



Youth Perspectives on Career Alignment: A Study of Education and Employment in Türkiye

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Abstract

Qualification mismatch has become a topic of interest for researchers in recent years due to globalization, the labor market, the increasing number of young people participating in formal education, labor/brain drain, observed demographic changes worldwide, and a series of technological developments directly affecting daily life practices. Qualification mismatch, which is categorized as mismatch by level of education and mismatch by field of study by the ILO, has started to become a global priority in terms of redefining the necessary qualifications and professional competencies to prepare better and safer employment conditions and to enhance the employability of workers. This research, focusing specifically on young people who experience a mismatch by field of study, aims to address the real-life problem of qualification mismatch affecting youth employment in Türkiye. This study involves 24 participants from diverse academic backgrounds who are employed in fields unrelated to their education. Thematic analysis of in-depth interviews reveals key findings regarding mismatches by field of study. One major issue identified is the limited applicability of the theoretical knowledge gained during university education. Participants indicated that their education failed to adequately prepare them for professional demands, particularly because curricula did not focus on sector-specific skills. This mismatch is further intensified by the growing number of graduates and universities in Türkiye, which increases competition and reduces job opportunities in graduates' fields. Many participants also cited the lack of internships and work experience as a barrier to securing relevant employment. Additionally, the expectation of work experience from new graduates, low salaries, long hours, nepotism in hiring, performing multiple roles, and enduring unpaid overtime, emerged as a significant challenge. Economic pressures, societal expectations, and family obligations were key factors influencing participants' job choices, leading many to pursue work outside their academic qualifications.

Keywords: competency; field of study; job satisfaction; qualification mismatch; youth employment