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**Araştırma Makalesi \* Research Article**

## The Impact of Students' Covid-19 Career Perception on Life Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Entrepreneurial Intention\*

### Öğrencilerin Covid-19 Kariyer Algılarının Yaşam Memnuniyeti Üzerindeki Etkisi: Girişim Niyetinin Aracı Rolü

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**Abstract:** The COVID-19 global pandemic has severely impacted the world economy, leading to numerous temporary and permanent business closures. Consequently, widespread layoffs have caused significant job insecurity. This crisis has affected both students and the working population, with students particularly concerned about future employment prospects. This study aims to analyze the effect of students' COVID-19 career perceptions on life satisfaction, with a focus on the mediating role of entrepreneurial intention. A sample was drawn from a university in each of Turkey's seven regions, and data were collected from 557 students using a survey method. The findings indicate a significant indirect effect of entrepreneurial intention on the relationship between career perception and life satisfaction. Given the limited research on career impacts during the pandemic and the assessment of students' entrepreneurial intentions, this study offers new insights and contributes to the existing literature.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, pandemic, career perception, life satisfaction, entrepreneurial intention.

**Öz:** COVID-19 küresel pandemisi dünya ekonomisini ciddi şekilde etkilemiş, birçok işletmenin geçici ve kalıcı olarak kapanmasına yol açmıştır. Sonuç olarak, yaygın işten çıkarmalar önemli bir iş güvensizliği yaratmıştır. Bu kriz hem öğrencileri hem de çalışan nüfusu etkilemiş, özellikle öğrenciler gelecekteki istihdam olanakları konusunda endişe duymaya başlamıştır. Bu çalışma, öğrencilerin COVID-19 dönemi kariyer algılarının yaşam memnuniyeti üzerindeki etkisini ve girişimcilik niyetinin aracı rolünü analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Türkiye'nin yedi bölgesinden birer üniversite seçilerek bir örneklem oluşturulmuş ve 557 öğrenciden anket yöntemiyle veri toplanmıştır. Bulgular, girişimcilik niyetinin kariyer algısı ve yaşam memnuniyeti arasındaki ilişki üzerinde önemli bir dolaylı etkisi olduğunu göstermektedir. Pandemi döneminde kariyer üzerindeki

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## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began to spread globally in early 2020, has profoundly disrupted various facets of human life, leaving an indelible mark on the world economy (Cortez & Johnston, 2020; Levine & Rathmell, 2020). One of the most significantly affected sectors is education, where many students have faced interruptions in their academic journeys due to school closures and the shift to online learning (UNESCO, 2020). These disruptions have posed considerable challenges to students, impacting their ability to access education, which is a fundamental right. Meanwhile, the epidemic has caused extensive damage to businesses globally. Production halts, supply chain disruptions, and logistical challenges have severely impacted national economies (Ratten, 2021). Students, witnessing these economic upheavals, have experienced increased anxiety and uncertainty about their future career prospects. This situation has led to a notable decline in students' mental health and a growing concern about their employment opportunities post-graduation (Mahmud, Talukder & Rahman, 2021).

Under pandemic conditions, students' career perceptions may undergo substantial changes. A primary reason is that businesses operating during the pandemic have continued implementing layoff policies. Additionally, many businesses have suspended recruitment processes, negatively influencing students' career outlooks (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Nicola et al., 2020). This situation raises the necessity of investigating how students' career perceptions are shaped during the COVID-19 period. Additionally, the pandemic might catalyze a shift towards entrepreneurship among students. Faced with limited employment opportunities, students may increasingly consider starting their own businesses. This raises pertinent questions about students' entrepreneurial intentions and their willingness to take initiative in an uncertain economic environment. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending the broader impact of the pandemic on future workforce trends.

The study is based on Career Construction Theory (CCT), which highlights the active involvement of individuals in structuring their career paths in response to changing environments (Savickas, 2013). It is especially significant under the present circumstances, as the pandemic has greatly altered conventional career paths and employment opportunities. This study seeks to utilize CCT to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between students' career perceptions, life satisfaction, and entrepreneurial intentions.

Despite the growing body of research on the impacts of COVID-19, there is still a significant lack of knowledge in the literature about how it impacts on students' career perceptions and entrepreneurial intentions. Prior research has predominantly focused on the immediate economic effects and public health issues, neglecting to thoroughly investigate the long-term consequences for career advancement and entrepreneurial endeavors (Barro, Ursúa and Weng, 2020; Xiong et al., 2020).

The existing literature contains a limited number of studies investigating career perceptions during the pandemic period. This study addresses this gap by focusing on students' career perceptions during the COVID-19 global epidemic. Specifically, the study has unique value in (i) revealing the career perceptions of students during the pandemic process, (ii) presenting significant findings to the entrepreneurship literature during the pandemic, and (iii) examining how students' career perceptions during COVID-19 affect their life satisfaction and entrepreneurial intentions across the seven regions of Turkey, thus providing a comprehensive and inclusive analysis.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The COVID-19 epidemic emerged from the SARS-COV-2 virus, which was first unearthed in Wuhan, China (Cortez & Johnston, 2020). The epidemic has greatly changed life as we know it. Early in 2020, the current COVID-19 epidemic began, and it has now impacted most facets of the world economy (Ratten, 2021). The present COVID-19 epidemic has had a significant impact on many facets of society,

global health, the economy, and education (Levine & Rathmell, 2020). As the pandemic impacted economic and social systems around the world, students who were making their career plans were also affected by this process. It is seen that the pandemic process negatively affects the career planning of university students (Alnıçık, Of, Balkaş, Tülemmez, Mirzayev & Alfarra, 2021). Critical topics that need to be looked into include the applicability of the business-related education gained and the difficulty in getting employment as a result of the epidemic. Approximately 75% of the world's student population has been negatively impacted by school closings and educational disruptions as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic (UNESCO, 2020).

This process causes disruptions in the educational processes of the students, the termination of their part-time jobs, etc. These circumstances give rise to worries regarding potential employment. It is stated that the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic negatively affect young people in three ways:

- Reduced working hours, reduced earnings, and job losses
- Cuts in education and training
- The difficulties faced by students in the process of completing their education life and finding a job (ILO, 2020).

The Covid-19 outbreak is described as a career shock (Akkermans, Richardson & Kraimer, 2020). It is possible for an individual to experience career shock throughout his working life, and career shocks can have significant effects on the career development process. (Bright, Pryor, Chan & Rijanto, 2009). The pandemic is referred to as a career shock since it has several important components that could negatively affect individuals. Due to the pandemic, the struggle for survival among the world's economies and industries is remarkable. For instance, the pandemic has resulted in widespread production shutdowns and business closures globally, accompanied by significant layoffs. A pervasive fear of job loss has emerged among the workforce (Bakker and Wagner, 2020). Furthermore, the global economy is falling, which is quite concerning for both present as much as future workers. The findings of the study by Aristovnik et al. (2020) on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on university students revealed that 42.6 percent of students were concerned about their future professional careers during the epidemic lockdown. COVID-19 exacerbates future career anxiety. Students' worries about their future careers should be investigated because COVID-19 impacts could affect them after graduation (Sahrani, 2021).

The resulting situation affects individuals psychologically and individuals begin to feel uncomfortable about their future careers. A study conducted in Bangladesh with 232 students shows that the next generation of workers is becoming concerned about their future careers. People are getting despondent and apprehensive about their future careers because of the COVID-19 outbreak, which is having a long-term harmful impact on human psychology (Mahmud, et al., 2021). For example, anxiety relevant to careers arises among university students who will face the job market with the emergence of the pandemic (Mahmud et al., 2021). It is stated that symptoms of fear and anxiety appear during the outbreak of infectious diseases (Taylor, 2019). This career anxiety defines the psychological experience that results from uncertainty or indecision in a person's professional choice (Vignoli, 2015). More than half of the students in research involving 1,224 participants at five public institutions in Brazil's state of Parana displayed signs of stress, anxiety, and depression, with 57.5%, 52.5%, and 60.5% respectively during COVID-19 (Lopes & Nihei, 2021). Students exhibit significant levels of anxiety due to COVID-19, are at a high risk of developing depression and anxiety symptoms and are subject to a variety of pressures that are particular to this developmental stage, according to a study in China (Wang et al., 2020). In another study conducted with 914 university students at the Opole University of Technology in the south of Poland, 65% of students displayed severe anxiety disorder, and a significant number of students (56%) reported feeling stressed out during the pandemic. Stress during the COVID-19 outbreak plays an important role in students' future career anxieties (Sahrani, 2021). A study comprising 1097 tourism students from 12 different universities in Turkey showed that fear of COVID-19 impacted students' career anxiety (Üngüren & Kaçmaz, 2022). In addition to anxiety, loss of motivation is one of the negative psychological effects. Particularly among young people, growing uncertainty about when this epidemic process will end and when the old normal life will return makes

them lose motivation (Liang et al., 2020). So, a strong and pervasive sense of uncertainty, fear, and loss has been brought on by the global epidemic (Autin, Blustein, Ali and Garriott, 2020).

Life satisfaction, one of the most reliable measures of well-being and positive functioning in young people, is a personal cognitive evaluation of one's life (Shin & Johnson 1978; Suldo, Riley & Shaffer, 2006). It has been discovered that stress, anxiety, and depression among students have a negative impact on life satisfaction (Lopes & Nihei, 2021). This demonstrates that during the pandemic, students experience high levels of stress and anxiety. Stress and anxiety among students also have a negative impact on their level of life satisfaction. Career perception is a process by which students arrange, choose, and analyze their interests to make meaningful career decisions for the future (Bordean & Sonea, 2018). A person's perspective of their career is of the biggest influence on their lives, particularly for university students hoping to pursue a field related to their programs of study. Uncertain professional pathways may result in dissatisfaction and the depletion of personal resources (Nyamwange, 2016). Based on these findings, it is predicted that the pandemic process will have a negative effect on students' perceptions of their future careers, and it may affect their level of life satisfaction.

Sirgy's congruity theory argues that an evaluation process that means judging the positivity or negativity (emotional enhancement/debasement potential) of an object, person, or event determines satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Given the choice between a high expectation and a low reality, a person feels the least satisfied (or most unsatisfied) (Meadow, Mentzer, Rahtz & Sirgy, 1992). Considering the career perception of students in the COVID-19 period according to this theory, low life satisfaction is expected. The reason for this situation is that while students think that they will be employed with an expectation when they graduate, the closure of most businesses or layoffs due to the pandemic does not match the reality expected by the students. Based on the literature, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H1: Career perception during COVID-19 affects life satisfaction.

Entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role during crises by offering a proactive approach to navigating changes. This adaptability is critical for converting adverse conditions into opportunities, thereby reshaping public perception of the crisis (Ratten, 2021). Furthermore, as university students approach the end of their academic programs, they increasingly envision entrepreneurship as a viable career path (Ahmed, Al Marshoudi and Peeran, 2020). Hence, fostering entrepreneurial skills is essential for equipping individuals to engage with emerging industries and societal shifts during times of crisis.

During the pandemic process, there has been a growth in entrepreneurship studies since the advances present both an opportunity and a threat to entrepreneurial endeavors. An examination of the literature revealed that, throughout the pandemic period, 25 research gave the subject of entrepreneurship only a cursory look, while another 47 studies gave it their primary attention. Additionally, 14 different themes were used regarding entrepreneurship (Sezgin, 2020). According to the findings of a study done with 407 students attending Akdeniz University in Turkey, career evaluations made during the COVID-19 period were weakly correlated with intentions to start a digital business (Alan & Boz, 2022). Another study conducted at Vietnamese universities with a sample size of 405 students showed that the fear and anxiety of COVID-19 have a negative effect on entrepreneurial intention (Doanh, Thang, Nga, Van & Hoa, 2021). According to a study done with 345 students in Pakistan, the perception of COVID-19 has a negative and significant impact on the students' entrepreneurial intention (Jiatong, Murad, Bajun, Syed & Munir, 2022). However, in another study done with 225 students at Brawijaya University in Indonesia, the fear and anxiety of COVID-19 did not affect entrepreneurial intention (Aini, 2022). However, given that this research could yield various outcomes in various cultural contexts and samples, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H2: Career perception during COVID-19 affects entrepreneurial intention.

Wilson (1967) emphasizes a strong work ethic and sense of self-worth in his description of happy individuals. He also states that immediate satisfaction of needs leads to happiness. For instance, it is claimed that the person has an expectation of an event, and that happiness will appear when the expectation is realized. This theory suggests that people could experience happiness if their needs and aspirations are suitably met. In this context, the individual's need for entrepreneurship and freedom



and autonomy, his desire to manage, his desire to follow and manage all processes by starting a business, etc. entrepreneurial intention is expected to affect life satisfaction, considering the state of realizing their wishes. The following hypothesis has been developed:

**H3: Entrepreneurial intention affects life satisfaction**

Life satisfaction might be adequate if a typical employee's job conditions are as intended. On the other hand, a person will have more autonomy and freedom when they start their own firm and become an entrepreneur. It is argued that this circumstance has a positive influence on a person's life satisfaction (Benz and Frey, 2004). In the studies in the literature, the negative effects of COVID fear and anxiety on entrepreneurial intention and the effect of entrepreneurial activity on life satisfaction (Brieger, De Clercq, Hessels and Pfeifer, 2020) raises curiosity about whether entrepreneurial intention has a mediating role in this process. Based on these studies, the following hypothesis was formed:

**H4: Entrepreneurial intention plays a mediating role in the relationship between Career perception during COVID-19 and life satisfaction.**

The career development of university students could benefit from structured career-planning programs that include seminars, conferences, education, etc. (Crites, 1978; Henry, Bardo and Henry, 1992). In the demographic questions part of the study, the question "Please indicate your participation in career events (interviews, seminars, conferences, training, etc.)" was asked as a research question. Based on this, the following hypothesis was developed, considering that participation in career events such as seminars, conferences, and interviews will have a negative impact on their career perception during COVID-19.

**Research Question 1 (RQ1): Does participation in career events affect entrepreneurial intention?**

The research primarily focused on senior students as the sample population, indicating a potentially heightened sensitivity to changes in career attitudes among this demographic. For example, a study by Priastant and Pratitis (2021) revealed that 74% of final-year students experienced moderate levels of career anxiety during the pandemic. Similarly, another study conducted by Sopiah, Alviani, Ridwan, Lindasari, and Nuryani (2022) reported that 46% of final-year students suffered from moderate career anxiety during the same period. These findings led to the formulation of the following research question:

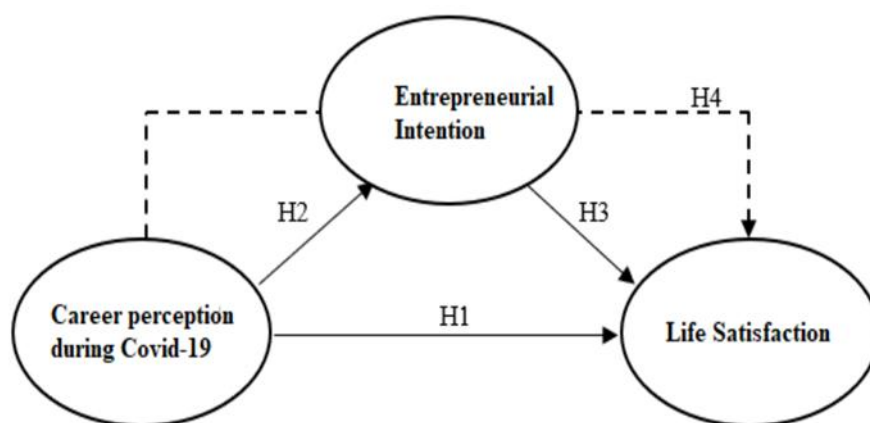
**RQ2: Are senior students affected more than other grades by career perception during COVID-19?**

## **METHOD**

The research model, the population, and sample, data analysis, and analysis outcomes are all presented in this section of the study.

### **Research Design**

The relationship between the variables of the study, Career Perception during COVID-19, entrepreneurial intention, and life satisfaction, was established within the conceptual framework. The research model, depicted in the accompanying figure, positions life satisfaction as the dependent variable to examine the impact of COVID-19 career perceptions on life satisfaction. Furthermore, entrepreneurial intention was designated as a dependent variable to examine the impact of career perception during COVID-19. Additionally, the role of entrepreneurial intention was investigated as a mediator between the impact of career perception during COVID-19 and life satisfaction.



**Figure 1.** Research Model

### The Population and Sample of The Study

The study employed the quantitative method of the survey. The benefits of the survey method include faster access to vast amounts of data. As a result, the technique is judged to be appropriate for the study. The population of the study consists of students from 7 districts of Turkey. The minimal sample size that may reflect the entire population was set at 384 (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2014). The objective was to obtain data above the minimum value (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009). Hence, 550 questionnaires were sent after accounting for missing or incorrect surveys. The surveys that were used in the context of the study were conducted with students from 7 universities that have been chosen from 7 different areas of Turkey. The researchers chose the universities that would best serve the regions. The capacity of universities to represent the area was taken into consideration for making this choice. The ethics approval of the questionnaire was taken from Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University.

### Data Collection Tools

The questionnaire for the current study was designed with a total of 16 items. Forty individuals participated in the pre-testing phase of the questionnaire. The data was gathered utilizing a final set of 16 items, categorized into three constructs as shown in Table 1. These constructions encompassed both independent and dependent variables. The researchers utilized a five-point Likert scale to gather authentic responses.

**Table 1.** Constructs and Observable Items

Career Anxiety Scale for the Future (Mahmud et al., 2021) <i>Cronbach Alpha's value is 0,87</i>	I worry about future employment because of a potential economic recession due to the outbreak of COVID-19 I worry about future employment because of fierce competition in the job market due to the outbreak of COVID-19. I worry about future employment because my salary would probably not be as excellent as I wish for the devastating effects of COVID-19. I worry about future employment because of the increasing unemployment and job cuts reported by the mass media for the reason of COVID-19 I worry about future employment because I probably would not find a job that interests me for the reason of COVID-19.
Life Satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985). <i>Cronbach Alpha's value is 0,87</i>	In most ways, my life is close to my ideal The conditions of my life are excellent.

Entrepreneurial Intention (Hassan et al., 2020)	I am satisfied with my life So far I have gotten the important things I want in life If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.
	I am ready to do anything to be an entrepreneur
<i>Cronbach Alpha's value is 0,94</i>	My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur
	I will make every effort to start and run my own firm
	I am determined to create a firm in the future
	I have very seriously thought of starting a firm I have the firm intention to start a firm someday

## FINDINGS

Demographic data pertaining to the study's sample is shown in Table 2. Accordingly, the age range covered by the study is between 18 and 25 years old for 90.5% of the respondents, and 26 to 30 years old for 5.6%. Examining the participants' grade levels reveals that 30.2% of them are in the second grade, followed by the first grade with 27.8%. 60% of the study's participants are women, who make up the majority. Finally, the *participant's* participation in career events is "I agree whenever possible" with 65.2%, followed by "No, I do not attend the events" with 23.7%.

**Table 2.** Demographic Indicators of Participants (N = 557)

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Women	334	60,0
Men	223	40,0
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	504	90,5
26-30	31	5,6
31-40	19	3,4
41 and +	3	0,5
<b>Grade</b>		
1.	155	27,8
2.	168	30,2
3.	115	20,6
4.	119	21,4
<b>Participation Status in Career Events</b>		
Yes, I often attend	62	11,1
I agree whenever possible.	363	65,2
No, I do not attend the events	132	23,7

The study consists of 60% female and 40% male participants. The majority of the participants are women. Considering the age range of the participants, 90.5% of them are between the ages of 18-25, 5.6% are between the ages of 26-30, 3.4% are between the ages of 31-40, and 0.5% are between the ages of 41. and above it. The participants between the ages of 18 and 25 made up the majority. Looking at the grades of the participants, 30.2% of the participants study in the second grade, %27.8 in the first grade, 21.4 % in the fourth grade, and 20.6 % in the third grade. It can be noticed that most of the participants are in the first and second grades. When the students' attendance in career activities is examined, it was discovered that 65.2 % of them participate whenever possible, 11.1 % of them often participate, and 23.7 percent of them don't attend at all. Students have been taking part in career-related events as they have opportunities.

The values for the mean and standard errors of the variables are shown in Table 3. The average values revealed that the participants' perceptions of their COVID-19 careers were mainly poor. The

participants' worries about the economic downturn brought on by COVID-19 and the detrimental effects of competition on employment were noted. The general life satisfaction of the participants was at a quite low level. The statement with the lowest average (2.24) which is "If I were born again, I wouldn't change anything in my life." showed that the participants want to change many things in their lives. It was observed that the entrepreneurial intentions of the participants were generally at a moderate level.

**Table 3.** *Descriptive Statistics*

	Mean	Std. Err.
Covid-19 Career Perception	3,91	1,24
Life Satisfaction	2,61	1,09
Entrepreneurial Intention	3,44	1,19

Software packages including SPSS (version 26) are used to do statistical analysis. The outcomes of this program serve to test the hypothesis. Correlation analysis was performed to see the relationships between the variables. Table 4 lists the correlation analysis findings for life satisfaction, COVID-19 career perception, and entrepreneurial intentions. Even though the obtained correlation coefficients were modest, they were all determined to be significant. When the relationship aspects are examined, it was found that there is a positive correlation between Covid-19 career perspective and entrepreneurial intention as well as a negative relationship between life satisfaction and Covid-19 career perception.

**Table 4.** *Correlation Analysis Result*

	1	2	3
Life Satisfaction	1		
Career Perception during Covid-19	-	1	
	0,097*		
Entrepreneurial Intention	0,209*	0,287*	1

\* p<.01

Regression analysis was performed to investigate how Career Perception during COVID-19 affects Life Satisfaction. The results of the regression analysis regarding the effect of COVID-19 career perception on life satisfaction are given in Table 5. It was observed that the 5,223 F statistical value obtained for the regression model was statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level, and when the t statistical values for the coefficients were examined, the constant coefficient and the coefficient related to the Covid-19 career perception were statistically significant (sig.<0.05). When the explanation percentage of the model is examined, it is seen that 9% of the 1-unit change that may occur in life satisfaction can be explained by the regression model given in Table 4 ( $R^2=0.09$ ). It shows that COVID-19 career perception has a reducing effect on life satisfaction. The regression equation obtained as a result of the regression coefficients is as follows:

$$\text{Life Satisfaction} = 2.907 - 0.076 * (\text{Covid-19 Career Perception})$$

**Table 5.** *Regression Analysis Results on the Effect of Career Perception during Covid-19 on Life Satisfaction*

	$\beta$	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	2,907	0,135	21,491	0,000
Covid-19 Career Perception	-0,076	0,033	-2,785	0,002
$R^2=0,09$ $F=5,223$ $sig=0,023$				

Regression analysis was performed to investigate how Career Perception during COVID-19 affects Entrepreneurial Intention. The results of the regression analysis regarding the effect of Career Perception during COVID-19 on entrepreneurial intention are given in Table 6. It was observed that the 49,781 F statistical value obtained for the regression model was statistically significant at the 0.05



significance level, and when the t statistical values for the coefficients were examined, the coefficient related to the Covid-19 career perception with the fixed coefficient was statistically significant (sig.<0.05). When the explanation percentage of the model is examined, it is seen that 8% of the 1-unit change that may occur in life satisfaction can be explained by the regression model given in Table 5 ( $R^2=0.09$ ). It has been determined that COVID-19 career perception has an increasing effect on entrepreneurial intention. The regression equation obtained as a result of the regression coefficients is as follows:

$$\text{Entrepreneurial Intention} = 2.378 + 0.271 * (\text{Covid-19 Career Perception})$$

**Table 6.** Regression Analysis Results on the Effect of Career Perception during COVID-19 on Entrepreneurial Intention

	$\beta$	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	2,378	0,157	15,191	0,000
Career Perception during Covid-19	0,271	0,038	70,62	0,000
$R^2=0,082$ $F=49,871$ $sig=0,000$				

Mediation analysis was used to examine the mediation role of entrepreneurial intention in the relationship between Career Perception during COVID-19 and Life Satisfaction. The mediation analysis results regarding the indirect effect of COVID-19 career perception on life satisfaction and the entrepreneurial intention defined as the mediating variable are given in Table 7. Accordingly, the BootLLCI (0.0305) and BootULCI (0.0884) values obtained have a positive effect on life satisfaction through the entrepreneurial intention of the Covid-19 career perception, since both have the same directional sign has been found to have an indirect effect. ( $\beta = .271$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 7.** Mediation Analysis Results on the Indirect Effect of COVID-19 Career Perception on Life Satisfaction

	Indirect Effect Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Entrepreneurial Intention	0,0583	0,0150	0,0305	0,0884

T-test results regarding the differentiation of life satisfaction, career perceptions during COVID-19, and entrepreneurial intentions of the individuals participating in the research according to their gender are given in Table 8. As the differences in life satisfaction were examined, the result shows that the statistical value of 0.012 t was not statistically significant (sig.>0.05). In other words, the life satisfaction of men and women participating in the research is at a similar level. The statistical value of 3,949 t was statistically significant (sig. 0.05) as the differentiations regarding career perception during COVID-19. The findings revealed that men had more professional concerns than women.

**Table 8.** T-Test Results Regarding the Differences by Gender

		N	Mean	Std. Err.	t	p
Life Satisfaction	Men	334	2,61	,893	0,012	0,991
	Women	223	2,60	,905		
Career Perception during Covid-19	Men	334	4,06	1,062	3,949	0,000
	Women	223	3,67	1,217		
Entrepreneurial Intention	Men	334	3,48	,984	1,076	0,283
	Women	223	3,37	1,206		

The ANOVA results regarding the differentiation of life satisfaction, Covid-19 career perceptions, and entrepreneurial intentions of the individuals participating in the research according to their grades are given in Table 9. According to this, it was discovered that the 0.503 F statistical value was not statistically significant ( $p>0.05$ ) for life satisfaction. In other words, the research participants from various grades have similar levels of life satisfaction. The statistical value of 5,353 F was statistically significant ( $p 0.05$ ) for career perception during COVID-19. The Post Hoc LSD test was used to evaluate the groups that contributed to the discrepancy, and it was found that the career perception during COVID-19 of the second graders was higher than that of the first graders.

**Table 9.** ANOVA Results Regarding the Differences by Grade

		N	Mean	Std Err.	F	p
Life Satisfaction	1.	155	2,55	,868	0,503	0,680
	2.	168	2,59	,830		
	3.	115	2,67	,910		
	4.	119	2,65	1,011		
	Total	557	2,61	,897		
Career Perception during Covid-19	1.	155	3,61	1,258	5,353	0,001
	2.	168	4,09	,958		
	3.	115	3,99	1,102		
	4.	119	3,94	1,195		
	Total	557	3,91	1,141		
Entrepreneurial Intention	1.	155	3,31	1,058	1,460	0,225
	2.	168	3,56	1,011		
	3.	115	3,42	1,100		
	4.	119	3,44	1,167		
	Total	557	3,43	1,079		

The ANOVA results regarding the differentiation of life satisfaction, career perception during COVID-19, and entrepreneurial intentions of the individuals participating in the research according to their participation in career activities are given in Table 14. It was discovered that the statistical value of 5,353 F obtained was statistically significant ( $p>0.05$ ) for life satisfaction. The Post Hoc LSD test was used to study the groups that account for the difference, and it was discovered that individuals who participated in career activities regularly had better life satisfaction than those who did not. The statistical value of 2,053 F was not statistically significant ( $p>0.05$ ) for career perception during COVID-19. It was discovered that the 2,588 F statistical value was not statistically significant ( $p>0.05$ ) for entrepreneurial intention.

**Table 10.** ANOVA Results on Differences by Participation in Career Events

		N	Mean	Std Err.	F	p
Life Satisfaction	Yes, I often attend	62	2,87	1,082	5,367	0,005
	I agree whenever possible	363	2,62	,864		
	No, I do not attend	132	2,43	,861		
	Total	557	2,61	,897		
Career Perception during Covid-19	Yes, I often attend	62	3,65	1,350	2,053	0,129
	I agree whenever possible	363	3,87	1,085		
	No, I do not attend	132	3,96	1,176		
	Total	557	3,91	1,141		
Entrepreneurial Intention	Yes, I often attend	62	3,34	1,264	2,588	0,076

I agree whenever possible	363	3,51	1,031
No, I do not attend	132	3,28	1,100
Total	557	3,43	1,079

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study demonstrates how COVID-19's effects are likely to influence students' perceptions of their careers and their goals for the future. It is acknowledged that an empirical study on the impact of COVID-19 anxiety on students' job expectations would add to the body of knowledge. The career perception consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic need to be revealed and addressed. This is why the study investigated the impact of students' career perceptions during COVID-19 on life satisfaction. It also investigated whether entrepreneurial intention has a mediating role in the relationship between students' career perception during the COVID-19 period and life satisfaction.

Sirgy's congruity theory states that if a person has high expectations and low reality, their degree of satisfaction would decrease. This led the study to accept the hypothesis that H1: Career perception during COVID-19 affects life satisfaction. This suggests that going through a pandemic while expecting a decent career after graduation affects a student's satisfaction with life. Through the course of their academic careers, students make numerous investments in both their personal and professional growth. Unsurprisingly, they have high expectations. They are seeking to be compensated for their efforts, just like in the theory of social exchange. Conversely, there are situations when it could not be appropriate to fulfill expectations. The outbreak, an unanticipated event, has had an impact on many cultures around the world in terms of the economy, social structure, and quality of life. Due to this circumstance, businesses also started cutting expenditures and shrinking. Students' expectations and levels of life satisfaction were impacted by the fact that they were exposed to this circumstance through the press or social media. Students who have a negative professional perspective that their expectations won't be met are likely to feel less satisfied with their lives.

Individuals' perspectives about their careers may shift during epidemics. H2: Career perception during COVID-19 affects entrepreneurial intention, which was created with the thought that an individual's career perception may influence the entrepreneurial intention during the pandemic period accepted because of the analysis. The result of the study supports similar studies in literature (Doah et al., 2021; Jiatong et al., 2022; Alan & Boz, 2022). In the present study, a positive correlation is observed between the variables. While this result differs from some studies (Doah et al., 2021; Jiatong et al., 2022), it is in the same direction as some (Alan & Boz, 2022). The reason for this situation can be explained by the cultural structure of the society. In another study conducted in Turkey, the result was positive (Alan & Boz, 2022). For example, the fact that the food sector was not affected during the pandemic process or the popularity of digital entrepreneurship in Turkey can be associated with such a result in Turkey.

Wilson's Telic Theory states that a person will be satisfied when their needs and aspirations are met. As a result of the analyses conducted, the hypothesis H3: Entrepreneurial intention affects life satisfaction, which was developed based on this idea, which is widely used to explain life satisfaction, was approved. When a person plans to start his own business, he or she may think about managing the company, having more flexibility and autonomy, and other things. For several reasons, life satisfaction can be positively impacted.

In order to reveal whether entrepreneurial intention has a mediating role in the relationship between students' career perception during the COVID-19 period and life satisfaction, H4: Entrepreneurial intention plays a mediating role in the relationship between Career perception during COVID-19 and life satisfaction was established. According to the results of the analysis, the indirect effect of entrepreneurial intention was observed. career perception during COVID-19 can influence life satisfaction either directly or indirectly through entrepreneurial intention. This result demonstrates that, to improve life satisfaction, we should concentrate not only on eradicating the pandemic's negative consequences but also on their entrepreneurial intentions. In this aspect, it is significant to note that due to the stress and anxiety brought on by the pandemic, proposals can be made for remote work programs,

that become more common in the future and won't significantly alter recruitment procedures. New entrepreneurship programs might also be implemented throughout this time to prevent the entrepreneurship process from being interrupted.

There are two research questions in the study. As a result of the analysis of the first research question (RQ1: Does participation in career events affect entrepreneurial intention?), it was seen that those individuals who participated in career activities regularly had better life satisfaction than those who did not. This might be related to the fact that participating in activities that are beneficial for their personal and professional development reduces anxiety or increases self-confidence in students. As a result of the analysis of the second research question (RQ2: Are senior students affected more than other grades by career perception during COVID-19?), no difference was observed. Based on the literature, it has been predicted that senior students would have more fear and anxiety because of near graduation. However, no evidence of this was found. This may be due to the unequal number of students in the grades.

It is widely recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened employment-related anxieties among students. This increased anxiety has detrimentally affected students' expectations and perceptions of career prospects, a situation exacerbated by prolonged business closures, production disruptions, and enforced curfews. However, businesses that have adopted policies supportive of sustained employment and endorsed remote working arrangements have been able to mitigate these negative perceptions to some extent. Furthermore, the perception of entrepreneurial intentions during the pandemic has varied globally; while some regions reported negative views, others saw a positive shift, particularly with the rise of digital entrepreneurship. In Turkey, for instance, a significant number of individuals engaged in entrepreneurial activities via social media during the pandemic. Consequently, this study observed a general decline in students' career perceptions during the COVID-19 period, alongside notable effects on life satisfaction and an indirect impact of entrepreneurial intention on these outcomes.

Given the limited number of studies conducted during the pandemic period, the findings of this research are poised to make a significant contribution to the literature on pandemic-era studies. Considering the challenges associated with data collection during such periods, this study could pave the way for an increase in scholarly work. The insights derived from this research are expected to be invaluable for academics and social scientists alike, serving as a critical secondary resource for future scientific inquiries.

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