



**CHOICE OF PROFESSION AS PART OF CAREER PLANNING AND FACTORS  
AFFECTING UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT PREFERENCE: A QUALITATIVE  
RESEARCH****Asst. Prof. (Ph.D.) Orhan DUMAN\*** **Asst. Prof. (Ph.D.) Sertaç ERCAN\*\*** **ABSTRACT**

*The factors influencing the choice of profession, one of the stages of career planning, are scrutinized in this study. The study's primary purpose is to define the factors affecting the choice of profession and contribute to universities' promotion and marketing activities. Within the scope of the research, focus group interviews were performed with undergraduate students, and the data acquired were analyzed using the grounded theory. According to the analysis results, the factors affecting the choice of a profession were reported by reducing to two themes and five categories. Accordingly, environmental factors, marketing activities, social media, obligations, and personal factors were determined as the main factors affecting the choice of profession. In the light of the findings, valuable suggestions have been put forward for universities as part of institutions and academicians working on choice of profession, and university department preferences, which is a decisive stage of career choice. In this day and age, where individual behaviors and social understandings are constantly altering/transforming, the fact that the factors affecting the choice of a profession also change daily shows that studies and research on this subject should be continually updated. This study is considered to make a genuine contribution to the literature as one of the current research.*

**Keywords:** Career Planning, Choice of Profession, Qualitative Research, Grounded Theory, Department Preference.

**JEL Codes:** A23, M10, M30.

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## KARİYER PLANLAMA BAĞLAMINDA MESLEK SEÇİMİ VE ÜNİVERSİTE BÖLÜM TERCİHİNİ ETKİLEYEN FAKTÖRLER: NİTEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

### ÖZET

*Çalışmada kariyer planlamanın aşamalarından biri olan meslek seçimini etkileyen faktörler araştırılmaktadır. Çalışmanın temel amacı meslek seçimini etkileyen faktörleri tespit etmek ve üniversitelerin tanıtım ve pazarlama faaliyetlerine katkıda bulunmaktır. Araştırma kapsamında lisans öğrencileri ile odak grup görüşmeleri gerçekleştirilmiş, elde edilen veriler gömülü teori kullanılarak analizler tamamlanmıştır. Gerçekleştirilen analiz sonuçlarına göre meslek seçimini etkileyen faktörler iki tema ve beş kategoriye indirgenerek raporlanmıştır. Buna göre çevresel faktörler, pazarlama faaliyetleri, sosyal medya, zorunluluklar ve kişisel faktörler meslek seçimini etkileyen temel faktörler olarak belirlenmiştir. Bulgular ışığında meslek seçimi konusunda çalışan kurum ve akademisyenler ile meslek seçiminin belirleyici bir aşaması olan üniversite bölüm tercihleri bağlamında üniversitelere yönelik pratik öneriler ortaya konmuştur. Birey davranışlarının ve toplumsal anlayışların sürekli değiştiği/dönüştüğü günümüzde, meslek seçimini etkileyen faktörlerin de her geçen gün değiştiği gerçeği bu konuyla ilgili çalışma ve araştırmaların da sürekli güncellenmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma da güncel araştırmalardan biri olarak literatüre özgün bir katkı sunacağı düşünülmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kariyer Planlama, Meslek Seçimi, Nitel Araştırma, Gömülü Teori, Bölüm Tercih.

**JEL Kodları:** A23, M10, M30.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Choosing a profession is one of the most consequential decisions a person can make in his/her life. For this reason, selecting a department in the university for senior high school students, who are university candidates, will also mean preferring a future profession; this decision is vital for students and their families. While choosing the wrong department may cost several years for the student, a lifetime spent in the wrong profession also means an unhappy future for the person. Therefore, students are expected to be meticulous when choosing a university department and to prefer the most appropriate department and profession by searching for information from diverse sources while choosing their department. In this search for information, besides the effects of traditional media and social media with the contribution of today's technological possibilities, the close environments of the student, their families, friends, and teachers are also seen as essential sources in this connection. Universities, as educational institutions, partake in fairs at different times, organize preference and promotion days, and carry out promotional activities by contacting students through social media channels in order to attract more distinguished students to their institutions, to lead the preferences of candidate students, and at the same time to inform them. Within this framework, public and foundation universities, as higher

education institutions, also welcome this marketing opportunity by making their own promotions over student preferences.

This research was performed to specify what kind of sources the students, who have made a university choice, are utilized during the information search and preference steps and which factors are influential within this framework in the department/profession choice of the students. Within this scope, besides probing the subjects of career planning and choice of profession, the factors that emerged following the focus group interview with the students and affected their decision-making process were tried to be revealed using the grounded theory. According to the analysis results, personal and environmental factors (family, peers, etc.), universities' marketing and promotion activities, and various obligations were detected as the decisive factors in the choice of department and profession.

Discovering these factors that influence the decision process of the students and revealing the reasons for their preference will enable universities to work more effectively in the promotion and orientation activities to be carried out at the stage of contacting the candidate students or beforehand. Furthermore, through communication studies, students can choose the most relevant departments for their purposes and gain the advantage of a more prosperous and efficient teaching process. Therefore, prospective students' department preferences can be seen as an essential element and the beginning of individual career planning and choice of profession. In this sense, it is necessary to talk about career planning and choice of profession in a little more detail.

## **2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. Career Planning**

Although career and profession are interchangeable from time to time (Cevher, 2015:165), the profession concept is defined as the path, process, and work area that an individual must pursue to succeed in business life. In this process, the individuals must acquire and provide the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and motivation to make their marble good (Dündar, 2013). Career planning, on the other hand, is described as a process in which a person evaluates his/her business life in the long term and adopts a course of action within the scope of his/her knowledge, concern, ability, value judgments, strengths and weaknesses, and career opportunities within and outside the institution (Barutçugil, 2004: 320). This concept is related to the choices that the persons consciously make, together with a strategic implementation plan within the framework of career opportunities, in which they review their abilities and interests.

In summary, it is an evaluation of the person by observing themselves and their environment and determining goals related to their business and efforts towards these goals. (Erdoğan, 2003: 15) The person, who will prefer the profession that he/she will do without getting bored and willingly throughout his life, is affected by various factors and makes his/her career planning according to these factors. These

factors can be expressed as the influence of family and environment, the prestige of the profession, and the person's basic abilities and interests. Misdirection of these factors may cause the individual to reevaluate in the future and then make a new choice. In this case, the person must make career planning again (Gezer, 2010: 95).

### **2.1. Choice of Profession and Factors Affecting Profession Choice**

Profession, by definition, is work done to supply valuable products and services to people, and earn money in return, based on systematic knowledge and skills attained through a specific education or experience and in which the rules are determined (Aydemir, 2018: 713). The profession also draws attention as an element of identity that enables a person to gain a respectable place in society, develops relationships, and provides a sense of being beneficial to the person (Kuzgun 2000).

On the other hand, choosing a profession is to evaluate occupational prospects in front of the person from different perspectives under his/her own needs and expectations and to decide on a profession with many positive and fewer opposing sides. Profession choice is a necessary process that develops from childhood to adulthood and vigorously influences every stage of a person's life (Kuzgun, 1982: 1). On the other hand, the choice of profession is the ranking of the professions in which the person considers to have favorable characteristics, according to the degree of willingness, and deciding on one of the professions (s)he prefers and individual efforts towards it. The reasons leading a person to a profession can be social prestige and income expectation, as well as the suitability of that profession to the interests and abilities of the person (Kuzgun, 2003:2-5). Therefore, it can be said that people tend to prefer professions that will most easily reach their expectations of gaining income, fame, and power (Yener, 2011:84).

It is evident that senior high school students, who do not currently have a profession, will choose a university department and, within this framework, a profession. For these people in the decision phase, the process is pretty tricky and a problem that needs to be solved. Individuals, who do not have accurate information, venture into making their choice of the profession based on limited and incorrect information. While a few of these decisions are correct and accurate, many have to make choices again because of wrong decisions (Çakır, 2003:33). However, when the time to choose a profession approaches, students experience indecision, and it even becomes more challenging to decide due to pressures from the immediate environment and family. Some students in this situation can make wrong decisions because of insufficient information and guidance, and some take a firm line. This situation is experienced because such an important issue is only handled at the last moment when choosing a profession (Gezer, 2010: 94).

Various factors may influence students during the decision process of profession choice. As one of these factors, the media, especially TV programs, can make some professions attractive regarding welfare and high living standards. Consequently, these professions can be preferred by students.

(Hoffner, 2006: 15) Other factors affecting students' choosing a profession are family and social environment. In such a choice, the individual ignores some details and makes decisions under the influence of the environment; therefore, he/she may change profession in the future due to the dissatisfaction experienced. Even though financial worries remain at the forefront of an individual's choice of profession, professional preferences with low income but high accessibility, made because of environmental factors, can redound upon the individual as unhappiness since they cannot let the individual has financial satisfaction. (Yörükoğlu, 2020: 15) Professional reputation, as another factor, is used to display the person's status in his/her social environment. Although different societies exhibit noticeable characteristics in terms of social environment, it is seen that occupations and cultural changes compel stratification and class formation in the social environment, which can affect the choice of profession (Çurğatay, 2010: 46). As the closest relatives of the students, parents should be able to identify and evaluate the professions most accurately and be a guide in choosing the most appropriate professions within the framework of their children's characteristics, interests, expectations, and capacities. From this standpoint, families well informed in choosing a profession can help their children more (Aydemir, 2018:714). In addition, when examined in terms of economic returns, it is seen as a common tendency by students to prefer public institutions because of the features such as social security, insurance, and high salary, as well as the high-income expectations. (Sav, 2008: 62) Gender is one of the factors affecting the choice of profession. Although there are traditionally male-intensive and female-intensive occupations, women, and men also have different occupational behaviors due to their structures. It is seen that women, who work in professions where men are intensive, question their competencies and have lower beliefs (Akdeniz, 2009: 30). The use of social media channels is seen as an essential factor in students' profession choices in terms of both information research and learning the perceptions of the profession in the social environment. In a study conducted within this framework, the department satisfaction of the participants was higher (82%), while the satisfaction of the students who preferred the department using social media was higher (89%). In this respect, social media has been discovered to be an essential factor in students' professional choices (Yörükoğlu, 2020: 83).

### **3. LITERATURE SEARCH**

In the literature, various studies on profession choices are performed on secondary education students, high school seniors, and university students. In these studies, it is seen that significant factors affecting students are revealed in different ways. In a study examining the factors affecting the profession choices of high school seniors, what influence students' preferences were found as factors such as the excess of job opportunities, talents, level of interest, personal values, self-perceptions, returns such as money, prestige, fame, and family guidance, respectively (Kıyak, 2006: 78). In another study, the factors affecting the department preferences of the university students were positive opinions about the profession (33.6%), professional advantages (28.2%), the feeling of desperation (23.5%), and the recommendations of the people around (14.7%) (Sarıkaya and Khorshid, 2009: 417). According to the

results of research conducted on secondary school students, most students (57.6%) expect the profession to be suitable for their abilities and interests. In comparison, the other factors are employment opportunities (16%), high income (15.3%), the influence of the family and the environment (4.3%), being respected (4%), and being directed by the members of the profession (2%), respectively (Aytekin, 2005:168).

The factors influencing the professional preferences of the students of the tourism department at the university are seen to be career expectations and personal characteristics, respectively; however, family and the environment have an impact, but lesser (Erdem & Kayran, 2013: 98). Another study on university students' department preference indicates that students choose their profession depending on factors such as the effect of family and environment, interest in the profession, being knowledgeable and talented in the profession, high employment potential, income, job security, career advancement opportunity, and professional prestige (Aydemir, 2018: 715). In a similar study, they were seen to prefer the department based on interest, low score, suitability for personal characteristics, and high employment opportunities (Owen et al., 2012: 141). In their professional choices, students mostly want to work in professions they love, where working hours do not affect family life, they will not work on public holidays, that are respected in society and more appropriate for the gender of the person, and in which they can develop their careers (Gezer, 2010: 95).

#### **4. DESIGN AND METHOD**

##### **4.1. Research Design**

The survey data were collected using the focus group discussion method, and examining, coding, and analyzing the obtained data were conducted based on the continuous comparison method. This method, called the grounded theory, is the process of explaining, interpreting, and adding meaning to the subject under research judging by the data. Thanks to this method, it is possible to make a unique contribution to an existing concept and/or understanding (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, in the light of the findings to be acquired at the end of the analysis, it is aimed to reveal the factors affecting the choice of profession.

Data collected through qualitative research methods can be reported systematically, as in quantitative methods, by applying appropriate principles and rules to these methods. The grounded theory is also one of these systematic reporting methods and makes it possible to make holistic inferences (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

It is aimed at this research to discover the factors that affect the choice of profession. Many different factors are declared to influence the choice of profession in the literature. The main ones among these factors are as follows: Family, peers, career prospects, status expectancy, educational environment, earnings expectation, etc. (Aydemir, 2018; Özyürek and Atıcı, 2002; Lee et al., 2018; Sarıkaya and

Khorshid 2009; Sharif et al., 2019). In addition to these main factors, which are commonly acknowledged in the literature as the factors affecting the choice of profession, it is tried in this study to reveal what other factors come to the fore from the eyes of the students, especially whether the new generation, which is called as the Z generation, is affected by the factors that already exist in the literature. For this reason, the qualitative research method is chosen in the research, and it is targeted to determine the relevant factors using an exploratory method through grounded theory.

#### **4.2. Sample and Focus Group Design**

The homogeneous sampling method was chosen in the sample selection. In this technic, a small and homogeneous sample is handled and examined in detail (Neuman, 2014). Within this framework, the sample consists of 1st-year undergraduate students maintaining their education in the Department of New Media and Communication and Public Relations at the Omer Seyfettin Faculty of Applied Sciences at Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University. The fact that they are educated in the same faculty ensures that the sample is homogeneous while being in the first years of the university makes the research suitable for the objectives as their feelings and thoughts about choosing a profession are fresh.

Two focus groups were defined from the determined sample on a voluntary basis. Focus group discussions, which are commonly used in the homogeneous sampling method (Crewwell, 2013), can be carried out within groups of different sizes. These group sizes can reach up to 15 people starting from at least four people (Kitzinger, 1995; Goss & Leinbach, 1996). The main objective of the focus group discussions is to collect data from participants (Neuman & Robson, 2014) who have similar characteristics and relative experience, using semi-structured forms, open-ended questions, brainstorming, or methods similar to interviews. In this context, the first of the two focus groups determined was performed with 14 participants from new media and communication students, and the second with 8 participants from public relations students.

#### **4.3. Execution of the Focus Group Process, Data Collection, and Analysis Method**

Using a semi-structured form, the following questions were delivered to the determined focus groups in a way appropriate to the daily language, away from academic discourses (Kruger & Casey, 2000), and the participants were asked to freely express their views:

- Which tools did you use when choosing your profession?
- What did you consider most when choosing a career?
- Did you make research on social media related to your preferred department? If yes, which platforms did you use?
- Which type of videos mostly gave you ideas while researching on social media?

• When you look back today, what are the things that you think would be good if you had some information, or if you could ask some people while researching the department and profession?

The first focus group discussions lasted 42 minutes, and the second lasted 32 minutes. They were carried out under the supervision of two researchers. While one researcher moderated the talks, the other researcher was involved as an observer. Before starting the discussions, voice recordings were carried out with the consent of the participants, the voice recordings were analyzed and transcribed, and the obtained data were analyzed through MAXQDA software. The data were divided into categories and themes by the continuous comparison method, and the findings were reported.

## 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The expressions in the data obtained following the transcription of the focus group discussions were first coded by the researchers, and then these codings were attached to joint codes. Then, the obtained codes were added into common categories, and finally, the category-related themes were determined. At the end of the analysis process, comparisons were made again for the 19 codings determined, and 15 codings were finally settled by conjoining similar codings. Thus, within the scope of the research, 15 codes, 5 categories, and two themes were revealed. These codings, categories, and themes are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Theme, Category, Codes, and Frequency Values Regarding the Factors Affecting the Choice of Profession**

Theme	Category	Codes	F	%	
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	Environmental Factors	Environmental Effect (graduate, teacher, sector employees)	6	8,57	
		Family Effect	11	15,71	
		Peer Influence	2	2,85	
		Business Opportunity	2	2,85	
	Marketing Activities	Faculty Introductions	2	2,85	
		University Promotions	15	21,42	
	Social Media	Advertisement Effect	1	1,42	
		Social Media (forums, Youtube, intro videos)	10	14,28	
		Eksi Sozluk	4	5,71	
	Obligation	Kariyer.net	3	4,28	
		Lack of Alternative	1	1,42	
			Score Effect	2	2,85
	<b>INDIVIDUAL</b>	Individual Factors	Ability Effect	3	4,28
			Area of Interest	4	5,71
			Self-realization	4	5,71



According to the findings in Table 1, the factors affecting the choice of profession are classified into two themes: environment and individual; four categories: environmental factors, marketing activities, social media, and obligation and individual factors; and fifteen codes. The findings and the interpretations that can be made from these findings are displayed at length in the following paragraphs.

### **5.1. Findings Regarding Environment Theme**

When the categories regarding this theme are examined, it is seen that there are factors related to the external environment besides the individual. Therefore, the environment theme includes the environmental factors that affect the individual while choosing a career. Findings will be examined under separate sub-headings based on the category.

#### **5.1.1. Findings Regarding Environmental Factors Category**

In the environmental factors category, four different codings were made: environmental effect, family effect, peer influence, and business opportunity.

**Environmental Effect:** According to the participants' statements, the environmental effect consists of the graduates' opinions, the guidance of the teachers/instructors, and the employees' comments in the relevant sector. According to this, these people around the participants positively affected the participants in their choice of profession. Environmental effect appears as the second most emphasized (8.57%) factor in the environmental factors category. According to these findings, it would be correct in accordance with the literature to state that environmental factors direct individuals' career choices (Aydemir, 2018; Özyürek & Atıcı, 2002; Lee et al., 2018; Sarıkaya & Khorshid 2009).

Some of the participant's views on this coding are as follows: *"I went to meet with my guidance counselor. He was also graduated from the new media and communication department, and he told me that 'if I knew then what I know now, I would continue my career directly from new media and communication,' this is etched on my memory"; "I met an advertiser who impressed me"; "... I was in contact with the person who took care of me more in the place of business, he was working at the agency. He was managing us and saying, "you're over here, you're going to do that job". I was struck by him. He said that maybe you can create your own advertising brand, he directed me more like this; frankly, I already wanted to work in public relations, and talking to him encouraged me more."*

**Family Effect:** The family effect stands out as the most mentioned factor (15.71%) in the environmental factors category. At the same time, this factor was the second most discussed topic among other codings in the whole study. However, contrary to the literature (Aydemir, 2018; Özyürek & Atıcı, 2002), the family effect comes to the forefront as a negative factor in this study. When talking about the family effect, the participants stated that their families put forward various offers, but they made the final decision and that the family pressure was not the same as before.

The participant statements on the family effect are as follows: *“I wanted to have the time of my life and incline away from my family”*; *“My family was not supportive at all and they mostly wanted me to be civil servants.... so I came with my own ideas”*; *“They usually state their opinion and leave the choice to us.”*

**Peer Influence:** Peer influence, the third environmental factor, was mentioned at a very low rate (2,85) by participants. In this factor, where results are similar to those in the literature (Aydemir, 2018; Özyürek & Atıcı, 2002) were determined, the participants stated that they made a career choice as a result of the advice and suggestions of their peers.

Here are the expressions of the two participants regarding this coding: *“I have a friend who is in 4th grade here, he suggested this department to me. He praised it by saying: our school is good at such activities etc., I said that's good, and we'll be the first since it's just opened, that's the reason...”*; *“...he had a lot of influence on me when I talked”*.

**Business opportunity:** This coding also seems to have a low percentage (2,85) similar to the peer influence. Although the business opportunity is a factor that comes to the fore in the choice of profession in the literature (Aydemir, 2018; Kuzgun, 2003; Kıyak, 2006; Sarıkaya & Khorshid, 2009; Korkut-Owen et al., 2011), the fact that the interests and personal characteristics of the departments included in the sample in this study are highly correlated with talents pushes the business opportunity factor into the background. In this respect, it can be stated that the study has a limitation in this sense. However, the fact that only two participants mentioned business opportunities enabled this factor to be included in the coding.

The participant views on the business opportunity factor are as follows: *“Public relations seemed to me to be a very general concept, I thought that the business opportunity was very high”*; *“I chose this section because of the wider scope of media communication, which is why most people did the same.”*

### **5.1.2. Findings Regarding Marketing Activities Category**

In the marketing activities category, three different codings were made, which are faculty introductions, university promotions, and advertisement effect.

**Faculty Introductions:** The participants mentioned the faculty introductions with a very low percentage (2,85). When the statements were examined, only two participants stated that the introductory videos of the department heads, instructors, and students about the faculty would guide them in choosing a profession and department. Therefore, it can be stated that, contrary to the literature (Lee et al., 2018), faculty introductions, which are categorized as one of the marketing activities, do not have a very intense effect on the career choices of individuals.

The expressions of the participants regarding this coding are as follows: “... a student from each department could gather and explain, or say that ours is the first, for example, our department head could introduce public relations to us. Because it was the Bandırma University we were matriculating, there was no detailed information, everything was explained slightly. You know, people want a few details, we want to see our destination in advance.”; “... In my opinion, the university should make videos of its instructors every year. Videos about what this year's mission or vision is, what our aim is, what we want to teach the students should be shot in each department separately with their teachers.”

**University Promotions:** University promotions stand out as the code with the highest percentage (21.42%) of the research. The participants heavily touched on the subject of university promotion. Starting from this point of view, it can be stated that the promotion of the university has a very intense effect on the profession choice and even directly affects the career and faculty choice. In this topic, the participants touched upon issues such as: the fact that university promotions should be student-centered and sincere, the promotions should reflect reality rather than mere advertisements, and the importance of the fair activities. Based on these inferences, it can be concluded that it would be more appropriate to design university promotions in the form of promotions with sincere content and centered on the student, rather than advertisements suitable for the dynamics of the marketing sector.

Some opinions of the participants regarding university promotions are as follows: “I went to the university fair. There were already 3 or 4 state universities where this faculty was found. Bandırma 17 Eylül University was one of them. So I went to the university booth, and after talking there, it started to become a little clearer in my mind”; “An interview with students at school could also have been effective. But a question would be asked in an instant. ... university hired children who introduce the faculty, they are just sitting, no student does like that, on the contrary, the videos that people upload to their own channels on Youtube are more convincing.”; “In my opinion, it could be a video promoting the school more. It could have been a video that introduced the inside and outside, and the possibilities.”

**Advertisement Effect:** Since the issue of advertisement is frequently quoted in the literature (Özyürek and Atıcı, 2002), it is also specified with a separate coding in this study. However, as can be seen, there is only one participant expression regarding this coding. Therefore, this statement was recorded by including the opinion of a participant who expressed advertisement only as a marketing activity, apart from the introduction of the faculty and university. When we look at the research in general, it is seen that the advertising activities carried out for the purpose of persuasion are of little consequence in the eyes of the individuals, and individuals expect more realistic and sincere communication activities.

The only participant statement regarding this code is: “...I had seen something called PR, advertisement...”

### 5.1.3. Findings Regarding Social Media Category

In the social media category, three different codings were made: social media, ekşi sözlük, and Kariyer.net.

**Social Media:** In the research, forums, Youtube, and promotional videos (mostly on Youtube) were included in the social media category. Promotional videos in this category have different content than faculty and university introductions and advertisements mentioned in the previous marketing activities category. While the videos in the previous category contain mostly university and department introductions, the videos mentioned in this category include the introduction of the profession, the presentation of the city where the university is located, and the introductions about the life students get ready for. The code was one of the most mentioned issues in the research with a rate of 14.28%. These results are similarly expressed in the literature (Lee et al., 2018).

Some of the expressions of the participants in the scope of social media are as follows: *"My friend, there is someone on Youtube. He introduces all universities under the name of "how a university is this". He also introduced this place. If he didn't, I wouldn't know neither name nor existence of here."*; *"I looked at the forums. There are places where people doing this profession posted on."*; *"There were videos introducing such professions on Youtube, and videos of a university, I watched them."*

**Ekşi Sözlük:** The reason why Ekşi Sözlük, which is a private content platform, is included in the coding is that it is mentioned repeatedly by different participants (5.71%). In this context, it can be stated that Ekşi Sözlük attracts a lot of attention in terms of profession introduction, career choice, and university introductions. Nevertheless, the fact that the website in question typically contains critical opinions stands out as another factor that should be taken into account. However, Ekşi Sözlük turns into a persuasive platform for individuals, as it is realistic and sincere despite critical statements and includes comments from natural persons.

Some opinions regarding this factor are as follows: *"I looked at the Ekşi Sözlük to see what people wrote about the faculty."*; *"... and everyone wrote the same thing, it was opened in 2015, what do you expect, what do you expect from the education staff, always such things are written about the school in the Ekşi Sözlük ..."*

**Kariyer.net:** Similar to Ekşi Sözlük, another platform that remarks in the research is Kariyer.net. Although the percentage is not very high (4.28%), the participants mentioned Kariyer.net. At this point, it can be stated that the job postings on the website in question are considerably informative about career choices. Obtaining information about many factors such as professional expectations, business opportunities, and required qualifications makes Kariyer.net a significant resource.

Participant views regarding Kariyer.net are as follows: *"I entered Kariyer.net and started researching professions, How can I do it? What can I do? How much salary will I get? Under what*

*conditions will I work? Do I have opportunities abroad through this profession? Or how can I improve myself? I researched those issues there.”; “The career is clear. Yes, directly Kariyer.net.”*

#### **5.1.4. Findings Regarding Obligation Category**

In the obligation category, two different codings were mentioned as lack of alternative and score effect.

***Lack of Alternative and Score Effect:*** The obligation category was included in the study after the participants stated that they made their choice of profession and faculty as a result of a necessity. According to these encodings, the participants state that they had to make a choice according to the faculties for which their scores were qualifiable. These factors, which are included in the obligation category, are expressed in different studies as compulsory choices that are made for various reasons such as score, city, and lack of alternatives while choosing a profession (Baltacı & Üngören, 2010; Sarıkaya & Khorshid, 2009; Korkut- Owen et al., 2011).

The opinions of the participants regarding these two codes are as follows: *“I thought of regular advertising, its scores were very high, so I thought I'd try my luck since this faculty has just opened. Got it.”*; *“... it didn't go well due to certain circumstances, we thought which faculty would be best with this score, and the answer was PR and advertising”*; *“There was no other option. I mean, we searched but there were very few. There were very few as this department, this was the best of a bad lot.”*

#### **5.2. Findings Regarding Individual Theme**

When the categories related to this issue are studied, it is seen that there are factors related to the characteristics and wishes of the individual. In other words, the individual theme includes the personal factors affecting the individual in choosing a profession and the features of the individual. The subject is reviewed under a single category named as Individual Factors.

##### **5.2.1. Findings Regarding Individual Factors Category**

In the category of individual factors, three different codings were mentioned: ability effect, area of interest, and self-realization.

***Ability Effect:*** Participants stated that the areas in which they have the ability are significant factors in choosing a profession. For example, copywriting, communication, and organizational capabilities are some of them expressed by the participants. When individuals with these abilities prefer public relations and media departments, they foreground their talents. In accordance with the literature (Aytekin, 2005; Aydemir, 2018; Kıyak, 2006; ), one can say that individual ability is a factor taken into account in choosing a profession.

Some opinions regarding this code are as follows: *“I realized that I am very good at organizational work. Then I wanted a professional environment like this, not so amateurish, I wanted*

*more of an organized corporate environment. That's why I chose this field.”; “I used to work in the sales industry before. I worked at Mediamarkt. I noticed that I have good communication with people. I realized that my persuasive ability is high. Therefore I said I'm into studying communications, that's why I chose this department.”*

**Area of Interest:** The area of interest factor is seen to be the subject that the participants mentioned the most (5.71%), together with the self-realization factor in the category of individual factors. The participants stated that they have chosen profession and department according to their own area of interest and that their interests were the most substantial issues in their preferences. This factor reveals that in addition to all environmental factors, the individual's own desires and interests are also significant. Like the ability effect, the findings related to the area of interest are also in line with the literature (Aytekin, 2005; Kıyak, 2006; Korkut- Owen et al., 2011).

Some of the views of the participants regarding the area of interest factor are as follows: *“I saw the media and communication department. When I examined, there were fiction courses, in addition to sociology and psychology courses. I love them too, they also interest me, that's why I chose this department”, “... at least I can study what I want and stay unemployed.”*

**Self-realization:** This code is the factor that includes the statements in which the participants most clearly reveal their preferences in choosing a profession. Accordingly, the participants state that they made their career and department choices in order to realize their own wishes, make their dreams come true, paddle their own canoe, and bring their own ideas into action. As in other individual factors, the individual comes to the fore in the factor of self-realization. The findings in this factor are also compatible with the studies in the literature (Aydemir, 2018).

Some of the participants' opinions regarding the code of self-realization are as follows: *“I listened to my family's opinions, but I definitely made a choice based on my own ideas in practice.”; “I thought in terms of not escaping, but as if I could stand on my own feet in another city, prepare more for life.”; “No one gave me any direction. I decided for myself”; “I wanted something that would become prominent. I thought I'd cope up with this one too.”*

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The choice of profession, which is one of the crucial stages of career planning, constitutes one of the milestones in the lives of young people. The most determining factor in the choice of profession of students is a university department preference. Preferred departments, in a sense -usually- also shape the individual's profession. It has been a frequently mentioned subject in the literature that various factors affect students in choosing a profession. In this study, qualitative research was carried out to contribute to the literature, and the results are shared below. When we inspect the research results thematically, it is seen that the findings are gathered under two different themes: environmental and

personal. Since the results are shared in detail in the findings section, only the remarkable points will be mentioned in the conclusion section.

According to the determinations regarding the environmental factors category, it can be stated that the environment, family, peers, and job opportunities are the main factors influencing the choice of profession. Among these factors, graduates, teachers, sector workers, and family, which reflect the environment, have the highest impact. However, contrary to the literature, it has been determined in the research findings (Aydemir, 2018; Özyürek & Atıcı, 2002) that the family effect has adverse effects on the choice of profession. Today, this situation can be perceived as a sign for families to reconsider their approach to young people. Because young people now want to make their own decisions and "stand on their own two feet." Results regarding peer influence and employment opportunity factors conform with the literature, and it should be noted that their effects on career choice are limited in this study.

In the marketing activities category, university promotions are determined as the distinctive element. At this point, it is seen that the prominent issues are the university promotions being student-centered and sincere, the promotions reflecting the realities rather than just advertisements, and the importance of exposition activities. Regarding these inferences, it can be concluded that university promotions should be designed with student-centered and sincere content rather than advertisements suitable for the dynamics of the marketing sector. Unfortunately, the section promotions and advertisements under this category were not brought to the forefront by the participants.

In the social media category, especially the influence of YouTube is seen to be very high. According to this finding, it can be concluded that it is vital for universities to produce content for YouTube in their marketing activities and to support their students in producing content. Apart from YouTube, it can be said that Ekşi Sözlük, Kariyer.net, and other forums and platforms are also promotional elements that universities should not underestimate.

Findings in the category of personal factors show that students consider their own abilities and interests in choosing a profession. In addition, it is seen that students want to realize themselves, make their own decisions, and move forward with their own preferences to their goals. Although these findings align with the literature, it shows that today's youth want to act more freely in their decisions.

In summary, many factors affect students in choosing a profession. These factors are changing and being shaped daily by individuals' varying perceptions and understandings. For example, as can be noticed in the family effect factor, in this study, it was determined that the effect of the relevant factor on individuals was negative, contrary to the literature. This finding recommends that academic studies on the subject should continue, and universities and institutions working on professional choices should consider this evolution. We think future studies with more comprehensive samples that include different universities and departments will immensely contribute to the literature.

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