Why Do Students in Vocational and Technical Education Drop Out? A Qualitative Case Study

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To cite this article:

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Abstract

The aim of this case study is to examine the economic, social and cultural reasons behind the dropout of vocational and technical education students. The participants of the study are 23 students included in accordance with the criterion sampling method. We gathered data with semi-structured interviews. Then we analyzed data with content analysis. Themes obtained as findings of the study are vocational habitus, capital agents, how to survive and post-experience. As a finding of the study; while individual problems are the most emphasized problems experienced at school by the participants, economic reasons are the most emphasized reasons behind the dropping out of the students.

Keywords: Vocational education, Dropout, Cultural capital, Economic capital, Social capital, Vocational habitus

Introduction

Probably nothing other than dropping out so strikingly affects the life of the students after school (Winship & Korenman, 1999). Dropping out is a critical issue for the triplet of individuals, the school system, and the whole community. Those students who drop out may encounter many difficulties in their life such as working for a low-wage and low-status job. Dropout students are more prone to experiencing health problems and engaging in criminal activities (Christine et al., 2007). For instance, in the United States, 82% of prisoners are school dropouts (Goldschimidt &Wang 1999). Plank et al. (2008) support this in terms of the possibility of unemployment, inhabiting poor life conditions, supported by the government aid, offence conditions and social cost in the states and state's tax revenue. The proportion of dropping out of high school is prevalent for students in vocational training (Thøgersen et al., 2020). Being a vocational high school student facilitates this dropout. Vocational high schools are designated to meet the necessities of labor market needs. Their curricula are arranged to meet the demands of the employment market so that these students may acquire the skills necessary for the labor market (Harvey, 2001). Families send their children to these sorts of high schools to train them for a particular finesse and raise the gain in the next years (Yi et al., 2015). At this point, 'who drops out' at those kinds of vocational high schools is significant. Harvey (2001) points out those dropout students do not own the required finesse to get a profession at a good salaried, high-skill job. Elffers (2012) also claim that the students who are drug users get pregnant or commit a crime in their life except the school generate the profile of 'at risk' dropout students.

'How high is the dropout rate in Turkey?', while the proportion of vocational high schools is 34.9 % and the proportion of students within the scope of vocational training is 9.8 % in 2019 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), this rate is equal to 31.7 % in 2017 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Compared to a few OECD countries, it is 31.7 % for Czech, 71.6 % for Finland, 70.9 % for Slovenia, 68.2 % for Holland, and 64,2 % for Switzerland (OECD, 2019). According to National Education Statistics, while the proportion of vocational high schools is 34.9 %, the dropout rate is %31 in 2019 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Although the earlier proportion of leaving school is decreasing, students continue to drop out of education throughout secondary education, especially in the 9th grade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). When the serious results of leaving high school are examined, 'who drops out the school and what is the reason behind it?' is a significant question. There is a group of students who leave school voluntarily

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and those compelled to leave. When the students compelled to abandon school are dealt with, reasons behind this discharge process may be low-income or being a minority member (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). There are many reasons for the students' dropping out of school. Azzam (2007) lists these reasons as the students' personal problems like not being interested in school and not having enough rules; Rumberger and Thomas (2000) list them as family, income, and educational background.

When the research on the reasons of dropouts up to now examined, researchers (Azzam, 2007; Baker et al., 2001; Christine et al., 2007; Glennie et al., 2012; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1989; Güngör, 2019; Pittmann & Haughwout, 1987; Werblow & Duesbery, 2009; Yi et al., 2015 Ziomek-Daigle & Cavin, 2015) state that school-level factors are influential on the intention of the student's dropping out. Researchers (Alspaugh, 1998; Christine et al., 2007; Elffers, 2012; Farias & Sevilla, 2015; Kılıç, 2017; Konold & Cornell, 2015; Parr & Bonitz, 2015; Polat, 2014; Porowski & Passa, 2011; Taş et al., 2013) indicate that coming from a family with low socioeconomic status tend to drop out. Besides, researchers (Aarkrog et al., 2018; Boyacı et al., 2018; Christine et al., 2007; Elffers, 2012; Plank et al., 2008; Tanggaard, 2013; Taş et al., 2013) imply that experiences of students at school, individual perspective of the students and teacher-student interaction are influential in the students' decision to drop out.

In addition, students' social capital, like the network of friends and peers, the cultural capital of students coming from the family is significant in education. Bourdieu (1973) points out that academic achievement directly depends on cultural capital and intendancy to put on in the tweedy debouche. Considering all of these, the students at vocational high schools who have more cultural capital and a habitus proper to it may be more prone to feel free and have good communication with teachers, be successful at school, and be less prone to drop out (Swartz, 1977). Taken altogether, even though a wide range of studies on dropouts has been done so far, there is a limited number of studies examining the dropouts at vocational high schools. Apart from the previous studies on the subject, this study focuses on the neglected side of vocational high schools. Accordingly, this current research aims to determine the social, cultural, and economic factors behind the dropouts at vocational high schools. It is anticipated that the key results of this study give teachers, school principals, and parents ideas about why those students drop out at vocational high schools.

Field, Habitus, Capitals and Dropout

The term 'field' points out the norms which govern the social activity area. This social activity area may be a family, public school, higher education, art, politics, economy etc. A field is arranged by the process and sorts of capital (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014; Thompson, 2008). All the fields are intertwined with large fields like education and economic fields and small ones like family. Habitus gets activated when it is in connection with 'field'. Habitus differs both in the level of society and the level of the person. Habitus is formed by the person's past, the family's personal history, and the individual's class. The habitus of individuals is not identical because of the difference of each individual (Reay, 2010).

Habitus is a social structure. Bourdieu (1988) explains this as "it is a structured body which embodies a world's innate structures and builds that world's perceptions and acts" (p.72, 78). According to Bourdieu (1990), there are no definite rules which lead an action, so habitus is indefinite. "Habitus is transmitted through speaking, standing up, walking and considering" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 23). Habitus is a reproductive scheme in which main social structures are moulded and are reflected in the individuals through socialisation; ultimately, the main social structures are reproduced (Nash, 1999). Habitus is linked to the raising of the family and the position of an individual in a social structure (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Habitus is a persistent, transmittable, cognitive scheme, perception, comprehension, and action (Bourdieu, 2002). Swartz (1977) also state that habitus affects the chances of individuals in life like one's origins. The habitus of an individual manifests itself in communication, tastes, values, perceptions, and rationale. When it is considered a game, habitus displays the individual's feelings, and field shows the social field on which an individual plays this game (Bourdieu, 1998; Gaddis, 2013). From this point forth, the concept of "vocational habitus", which is based on the habitus concept of Bourdieu, is important to be mentioned. According to Colley et al. (2003), vocational habitus facilitates the process of adaptation for the students to adopt and learn a specific identity. "Being the right person for the profession" must accrue for the adaptation to learn a specific identity (Colley et al., 2003). Vocational habitus necessitates the process of adopting vocational behaviours and attitudes for adaptation. It consists of acting suitably, feeling and glancing towards the envisioned profession (Ferm et al., 2018). For the construction of identity, the effect of vocational culture cannot be ignored. It may provide the agents to consider the way of organisation of the practices in the so-called culture. Thus, it ventilates how to behave in the place of work suitably. The suitable place and practice may be realised through the vocational culture (Bourdieu, 1977; Colley

et al., 2002). Vocational culture admits accepting individuals from certain social groups and excluding those who are not suitable (Colley et al., 2002).

Vocational habitus displays the strong side of vocational culture. It is a unification of idealized and realized tendencies to which the students need to adapt themselves to become the right individuals for the profession. The emphasis is on "becoming the right person" within the context of vocational habitus. It leads to the occupation realized by the individual and the shaping process of the individual (Colley et al., 2003). To be successful, the student needs to adapt to the values and practices of the profession socially. These shared values are continually formed by the teachers, students, and employers (Colley et al., 2003). Habitus contains different kinds of capitals as content (Bourdieu, 1998; Gaddis, 2013). Capital is a mediator between field and habitus as it defines the content of the field. It is a monetary unit of the field. The product and process of the field are assessed via the capital (Grenfell, 2009). Capital determines the social world and its structure, and it is situated in the essence of the social world (Bourdieu, 1985; Thorpe, 2009). Capital with a symbolic meaning defines what can be recognized, what is possible, and what can be awarded. It belongs to the field. The field is the concept that establishes the values, and it is the individuals who own the values. Although the field is open to every individual, it is not distributed in the same proportion (Grenfell, 2009). In this context, the education system and high schools can be framed as a 'field'. The power in this field is configured by striving factors of the social echelon, which are the dissemination of economic, social, and cultural capitals (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). When considered as a field, the "formal education system is a primary mechanism in the perpetuation of socioeconomic inequity, since it serves to legitimate the existing social hierarchy by transforming it into an apparent hierarchy of gifts or merit" (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 241-258). The reproduction of the social structure is realized due to the students' habitus, which is important for students' navigating their way (Dumais, 2002). The students' configuration within this field comes into existence through their tenancy of the habitus and the capital in this sphere. Students' practices are outcomes of students' habitus and cultural capital in the bundle of this sphere. In other words, habitus, cultural capital, and the field liaise to incur behaviors of the students in the social context (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014).

In the field of education, the most valuable capital is cultural capital. The education system represents the culture of the dominant class. Bourdieu (1973) points out that academic achievement directly depends on cultural capital and intendancy to put on in the tweedy debouche. In a field like education, there are certificates, forms of pondering, and making named cultural capital and some of them are more valuable than alternates. Cultural capital connects education with other fields (Bourdieu et al., 1995; Grenfell, 2009). The student needs the skill of getting and internalizing to gain this cultural capital. In this point, the cultural capital deriving from the family is significant, and this is related to the social class to a large extent. In the lower class, this cultural capital is less than the upper class. Besides this, the students who own more cultural capital might find their way easily throughout the curriculum, assessment, and institutional necessities. In contrast, those with less cultural capital might face more difficulties (Gale & Parker, 2017). This system is fostered by the educational system (Dumais, 2002).

Social capital consists of the relationships that constitute a group's membership, and it is a kind of shared capital ensuring power (Trainor, 2010). It implies the content and quality of the social networks that can support individual interests and turn a kind of capital into another (Bourdieu, 1986; Møllegaard & Jaeger, 2015). The social capital concept of Bourdieu is based on the theories of socially refabricating and nominal stamina. The dimension of the social capital is up to the social network and the proportion of capitals the person has within the social web (Dika & Singh, 2002). In that case, social capital can be divided into two groups; 'social relationships' and 'the quality and quantity of resources'. Social relationships consist of demanding, pretending the resources the society owns. That is to say, social capital is a mediator for retaining group solidarity. It is the instrument for reproducing the dominant class (Dika & Singh, 2002; Lin, 1999; Portes, 1998). Therefore, the social capital concept of Bourdieu cannot be grasped without the cultural capital, habitus, and field terms.

The capital, habitus, and field concepts of Bourdieu emphasize the inequality in life (Bourdieu, 1977; Gaddis, 2013). The inequalities in the capital and the habitus affect the academic results and dropout. On the one hand, the students at vocational high schools who have more cultural capital may be more prone to feel free and have good communication with teachers, be successful at school, and be less prone to drop out. At this point, the habitus of the students is very significant. Students' ability to invest in school and not drop out depends on their classification system and their achievement anticipation (Swartz, 1977). Students who do not have high cultural capital as those of high socioeconomic status. Thereby a habitus shaped by this might find the school environment very different. Not being acquainted with the dominant culture and lacking the appropriate education besides coming from a low socioeconomic status affects students' intention to drop out. Considering that there are some definite ways of communicating, attitudes and behaviours transmitted through interaction by the actors at school, the students deriving from a superior background are exposed to this kind of cultural capital

in a company with domestic life and parent-child communication. The cultural capital aids them to develop a proper habitus to go around the education system. The students with low socioeconomic status may not be exposed to the necessary cultural capital, and when they cannot display the appropriate habitus, they become disadvantageous. The schools reproduce the inequalities based on socioeconomic status. Since the teachers and education reward the dominant culture manifestations, these rewards turn into high educational success and decrease the intention of dropping out of school (Gaddis, 2013).

On the other hand, the communication between students and teachers is an important dimension for the school's social capital. The students mention the lack of academic support for dropping out before graduating (Cemalcilar & Gökşen, 2014; Croninger & Lee, 2001; Rumberger, 1987). Favourable social relations are significant for the students (Cemalcilar & Gökşen, 2014; Murdock, 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Bourdieu (1986) stresses that teachers facilitate reaching the corporation sources and might be a mediator to transmit the information and support to the adolescent. A sustentacular social environment may create strong incentives not to drop out in case there is social inequality. The student's development is shaped through social capital at schools, community, and family. Social capital affects the achievement and decreases dropouts (Acar, 2011; Israel et al., 2001; Rogošić & Baranović, 2016). When the research is examined, most of the studies are pertinent to finding out reasons for dropouts at high schools. These reasons are a classification of student characteristics, school-level factors, socioeconomic situation, and family's economic background (Alspaugh, 1998). In terms of school size, researchers (Azzam, 2007; Baker et al., 2001; Glennie et al., 2012; Gottfredson, 1989; Güngör, 2019; Pittman & Haughwout, 1987; Werblow & Duesbery, 2009;) stress that school characteristics are influential on the intention of the students' dropping out. When taken in hand as socioeconomic status, the researchers (Alspaugh, 1998; Elffers, 2012; Farias & Seville, 2015; Kılıç, 2017; Konald & Cornell, 2015; Parr & Bonitz, 2015; Polat, 2014; Taş et al., 2013;) emphasize that students having poor family relationships and indigent families tend to drop out. When taken in hand, the educational system as a field is constructed by the powerful definite components that affect the student's overall educational life and the risk of dropping out the school. Social network of the student stemming from the social capital, cultural capital that ascent from the family and habitus which is a scheme forming the idea, behavior of the students and leading them. Because these are not distributed fairly, all of these affect the whole academic life of the students. Despite all the studies on dropout students, there is a gap needed to research vocational high schools. Therefore, the current study examines why students drop out at vocational high schools and the cultural, social, and economic reasons behind this and their impacts. As the number of studies in vocational high schools is insufficient, this study will provide a usual line of vision into the field in defining the factors behind dropping out and the effects of before and after.

Method

Research Design

This study has been conducted by using the qualitative approach. In a qualitative approach, "researchers seek to preserve and analyze the situated form, content, and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations" (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p.18) and "qualitative data are analyzed and presented in the form of case studies, critiques, and sometimes verbal reports (Frey et al., 1992, p.17). As a current phenomenon, 'drop out' is handled with its own life frame. The case study research design has been utilized in this research. The significant point here is the emphasize on the context. A case study is used in a qualitative approach (Yin, 1994); pursuing the process is more of an issue (George & Bennett, 2004). A case study research has been favored in this study because it investigated the properties of a single case (Campbell & Stanley, 1963), namely the 'drop out' of a vocational high school. In a case study, one or more cases are interrogated in a context or situation. The researcher collects data in a detailed way to examine one or more cases. These sorts of collecting data may be interviewing, observing, and reporting the described cases (Creswell, 2014). Accordingly, as a single case, 'drop out' has been examined from the perspectives of the dropout students as a context at 'vocational high schools'.

Context of the Study

Vocational high schools are important in providing the country's necessary workforce, employing qualified employees, economic development, and contributing to the family economy. Vocational high schools offer a variety of courses to be studied, being different in each vocational high school, to meet the need for intermediate staff. Courses in vocational high schools are divided into two as theory-based academic courses and vocational skills training courses. Weekly class hours of vocational courses are relatively longer than culture lessons. Perception of vocational high schools in Turkey is that the student about whom there is no possibility of passing

the university entrance exam might get a job by registering to vocational high schools. Compared with other countries, there is a negative perspective towards students in vocational high schools in Turkey. Students with an unsuccessful educational background prefer vocational high schools, making it difficult for these students to acquire a profession in the future. Therefore, it may be that the expectation of academic success is low in the public's eyes. It can be considered that teachers in vocational high schools do not expect much from students in terms of success. As researchers, we are closely acquainted with the research context and the backgrounds and experiences of the students studying in this context. At this point, we would like to express some descriptive information about these situations. Students generally come from broken families, their economic conditions may be bad, and an environment where students have to work outside of school can be created. In schools, the 9th-grade levels can be very crowded; especially before the departments are divided (the class sizes may decrease with the selection of the department as the middle class and the senior class). Again, we can say with our long-term observations in these schools that the families are indifferent to the condition of the students at school, their academic achievement, and their overall situation. The students are hopeless about their future life. They do not care about a profession, a good and qualified lifestyle, and a university career; they do not communicate well with the teachers. The research has been carried out to manifest the reasons behind the dropping out of vocational high schools. The significant issue is that many students at vocational high schools drop out because they work outside school. Another portion of students are within the group of risky students to drop out; these students are compelled to abandon the school because of the difficult circumstances in their life and cannot continue their education. This study has been realized in this vocational high school since there is a serious rate of dropping out at these schools except other high schools.

Participants of the Study

Participants in qualitative research must be the ones who have enough experience to share their thoughts about the aim of the research (Creswell, 2007). In this current study, the researchers agreed on two groups of participants. The study involves 23 student participants from the vocational high school, which is the center point for the research. 19 of the students are those who dropped out because of their working outside the school. The other four intended to drop out. The researchers have preferred criterion sampling in which participants are chosen based on predetermined criteria, and it is one of the purposeful sampling methods. Criterion sampling is a purposeful sampling of cases depending on aforethought criteria (Meriam, 1988). Cases are selected because they display a variable intensely (Patton, 1990, p. 182-183). In this study, dropout or at-risk students are selected, and students whose absenteeism is at the highest limit and whose GPA is very low are selected. The table of the participants in this study is as follows:

Table 1. Participants of the study

Pseudonym	Field of education	Dropout/ Intended to Leave	Age
Ares	Installation Technologies and Air Conditioning	Dropout	18
Thaumas	Furniture and Design	Dropout	18
Krios	Art and Design	Dropout	24
Apollon	Art and Design	Dropout	18
Poseidon	Engine Technologies	Dropout	20
Sisyphos	Art and Design	Dropout	19
Phorkys	Furniture and Design	Intended to leave	17
Prometheus	Art and Design	Dropout	18
Arges	Installation Technologies and Air Conditioning	Dropout	18
Okeanos	Art and Design	Dropout	18
Hades	Engine Technologies	Dropout	19
Nereus	Technical Engine Technologies	Intended to Leave	16
Khaos	Installation Technologies and Air Conditioning	Intended to Leave	17
Brantes	Furniture and Design	Dropout	19
Hera	(not selected yet)	Dropout	20
Hephaistos	(not selected yet)	Dropout	17
İkarus	Engine Technologies	Dropout	18
Zeus	Installation Technologies and Air Conditioning	Intended to Leave	18
Athena	Technical Engine Technologies	Dropout	18
İapetos	Engine Technologies	Dropout	16
Dionisos	Engine Technologies	Dropout	17
Nkys	(not selected yet)	Dropout	17
Herakles	Engine Technologies	Dropout	22

As shown above, the study's criteria for selecting participants are education, being a dropout or intended dropout, and age. 23 participants have been interviewed to collect data for the study. The participants consist of dropout students and students who intend to leave vocational high schools. Among these participants, four of

them intended to leave school. The field of education includes installation technologies and air conditioning, furniture and design, art and design, engine technologies, and technical engine technologies. The ages of the participants range from 17 to 24. Furthermore, participants have been given pseudonyms from mythical gods because of the analogy between the gods' being extra-ordinary and special and the students' being in a special condition.

Data Collection

Before collecting the research data, permission was first requested from Yıldız Technical University's Ethics Committee. Research permission dated the 10th of February was obtained. The consent form was sent to participants to sign. They were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study at any time and that their responses were confidential. The researchers used pseudonyms to protect participants' identities and ensure confidentiality. After scanning the literature about dropouts, 7 questions have been directed to the participants who dropped out and 5 questions to those who intend to leave school. The questions have been presented to an expert on the field, and revisions have been made accordingly. The researchers invited dropout participants to school, and the interviews were conducted there. The semi-structured face-to-face interviews were done in January 2021. Each interview lasted 30-40 minutes. Each participating student had equal and enough amount of time to share their experiences. The participants have been informed about the purpose of the study. The participants' views have been recorded online with their permission. When the interview process ended, the records were erased, accompanied by their approval of the recordings in the transcripts. The approvals of the participant students about the transcripts have been obtained.

Data Analysis

Audio-visual records have been transcribed after the interviews. The researchers have analyzed the data through content analysis to gain reliability in the findings. Content analysis is a research method through which the event is depicted systematically and objectively (Krippendorf, 1980). It permits the researcher to test the issues to increase the meaning of the data. The words are divided into categories that are associated with each other. After dividing into categories, the same meaning may be obtained from the words and sentences (Cavanagh, 1997). Through this method, it has been managed to reveal suppressive meanings in this research. The transcriptions have been read over and over again. Codes, categories and themes have been determined properly.

Findings

The analysis of the transcripts of individual interviews put forward that "lack of sleep" as the individual problem is the most emphasized concept many participants agree on as the most significant problem experienced at school based on the vocational habitus theme. The participants' views also support that their desire to earn money without studying is why they drop out, based on the theme of capital agents. The conditions requisite for not dropping out are improving the length of class hours and academic achievement based on the theme of how to survive. Finally, the participants state that while their economic capital has improved, their social and cultural capital has been influenced badly based on the theme of post-experience. In short, the themes are identified as follows: vocational habitus, capital agents, how to survive, and post-experience.

Theme 1: Vocational Habitus

The findings exhibit that the most significant problem of the dropout students at the school can be associated with the theme "vocational habitus". This theme may be divided into four categories: individual problems, teachers' behaviors, lesson design, school environment and peer groups. For instance, one of the participants defines his problem about drug use as follows:

I had a girlfriend at this school. We had a very sincere relationship. When I got angry with her, I didn't go to school and couldn't sleep at night. I was getting bored with school. Besides, I was getting antidepressant drugs, so I was sleeping day and night. The lesson began at half-past eight. I was sleeping at the lesson, and when I got up, it was the lunch break. I was experiencing a lack of sleep because of my problems with my girlfriend and drugs (Okeanos, dropout, 18).

Under the category "individual problems", the participants emphasised the students' inability to concentrate on the lessons, getting bored, not caring about, and not being interested in lessons. For instance, a participant identifies this problem with him not being interested in the lessons as follows:

I had problems not with the school but with the lessons. I wasn't attending the lessons. I was studying, but I didn't want the lessons. I wasn't mindful of the lessons and not being able to achieve, so I couldn't like the school. The school was good, but I didn't enjoy the lessons (İapetos, dropout, 16).

Another category, "the behaviours of teachers", has been associated with the teachers' not being understanding, being unable to manage the class, taking a stand towards the students, and discrimination among the students by the participants. One of the participants signifies his problem about the teachers' not being able to manage the class and their unfavourable behaviours towards students as follows:

I had to study with people younger than me in my second grade because of my grade repetition. My friends next to me would be pampered. To be honest, the teachers couldn't silence the students and manage the class. There was also a teacher whose actions and behaviours were bossy. She uttered these sentences "Nobody can interfere with me, I do this and that". I'd reach that nobody can do something like this to me. She slapped me when we met for a second time. She threatened me by saying, "no one can save you, even your family". She caused other teachers to take a stand against me (İkarus, dropout, 18).

The other category, "lesson design", has been related to the participants' length of class hours, poor grades, and quantitative and verbal lessons. One of the participants explains the problem with the duality between the lessons at school and apprenticeship as follows:

We say that we are going to get a job in the future. We are students at vocational and technical high schools. We learn a few things about the profession in the apprenticeship. When I ask a welding master to teach me how to weld, he says, "I can't teach you. You can come and try in your lunch break". However, a person can't do things they don't know. The system at the school and apprenticeship place is different (Phorkys, intended to leave, 17).

The other category, "school environment and poor grades", are related to the circle of friends, psychological pressure, fights, the environment with blasphemy and other bad habits, and girlfriends. One of the participants states the psychological pressure caused by her friends at school and the environment as follows:

There were types who tried to crush anyone who was hanging out like a punk. This was one of the most important reasons that drowned out the school. There was politics at school. It was as if the school was separated into right and left wings. The grouping was too much. There were groups like gangs at the school. They were exchanging words at passers-by, glaring. This situation was very disturbing. This psychological pressure is enough for people (Hera, dropout, 20).

In this context of the theme of "vocational habitus", it can be inferred from the participants' discourse that the student participants address the individual problems as the most significant problem they have experienced at school. They emphasise working outside school and not being able to come to lessons on time, and feeling tired at the lessons. Besides this, they stress emotional affairs such as using drugs and not being able to listen to the lesson as a result of it. Among the individual problems, the participants accentuate not being interested in the lessons, concentration problems, and getting bored as significant problems. Furthermore, the participants mention the teachers' not being supportive, being low-tolerant towards them, putting in them very much about the extra academic subjects, and not being able to manage the class properly as an important problem at school. It can be deduced from the participants' discourse that the students' failure discourages them since they are not interested in the subjects, and the duality between the situation at school and apprenticeship place makes them unenthusiastic for the school. The participants stress their dissatisfaction with their friend circle and bullying behaviours of their friends as a significant problem for them.

Theme 2: Capital Agents

The findings emphasise that the participants' intention to leave school and drop out can be associated with the "capital agents" theme. This theme may be divided into five categories: economic reasons, academic failure, indifference to school/learning, social background, and uncertainty in expectations. Under the category of "economic reasons", the desire to earn money without studying and go into professional life is the most emphasised statement. For instance, Herakles, who is a dropout, explains his desire to earn money as follows:

I started working after I failed the class. I was a waitress at that time. When I was a waitress, I was paid weekly, and it sounded very sweet. For example, I was getting 1000 TL per week. At that time, the minimum wage was maybe 800 TL. I was working for 12 hours and was getting 1000 TL. My family didn't need it, and I was spending this money. Although I was 16-17 years old at that time, I was making very good money (Herakles, dropout, 22).

Another participant expresses his ideas about the importance of money over having an education. That shows us the negative impact of social capital with the help of negative peer-network as follows:

Most of my friends dropped out of school. They had money in their pockets. They say, "Look, you don't have money in your pocket, let's get you to work, the craftsman say that they are looking for employees". It makes sense to think about it a little bit like that. When you work, you see the repatriation of the money. They call it "the hot side of money". The man counts 5-6 billion coins in front of you every day. This is what attracts people. When people say, "don't ask your father for money, how old are you, do you still ask your parents for money," you inevitably have to work (Zeus, intended to leave, 18).

Another category, "academic failure", has been associated with their failing the class by the student participants. One of the participants explains his failure experience and his dissatisfaction with this situation as follows:

When I failed the class, I thought that my friends would be 10th-grade students and I would be a 9th-grade student. I considered that I would study with one year younger students than myself. I dropped out the school by saying, "I don't want to go on." (Herakles, dropout, 22).

The other category, "indifference to school/learning", has been associated with waste of time, not caring about the school, not endeavouring to achieve, belief in failure, not demanding the education uttered by the student participants. "Waste of time" is the most stressed phrase. One of the participants who intend to leave school expresses his ideas about the school's being a waste of time as follows:

Waste of time, teacher. When you look outside, some do not go to school, but they go on their education in evening high school. Some finish high school this way. They are not educated in high school. They spend their time working. They are taking more confident steps in this direction. We are wasting our time at school. It makes more sense to work and earn a diploma from evening high schools (Phorkys, intended to leave, 17).

Another category, "social background", has been associated with bad environmental conditions. One participant expresses his ideas about this and its effect on his life after school as follows:

I continually wanted to change my environment. I got bored of the same environment and the same people. It didn't do much for me. They say that the fate of a person is the same where they grew up. If you are growing up in a bad place or trying to grow up in a bad place, you are inevitably drawn to that environment. The environment in which I grew up wasn't good in those times. Some people had the idea of crushing and breaking down in my neighbourhood when I was studying (Krios, dropout, 24).

Another category, "uncertainty in expectations", has been associated with the desire for a different kind of lifestyle, going on their education in a different field, and hopelessness about the future. One of the participants expresses his ideas about his desire for a different kind of life as follows:

I had no idea about what kind of a person I should have been. I didn't want to lead an ordinary life. I had been pondering upon these for a long time. I have opened a café, and maybe I can move forward with this. I had a dream to go to Europe. If I had an education in a language school, maybe I could have a chance. I had no idea about what to do in the future. I didn't want to work to earn only 4-5 thousand Turkish liras (Apollon, dropout, 17).

In this context of the theme "capital agents", it can be inferred from the participants' discourse that economic reasons take the lead. It can be realised that the participants demand to enter into business life and earn money as soon as possible to not depend on their family. Besides, academic failure and failing the class are discouraging experiences pushing them to drop out the school. Additionally, their indifference to school is affected by perceiving the time wasted at school as irrational and unnecessary and considering working life over school life. The tough social background they have grown up in is an important factor in dropping out of school. Uncertainty about expectations, disbelief and hopelessness about the future, and making a wrong decision while selecting their field are significant factors behind dropping out of school.

Theme 3: How to Survive

The findings accentuate that the situations that will discourage leaving school can be associated with the theme "how to survive". This theme may be divided into four categories: the curriculum's organisation, improvement of economic conditions, perception of school, and familial conditions. Under the "organisation of the curriculum" category, length of class hours and academic achievement is the most emphasised statement. One of the participants states his dissatisfaction about the block classes and off days as follows:

There were continually block classes at the school, and we were getting bored. Actually, I wouldn't have got bored if we had had half-hour lessons, not block classes. If our off days had been 3 days and not 2, it would be more rational. Maybe Wednesday could have been a holiday in the middle of the week (Athena, dropout, 18).

Another category, "the improvement of economic conditions", has been associated with income and money by the participants. One of the participants expresses the effect of tough economic conditions on his decision as follows:

My mother quit work. We should have done something to survive, so we decided to open a café. The store expenses were very expensive there, so we had to move. We were middle income. But when we moved to another place, we had a little difficulty. If my mother hadn't quit the work and we hadn't moved to another place, I could continue my education (Apollon, dropout, 17).

Another category, "perception about the school", has been associated with courses of interest, inequity, and the participants' dream job. One of the participants expresses his distaste about the education system and his courses of interest as follows:

I wouldn't drop out of school if the education system were improved. It is as if we are in a race. Everybody should be free. If I'm a student at fine arts, mathematics will be of no use for me. We know arithmetic's in our daily life, anyway, and they are the subjects of 4th grade. We have studied these subjects for 6 or 7 years. It is of no use to study them again in 9th grade. If you are a student whose course of interest is visual arts, you draw pictures and study at a workplace. For instance, there wasn't a computer lab in our school. If there were a computer lab, I wouldn't need an extra computer (Nkys, dropout, 17).

It might be inferred from these quotes that although these students have been educated in fields like pipework and engine technology, they tend to get a profession such as a hairdresser, which is different from the fields they have studied. The participants have a completely distinct tendency apart from their vocational habitus. The profession of hairdressers is contrarian to the vocational habitus in which they have been educated to get the proper job following their skills and vocational culture.

Another category, "familial conditions", have been related to the family's educational background, long-lasting disease among the family members and the integrity of family institution by the participants. One of the participants expresses his opinions about his unwillingness to live with the financial support of his family as follows:

If you continue your education, you have to depend on your family for a living. You expect them to buy something. My parents were divorced, and our situation was apparent. When I told my father that I needed a computer and I had a dream, he sent me his own computer worth 1000 Turkish Liras. I might use it only for limited purposes. You can't raise the level. If I left the school and earned my money by working somewhere, I could buy my own needs (Nkys, dropout, 17).

In the theme, "how to survive", it can be deduced that the length of class hours and academic achievement are important conditions to prevent the students from dropping out of school. The block classes, 11-12 hours of classes in a day, and academic failure are undesirable conditions for their education. These conditions should be altered in a better way to prevent them from dropping out of school. Besides, improvement of the family's economic conditions and income are stated as dissuasive conditions for not dropping out the school. Furthermore, their distaste about the education system and the duality between their dream job and their field of education are conditions to be improved to survive and give up the idea of dropping out of school. Lastly,

familial conditions, the integrity of the family institution, and the family's educational background are considered significant conditions not to drop out of school.

Theme 4: Post-experience

The findings exhibit that the condition of economic, social, and cultural life after dropping out of school can be associated with the theme "post-experience". This theme may be divided into three categories: the increase of economic capital, the decrease of social capital, and the decrease of cultural capital. Under the category "increase of economic capital", many participants mentioned the increase of economic capital after dropping out of school. Still, some claim the decrease of their economic capital. One of the participants expresses the improved condition of their economic capital as follows:

Fortunately, we have been in better conditions economically. We didn't have an automobile and a car in those times, but now we have both of them. I sometimes talk to myself. I wish I hadn't dropped out of school. I pay 5000 Turkish liras yearly to get a diploma. Our economy is better now (Herakles, dropout, 22).

Another category the decrease of social capital has been expressed by one of the participants as follows:

Educated people make educated friends, and uneducated people make uneducated friends. We may think like this. If I kept on my education, I would meet with my educated friends. For instance, if you are a teacher, your teacher friends are more than the number of your old friends. I'm a cook. I have the telephone numbers of my cook friends. When I got into the business of selling cars, I had the telephone numbers of many car sellers. If I had an education, I would have educated friends (Poseidon, dropout, 20).

Another category, the decrease of cultural capital, has been associated with the participants' decrease in sport and cultural activities. One of the participants states the influence of dropping out the school on the decrease of cultural capital as follows:

I was interested in sports, and I had more opportunities to do it when I was a student. Now that I work, I don't have enough time. When I was a student, we had Physical Education Lessons. We could do sports at least two days a week. I can only do sports for half an hour a week now. Sometimes I can never do it in a week (Ares, dropout, 18).

In addition to these, it can be realised that dropout students are regretful about cultural capital results. They are not pleased with their condition because of their lack of diploma to get into a high-wage, high-status job. Lack of a diploma is the most emphasised word uttered by the participants as the reason for their regret. One of the participants expresses this condition as follows:

If I quit this job and try to get into an authorised place, I don't have a chance to do this because they prefer those with a high school diploma. There is a bad side to this condition. Apart from this, I can go wherever I want. The only nuisance is my lack of a diploma (Hades, dropout, 19).

In the context of the theme of "post-experience", it can be inferred from the participants' discourse that a great deal of the students touches upon the increase of economic capital by implying the escalatory amount of time at work and regular working schedule. Concerning the social capital, the participants stress the decrease of time spent with friends and having an enjoyable time out. Concerning the cultural capital, participants stated that leisure time activities like sports and music are not possible to do as much as in school because of the lack of time and energy, since they spare time to work. Apart from these, the participants express their regret about gaining cultural capital, which may be a touchstone for them in the future. It can be deduced from their statements that they are regretful for not receiving their high school diploma, which will be very significant for them to be employed in high-wage and high-status jobs. This condition can be associated with the importance of cultural capital for the participants. The participants stated that not having the opportunity to be together with old friends and not having an enjoyable time is regret. It can be stated that they express their longing for their old friends at school sincerely.

Discussion and Recommendations

The study findings reveal that individual problems like lack of sleep, not being able to concentrate on the lessons, getting bored from the lessons, and not being interested in the lessons are expressed as the most

significant problems. On the one hand, the participants state that working somewhere out of school and using drugs were reasons for their lack of sleep. Furthermore, they define the most significant problem at school as their inability to concentrate on the lessons. Similarly, Azzam (2007) also states that not being interested in the school and insufficient rules at the school are important reasons for dropping out of school. At this point, the research finding of Azzam (2007) may be attributed to this relevant study.   Besides, the teachers are described as inconsiderate and incompetent to manage the class. It is identified as a significant problem at the school. At this juncture, the findings of the researchers (Aarkrog et al., 2018; Boyacı et al., 2018; Christine et al., 2007; Elffers, 2012; Plank et al., 2008; Tanggaard, 2013; Taş et al., 2013) support this relevant study by indicating that the experiences of students at school, individual perspectives of the students, and teacher-student interaction are influential on the students' decision to drop out. In addition to this, communication between students and teachers is a consequential dimension for the students' social capital. Bourdieu (1986) also claims that the teacher's support is notable for the social capital, and hereat social capital influences achievement and lessens dropping out.

The students' not having the chance to select the lessons they are interested in, the length of class hours, and the duality between the apprenticeship and the school are significant problems. These can be associated with school-level factors. Similarly, the researchers (Azzam, 2007; Baker et al., 2001; Christine et al., 2007; Glennie et al., 2012; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1989; Güngör, 2019; Pittmann & Haughwout, 1987; Werblow & Duesbery, 2009; Yi et al., 2015; Ziomek-Daigle & Cavin, 2015) also state that school-level factors are influential on the intention of the students' dropping out. The participants' having a circle of friends leading to an unsatisfactory condition at school, bad habits, an undisciplined environment, and alienation from the school are also important problems. The students' circle of friends may be affiliated with the social capital of the students. Based on the study's findings, dropping out of school can be associated with economic reasons, academic failure, indifference to school/learning, social background, and uncertainty in expectations. Most participants state their reason to drop out of school is that they view working life as more profitable than school life. According to them, even at an early age, they may earn a lot of money without education. Going into a profession is more rational because of its financial gain. Earning their own money is more accredited to demonstrate themselves to their environment as worthy of attention. Their time is wasted at school. Dropping out the school is more rational. The participants complained about the conditions of the university grades in Turkey. The students also emphasise academic failure, its effects on their emotions and behaviours. Academic failure can be related to the lack of cultural capital since education and cultural capital are linked, and the education system represents the dominant class's culture. Bourdieu (1973) also stresses the relationship between academic achievement and cultural capital. According to him, there are certificates and certain ways of thinking in education. Some of them are more notable than others. The students need to know how to gain this cultural capital and be skilful to attain it. At this point, as a reason for the participants' dropping out of school, the lack of cultural capital regarding academic failure may not be underestimated. It can be inferred that the participants covertly imply the lack of cultural capital as a pushing factor to drop out of school.

Besides, growing up in a bad environment and their neighbourhood are expressed as pushing factors to drop out of school. The bad and harsh environmental conditions may be associated with habitus and low socioeconomic conditions. Bourdieu (1988) explains habitus as "it is a structured body which embodies a world's innate structures and builds that world's perceptions and acts" (p.72, 78). "Habitus is transmitted through speaking, standing up, walking and considering" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 23). According to Gaddis (2013), people with low socioeconomic conditions may not have the necessary cultural capital, and when they cannot display the suitable habitus, they become disadvantageous. The schools create inequality based on socioeconomic status. The education system rewards the dominant culture; this kind of reward converts into academic achievement and reduces the risk of dropping out. Correspondingly, the relevant study emphasises that the participants are pushed into dropping out of school because of the habitus and harsh environmental conditions. The participants are hopeless about their future. Their dreams and reality are on disparate and sharp edges. Their dissatisfaction with their field, their desire for their field of interest, and the gap between them are significant reasons to drop out of school. This situation of the participants may be related to the "vocational habitus". According to Colley et al. (2003), vocational habitus catalyses the process of learning and adopting a definite identity. Vocational habitus is necessary to adapt and gain suitable actions and feelings towards the envisioned profession (Ferm et al., 2018). Vocational culture accepts the ones from certain social groups and eliminates those that are not (Colley et al., 2002). The students need to accommodate themselves both to the values and practices of the profession socially. These shared values are consistently formed by the teacher, student, and employer (Colley et al., 2003). From this point forth, the participants complain about their dissatisfaction with the field and so-called not "being the right person for the job" since their vocational habitus is different. It can be inferred from their statements that they do not have the proper values of the profession and vocational culture. They long for another field in

their dreams, and as a result, they are excluded. The exclusion process may be associated with the students' dropping out of school.

The necessary conditions to not drop out are stated as the length of class hours and academic achievement under the category 'organisation of the curriculum by the participants'. According to them, 11, 12, or 13 hours of lessons a day and block classes are boring and tiring. Low academic achievement is demoralising to go on their education. Another factor not to drop out of school is the improvement of economic conditions. The participants mention the low-income level of their family and tough economic conditions as effective factors to drop out of school and indicate that if their family's economic conditions had been better, they would not have dropped out. Similarly, the researchers (Alspaugh, 1998; Elffers, 2012; Farias & Seville, 2015; Kılıç, 2017; Konald & Cornell, 2015; Parr & Bonitz, 2015; Polat, 2014; Taş et al., 2013) emphasise that students with poor family relationships and indigent families tend to drop out. It may be stated that better economic conditions may influence the participants' decision not to drop out of school.

 The participant's perception of the school, the difference between their dream job and their educational field, and their reluctance towards some lessons are influential on their decision to drop out of school. They state that if they had been given a chance to get an education on the field they dreamed of, they wouldn't have dropped out of school. The participants mention familial conditions like the family's educational background and the integrity of the family institution. They state that if the educational background of their parents had been better and their parents had not been divorced, they would not have dropped out of school. Concerning the family's educational background, Gale and Parker (2017) stress the cultural capital stemming from the family. It is associated with the social class to a large extent. Accordingly, the cultural capital in the lower class is less than the cultural capital in the upper class. Students with more cultural capital might face difficulties more easily and be successful. From this point, it may be stated that the family's educational background as a cultural capital may influence the decision of the students not to drop out of school. As a finding of the study, the participants' economic, social, and cultural life after dropping out may be analysed under the categories of increase of economic capital and decrease of social and cultural capital. While many of the participants mentioned the increase of income in their family and regular working hours, some mention the extravagant styles of spending their money gained after dropping out. As the decrease of social and economic capital, the participants' reason their exhaustion and lack of time. They mention their large circle of friends at school times. They state that they cannot do sports and cultural activities since they do not have enough time and energy. It is also expressed that strict conditions of working life are influential on this decrease.

The decrease of social and cultural capital may also be associated with their regret because they dropped out of school. They predicate their regret with the unattained diploma to become a university student and have a better status with more job alternatives in the future. Besides, they are aware of the knowledge side of this situation. They state that they will not have a notable accumulation of knowledge due to dropping out of school. This condition can be linked with the importance of cultural capital. According to Christine et al. (2007), the students work in low-wage and low-status jobs due to decreased cultural capital. According to Bourdieu (1973), certificates are significant to gain cultural capital and learn how to act and think in the education system. It may be noticed that the students feel the deficiency of the cultural capital after dropping out of school by stating the attained diplomas. In addition to this, the participants' discourse states that they are also regretful about their old school environment and circle of friends. It can be noticed that they long for this atmosphere and circle of friends. This condition can be linked with the importance of social capital. Social capital is significant because of the friend circle and social network in terms of education. It includes the fundamental kinds of relationships for the membership of a group (Trainor, 2010) because it is a mediator to support the individual interests and turn one capital into another (Bourdieu, 1986; Møllegaard & Jaeger, 2015). It is linked to the social network and the proportion of capital within the social web. It provides the group solidarity as an agent (Dika & Singh, 2002). Similar to the relevant study, the researchers (Acar, 2011; Israel et al., 2001; Rogošić & Baranović, 2016) have found that social capital influences success and decreases dropping out. They also emphasise that the development of the student at the school is shaped through social capital, society and family. It can be deduced from the overall analysis of the participants' discourse that dropping out of high school is common for students in vocational high schools, as Warts and all and Thogerson et al. (2020) stated. Students at vocational high schools drop out more easily. Although students are sent to vocational high schools to gain particular skills and finesse, they can face difficulties getting their education (Yi et al., 2013). Habitus, social, cultural, and economic capitals influence their decision and push them towards dropping out of school. It can be concluded that if they had been grown up in a proper habitus with the values supported by the education system, had a good position in the social system, had a cultural capital coming from the family, had the economic capital necessary for their education, had a better socioeconomic background, had social capital with a large circle of a social network, and had support from their teachers; they might not drop out of school and continue their education. In addition to

these, vocational habitus is significant for being the right person for the job. The apprenticeship and the school environment need to be consonant to create a suitable vocational culture and the students' contentment since it is necessary to get a specific identity.

The relevant study contributes to the Bourdieuan literature by inquiring about the effects of social, cultural, and economic reasons behind dropping out. The importance of the social, cultural, and economic capital is perceptible through analysing the participants' statements. For future researches, the context of the study may be enlarged to different schools and districts to obtain various points of view from different contexts. The gender of the participants can be equalised or be in a similar proportion in both boy and girl student participants. The interviews may be conducted with a focus group instead of one-on-one interviews so that the participants may interact and share their experiences. To the final remark in this study, the proportion of dropout students at vocational high schools is a significant issue for teachers, policy makers, and educational administrators. The teachers and school principals may support the students more even when they show slow progress in the school environment. The teachers may be more tolerant and understanding towards them. Family members also have a great mission to accompany them in their education, both materially and nonmaterial. Last but not least, the importance of vocational high schools is great when considered in terms of the country economy and the needs of some industry segments. Each dropout student is a loss in this respect.

Author (s) Contribution Rate
Both researchers contributed at every stage of the research.

Conflicts of Interest
There is no conflicts of interest

Ethical Approval
Ethical permission (10/02/2021 – E.2102150050) was obtained from Yıldız Technical University for this research.

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