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To What Extent Does Perceived Employability Affect Life Satisfaction? Findings from Munzur University Students

İstihdam Edilebilirlik Algısı Yaşam Memnuniyetini Ne Ölçüde Etkiler? Munzur Üniversitesi Öğrencilerinden Bulgular

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Abstract: This study analyzes the factors affecting the general life satisfaction of students at Munzur University, one of the universities established after 2006 in Turkey. To that end, data obtained from a questionnaire survey conducted at Munzur University was used. A hierarchical linear regression is predicted that includes university students' satisfaction variables related to non-university domain (income, their use of leisure time, health and family relations) and university domain (academic and physical opportunities, perceived employability and overall evaluation). The findings of the research indicate that satisfaction derived from non-university sub-domains impact their general life satisfaction positively. Perceived employability has the most predictive power in the broad model that includes university domain. This finding is discussed regarding how students' employment expectation in their post-graduation lives is the main determinant with respect to their general life satisfaction in the contexts of increasing graduate unemployment and academic inflation in Turkey.

Keywords: Perceived Employability, University Students' Life Satisfaction, Academic Inflation, Hierarchical Linear Regression, Munzur University

JEL Classification: I23, I28, I31, J64

Öz: Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de 2006 sonrasında kurulan üniversitelerden biri olan Munzur Üniversitesi'ndeki öğrencilerin genel yaşam memnuniyetlerine etki eden faktörleri analiz etmektedir. Bu amaçla, Munzur Üniversitesi'nde yapılan anket çalışmasının verileri kullanılarak, öğrencilerin üniversite-dışı (gelir, boş zaman kullanımı, sağlık ve aile ilişkileri) ve üniversite (akademik ve fiziki olanaklar, istihdam edilebilirlik algısı ve genel değerlendirme) alanlarına ilişkin memnuniyet değişkenlerini içeren bir hiyerarşik doğrusal regresyon modeli tahminlenmiştir. Bulgular, üniversite-dışı alt alanlardan duyulan memnuniyetin genel yaşam memnuniyetini pozitif etkilediğini göstermektedir. Üniversite alanının da dahil edildiği geniş modelde en güçlü değişken istihdam edilebilirlik algısı olmuştur. Öğrencilerin genel yaşam memnuniyetlerinin en temel belirleyicisinin mezuniyet sonrasına yönelik istihdam beklentileri olduğu şeklindeki bu bulgu, Türkiye'de son dönemde artan üniversite mezunu işsizliği ve akademik enflasyon çerçevesinde tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İstihdam Edilebilirlik Algısı, Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Yaşam Memnuniyeti, Akademik Enflasyon, Hiyerarşik Doğrusal Regresyon, Munzur Üniversitesi

JEL Sınıflandırması: I23, I28, I31, J64

1. Introduction

An unprecedented scale of growth defines Turkey's higher education system. In the last twenty years, the number of universities has increased three times, while the number of university students has risen five times (CHE, Higher education information management

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system). In 2018, there were 7,5 million university students in the country, whereas this was limited to 3 million in Germany, which has a similar population, and 2,5 million in France and in the UK (Eurostat, Education and training database). For the same year, Turkey's gross enrollment ratio in tertiary education at a level of 113 % was well above the global average (38 %), placing the country at the third rank in the world. Between 2006 and 2018, the gross enrollment ratio in tertiary education increased by 167 %. The global average for the gross enrollment ratio in tertiary education was 52 % (Turkstat, Education statistics; Worldbank, Education statistics).

Several factors on the macro level explain this phenomenal growth such as the reduction of regional development differences, support of local actors to gain economic and political rent (Kaynar and Parlak, 2005), the government's desire to reduce social tensions among youth that aspire to become university students and the broader accelerating privatization dynamics within education. However, the government policy to open a university in every city without taking the question of academic and physical infrastructure (equipment, dormitories, social spaces, transportation etc.) much into account has been controversial in terms of education quality. Although five Turkish universities ranked in the first 500 universities in 2011 according to URAP (university ranking by academic performance), this number consistently fell down year by year. Since 2016, no Turkish university ranked in the first 500 universities (URAP research laboratory). In addition, university students' literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills in technologically rich environments is well below the OECD average (OECD, Survey of Adult Skills). In line with these qualitative problems, university students' satisfaction regarding education, campus life, academic support, and career support has deteriorated. According to Turkey's University Satisfaction Research data, the universities that were opened in 2006 and later weigh heavily to impact the decrease in university satisfaction levels (Karadağ and Yücel, 2019a). All these quantitative data indicate that the academic climate in Turkey is also qualitatively transforming in negative terms.

One of the main problems caused by academic inflation, which means a high increase in the number of university graduates (Hesseln and Jackson, 2000; Yi and McMurtrey, 2013; Yalçıntaş, 2019), has been a significant graduate unemployment.[1] After graduation, educated youth in Turkey have to face the corrosive effects of educational stagflation (Brown, 2003), which occurs because the demand for graduates in the labor market remains below the supply of diplomas. While the large reserves of educated graduates enable employers to gain a

[1] In OECD countries, the unemployment rate among university graduates between the ages of 25-34 fell from %7,3 to %5,3 between 2014 and 2019. Yet, the unemployment rate consistently increased from %11,4 to %14,9 in Turkey during the same years (OECD, Education at a glance database). In Turkey, it is observed that more education does not contribute towards employability, mainly because the unemployment rates across high-school and university graduates are very close in 2019 (OECD, 2020).

competitive edge in shaping wages and working conditions, the criteria to apply for positions gets harder (Yalçıntaş, 2019). Due to the cost concerns of employers, this race in which graduates with the necessary professional equipment and ready for the job are selected (Brown and Souto-Otero, 2020) leads to the reduction of the main purpose of the education process to being employable by both students and universities. The demand for *peripheral universities*[2] founded after 2006 comes overwhelmingly from the *first-generation students*[3] . As in other global cases, these students come from families that are generally in low-income groups, reside in cities close to the university (Inman and Mayes, 1999). Since their education investment constitutes a major financial burden for their families, students of these universities consider university to be an institution that would functionally enable them to find a good job with a decent wage (Lehmann, 2009). Because of the academic inflation and the hiking qualitative problems within higher education in the last twenty years, scholars observe that graduates of peripheral universities have quite low expectations regarding employment (Karadağ and Yücel, 2019a). It could be stated that unemployment anxiety is more intense among these students, for whom university is an instrument of finding a profession. They are more anxious about future employment prospects since they come from low-income areas (Acun, 2020) where youth unemployment is much higher than the country average.

One of the vital problems caused by unemployment is that it lowers individuals' life satisfaction (Clark and Oswald, 1994; Winkelmann and Winkelmann, 1998). The main reasons behind the decreasing life satisfaction include psychological (depression, anxiety, loss of self-confidence) and social (loss of status) costs led by unemployment (Frey and Stutzer, 2002). Life satisfaction drops significantly also across students who develop unemployment anxiety upon witnessing an increasing amount of joblessness among university graduates. Undoubtedly, one needs to consider income, use of leisure time, health, social relations and socio-cultural belonging, which determine individuals' life satisfaction along with employment expectations (Veenhoven, 1984). Therefore, analyses of university students' life satisfaction has to be expanded to cover both university and non-university life domains. Such an approach would make it possible to understand in what capacity students' satisfaction regarding their university lives contribute to their general life satisfaction.

Being one of the many universities opened in the 2000s as part of the government's policy to open a university in every city, Munzur University is a good representative of the abovementioned institutional settings. Founded in Tunceli, the city with the lowest population (Turkstat, Address based population registration system) and the most unhappy city (Turkstat,

[2] The term peripheral university refers to the universities that were established in underdeveloped regions as a result of the government's policy to open a new university in every city during the 2000s.
[3] First-generation students are those whose parents do not have a university degree.

Life satisfation survey 2013) in the country, Munzur University ranks 178 among 188 universities in Turkey in terms of student satisfaction in the 2018-2019 academic year (Karadağ and Yücel, 2019a).

Our study then aims to reveal the factors that determine university students' general life satisfaction in the case of Munzur University. This study has two main contributions to the relevant literature in Turkey. The first is that a peripheral university was preferred, which was established without creating a physical and academic infrastructure and where student satisfaction remained extremely low. Second, the university and non-university domains that affect students' overall life satisfaction were analyzed comparatively. Non-university domain includes students' income, health, family relations and their use of leisure time. University-domain consists of students' satisfaction regarding the university's academic and physical infrastructure, perceived employability and their overall evaluations of university. We will present the extent to which these two domains are able to explain students' general life satisfaction through a hierarchical linear regression.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Life satisfaction refers to how individuals evaluate their quality of life based on the criteria they see important (Shin and Johnson, 1978). Socio-economic status, work, effective use of leisure time, family relations, friendships, religiosity and other similar sub-domains hierarchically determine general life satisfaction (Sirgy, 2012). While individuals take similar domains into consideration in evaluating their life qualities, they also tend to make a different evaluation in terms of the priority and importance of these domains (Pavot and Diener, 2009; Veenhoven, 1996). As far as university students are concerned, university life should be included among these sub-domains because the academic, physical and social resources of universities, along with these institutions' capacity to prepare students for post-graduation life, can affect students' general life satisfaction.

Drawing on bottom-up spillover theory, Sirgy et. al (2010), Yu and Lee (2008), and Arslan and Akkaş (2014) conclude that students' university life satisfaction positively impact their general life satisfaction. Using social cognitive theory, Lent et.al (2005), Sheu et.al (2014) and Işık et.al (2018) demonstrate how academic satisfaction boost students' general life satisfaction. Chow (2005), Gündoğar et.al (2007) and Hendershott et.al (1992) indicate that students with fulfilling academic experiences also have a higher level of general life satisfaction. Yet, some studies show that there is either no relationship between university satisfaction and general life satisfaction (Rode et al, 2005) or reveal that the relationship between the two is weak (Michalos and Orlando, 2006).

Scholars have often examined educational quality and social climate as they considered the relative importance of the sub-domains within university life in relation to general university satisfaction (Sirgy et.al., 2010; Wiers-Jenssen et.al., 2002; El Hassan, 2011; Douglas and Douglas, 2006; Arslan and Akkaş, 2014; Aldemir and Gülcan, 2004; Yu and Lee, 2008). Universities' physical resources and equipment infrastructures can also determine the quality of university life and university satisfaction (Muhammad et.al, 2014; Chan et.al, 2005; Yu and Lee, 2008; Li-Wei Mai, 2005, Mihanovic et.al, 2016).

At the same time, academic satisfaction is high among students who think that their diploma will contribute to their chances of finding a job, as well as those with high career expectations (Campana et.al., 2016; Li-Wei Mai, 2005, Işık et.al., 2018), and among students who find the opportunity to intern during school (Bini and Masserini, 2016). Along with the abovementioned dimensions of university satisfaction, employability optimism (Räty et.al., 2020) also influences students' general life satisfaction (Karavdic and Baumann, 2014; Özdikmenli-Demir, 2010; Michalos and Orlando, 2006; Gündoğar et.al. 2007). Although they don't directly experience unemployment up until graduation, university students' fear and anxiety of unemployment negatively affects their psychological well-being (Ersoy-Kart and Erdost, 2008). With the experience of unemployment after graduation, it is inevitable for students' life satisfaction to further fall down as they are unable to receive returns on invested time and resources (Eurofound, 2017).

3. Method

3.1. Data

We collected our research data through a questionnaire survey conducted with students of Munzur University during May and June of 2018. The survey includes questions to measure students' demographic features, income, leisure activities, family relations, subjective health evaluations, general life satisfaction and their levels of satisfaction in several realms with respect to Munzur University. Questionnaires were distributed in the classroom and filled in by the students themselves under observation.

The sample of our research was selected among students that were actively registered in the central campus of Munzur University during the academic year of 2018-2019. A total sum of 219 surveys were carried out. Surveys inappropriate for analysis because of their low response percentage were taken out. Therefore, 200 surveys were available for analysis. 45 of these eligible surveys were from students of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 48 were from Faculty of Engineering, 66 were from Faculty of Arts, 27 were from

Two-Year Vocational School, and 14 were from Faculty of Health Sciences. 39,5% of participants were seniors, 33% were juniors, 24,5% were sophomores and 3% were freshmen.

108 of the survey participants were women, whereas 92 were men. Average age was 22.8, while median age was 23. 89% of the students come from East and Southeast regions of Turkey, where income per capita is the lowest (Turkstat, Regional Accounts Database) and the average income is 687 Turkish Liras. This amount is slightly above the monthly hunger limit (517 Turkish Liras) for an adult as of 2019 June but well below the cost of living (2,559 Turkish Liras) for an unmarried and childless citizen (Türk-iş, 2019).

3.2. Variables

3.2.1. Satisfaction with Life

Munzur University students' general life satisfaction is the dependent variable in our study. In measuring the level of general life satisfaction, we used Diener et.al.'s (1985) satisfaction with life scale (SWLS), which includes five questions. We asked students the extent to which they agree with the following statements: "SWLS1: In most ways, my life is close to my ideal;" "SWLS2: The conditions of my life are excellent;" "SWLS3: I am satisfied with my life;" "SWLS4: So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life;" and "SWLS5: If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing." Students were asked to respond with a Likert scale of seven options (1: I strongly disagree, 7: I strongly agree). In our sample, the average of general life satisfaction scale with a minimum of 5 and maximum of 35 was 14.51. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used while forming the general life satisfaction variable.

3.2.2. Non-university Domain

In this study, the variables of non-university domain include students' satisfaction levels from monthly income levels, leisure activities (entertainment, cultural and sports activities), health conditions and family relations (0: completely dissatisfied, 10: completely satisfied). Since general life satisfaction relies on an individual's subjective assessments, we did not use the absolute level of income but the level of satisfaction from income in this model. The level of satisfaction with each sub-domain was measured with a single question. Students of Munzur University expressed that they were generally satisfied about family relations (μ=8.10) and health conditions (μ=6.25) but were predominantly dissatisfied about leisure activities (μ=3.70) and monthly income (μ=3.72).

3.2.3. University Domain

We posed 9 questions to the participants in order to measure their levels of satisfaction from Munzur University. We measured students' satisfaction with the average level of faculty members' knowledge, laboratories, computer, library, internet and other equipment opportunities, social spaces, dormitory services, transportation services, the general quality of education, and the university's activities with respect to preparing students for business life (0: completely dissatisfied, 10: completely satisfied), their hope to find a job upon graduation (0: completely hopeless, 10: completely hopeful), and their levels of overall trust towards the university (0: completely trust, 10: completely distrust).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable name	Variable description (Scale)	N	Mean	Std. D.
SWLS				
SWLS1	1-7	200	3.08	1.53
SWLS2	1-7	200	2.54	1.49
SWLS3	1-7	200	3.54	1.69
SWLS4	1-7	200	3.25	1.77
SWLS5	1-7	200	2.12	1.55
Sex	0-1	200	0.54	0.50
Age	19-34	200	22.8	1.92
Non-university domain				
Income	0-10	200	3.72	3.09
Use of leisure time	0-10	199	3.70	2.60
Health	0-10	199	6.25	2.85
Family	0-10	200	8.10	2.49
University domain				
Average level of faculty members' knowledge	0-10	200	5.64	2.61
Equipment infrastructure (computer, library, internet, laboratory)	0-10	200	3.05	2.81
Dormitory services	0-10	200	2.73	2.63
Transportation services	0-10	200	2.19	2.66
Social spaces	0-10	200	1.33	2.03
Preparation for business life	0-10	200	1.94	2.38
Hope to find a job	0-10	200	3.38	2.33
General quality of education	0-10	200	3.16	2.75
Trust	0-10	200	3.07	2.66

According to these figures given in Table 1, only the satisfaction from the instructors' level of knowledge (μ=5.64) is above the median in the question scale. In that regard, it is possible to state that the satisfaction from the instructors' level of knowledge is above

institutional satisfaction. The lowest levels of satisfaction have been reported in relation to social spaces (μ=1.33) and the university's resources to prepare students for business life (μ=1.94) (see Table 1). These indicated nine items have been subjected to PCA in order to be used in regression analysis.

3.2.4. Principal Component Analysis

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is a method of data reduction in order to form the minimum number of representative components from an existing set of variables (Hair et.al., 2014). In order to form the general life satisfaction (SWLS) variable and the relevant explanatory variables regarding university life in our study and to use the scores in regression analysis, we applied two different PCA. We used 7-point (1-7) and 11-point Likert scales (0-10) respectively regarding general life satisfaction and university satisfaction. In the case of PCA regarding general life satisfaction, we used polychoric correlations suggested by Kolenikov and Angeles (2004). In the Stata module developed by Kolenikov, if the items take values above 10, Pearson correlations are used as in continuous variables (StataCorp, 2015). Therefore, Pearson correlations were used in the PCA regarding university satisfaction. We adopted the rule of eigenvalue greater than one in determining the number of components (Kaiser, 1960).

We extracted only one component, with an eigenvalue of 3.25, from polychoric PCA regarding general life satisfaction. This component explains 64.9 % of the variance. Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p<0.001$) and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure (KMO) (0.857) indicate sufficiency of correlations among the variables and appropriateness of the component analysis. The minimum variable-specific measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) value was 0.84, which is well above the threshold value of 0.50. (Hair et.al., 2014). Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.83), which is above the recommended threshold value (0.70) (Mooi et.al., 2018), reveals that the scale has internal consistency. The pattern matrix that shows the correlations between the component and variables is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Polychoric PCA of Life Satisfaction (Pattern Matrix)

Variable	General life satisfaction
SWLS1	0.788
SWLS2	0.839
SWLS3	0.854
SWLS4	0.819
SWLS5	0.721

$KMO = 0.857, Bartlett's\ test\ of\ sphericity: \chi 2(10) = 444.9\ (p < 0.001)$

As PCA was applied to the nine items representing the participants' satisfaction from Munzur University, three components with an eigenvalue of greater than one was extracted. These components explain 69.1 % of the variance. We present the components after promax rotation with Kaiser normalization and component loadings of each item in Table 3. The highest component loadings regarding items are indicated in bold.

Table 3. Results of PCA of University Satisfaction (Pattern matrix)

Variable	Academic and physical opportunities	Perceived employability	Overall evaluation
Average level of faculty members' knowledge	**0.711**	-0.248	0.118
Equipment infrastructure	**0.763**	0.068	-0.008
Social spaces	**0.579**	0.238	-0.095
Dormitory services	**0.722**	0.031	0.126
Transportation services	**0.665**	0.215	-0.085
Preparation for business life	0.087	**0.885**	-0.036
Hope to find a job	-0.073	**0.925**	0.119
General quality of education	0.060	0.023	**0.901**
Trust	-0.025	0.041	**0.930**

$KMO = 0.783, Bartlett's\ test\ of\ sphericity: \chi 2(36) = 707.7\ (p < 0.001)$

The first component explaining 43.7% of the variance is comprised of five items that include the participants' evaluations regarding the academic and physical opportunities in Munzur University (λ= 3.93). This component consists of students' satisfaction from the average level of faculty members' academic competency, equipment infrastructure, social spaces, dormitory and transportation services. The second component reflecting students' stance on perceived employability is comprised of two items and explains 14.1% of the variance (λ= 1.27). The first item reveals students' opinions regarding the university's capacity to prepare students for business life, whereas the second one shows students' hope to find a job following graduation. The third component is comprised of students' overall evaluations of Munzur University. This component with two items regarding students' satisfaction from the general quality of education and their trust to the university explains 11.3% of the variance (λ= 1.02). Although the recommendation is that the components in PCA are comprised of at least three items, it is also possible to form components with two items as long as they are highly correlated (r>0.70) (Worthington and Whittaker, 2006). In our study, correlation of items for the second component is 0.77 (p<0.001), whereas this is 0.76 (p<0.001) for the third component.

Bartlett's test of sphericity (p<0.001), KMO (0.783) and minimum MSA value (0.69) provide the sufficient conditions for implementing PCA. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient meets

the conditions of internal consistency at the level of scale (0.83) and subscales (academic and physical opportunities: 0.77, perceived employability: 0.87 and overall evaluation: 0.86)

4. Results

A glance at the results of the correlation matrix reveals that all explanatory variables except for gender are significantly correlated with general life satisfaction (Table 4). Variables that are in the highest correlation with general life satisfaction are, respectively, perceived employability (r=0.51) and satisfaction regarding the use of leisure time (r=0.49). There is a weak to moderate correlation between university-domain components (academic and physical opportunities, perceived employability, overall evaluation).

Table 4. Zero-order Correlation Matrix for all Variables

Variables		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1.	Sex	1.00									
2.	Age	.30***	1.00								
3.	Income	-.07	-.08	1.00							
4.	Health	-.04	.02	.10	1.00						
5.	Leisure act.	-.03	-.08	.27***	.36***	1.00					
6.	Family	.10	-.05	.05	.12	.06	1.00				
7.	Academic and physical opportunities	.09	.15*	.25***	.19**	.29***	.09	1.00			
8.	Perceived employability	.09	.07	.26***	.22**	.40***	.07	.45***	1.00		
9.	Overall evaluation	.04	-.01	.21**	.15*	.12	.24***	.36***	.28***	1.00	
10.	General life satisfaction (SWLS)	-.12	-.16*	.35***	.38***	.49***	.23**	.37***	.51***	.31***	1.00

**p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001*

In our study, we used a three-step hierarchical linear regression model in order to explain students' general life satisfaction. We preferred this method in order to add variables in blocks and show the changes in R2. In the first step, only age and sex variables were used. In Step 2, satisfaction from non-university sub-domains (income, leisure activities, health and family relations) was added to the regression analysis. In Step 3, university domain components gathered from PCA were added to the regression analysis, enabling us to reach the broad model. Although statistically significant, variables of age and sex from Step 1 make a very small contribution to the explanatory power of the model. These variables explain just 3% of the variance in general life satisfaction: $F(2,195)=3.13$, $p< .05$. There is a negative relationship between age and life satisfaction in the model. Yet, there is no significant difference between male and female students' life satisfaction.

Table 5. Results of Hierarchical Regression for General Life Ssatisfaction

Variables	β	*RSE*	*VIF*	sr^2	R^2	ΔR^2
STEP 1					0.030	0.030*
Sex	0.075	0.225	1.10	0.005		
Age	-0.136*	0.055	1.10	0.017		
STEP 2					0.391	0.361***
Sex	0.068	0.186	1.12	0.004		
Age	-0.090	0.044	1.11	0.007		
Income	0.227**	0.037	1.09	0.048		
Health	0.220***	0.031	1.17	0.041		
Leisure activities	0.332***	0.047	1.23	0.090		
Family relations	0.176*	0.042	1.04	0.030		
STEP 3					0.503	0.111***
Sex	0.102	0.172	1.13	0.009		
Age	-0.129**	0.036	1.15	0.014		
Income	0.141*	0.033	1.17	0.017		
Health	0.178**	0.030	1.19	0.027		
Leisure activities	0.214**	0.044	1.39	0.033		
Family relations	0.144*	0.036	1.09	0.019		
Academic and physical opportunities	0.092	0.102	1.44	0.006		
Perceived employability	0.294***	0.113	1.46	0.059		
Overall evaluation	0.089	0.091	1.25	0.006		

Robust standard errors (RSE) are used for the regressions
β: standardised regression coefficients; sr^2: squared semipartial correlations; VIF: variance inflation factor
**p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001*

Regression results indicate that variables representing the non-university sub-domains included in Step 2 explain an additional 36.1% of the variance in general life satisfaction. According to F test for the increment in R2, this increase is statistically significant: F(4,191)=32.81, p< .001. In the model, students' satisfaction from non-university sub-domains significantly predicted their general life satisfaction. The general life satisfaction of students is higher if they are also satisfied with their leisure activities (β=.332, p< .001), personal income (β=.227, p< .01), health (β=.220, p< .001) and family relations (β=.176, p< .05).

In Step 3, which includes variables related to the university domain, we observe that the explanatory power of the regression has increased. These variables add 11.1% to the explained variance in general life satisfaction: F(3,188)=13.09, p< .001. Among the added components, it is observed that only the component representing students' perceived employability is a significant predictor of general life satisfaction in the model (β= .294, p<

.001). In addition, the regression coefficients in the broad model reveal that the most powerful variable that determines general life satisfaction is students' perceived employability. This is followed by students' satisfaction regarding the use of leisure time (β=.214, p< .01).

Partial correlation coefficients showing the unique contribution of every explanatory variable to the explained variance of general life satisfaction in the models were also added to Table 5. Accordingly, it is observed that satisfaction from leisure activities (sr^2= .090), is the variable with the most explanatory power in the second model, whereas it is perceived employability (sr^2= .059) in the third (broad) model. Since VIF calculated for the variables was quite close to 1, it could be stated that the problem of multicollinearity does not exist in all three models (Hair et.al., 2014).

5. Discussion

The extent to which satisfaction of students from the peripheral universities established after 2006 determines their general life satisfaction has been the main research question of this study. The sample of our study is from Munzur University, which bears the main characteristics of other peripheral universities. Scholars have demonstrated that students' satisfaction from their universities, together with other life domains, is a significant determinant of general life satisfaction (Sirgy vd., 2010; Lent vd., 2005). In our hierarchical linear regression that was formed along with the insights of this literature, we first researched the impact of non-university sub-domains on general life satisfaction, and then included the variables of satisfaction from university life to demonstrate the extent to which they predict the model.

Our findings regarding the impact of non-university sub-domains on general life satisfaction are mostly in line with the literature. It's been observed that students who feel satisfied with their leisure activities (Caldwell et.al., 1992; Lepp, 2017; Lu and Hu, 2005; Ito et.al, 2017), income (Allik et.al., 2018; Møller, 1996; Flynn and MacLeod, 2015; Sam, 2001; Shim et.al., 2009; Xiao et.al., 2009), health (Vaez et.al., 2004; Grant et.al., 2009; Pedišić et.al., 2015) and family relations (Alorani and Alradaydeh, 2018; Lee and Padilla, 2016; Schnettler et.al., 2015; Brannan et.al., 2013) also have higher levels of general life satisfaction. Considering the relationship of positive causality, it could be said that the two non-university sub-domains (income and leisure activities) that were ranked low by students have largely impacted why the general life satisfaction has remained low. Munzur University is an institution that houses students predominantly from Turkey's impoverished peripheral cities, as well as students whose individual income is close to hunger limits. Therefore, many students experience financial deprivation as they graduate from university. At the same time,

while Tunceli's natural landscape is inspiring and charming, it also lacks artistic, cultural and entertainment activities that would increase the quality of leisure time from the perspective of students. Like many other cities where a new peripheral university was opened after 2006, Tunceli has also become a university city that is not student-friendly (Karadağ and Yücel, 2019b). The fact that such activities are not held within the university due to the inadequacy of social spaces further increases the aforementioned dissatisfaction.

In our study, three components representing satisfaction from university life were formed through PCA and were integrated into the model with non-university variables at the last stage of regression analysis. While descriptive statistics show that students' academic satisfaction is quite low in all categories, regression results reveal that the only component among these that significantly predict general life satisfaction is "perceived employability". At the same time, the fact that perceived employability is the variable that adds most to the explanatory power of the broad model and also is the variable with the highest coefficient indicates that students' expectations of employment play a large role in the determination of their general life satisfaction. Previous studies demonstrated that students with high level of perceived employability also have a high level of life satisfaction (Karavdic and Baumann, 2014; Özdikmenli-Demir, 2010; Michalos and Orlando, 2006; Gündoğar et.al., 2007). However, considering that the students in our sample have overwhelmingly pessimistic expectations about finding a job after graduation, it is possible to state that this pessimism is the main determinant of low levels of life satisfaction.

Our finding that the level of perceived employability is the main determinant of general life satisfaction is in fact in line with the unplanned structure of Turkey's higher education system and its negative effects on employability. The academic inflation process that's been accelerated by the Turkish government's myopic and populist policies to open a university in every city in the last 15 years caused a qualitative erosion. Due to the academic and physical inadequacies, the academic satisfaction of students in these universities has been low. However, the essential factor that decreases general life satisfaction has been unemployment anxiety. As the number of unemployed citizens with a university diploma has risen along with the unplanned increase in the number of university graduates, the employment expectations of students who are about to graduate is also negatively affected. In a general sense, it is known that a past experience of unemployment decreases life satisfaction by keeping the anxiety of future fresh (Knabel ve Rätzel, 2011). A similar tendency emerges also among students who develop an anxiety of unemployment as they observe how unemployment becomes widespread across youth with university diplomas. First generation students studying at

peripheral universities, who feel that they have to instrumentalize university education in terms of finding a job, are especially more intensely affected by this negativity.

Approximately 10% of Turkey's population invests time and money in a university diploma in order to increase their chances of participating in the labor market having a formal and regular jobs with decent wage, despite their disbelief in universities' capacity to enable students to gain worthwhile knowledge and skills. Therefore, individuals avoid lagging behind a large number of competitors, while simultaneously thinking that they will become advantageous in a labor market where the other participants are predominantly educated at the level of high school or below. The university diploma, which has long lost its quality as a tool for upward mobility, is now turning into worthless papers that have no meaning beyond applying for high school students' jobs. In that regard, decision-makers have to re-evaluate whether it is necessary for peripheral universities to continue functioning in the current circumstances, let alone opening new ones.

Our study presents important findings about how the academic inflation caused by the policy to open a new university in every city negatively impacts university students' perceived employability which in turn affecting their perceived life satisfaction. However, it has limitations since our sample is only from Munzur University students. Increasing the volume of the research sample by integrating more universities with similar structures into analysis in future research projects would enable more powerful and overarching findings.

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