theory. In D. Brown & Associates (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (4th ed., pp. 255-311). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., Schmidt, J., Brenner, B. R., Lyons, H., & Treistman, D. (2003). Relation of contextual supports and barriers to choice behavior in engineering majors: Test of alternative social cognitive models. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 50*, 458-465.
- Lent, R. W., Miller, J. M., Smith, P. E., Watford, B. A., Lim, R. H., & Hui, K. et al. (2013). Social cognitive predictors of adjustment to engineering majors across gender and race/ethnicity. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 83*, 22-30.
- McWhirter, E. H., Rasheed, S., & Crothers, M. (2000). The effects of high school career education on social-cognitive variables. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 47*, 330-341.
- Metheny, J., & McWhirter, E. H. (in press). Contributions of social status and family support to college students' career decision self-efficacy and outcome expectations. *Journal of Career Assessment*. doi: 10.1177/1069072712475164
- Metheny, J., McWhirter, E. H., & O'Neil, M. E. (2008). Measuring perceived teacher support and its influence on adolescent career development. *Journal of Career Assessment, 16*, 218-237.
- Paa, H. K., & McWhirter, E. H. (2000). Perceived influences on high school students' current career expectations. *The Career Development Quarterly, 49*, 29-44.
- Patton, W., Bartrum, D. E., & Creed, P. A. (2004). Gender differences for optimism, self-esteem, expectations and goals in predicting career planning and exploration in adolescents. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance, 4*, 193-209.
- Phillips, S. D., Blustein, D. L., Jobin-Davis, K., & White, S. F. (2002). Preparation for the school-to-work transition: The views of high students. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 61*, 202-216.
- Rodriguez, M., & Blocher, D. (1988). A comparison of two approaches to enhancing career maturity in Puerto Rican college women. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 35*, 275-280.
- Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs, 80*, 1-28.
- Rotter, J. B. (1990). Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement. *American Psychologist, 45*, 489-493.
- Schaub, M., & Tokar, D. M. (2005). The role of personality and learning experiences in social cognitive career theory. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 66*, 304-325.
- Schultheiss, D. E. P., Kress, H., Manzi, A., & Glasscock, J. (2001). Relational influences in career development: A qualitative inquiry. *The Counseling Psychologist, 29*, 214-239.
- Schultheiss, D. E. P., Palma, T., Predragovich, K., & Glasscock, J. (2002). Relational influences on career paths: Siblings in context. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 49*, 302-310.
- Swanson, J. L., & Gore, P. A. (2000). Advances in vocational psychology theory and research. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook of counseling psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 233-269). New York: Wiley & Sons.
- Taylor, K. M., & Popma, J. (1990). An examination of the relationships among career decision-making self-efficacy, career salience locus of control, and vocational indecision. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 37*, 17-31.
- Tokar, D. M., Thompson, M. N., Plaufcan, M. R., & Williams, C. M. (2007). Precursors of learning experiences in Social Cognitive Career Theory. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 71*, 319-339.
- Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*, 1063-1070.
- Wettersten, K. B., Guilmino, A., Herrick, C. G., Hunter, P. J., Kim, G. Y., Jagow, D. et al. (2005). Predicting educational and vocational attitudes among rural high school students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 658-663.
- Whiston, S. C., & Keller, B. K. (2004). The influences of the family of origin on career development: A review and analysis. *The Counseling Psychologist, 32*, 493-568.
- Woodbury, C. A. J. (1999). *The relationship of anxiety, locus of control and hope to career indecision of African American college students*. Dissertation Abstracts International, 59(11-A), 4072.
- Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The Multidimensional scale of perceived social support. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 52*, 30-41.