

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Determination of Factors Affecting Choice of Profession and University Preference of University Candidates

Üniversite Adaylarının Meslek Seçimi ve Üniversite Tercihini Etkileyen Faktörlerin Belirlenmesi

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Geliş/Received: 23/02/2026

Kabul/Accepted: 04/04/2026

Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the factors affecting the career and university preferences of university candidates. Identifying these factors helps universities to shape promotional strategies and supports students in making informed choices for a fulfilling career. Data was collected from 1367 university candidates who were in their final year of education in different high schools and equivalent programs in Ankara and who were graduated and preparing for the university exam with the cross-sectional survey research technique. The most prominent factors in career selection are good income (4,38), easy job opportunities (4,22), working conditions (4,14), and in university selection; technological facilities (4,38), academic staff (4,31), physical, cultural and social facilities (4,28). The most preferred sources of information were social media (22%), university promotion activities and friends studying at school (19%). The final decision was made with their families (38%).

Keywords: choice of profession, choice of university, factors affecting the decisions, information source

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, üniversite adaylarının kariyer ve üniversite tercihlerini etkileyen faktörleri belirlemektir. Bu faktörlerin belirlenmesi, üniversitelerin tanıtım stratejilerini şekillendirmesine yardımcı olur ve öğrencilerin tatmin edici bir kariyer için bilinçli seçimler yapmalarını destekler. Veriler, Ankara'da farklı lise ve dengi programlarda öğrenimlerinin son sınıfında olan, mezun olan ve üniversite sınavına hazırlanan 1367 üniversite adayından kesitsel anket araştırma tekniği ile toplanmıştır. Kariyer seçiminde en belirgin faktörler iyi gelir (4,38), kolay iş imkânı (4,22), çalışma koşulları (4,14) iken, üniversite seçiminde; teknolojik imkânlar (4,38), akademik kadro (4,31), fiziki, kültürel ve sosyal imkânlar (4,28) olarak belirlenmiştir. En çok tercih edilen bilgi kaynakları sosyal medya (%22), üniversite tanıtım faaliyetleri ve okulda okuyan arkadaşlar (%19) olmuştur. Nihai kararı aileleri (%38) ile birlikte vermişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: meslek seçimi, üniversite seçimi, kararları etkileyen faktörler, bilgi kaynağı

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Önerilen Atıf/Suggestion Citation

Tengilimoğlu, D., Çiğdemoğlu, C. & Kavasoglu, B., (2026). Determination of Factors Affecting Choice of Profession and University Preference of University Candidates, *Anadolu Kültürel Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 10(2), 1082-1101.

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the increasingly challenging labour market conditions, and the changes in technological advancements, preparing young people for the transition from school to work has become a priority in all developed countries (Wong et al., 2021). The need for qualified human resources increases day by day in such a knowledge-based production processes which becomes one of the key elements that determine competitive advantage in the globalizing world (Kurt & Gümüő, 2015). Choices made in adolescence can have lifelong consequences for an individual's health, career, psychological well-being, and social acceptance (Mann et al., 1989).

Clara et al. (2003) have emphasized the importance of social support from family and friends in their studies. University students' future lives and career choices are shaped by their families' influence and the social support they receive from their close environment (Aslan & Koak, 2023). Teachers' expectations of student's performance, increase the likelihood that student's performance will improve (Brophy, 1983). Career choice and success are interdependent processes; career choice is one of the most important stages affecting the life and satisfaction. University years play important role in making career plans and programs (Aslan & Koak, 2023).

Based on these, this study aims to collect data from a large-scale group to reveal up-to-date situation in the study context. The work has potential in terms of analysing the similarities and differences between these two important decision processes by examining the factors affecting choice of profession and choice of university together, which are usually handled separately in the literature. Although social media and digital platforms are very influential nowadays, these factors have been included in a limited number of studies in this field. The prominence of social media as a source of information will offer a new perspective to the literature.

1.1. Choice of Profession

Choosing an occupation and a university is a crucial decision for young people, as it significantly impacts their future, quality of life, and overall lifestyle. However, in many cases, decisions are also influenced by direct or indirect factors that are out of students' personalities, and the final decision may even be made with such factors. Parents, friends, and reference groups are among these factors (Ensari & Alay, 2017).

Adolescents face with many difficulties before or during the decision-making. These difficulties may lead to delegating decision-making responsibility or delaying it. To help students make career decisions, guidance and counsellors play significant role in identifying the difficulties they encounter and provide them with guidance (Gati & Saka, 2001). According to Trice and Rush (1995), children begin to frame their ideas and make judgments about the suitability of various types of occupations for them as early as age 4. The same study showed that both girls and boys at the age of 4 years prefer occupations that are traditionally thought to be appropriate for their gender, and boys reject occupations that are associated with the opposite gender. As childhood ideas about work and occupations are precursors to adolescent career development and later exploration of the world of work, we need to continue to expand our understanding of career development during the primary and secondary school years (Howard & Walsh, 2011). Rimfeld et al. (2016) found that genetic factors affect both achievement and academic choices. Mccall et al. (1997), on the other hand, found that job and occupational changes are influenced by genetic factors.

Mann et al. (1989) emphasize that the ability to make a rational decision is one of the main characteristics of a mature adolescent. Choices made in adolescence can have lifelong consequences for an individual's health, career, psychological well-being, and social acceptance. Among the obstacles to achieve competence in decision-making during adolescence are attitudinal constraints (for example, beliefs about the appropriate age for decision-making), peer group pressures towards conformity, disruptions in family structure and functioning, and restricted legal rights regarding making significant personal decisions (Mann et al., 1989). While parents continue to serve as significant sources of influence regarding long-term matters such as career choices, moral issues, and values, peers predominantly shape preferences related to adolescent culture, including taste, style, and appearance (Smetana et al., 2006).

An occupation is not just a way to earn money; it is also one of the most important stages of self-actualization (Eryetiş, 2016). Making a career decision is a complex process, some individuals can make such decisions more easily, while others may face with difficulties so they may seek professional help (Gati et al., 1996). In many developed countries, to guide individuals in their career choices, schools try to identify their talents and interests through counsellors from childhood and determine suitable professions for them. Yaylacı (2007) emphasizes the importance of career education and counselling at the primary school level. He argued that guidance and psychological counselling services serve as an important bridge that helps children discover their interests and abilities and make the right university and occupation choices accordingly (Yaylacı, 2007).

Özden et al. (2008) reports the priority of university students in occupation choices as, desire to earn a high income and desire to work independently. Çelik and Üzmez (2014) states that individuals' occupation choices are generally influenced by factors such as job availability, job security, salary, career opportunities, vacation possibilities, social prestige, convenience, family, interest in the job, possession of professional knowledge and skills, and the environment. An occupation is perceived as ideal when it has potential to fulfil intrinsic job needs, moreover, students who think their occupation is ideal are more satisfied with their occupational decisions. Furthermore, Greenhaus and Simon (1976) states that despite prestige, security, and economic gain, whether an occupation is ideal or not depends more on its intrinsic satisfaction.

According to Blau et al. (1956), if individuals working in an occupation are satisfied with their careers, they will also influence the occupation decisions of future generations. When number of people who are satisfied with their occupation is high, the psychological consequences of entering the satisfied occupation become one of the factors influencing the choice of that occupation for future generations. Whether an individual experiences occupational advancement or faces disappointment in their career, it later shapes their perspectives on occupational life. Many factors including, academic staff, campus life, physical facilities, scholarship opportunities, etc. of the university are influential in decision-making of candidates. University selection process involves a very difficult and complex decision process including variety of factors.

In this study, the terms 'choice of occupation' and 'choice of profession' are used interchangeably to refer to the same concept.

1.2. Choice of University

After choosing an occupation, young people aim to select a university that best aligns with their career goals and provides the necessary knowledge and skills. Because the international recognition of the university has a significant impact on the ease of finding a job after graduation (Council of Higher Education, YÖK, 2024). The report of YÖK shows that the average time for graduates to find their first job is 10.24 months for 2021, 7.69 months for 2022, and 4.5 months for 2023. The average time to find a first job decreased from 10.24 months in 2021 to 4.5 months in 2023. A decrease in this period may indicate an increase in demand for graduates in the labor market, or it may indicate that graduates are better equipped to find a job, or that the impact of universities' career guidance services is more pronounced. In addition, the fact that the duration of job placement varies by university brings to the agenda the differences in quality and brand value between higher education institutions. This situation reveals that not only academic but also employment-oriented criteria are important for students in the university selection process.

Universities also conduct promotional and marketing campaigns to recruit qualified students and academics (Beneke, 2011). The basic requirement for creating a successful and strong brand and image is positioning (Çatı & Bilgin, 2015).

Each university has a perceived market position compared to its competitors, which may be unofficial and shaped by varying factors. This calls for further research on segmentation, targeting and positioning (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2013). The functioning of a university can be assessed in terms of its current position or the breadth of the strategic space in which it aims to position itself in research and education (Price et al., 2003). Higher education institutions are increasingly facing a more competitive environment, and institutions are having to compete in student recruitment markets. A useful way to understand these admission markets is to clearly grasp the candidates' selection and decision-making

(Maringe, 2006). According to Maringe (2006), students adopt a consumerist approach in their higher education decisions. The importance given to labour market motivations such as employment and career expectations stands out much more than the reasons for participation in higher education, such as interest in the subject and love for the courses. Program and price-related issues are important than other elements of the university marketing mix.

Obtaining a university degree provides significant economic benefits to individuals (McGregor et al., 2002). Granting an individual a professional identity is important in almost every profession. This process begins with starting to educational life. According to Albert (2000), there has been an increase in demand for higher education in most developed countries, and many studies have emerged to explain this increase. Studies show that the level of education of parents, especially the mother, increases the likelihood of going to university. The father's high socio-economic status also increases the demand for higher education. Gender is also a factor; being male negatively affects the decision to go to higher education, while women tend to obtain higher qualifications to compete in the labour market (Albert, 2000).

Ateş and Kılınc (2013) reports that in university placement system many students are forced to choose their selected department because their scores only suffice for that department, or they cannot reach their goals. According to the study conducted by Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2013), demographic and institutional factors influencing students' choice of higher education institution show that university selection is shaped by a complex interaction of individual and institutional factors. Demographic factors such as gender, race, and age, as well as socio-economic status, guide preferences; institutional factors such as academic reputation, cost, and campus feature also play an effective role in the selection process (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2013). Akar (2012) also states numerous criteria influencing preferences in university selection. Geographical location, academic reputation and institutional image, economic conditions, gender, income, and the place where the student will reside are important for university preference.

Higher education does not offer the same experience for everyone (Reay et al., 2001). Each institution offers different advantages and focuses on different values. (for example, employability, accredited programs, etc.) (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2013). University selection varies between those attending public and private institutions. Students who choose private universities evaluate reputation, selectivity, personal interaction, facilities, and cost, while students who choose public universities evaluate programs, sports activities, reputation, cost, accommodation, and location. For students in public institutions, reputation is associated with quality education and accreditation, while for students in private institutions, the recognition of the university's name is related to the reputation of the university and its faculty members (Joseph et al., 2012). Bowers and Pugh (1973) also state that students and parents place importance on different factors during the selection process. Parents prioritize financial factors, proximity, and academic reputation, while students place importance on social and cultural factors (Braddock et al., 2007).

Determining the factors that influence students' choice of profession and university, and whether these factors vary according to demographic variables is of great importance to both educational administrators, policymakers, as well as university administrations. Despite the numerous studies, determining the current state of young individuals' preferences amidst such rapidly changing societal dynamics. Digital transformation and concepts like artificial intelligence, which are rapidly entering our lives, have potential to influence future professions and therefore individuals' preferences. This study proposes to reveal factors affecting the occupation and university choices of students. The study will answer following research questions:

1. What are factors impacting on students' choice of profession (Cop)?
2. What are the factors impacting on choice of university (Cu)?
3. How other preferences issues are distributed?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used to reveal factors that affect university candidates' choice of profession and university. Survey research usually involves questionnaire comprising of items that intent to measure study concepts (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). The advantage of survey research is that it has the potential to provide a great deal of information obtained from a large sample of individuals (Saunders et al., 2003).

2.2. Population / Sample

Data was collected from candidates who intend to enter university exam in Türkiye. Almost three million students enter the exam in 2024, among them almost % 10 entered from Ankara as of our target population. Using a paper-based face-to-face delivery in spring semester of 2024, we collected data from students at various high schools and university preparation units. To assure representativeness of sample, we employed a probability-based sampling strategy, specifically a multistage cluster sampling method, which is appropriate when working with large, geographically dispersed populations (Groves et al., 2009). In the first stage, we randomly selected several districts within Ankara, ensuring representation across different socio-economic areas. In the second stage, within each selected district, we randomly choose school types (e.g., public high schools, private high schools, and university preparation centers). Finally, in the third stage, we surveyed all eligible students within those selected institutions. This method allowed us to manage logistical constraints while maintaining randomness and representativeness. The minimum sample size, taking the type of analysis into account (Power = 0.80; $f=0.3$; $\alpha=0.05$), was determined with GPower (Faul et al., 2007), and the program suggests 82 students. Furthermore, to generalize our findings Ankara distinct, we need at least 384 samples based on sample size calculators at 0.05 confidence interval. To eliminate any possible deficiencies, 1367 responses were collected. The ethical procures were completed, school administrators were informed about that. Demographic information of the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 13. Descriptive details of the study sample

Variable	Level	N	%
Gender	1. Female	718	52,67
	2. Male	645	47,32
	3. Total	1363	100
Age	1. 16	64	4,69
	2. 17	664	48,71
	3. 18	400	29,34
	4. 19	206	15,11
	5. 20+	29	2,12
	6. Total	1363	100
Student Graduation School Type	1. Anatolian High School	835	61,21
	2. Vocational Technical and Anatolian High School	240	17,59
	3. Science High School	146	10,70
	4. Social Science High School	108	7,91
	5. Distance Education	35	2,56
	6. Total	1364	100
School Status	1. Public High School	1274	93,26
	2. Private High School	92	6,73
	3. Total	1366	100
Grade	1. High School-4	1253	91,92
	2. Graduated	110	8,07
	3. Total	1363	100
Those Who Attend the Course	1. Yes	320	91,69
	2. No	19	5,44
	3. Total	349	100

Mother Education	1. Not Literate	35	2,60
	2. Primary School	230	17,12
	3. Secondary School	283	21,07
	4. High School	445	33,13
	5. Associate degree- bachelor's degree	218	16,23
	6. Master's degree	132	9,82
	7. Total	1343	100
Father Education	1. Not Literate	29	2,16
	2. Primary School	139	10,36
	3. Secondary School	273	20,35
	4. High School	501	37,36
	5. Associate degree- bachelor's degree	261	19,46
	6. Master's degree	138	10,29
	7. Total	1341	100
Number of children	1. 1	216	16,09
	2. 2	552	41,13
	3. 3+	574	42,77
	4. Total	1342	100

Note: For each category the total number may not be equal to sample size due to missing values.

2.3. Instrument

We benefited from similar studies from the literature and obtained expert opinions in the constructing the survey form. The scales were developed by Çelik and Üzmez (2014), and Vurucu (2010) for the questionnaire of choice of profession. Besides, the scales developed by Akar (2012) and Çatı, İşter and Özcan (2016) were benefited for in the questionnaire of choice of university. The questionnaire form was divided into four parts; the first includes demographic items, the second about items regarding choice of profession, the third was about items regarding choice of university, the fourth was about general preference issues. Demographic items were about gender, age, school type/status, years after graduation, mother and father education level. Choice of profession was measured with a 5-point Likert scale consisting of 24 items ranging from “never important” to “always important”. The items were gathered from comprehensive review of available literature. A sample item is, “the prestige of profession”. We performed an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to examine the underlying factor structure of the “Choice of Profession” survey. However, the analysis did not give a clear or conceptually coherent factor solution. The extracted factors lacked theoretical interpretability and failed to meet conventional criteria for factor retention (e.g., eigenvalues >1 , factor loadings $\geq .40$, and cross-loading thresholds). Based on these results, we opted to compute a composite score by summing all items, treating the scale as unidimensional. The internal consistency was acceptable, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .826, indicating good reliability.

The choice of university part included 27 closed-ended items with response categories of “never agree” to “always agree”. Similarly, we reviewed comprehensive articles and government documents to construct the survey items. A sample question is “the medium of instruction is important”. We performed an explanatory factor analysis for “Choice of profession” too. No conceptually coherent factor solution was obtained. Factors lacked theoretical interpretability and failed to meet conventional criteria for factor retention (e.g., eigenvalues >1 , factor loadings $\geq .40$, and cross-loading thresholds). Based on that, we opted to compute a composite score by summing all items, treating the scale as unidimensional. The internal consistency was acceptable, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .87. The last part was including items on general preferences concerns; the item was open-ended of closed ended with few categories.

2.4. Data Analysis

To avoid straight-lining issues and to detect whether the sample indeed read the items carefully, the survey form included an instructional manipulation check (IMC) statement (Kock et al., 2019), which requires individuals to select a specific response option (ie, 4). Possibly because of power of face-to-face mode of delivery, no participant answered that item incorrectly. We examined all data about missing

values, no systematic pattern observed, and missing were replaced by mean. We first provided descriptive statistics, then continued with inferential for testing research questions. Prior to main analysis, level of analysis, random sampling, independence of observation, normal distribution, homogeneity of variance was all controlled. While conducting the analysis of variance (ANOVA), in some comparisons, group sizes were not equal. We put special attention to the assumptions underlying ANOVA, particularly the assumption of homogeneity of variances. To address this, we look at Levene's test to assess equality of variances between the groups. In case of violation of the homogeneity assumption ($p < .05$), we preferred a Welch's ANOVA instead of the traditional ANOVA, since it is more robust to unequal variances and unequal sample sizes. Besides, when the data of independent and dependent variables is gathered from the same groups via a questionnaire, it is necessary to control common method bias (CMB). We applied a full collinearity assessment to determine existence of CMB. The analysis revealed that CMB is not seen as a concern for this study.

2.5. Ethics Committee Approval

The conceptual framework of this research was prepared, data collection tools were applied, data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted in full compliance with ethical rules. The ANKAD Editorial Board bears no responsibility for any ethical violations that may occur. All responsibility lies with the author. We declare that this work has not been submitted for evaluation to any academic publication medium other than ANKAD. This study complies with all rules specified in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Guidelines." None of the actions listed under the heading "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics" in the second section of the guidelines have been carried out. An application was made to Atılım University Humanitarian Research Ethics Committee for the interview to be conducted and the ethics committee approval was obtained at the board's meeting number 604.01.02-60363 dated 26/04/2023.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

First choice of profession (Cop), then choice of university (Cu), and other preferences issues are described in this section. These skewness and kurtosis were all controlled, almost no violations observed. As seen from Appendix A and Appendix B descriptive are provided. Students' highest rate of choice of profession is about good economic return with a mean score of 4,38 over 5. The lowest important issue is the influence of peers with a mean score of 2,66 over 5. The most important issues are the profession has good economic returns (4,38), availability of career opportunities in the profession (4,32), the profession offers easy job opportunities (4,22), the profession is suitable in terms of occupational health and safety (4,14), compatibility of working conditions with my personal characteristics (4,10). Descriptives of choice of university (Appendix B) shows that factors that are effective in university preference are; The university's technological facilities are important (4,38), followed by the academic staff is important (4,31), It is important for the university to have essential facilities (cafeteria, sports, library, etc.) (4,29), The city where the university is located is important (4,22), The perception/image of the university in society is important (4,15) and the university's position in national and international rankings is important (4,14). The statement they agreed with the least was "If my score is not sufficient for the university I am considering, I am thinking of not making a choice" (3,08). Item number 27 states not to make preference in the case of getting a low score which means students don't prefer to wait one more year. The mean score for this item is 3,03 over 5. Students' main preferences are summarized in Figure.1.

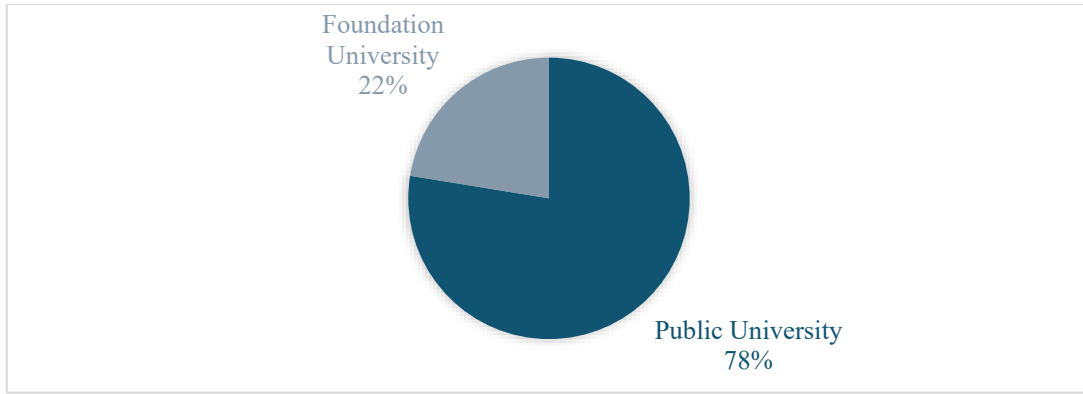


Figure 1. University Type Preference

The 78%, represents students who prefer public schools. With a preference rate of 22%, it shows that private universities also appeal to a significant audience.

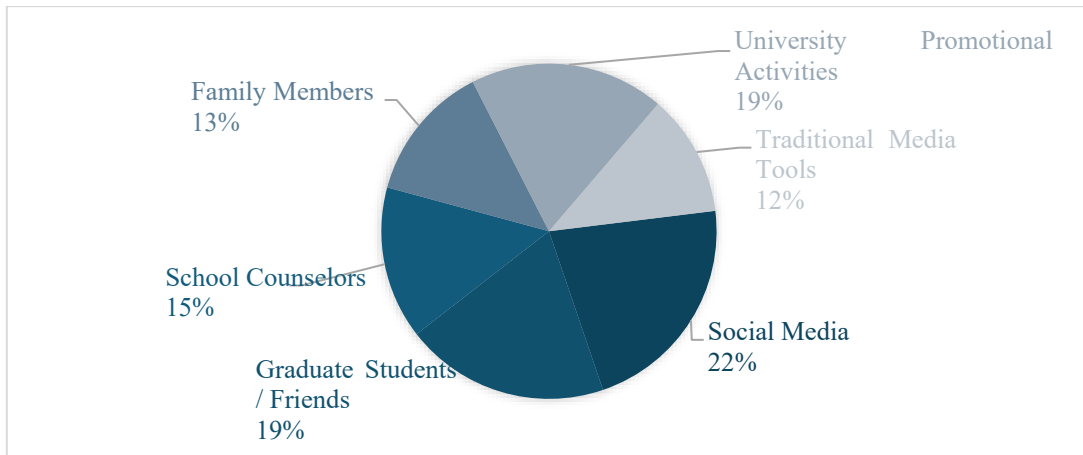


Figure 2. Information Resources

Among the information sources of students, promotional activities of universities are one of the sources with the highest percentage with 19%. It is seen that 19% of students turn to alumni or friends for information, which is also one of the most preferred sources by students. After traditional media tools, families seem to be the least preferred source of information.

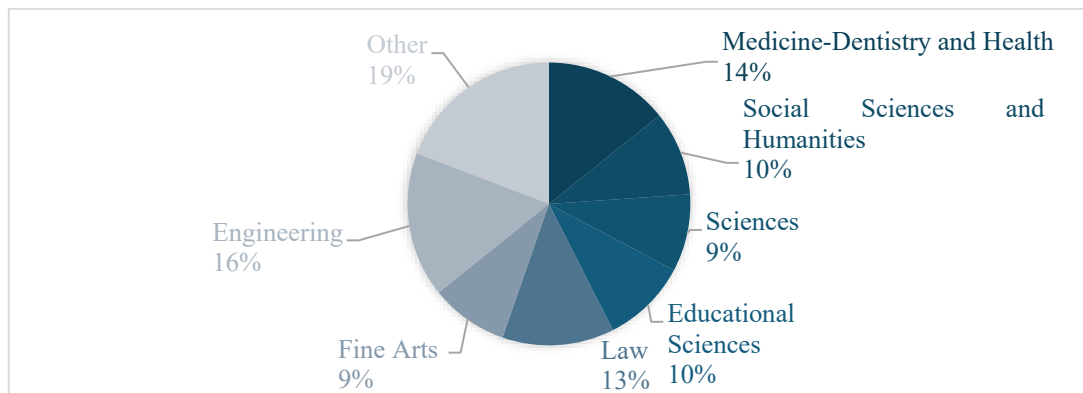


Figure 10. Area of Profession

Based on Figure 3, students' preferences are almost evenly spread across occupational fields. Engineering is preferred by 16% of the students and constitutes one of the largest slices in the graph. After engineering, the most preferred departments are Medicine, Dentistry and Health with 14% of the students.

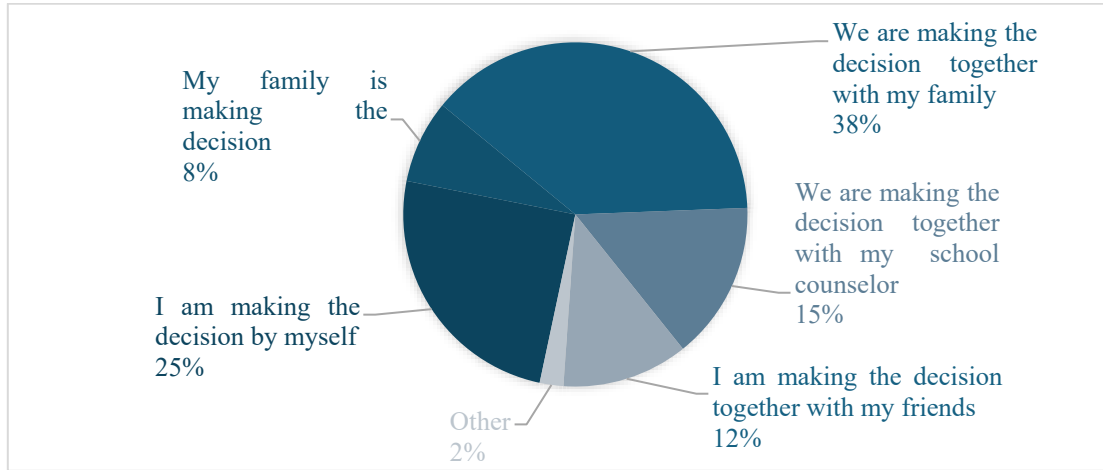


Figure 4. University Choice Decision

It was observed that 38% of the students decided on their choice of profession with their families. Although students reported that they made the decision to choose a profession on their own, it is seen that the word of their families is more valid in the decision to choose a university.

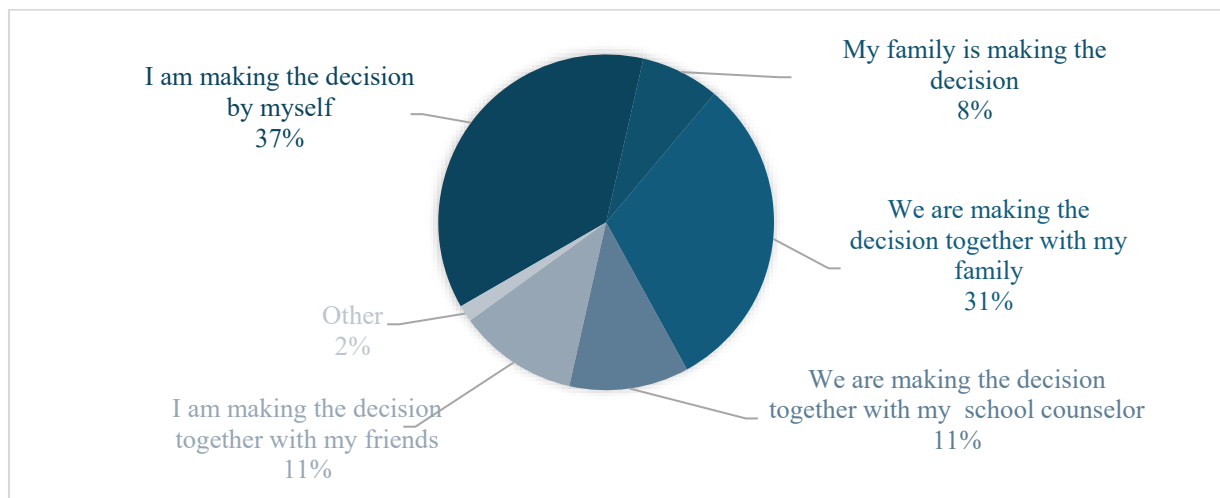


Figure 5. Choice of Profession Decision

Based on Figure 5, 37% of the students stated that they decide on their career choice on their own. When compared with the graph of university preferences, it was observed that self-determination increased in the choice of profession. Next, we continued with inferential statistics.

3.2. Inferential Statistics for Testing Research Questions

We provided inferential for choice of profession (COP). Table 2 provides the details.

Table 2. Results for Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for COP.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Gender	3,8215	,51942	1366	5,339	0,005	0,008	0,841
No response	3,9167	0,65881	4				
Female	3,8644	0,46394	717				
Male	3,7732	0,57103	645				
Age	3,8215	,51942	1366	3,991	,001	,014	,951
No response	4,2708	,51426	4				
16	3,6184	,80284	63				
17	3,7983	,52325	664				
18	3,8502	,49926	400				
19	3,8981	,31546	206				
20+	3,7931	,86211	29				
Graduation School Type	3,8215	,51942	1366	2,845	,015	,010	,844
No response	3,5694	,17347	3				
Anatolian High School	3,7880	,53763	834				
Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School	3,8512	,56866	240				
Science High School	3,9087	,23628	146				
Anatolian Imam Hatip High School	3,9263	,54421	108				
Open Education High School	3,7500	,43887	35				
School Status	3,8215	,51942	1366	,934	,393	,001	,213
No response	4,2500	.	1				
Public High School	3,8171	,52758	1273				
Private High School	3,8782	,38823	92				
Grade Level	3,8215	,51942	1366	18,802	,000	,040	1,000
No response	3,8611	,42150	3				
High School-4	3,8229	,50842	1252				
Graduated	3,8390	,52376	110				
Extra Train Cours	3,8215	,51942	1366	4,035	,018	,006	,721
No response	3,7997	,56340	1027				
Yes	3,8935	,33391	320				
No	3,7895	,51976	19				
Graduation Year	3,8215	,51942	1366	2,103	,098	,005	,540
No response	3,8014	,57240	960				
1 year	3,8735	,33024	228				
2-4 years	3,8547	,39316	172				
5 years+	4,1111	,48496	6				
Number of Children	3,8215	,51942	1366	1,570	,165	,006	,553
No response	3,6950	1,29506	25				
1	3,8954	,41115	216				
2	3,7965	,49776	551				
3+	3,8218	,52005	566				
4	3,7083	,29463	2				
5	3,9861	,28219	6				
Mother Education	3,8215	,51942	1366	1,564	,154	,007	,609
No response	3,9896	,38704	24				
Not Literate	3,7083	,63834	35				
Primary School	3,7697	,62724	230				
Secondary School	3,8475	,43318	282				
High School	3,8379	,49367	445				
Associate degree- bachelor's degree	3,7856	,54800	218				
Master's degree	3,8595	,49615	132				
Father Education	3,8215	,51942	1366	,911	,486	,004	,366
No response	3,6571	1,23958	26				
Not Literate	3,8247	,67557	29				
Primary School	3,8459	,56792	139				
Secondary School	3,8382	,44306	272				
High School	3,8351	,52657	501				
Associate degree- bachelor's degree	3,7771	,48475	261				
Master's degree	3,8288	,36407	138				

First, we explored whether COP differs across gender using one way analysis of variance (Anova) test. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p=.05$ level in COP scores for males and females $F(2,1363) = 5,339, p=.005$. Although a statistically significant difference is observed between females and males mean score was quite small. The eta squared effect size was .008. Post-hoc comparisons indicated the mean score for females ($M=3,864, SD=,4639$) was significantly different from males ($M=3,773, SD=,571$). Secondly, Anova test was used to explore whether COP differed according to age, no statistically significant difference in COP scores was observed for males and females at the $p < .05$ level. Then, Anova test was used to investigate whether COP differs according to the type of school graduated from, there was a statistically significant difference in COP scores for the type of school graduated from at $p < .05$ level $F(2,1363) = 2,845, p=.015$.

The next Anova test was used to explore whether COP differed according to grade level. There was no statistically significant difference in COP scores for public high school and private high school at the $p < .05$ level. Then we did the same analysis to explore whether COP differed according to school status. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p=.05$ level in COP scores for high schools and graduates $F(2,1363) = 0,934, p=.393$. Another Anova test was used to explore whether COP differed according to extra train course. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p=.05$ level in COP scores for those who attend extra training courses and those who do not $F(2,1363) = 4,035, p=.018$.

To test whether CU differs according to graduation year, we again conducted Anova test. There was no statistically significant difference in CU scores among the groups of 1 year, 2-4 years, and 5 years or more at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2,1363) = 2,103, p=.098$. When we look at whether COP differed according to number of children. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p.05$ level in COP scores for 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 $F(2,1363) = 1,570, p=.165$. next we questioned whether COP differed according to mother education. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p .05$ level in COP scores for Not Literate, Primary School, Secondary School, High School, associate degree- bachelor's degree and master's degree $F(2,1363) = 1,564, p=.154$. Whether COP differed according to father education was analysed. There was no statistically significant difference in COP scores for Not Literate, Primary School, Secondary School, High School, associate degree- bachelor's degree and master's degree at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2,1363) = ,911, p=.486$.

For the second research question we conducted another Anova test. The results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and ANOVA Results for CU

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	F	Sig.	Partial Squared	Eta	Observed Power
Gender	2,938	,20193	1273	11,822	,000	,017		,995
Age	3,9733	,50257	1338	1,753	,120	,007		,608
No response	4,0000	,60557	4					
16	3,8270	,66840	64					
17	3,9600	,53163	654					
18	4,0160	,43780	391					
19	3,9787	,35037	200					
20+	3,9778	,96817	25					
Graduation School Type	3,9733	,50257	1338	,563	,728	,002		,209
No response	3,5926	.	1					
Anatolian High School	3,9799	,52972	816					
Vocational and Technical								
Anatolian High School	3,9564	,53472	237					
Science High School	3,9591	,20114	144					
Anatolian Imam Hatip High School	4,0123	,45946	105					
Open Education High School	3,8847	,61993	35					
School Status	3,9733	,50257	1338	1,803	,165	,003		,378
No response	4,3704	.	1					
Public High School	3,9667	,49719	1249					
Private High School	4,0623	,57018	88					
Graduation Level	3,9733	,50257	1338	23,737	,000	,051		1,000
No response	4,0988	,56696	3					
High School-4	3,9671	,47378	1232					
Graduated	4,0832	,65715	102					

Extra Train Course	3,972	,51345	1335	,048	,953	,000	,057
Graduation Year	3,976	,61236	1338	,572	,633	,001	,169
Mother Education	3,9733	,50257	1338	,724	,003	3,648	,246
No response	3,7954	,93188	21				
Not Literate	3,9391	,46550	31				
Primary School	3,9814	,62206	225				
Secondary School	3,9808	,43821	279				
High School	3,9883	,49564	435				
Associate degree- bachelor's degree	3,9590	,44924	215				
Master's degree	3,9537	,41929	132				
Father Education	3,9733	,50257	1338	,603	,728	,003	,244
No response	3,8349	,81642	24				
Not Literate	3,9028	,42829	24				
Primary School	4,0030	,48324	135				
Secondary School	3,9649	,52031	271				
High School	3,9895	,52210	487				
Associate degree- bachelor's degree	3,9661	,44587	259				
Master's degree	3,9530	,46063	138				
Number of Children	3,9733	,50257	1338	,721	,608	,003	,263
No response	4,0281	,82182	25				
1	3,9894	,32314	214				
2	3,9691	,49857	536				
3	3,9646	,54398	555				
4	4,0185	1,07375	2				
5	4,3210	,22670	6				

First, we explored whether CU differs across gender. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p = .05$ level in CU scores for males and females $F(2,1363) = 11,822, p = .000$. Although a statistical significance is observed the difference between females and males mean score was quite small. The eta squared effect size was .017. Secondly, we test whether CU differed according to age. There was no statistically significant difference in CU scores for males and females at the $p < .05$ $F(2,1363) = 1,753, p = .120$. When we investigate whether CU differs according to the type of school graduated from, there is a statistically significant difference in CU scores for the type of school graduated from at $p < .05$ level $F(2,1363) = .563, p = .728$.

We explored whether CU differed according to grade level, and there was no statistically significant difference in CU scores for public high school and private high school at the $p < .05$ level. Next, we investigated whether CU differs according to graduation level. A statistically significant difference was found in CU scores between graduates and those in high school-4 at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2,1363) = 23.737, p = .000$. When we examined CU scores across attendance in extra training courses, we noticed that there was no statistically significant difference in CU scores between those who attended extra training courses and those who did not at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2,1363) = 0.048, p = .953$. Based on graduation year, there was no statistically significant difference in CU scores among the groups of 1 year, 2-4 years, and 5 years or more at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2,1363) = 0.572, p = .633$. Comparing CU according to mother's education level showed a statistically significant difference among the groups of not literate, primary school, secondary school, high school, associate degree, bachelor's degree, and master's degree at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2,1363) = 0.724, p = .003$. Contrary to mother education level, COP differed according to father education. No statistically significant difference in COP scores for not literate, primary school, secondary school, high school, associate degree- bachelor's degree and master's degree at the $p < .05$ level $F(2,1363) = .603, p = .728$. Finally, COP differed according to number of children. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p = .05$ level in COP scores for 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 $F(2,1363) = .721, p = .608$.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the study, factors affecting the occupation and university choices of university candidates were examined. We explored whether there are significant differences between various demographic factors and education-related variables. Based on results, it was observed that students consider technological advancements, academic staff, security, and social facilities as the most critical factors when choosing

a university. Similarly, the work of Akar's (2012) points out that the factors students consider most when choosing departments of economics and administrative sciences are academic reputation, the geographical location of the university, and the sources from which information about the university is obtained. Environmental factors, the condition of the physical structure, and the influence of social media are less significant elements for students. Koçak and Çokluk Bökeoğlu (2021) emphasized in their study that the most important criterion affecting students' university preferences is the department they will study in. The next most important criterion after this is whether the university is a public or private institution and its reputation. Geographical location and socio-cultural opportunities also rank among the top five most important criteria. Our results resemble this study, in our case, we observed that 78% of the students prefer state universities. The reasons for this preference include the more advantageous fees and social facilities, higher quotas compared to foundation universities, and the uncertainty of the fee policies that foundation universities will adopt. Çatı et al. (2016) concluded that students who select more quantitative-oriented departments place more importance on the universities' access to information compared to students in other departments. Additionally, they stress that students who prefer state universities take the university's facilities into consideration.

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), factors that increase motivation in these decisions are prestigious occupations, job opportunities, and high salaries. Our results are in line with this research, students tend to prefer fields such as law, health, and engineering, which they believe they will have a higher potential for job opportunities. It is observed that the most important sources for students to obtain information about university and occupation choices are social media (22%), university promotions (19%), and school friends (19%).

According to Howard and Walsh (2011), the career choice process is a dynamic process. This process is shaped within the framework of environmental conditions and developmental stages. Based on our results, it was observed that university selection is mostly made by the students themselves (37%) and in collaboration with their families (31%). The influence of counsellors is 15%. Aslan and Koçak (2023) concluded that providing appropriate guidance from the family and social support from the environment is important in the career decision-making process. In this way, individuals' expectations of occupational outcomes and life satisfaction can be positively influenced. Additionally, Polat et al. (2021) concluded that most high school students have a high level of competence in making occupation choices and that this competence has a positive relationship with family support. According to the study's findings, it has been revealed that increasing family support and strengthening career counselling will positively affect students' career choice processes.

Based on the findings, it can be said that the significant factors influencing students' occupation and university choices are individual and family effects. Especially in university preferences, it is observed that students prioritize technological opportunities. At the stage of occupation choice, it is observed that economic benefits and the ease of finding a job are decisive factors. These results are consistent with the findings of Özden et al. (2008) and Çelik and Üzmez (2014). A large portion of the students also indicated that they would choose state universities in their preferences of university type, and it is understood that families play an important role in this decision. As a result of the study, it has been observed that the processes of university and occupation selection are influenced by multidimensional factors. These factors can also be categorized as individual, familial, and environmental factors.

In an increasingly competitive environment, universities should differentiate themselves from other universities and develop marketing strategies that will gain the trust of students and parents to attract successful students. They should develop marketing strategies appropriate to the schools where students study and the income and education levels of their families. In addition, foundation universities should develop policies to address students' wage concerns and improve physical and social conditions. As a result of the study, administrators should remember the effectiveness of career counselling and guidance services in students' preferences for future studies.

Since one of the most important sources of access to information for students is university promotion days, it is recommended that universities should work more on developing their promotion strategies. In addition, since another important source is their friends studying at the school they will prefer, universities should try to increase the satisfaction rates of students who are already students and continue

to study. The factors that influence students' university choices are the students themselves, their families, and counsellors, respectively. Accordingly, universities should carry out promotional activities not only for students and their families but also for counsellors. As a result of the study, it was seen that families were almost as influential as students in their university and occupation choices. Accordingly, to understand the factors affecting families, a similar study should be conducted in a larger population for parents as well as students. To sum up, we reveal the most influential factor in occupation and university selection. The policy makers may benefit for their strategies.

In summary, this study makes important contributions from both theoretical and practical perspectives. As an important finding of the study, the influence of families on the decision to choose a university (38%) was clearly demonstrated. This factor particularly emphasizes the need for universities to integrate the family factor into their communication strategies. The fact that social media (22%) stands out as the most common source of information is also an important finding in the context of digital transformation. As a result of the study, important findings were reached that students prioritize preference motivations in choosing a profession. It was observed that factors such as “professions of the future” and economic return came to the fore. In line with these findings, the contribution of career guidance and career promotion activities to students' motivation and the importance of restructuring these activities have been revealed. The fact that technological infrastructure and economic staff are the most important factors in choice of university reveals valuable findings in terms of both the strategic planning of institutions and the guidance of state policies. The fact that university promotional activities are one of the most important sources of information for students (19%) provides important concrete data on the development of marketing strategies in this area. The sample structure, which includes different types of high schools, allowed for analysis based on socioeconomic and academic diversity. This factor increases the generalizability of the study and provides methodological reference for similar studies.

4.1. Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies should aim to reach a larger sample size and collect data from different geographical regions in order to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, conducting comparative analyses across different types of universities and academic departments, as well as employing alternative methodologies, would further enrich the results.

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Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Determination of Factors Affecting Choice of Profession and University Preference of University Candidates

Üniversite Adaylarının Meslek Seçimi ve Üniversite Tercihini Etkileyen Faktörlerin Belirlenmesi

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DOI : [10.63556/ankad.v10i1.452](https://doi.org/10.63556/ankad.v10i1.452)

Geliş/Received: 23/02/2026

Kabul/Accepted: 04/04/2026

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

1. Giriş

Türkiye'deki nüfus artış hızı ve göçlere paralel olarak yükseköğretime olan talep her geçen yıl daha da artmaktadır. Özellikle genç nüfus oranının genele göre yüksek olması, üniversite çağına gelen birey sayısının sürekli artmasına yol açmakta; buna paralel olarak üniversite sayısında yaşanan önemli artışa rağmen, üniversitelere yerleşemeyen aday sayısı da artış göstermeye devam etmektedir. Yükseköğretime yönelik karşılanamayan bu talep hem öğrencileri hem de öğrencilerin ailelerini farklı arayışlara yöneltmektedir. Eğitim için yurt dışındaki okullara yönelen öğrencilerin sayısının artması, hem bireysel olarak aile bütçelerini zorlamakta hem de ülkenin nitelikli insan gücü açısından kayıplar yaşamasına neden olmaktadır.

Son yıllarda özellikle vakıf üniversitelerinin hızla artması öğrenciler için önemli bir tercih imkânı sunmakta ve üniversiteler arasındaki rekabetin de artmasına sebep olmaktadır. Özellikle büyük şehirlerde yoğunlaşan vakıf üniversiteleri, yükseköğretim sisteminde önemli bir yer tutmakta ve vakıf üniversitelerinin sağladığı burs olanakları, yabancı dilde eğitim, gelişmiş sosyo-kültürel faaliyetler, modern donanımlı kampüs imkanları onları devlet üniversitelerine alternatif hale getirmektedir. Bu durum, üniversite adayları açısından daha geniş bir tercih yelpazesi anlamına gelmekte ve adayların karar verme süreçlerinde çok daha fazla değişkeni göz önünde bulundurmalarını zorunlu hale getirmektedir.

Türkiye'de 2023-2024 eğitim-öğretim yılı verilerine göre ortaöğretim düzeyinde toplam 4.721.331 öğrencinin öğrenim gördüğü ve net okullaşma oranının %87,97 seviyesinde gerçekleştiği belirtilmektedir (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı). Bu istatistiklerde belirtilen öğrenciler aynı zamanda yükseköğretime geçiş potansiyeli taşıyan öğrencilerdir. Üniversite aday öğrenci sayısının bu kadar yüksek olması ve çok fazla okul seçeneğinin olması hem öğrencilerin üniversite seçimlerini hem de üniversitelerin öğrencilerin kendilerini tercih etmelerini sağlamasını zorlaştırmaktadır. Bu süreçte öğrenciler yalnızca akademik başarı kriterlerini göz önünde bulundurmamaktadır. Akademik başarının yanı sıra üniversitenin bulunduğu şehir, kampüs yaşamı ve sosyal imkanlar, gelecekteki iş bulma imkânı ve kariyer olanakları, burs imkânına göre de seçecekleri üniversiteye karar vermektedirler. Tüm bu faktörlerin çeşitliliği, üniversite tercihini çok boyutlu ve stratejik bir karar sürecine dönüştürmektedir. Bu çeşitlilik, üniversitelerin tanıtım stratejilerini daha bilinçli ve hedef odaklı kılmalarını zorunlu hale getirmektedir.

Bireylerin meslek ve üniversite seçimleri hayatlarının yalnızca bir dönemini değil tamamını etkileyen önemli ve uzun vadeli sonuçları olan kararları içerir. Öğrenciler bu kararları verirken çevrelerindeki belirli faktörlerden etkilenir. Bu faktörler bireyin gelecekteki çalışma alanını, gelir düzeyini, yaşam standardını, sosyal çevresini, hatta yaşamak isteyeceği şehri ve kuracağı yaşam biçimini olabilir. Bu faktörlerin belirlenmesi üniversitelerin tanıtım faaliyetlerinde nasıl bir strateji izlemelerini

belirlemelerine katkı sađlaması yanında öđrencilerin bilinçli seçim yapmalarına katkı sađlayarak gençlerin mutlu bir kariyer sürdürmelerine de katkı sađlayacaktır. Tatmin edici ve mutlu süren bir kariyerin temeli, bireyin kendini gerçekleştirebileceđi ve potansiyelini ortaya çıkarabileceđi bir eğitim ortamında atılmaktadır. Hem akademik hem de sosyal açıdan kendini ait hissedebileceđi bir okulda, ilgi duyduđu ve yeteneklerine uygun bir bölümde eğitim almak, kariyer yolculuğunun en sađlam başlangıç noktası olacaktır. Çünkü üniversite yılları yalnızca mesleki bilgi ve becerilerinin edinildiđi bir dönem deđil; aynı zamanda kişinin kişisel kimliđini, sosyal ilişkilerini ve geleceđe yönelik hayallerini oluşturdđu önemli bir yařam evresidir.

2. Yöntem

Kesitsel tarama modeli kullanılarak yapılan bu çalışmada, bireylerin meslek ve üniversite seçerken hangi faktörleri dikkate aldıklarını ve bu süreçte hangi çevresel deđişkenlerden etkilendikleri gibi sorulara yanıt aranmıştır. Çalışmada küme örnekleme stratejisi kullanılmıştır ve Ankara ilinin metropol ilçelerde farklı lise ve dengi programlarda son sınıfta eğitim gören ve mezun durumda olup üniversite sınavına hazırlanan 1367 üniversite adayı arařtırmaya katılmıştır. Arařtırmaya katılan adaylar ile yüz yüze ve online anket tekniđi ile veriler toplanmıştır. İki farklı yöntemle veri toplamasının nedeni, farklı okullara ve aday gruplarına daha kolay erişim sađlanması ve veri çeşitliliđinin artırılmasına katkıda bulunmasıdır. Anket soruları cinsiyet, yař, okul türü/statüsü, mezuniyetten sonraki yıl sayısı, öđrencinin bu süreçte bir kursa devam edip etmediđi, mezuniyet yılı, anne ve babanın eğitim düzeyi, ailedeki çocuk sayısı ile ilgilidir. Meslek seçimini etkileyen faktörler, “hiç önemli deđil” ile “her zaman önemli” arasında deđişen ifadelerden oluşan 5 puanlı likert tipi bir ölçek aracılıđıyla ölçülmüştür. Toplam 24 maddeden oluşan bu ölçek, öđrencilerin meslek tercihinde hangi unsurlara ne derece önem verdiklerini ortaya koymayı amaçlamıştır. Üniversite seçimini etkileyen faktörler, “hiç önemli deđil” ile “her zaman önemli” arasında deđişen ifadelerden oluşan 5 puanlı likert tipi bir ölçek aracılıđıyla ölçülmüştür. Toplam 27 maddeden oluşan bu ise ölçek, öđrencilerin üniversite tercihinde hangi unsurlara ne derece önem verdiklerini ortaya koymayı amaçlamıştır. Elde edilen veriler IBM SPSS 26 paket programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiş ve analiz aşamasında betimleyici ve çıkarımsal istatistiklerden yararlanılmıştır. Üniversite adaylarının meslek seçiminde en çok dikkate aldıkları kriterlerin başında; mesleğin iyi gelir imkânı sađlaması (4,38), meslekte kariyer olanaklarının varlıđı (4,32), kolay iş imkânı olması (4,22), kişinin yeteneklerine uygunluđu (4,15), çalışma koşullarının güvenli ve sađlıklı olması (4,14), geleceğin meslekleri arasında yer alması (4,8) gelmektedir. Üniversite seçiminde ise; Üniversitenin sahip olduđu teknolojik imkanlar ve laboratuvarlar (4,38), Üniversite kampüsünün güvenliđi (4,32) bunu sırası ile, akademik kadrosunun güçlü olması (4,31), üniversitenin fiziksel, kültürel ve sosyal imkanları (4,28), üniversitenin bulunduđu şehir (4,22), üniversitenin hijyen kurallarına uyumu (4,22), üniversitelinin sunduđu yabancı dil eğitimi (4,15), üniversitenin toplumdaki imaj ve algısı (4,15) ve üniversitenin uluslararası sıralaması (4,14) izlemektedir. Burada dikkat çeken faktör öđrencilerin üniversitesinin uluslararası ölçekteki görünürlüđu ve itibarını da deđerlendiriyor olmalarıdır. Bu durum, üniversitelerin uluslararasılaşma çabalarını daha da önemli hale getirmektedir.

3. Bulgular

Bu çalışma hem teorik hem de pratik açılardan önemli katkılar ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmanın önemli bir bulgusu olarak, ailelerin üniversite seçimi kararındaki etkisi (%38) açıkça gösterilmiştir. Aile etkisinin bu kadar yüksek bir düzeyde olduđunun tespit edilmesi, üniversiteler açısından stratejik sonuçlar doğurmaktadır. Bu faktör, özellikle üniversitelerin aile faktörünü iletişim stratejilerine entegre etme ihtiyacını vurgulamaktadır. Sosyal medyanın (%22) en yaygın bilgi kaynađı olarak öne çıkması da dijital dönüşüm bağlamında önemli bir bulgudur. Çalışma sonucunda, öđrencilerin meslek seçiminde tercih motivasyonlarına öncelik verdikleri önemli bulgulara ulaşılmıştır. “Geleceğin meslekleri” ve “ekonomik getiri” gibi faktörlerin ön plana çıktığı gözlemlenmiştir. Bu bulgular doğrutusunda, kariyer rehberliđi ve kariyer tanıtım faaliyetlerinin öđrencilerin motivasyonuna katkısı ve bu faaliyetlerin yeniden yapılandırılmasının önemi ortaya konmuştur. Teknolojik altyapı ve ekonomik personelin üniversite seçiminde en önemli faktörler olması hem kurumların stratejik planlaması hem de devlet politikalarının yönlendirilmesi açısından deđerli bulgular ortaya koymaktadır. Üniversite tanıtım faaliyetlerinin öđrenciler için en önemli bilgi kaynaklarından biri olması (%19), bu alanda pazarlama stratejilerinin geliřtirilmesi konusunda önemli somut veriler sađlamaktadır. Farklı lise türlerini içeren örnekleme yapısı, sosyoekonomik ve akademik çeşitliliđe dayalı analiz yapılmasına olanak sađlamıştır.

Bu faktör, araştırmanın bulgularının daha geniş örneklem gruplarına uyarlanabilmesine olanak tanıyarak çalışmanın genelleştirilebilirliğini önemli ölçüde artırmaktadır. Elde edilen sonuçların yalnızca belirli bir örneklemele sınırlı kalmayıp benzer sosyodemografik özelliklere sahip farklı gruplar için de anlamlı çıkarımlar sunabilmesi, çalışmanın bilimsel değerini güçlendirmektedir.

4. Sonuç ve Öneriler

Bilgi kaynağı olarak ise en çok başvurduğu kaynak sosyal medya (%22), üniversite tanıtım çalışmaları (%19) ve bireylerin okulda okuyan arkadaşları (%19) gelmektedir. Nihai kararı aileleri ile verdikleri (%38) görülmüştür. Buradaki en önemli bulgu öğrencilerin en güçlü yönlendiricilerinden birinin hala aileler olduğudur. Ailelerin üniversite tercih sürecindeki belirleyici rolünün yanı sıra, günümüzde sosyal medyanın giderek artan etkisi ve özellikle genç kuşağın yoğun sosyal medya kullanım alışkanlıkları, üniversitelerin iletişim ve tanıtım yaklaşımlarını yeniden gözden geçirmelerini zorunlu kılmaktadır. Bu durumun sonucu olarak üniversitelerin dijital pazarlama ve çevrimiçi tanıtım stratejilerine daha fazla yatırım yapmaları gerektiğini göstermektedir.