



A Process-Based Evaluation of Architecture Students' Perspectives on the Professional Journey

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Abstract

Architecture has been an attractive career option for many people as a creative and prestigious professional field. However, in recent years, serious concerns and anxieties about the future of the profession have emerged. Particularly, economic difficulties, sector contraction, and disruptions in education are undermining architecture students' hopes for professional life. In this context, understanding the perceptions and expectations about the profession is crucial for laying the foundation for future solutions. This study aims to understand architecture students' professional perceptions and expectations. An online questionnaire was conducted via Google Forms with a group of 69 students from the 7th Term (4th Year) undergraduate class in the ARCH 4031-Construction Management and Economics course at Gazi University, Faculty of Architecture. The students' professional expectations, interest in the profession, and challenges they face regarding professional life were examined. The results of the study reveal that students are concerned about the future of the profession and are keenly aware of its declining prestige. This study, which is a continuation of the series, reveals the extent of these concerns among students over the years. Additionally, disruptions in education, lack of practical experience, and educational processes that are insufficiently integrated with the sector are negatively impacting architecture students' preparation for professional life. Based on the findings, various recommendations have been made to improve professional perceptions. These include enhancing the quality of education, controlling the number of architecture faculties, strengthening the academic staff, and emphasizing the importance of practical education. Furthermore, it is emphasized that professional guidance and societal support are necessary to improve the public's perspective on the profession. This study is part of a series of research aiming to contribute to solving professional issues in the long term on architecture students' perceptions, and raising awareness about the profession by laying the groundwork for an index of professional issues that will be developed through future studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Architecture is a precious discipline that shapes the urban environment and influences the quality of life. Through their designs, architects address functional necessities while contributing to the cultural identity, economic development, and social cohesion of communities [1]. The role and education of architects have undergone changes throughout history.

The architectural profession emerged around 3000 BC in the Middle East during the process of the urban revolution [2]. At that time, architects functioned as a combination of master craftsman, engineer, and artist, encompassing both physical and intellectual domains. The role of the architect evolved from builder and craftsman in the Middle Ages to a respected professional engaged in both artistic design and technical expertise, with the establishment of architectural offices.

It is evident that changing dynamics, economic conditions, and the quality of education shape students' hopes and concerns [3]. The issues experienced in architectural practice and education are defined as a

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“dual crisis environment,” emphasizing the devaluation of design and the increasing pressure for production [4]. Furthermore, in the construction of a professional career, external conditions such as the nature of the job and environmental factors—are as determinative as internal conditions such as the individual’s experience and tendencies as previous studies have revealed that careers are shaped by a wide range of cultural, political, individual, sociological, psychological, educational, temporal, physical, economic, gender, and chance-related factors [5]. Below are presented assessments concerning the economic, political and educational factors that influence the environment in which architectural practice takes place in Turkey, along with the consequences of these factors:

The Impact of the Economy on the Architecture Sector in Türkiye:

- In recent years, economic stagnation and rising inflation in Turkey have increasingly affected budgets allocated to architectural and construction projects [6].
- The depreciation of the Turkish lira has impacted firms engaged in foreign currency-based contracts and complicated the procurement of imported construction materials [7].
- Strict governmental policies have reduced public project budgets, potentially slowing the implementation of ongoing projects [8].
- Rapid construction processes and cost-driven, uniform design approaches have contributed to a decline in public appreciation for architectural quality [9].

The Impact of Policies on the Architecture Sector in Türkiye:

- Turkey has long pursued development policies heavily reliant on the construction sector [10], yet a lack of long-term strategic planning has become apparent.
- Uncontrolled urban expansion and unplanned zoning projects have taken place in numerous cities [11].
- The Kahramanmaraş earthquake highlighted delayed preventive measures against natural disasters, undermining public trust in buildings and in the roles of contractors [12].
- The influence of professional chambers of architecture has diminished, reducing professional solidarity.

The Impact of Education Strategies on the Architecture Sector in Türkiye:

- In Turkey, the absence of a “Science and Education Policy” that would provide a concrete legal basis indicates the lack of a common value platform in the field of architecture [13]. Inadequate policies in architectural education have resulted in underprepared graduates entering the profession, alongside an uncontrolled increase in the number of practicing architects.
- The unchecked proliferation of architecture faculties has contributed to the ongoing decline in the architectural sector [5].
- Variations in the quality of education provided have further impacted the profession negatively.

Deficiencies in the curriculum and content have hindered the preparedness of graduates. Under the former conditions, the architecture sector in Turkey has been affected both directly and indirectly. This situation has had a considerable impact on the profession of architecture, led to a decrease in professional motivation, and weakened industry standards. As a result, employment opportunities for architects and engineers in the sector have also been adversely impacted. Since these changes are also observable from outside the profession, they carry the potential to create a perception of an insecure future for prospective architects.

This article aims to identify and analyze the factors that shape architecture students’ professional perceptions and expectations, offering a nuanced understanding of how these factors influence their hopes and concerns about the future of the profession. It is part of a broader series of research that seeks to keep the declining interest in architecture on the agenda and to contribute to discussions about its future (Table 1).

- The oldest study was conducted during the 2018–2019 academic year with fourth-year undergraduate students enrolled in the seventh semester ARCH 4031-Construction Management and Economics course in the Department of Architecture at Gazi University. Questions were

posed regarding the factors influencing students' career choices, their preferred fields of work within architecture, the skills they believed would help them secure employment, and their expectations for their first jobs.

- The authors' second study questioned the societal impacts of the shrinking construction sector. It discussed the effects of changes in the construction industry on architecture students. With the study conducted in 2021, the sociological dimension of architecture was also expanded.
- The current paper presents data from 2024, focusing on understanding architecture students' hopes and concerns regarding the profession. By comparing the findings with those from previous years, the study aims to present a portrait of changing perceptions concerning the direction of architectural education and the future of the profession.

Within this framework, the current paper contributes to the longitudinal observation process initiated in earlier studies and builds on their findings and develop a systematic set of indicators to better understand and address professional challenges.

Table 1. Summary Information on the Research Series

Period	Explanation
2018-2019 Academic Year	In this study, a questionnaire was conducted with a group of 51 participants, aiming to understand the changing nature of professional practice, to improve architectural education, and to explore students' expectations and aspirations. The students were asked questions regarding the factors influencing their career choice, the specific fields within architecture in which they wish to work, the skills they believe will assist them in finding employment, and their expectations concerning their first professional experiences.
2020-2021 Academic Year	The study focused on exploring the potential consequences of the transformation within the construction sector. Conducted with a participant group of 66 individuals, the research expanded upon the 2018 study by additionally investigating the participants' sociological characteristics and demographic profiles.
2022-2023 Academic Year	The declining interest in the architecture profession—and the resulting drop in the university entrance ranking of architecture schools—was addressed as a critical issue. In this study, conducted with 91 participants, questions were added regarding their university program preference rankings and their alternative choices outside the field of architecture, in addition to the questions used in previous studies.
2024-2025 Academic Year	The study presents the economic and political factors influencing the context in which architectural practice is carried out in Turkey. The data, focusing on understanding the hopes and concerns of architecture students, are presented through a comparative analysis with findings from previous years.

2. ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION IN TURKEY: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENT PROFILES

The establishment of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in the mid-1800s in the United Kingdom marked an important step in the regulation of the architectural profession. This initiative brought about a redefinition of roles within the construction sector, and at a conference on architectural education [14]. The establishment of RIBA was significant as it marked the institutionalization of the architectural profession, setting standards for education, ethics, and practice. By redefining the role of the architect within the construction sector, it also provided a model of professionalization that would later find parallels in the institutional development of architectural education in Türkiye.

The historical scope of modern architectural education in Türkiye is defined by fundamental institutional and ideological changes that reshaped the profession. The most significant turning point in this regard can be considered the early Republican period. The transition from state-supported architectural practice in

the Ottoman period to the establishment of modern faculties and subsequent expansion under the auspices of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) during the early Republican period represents turning points in which the boundaries of 'modern architectural education' were defined. A closer examination of this temporal context is warranted.

During the Ottoman Empire, architectural activities were state-sponsored, and education focused on designing buildings for the sultans; from the late 18th century, Western-modeled engineering schools enabled architects to evolve into professional experts beyond state service [3]. Architectural education in Turkey institutionalized in the early 20th century, with the 1930s marking a shift from Renaissance- and Ottoman-based approaches to modern architecture, supported by foreign architects and the establishment of architecture faculties at Yıldız Technical School (1942) and Istanbul Technical University (1944) [15]. In 1956, METU established the first architecture faculty outside Istanbul, introducing a Bauhaus-inspired model; the 1960s saw new faculties and private schools emerge, and with YÖK's (the Council of Higher Education) establishment in 1981, architectural education expanded nationwide within the formal university system [3]. Since the 2000s, Turkey's economic policies have shifted, with increased investment in the construction sector and a growing share of construction in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). [10]. As a result, participation in the construction sector grew significantly, and schools of architecture emerged as highly sought-after institutions.

Architectural education in Turkey has undergone a significant transformation in recent years with the increase in student numbers and the spreading of universities. The number of universities providing architectural education reached high levels in the 2000s. While in 1990 architectural education was conducted in 11 institutions, by 2009 the number of faculties of architecture had increased to 41 [16]. By 2024, this figure has undergone a remarkable expansion, reaching 124 institutions, including 69 public universities and 55 foundation universities. This institutional proliferation has been accompanied by a comparable rise in student quotas, which grew from 1,994 in 2003 to 6,500 in 2023, reflecting an increase of 225% [14]. This expansion has significantly influenced the state of architectural education in Turkey. The process of institutionalization resulting from this expansion has had a considerable impact on the quality and effectiveness of architectural education. As a consequence of the increase in quotas, the profile of students admitted to faculties has been changing. According to Köknar et al., as reflected in the presentations at the 2018 annual conference of the European Association for Architectural Education (EAAE), such issues concerning faculties of architecture are not observed in other countries [17]. This transformation has influenced the profile of architecture students, their expectations, and their professional perceptions. In particular, factors such as changing economic conditions, concerns about employment, and professional dissatisfaction have led to notable shifts in students' outlooks on the field of architecture [18]. Köknar et al. define the problem arising in this context within architectural practice and education as a dual crisis. They argue that the production pressure generated by architectural practice has been reflected in education, leading to the devaluation of design [17].

Architectural education is directly linked to professional practice and plays a critical role in shaping architects' knowledge, skills, and competencies. Therefore, architecture students' educational experiences and their perceptions of the profession are of great importance for the future of architectural practice [19]. Several studies have addressed this topic. For instance, academic studies conducted a study aiming to understand architecture students' views on professional practice, improve educational processes, and assess student expectations. These researches examined the factors influencing students' choice of profession, their preferences regarding areas of practice, the skills they consider important for employment, and their expectations about their first professional experiences [20].

In many countries, various systematic methods are employed to better understand higher education students and to identify their needs. For instance, in France, the Observatoire Nationale de la Vie Étudiante (OVE) conducts a comprehensive study every three years to examine student life in detail and to evaluate other research carried out on this subject. In the United Kingdom, Times Higher Education conducts research aimed at understanding student experiences [21]. In Australia, a survey carried out every five years at the University of Melbourne focuses particularly on the experiences of first-year students [22].

In Turkey as well, studies have been conducted on student profiles. For instance, a study carried out in 1968–69 at Hacettepe University’s School of Basic Units focused on students’ personal characteristics, family backgrounds, personality traits, skills, motivations, and perceptions of the university. Adnan Mazmanoğlu investigated the influence of birthplace, region of residence, and family environment on the academic success of students at Istanbul University. In 1993, the profiles of Hacettepe University students were documented. The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) conducted a study addressing family income, educational expenditures, financial aid, and employment expectations of university students in order to inform educational policies. In 2003, another study on student profiles was carried out at Akdeniz University [23]. In 2005, a study at Middle East Technical University examined the relationship between the problems of senior students and the variables of gender and faculty [24]. At Gazi University, a study was conducted in 2007 to identify student profiles [25]. In 2019, Gencer and Daşlı carried out a study on student profiles and university satisfaction based on students from Sivas Cumhuriyet University. Güngör et al. also published a profile study on Gazi University students in 2007 [23].

When it comes specifically to studies conducted on architecture students, a study carried out by the authors aimed to understand professional practices, improve architectural education, and explore students’ expectations and aspirations [20]. In this study, students were asked questions regarding the factors influencing their career choices, the fields in which they wished to work, the skills that could assist them in finding employment, and their expectations for their first jobs. Additionally, a study also conducted in 2022 by the authors examined the declining interest in schools of architecture and, as a result, the drop in their ranking in the university entrance examination. This study also included questions about the order in which students selected their preferred schools and their preferences for programs outside of architecture [18].

In 2021, a study was conducted to analyze the factors influencing architecture students’ career choices, stemming from internal and/or external motivations, and to investigate how participants’ perceptions of “self-efficacy” in becoming an architect changed in parallel with the skills they acquired during their professional education. The findings revealed that students’ reasons for pursuing architectural education were influenced by their self-perceptions aligned with the qualities required in the profession, as well as by the impact of their social environment and families [26]. The study conducted by Demirtaş and Hatipoğlu aimed to understand students’ expectations from the construction sector, their satisfaction, the factors influencing their short-term experiences, and how they behaved in a risky environment. The findings indicated that the nature of the profession and its prestige attracted architecture students in Turkey; however, due to dissatisfaction with salaries and social benefits, their behavioral intention to continue in the sector decreased [14]. In the field of landscape architecture, a study conducted with a 12-year interval posed the same questions to students. The results showed that, while initial career choices were driven by high motivation and conscious decision-making, over time students’ confidence decreased due to gaps in education, insufficient practical training, and concerns about the job market. It was also observed that concerns regarding professional competence and employability increased over time [27]. Consequently, adopting a student-centered approach, improving the physical characteristics of educational institutions, and maintaining continuous improvement efforts are essential for a quality educational environment. In addition, focusing on initiatives aimed at enhancing student satisfaction is important. Only through such measures can the expectations of young individuals aspiring to pursue a career in architecture be understood and addressed effectively. In this respect, when studies conducted in Turkey are examined, it is seen that these studies aim to establish a historical framework about students’ socio-demographic characteristics, family structures, economic situations, and expectations; however, most of these studies are not specific to architecture students. Increasing the number of studies analyzing architecture students’ professional perceptions, short- and long-term expectations, and expectations from education is an important requirement for deepening general student profile studies within the framework of the architecture profession.

3. METHOD

The primary aim of this research is to identify the factors that influence architecture students’ professional perceptions and expectations, and to analyze how these factors affect their hopes and concerns regarding

the profession. The methodology of this study adopts a systematic and multifaceted approach to understanding architecture students' perspectives on the profession. The combined use of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods enhances the validity and reliability of the research. The first part of the questionnaire aims to understand students' family backgrounds and socio-economic conditions. These questions were designed to discuss the influence of family on career choices and the relationship between architecture and social capital. The second part covers students' reasons for choosing architecture, their university preferences, and their assessments of the education process. This section provides data on both the quality of architecture education and students' personal orientations. The third section analyzes architecture graduates' perceptions of the job market by asking about their expectations regarding their first job experience (ease of finding a job, salary level, working conditions). These sections were administered to participants as multiple-choice questions. In the final section, open-ended questions were asked about long-term professional goals and views on the position of architecture education in society.

The study group consists of undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of Architecture at Gazi University. Prior to data collection, the necessary approval was obtained from Ethics Committee of Gazi University with the decision numbered E-77082166-604.01-881085 and dated 16.02.2024. Following this, in last part of broader series of research, a questionnaire was conducted in October 2024 with a group of 69 students enrolled in the 7th semester (4th year) undergraduate course titled ARCH 4031- Construction Management and Economics at the Department of Architecture, Gazi University. The questionnaire was conducted online via Google Forms.

The analysis of the questionnaire was conducted through the compilation of data provided by an online platform. In this context, in quantitative section of the study students' responses regarding their demographic characteristics, professional expectations, and educational satisfaction were analyzed. The quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentage distributions to identify patterns and trends across the sample. In the qualitative section of the study, students' responses to open-ended questions were analyzed using content analysis. Specifically, the analysis focused on two main themes: students' short- and long-term professional expectations and their views regarding the recent decline in university entrance rankings for architecture programs. Responses were systematically categorized to capture students' perspectives on their anticipated career paths and their reflections on the factors influencing the popularity of architecture programs. This approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of how students perceive their future profession and the educational context shaping their career decisions.

Ethical principles were carefully observed throughout the research process. The study commenced after obtaining the necessary permissions. Participants were informed about the purpose and scope of the research, and participation was based on voluntary consent. The anonymity of the students was preserved, and data were used in accordance with the principle of confidentiality. The researcher avoided any form of guidance or influence during the process.

This study was conducted with a limited sample of students. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all architecture students in Turkey. Nonetheless, the results provide valuable insights that contribute to the ongoing discussions on architectural education and professional perceptions.

3. PRESENTATION OF CHANGES IN ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS' HOPES, CONCERNS AND PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The findings of the study organized under the subheadings: Personal Motivation and Professional Attraction, Perspectives on Professional Life, and Awareness of Challenges and the Search for Solutions.

3.1. Professional Motivation

Key general factors play a crucial role in career choice, including the nature of the profession, working conditions in the sector, salary and benefits, professional prestige, and alignment with personal expectations [14]. Students' career choices are shaped by various factors, one of which is professional

motivation. Professional motivation may include one or more of the key factors listed above. The field of architecture offers individuals an opportunity for self-expression, as well as the potential to create lasting works and contribute to society—features that make the profession particularly appealing. The prospect of developing multifaceted skills during architectural education, working in global contexts, and engaging with technological tools can also be attractive to students.

However, it is well known that secondary education and university preference processes in the current system often lack adequate career guidance. As a result, students tend to be influenced by the professions of individuals in their immediate surroundings, leading them to gravitate toward those familiar occupations. Also, in a study it is mentioned studying architecture has revealed that the student candidates are influenced by family members currently working in the construction sector [25]. In this context, participants in the study were asked about the professions of their family members and the factors that influenced their decision to pursue architecture.

Data collected in 2020, 2022, and 2024 indicate that the majority of students did not have family members working as architects, civil engineers, contractors, or construction workers. As shown in the data from 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024, most students chose architecture based on their personal dreams and the belief that their skills and talents were well suited to the profession (Figures 1).

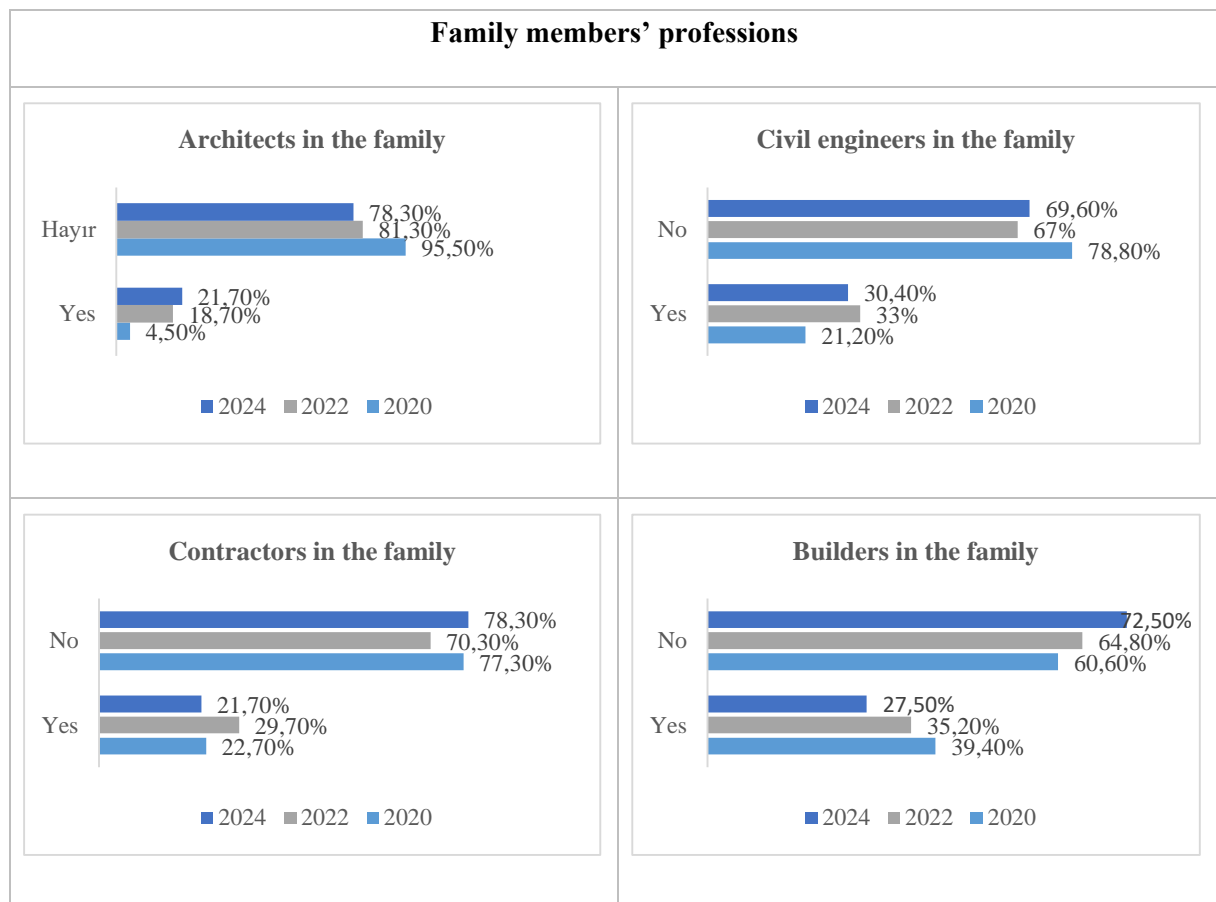


Figure 1. Participants' family members engaged in the construction field

3.2. Perspective on Professional Life

Architecture is a profession that values creativity, aims for social benefit, and allows leaving a lasting contribution to the world. At the same time, it is also tied to capital-driven production, may involve ethically questionable practices, and often exposes employees to low pay and long working hours. The responsibilities and work settings of architects are wide-ranging, and the type of institution or company they work for largely determines the projects they engage in and their working conditions. In this regard,

the career orientations of undergraduate students preparing to enter the profession gain particular importance [14].

In this study, students' perspectives on professional life were explored through questions about their preferred career paths, salary expectations, perceptions of job accessibility, and potential alternative directions in case of unemployment.

In 2022, as in 2020 and 2018, the majority of students (52.9%) stated that they wanted to work in architectural offices. The proportion of those who wished to work in corporate construction firms, on construction sites, or outside the construction sector was similarly recorded as 15.7%. In 2024, a comparable trend was observed, with the majority (55.10%) again expressing a desire to work in architectural offices (Figure 2).

Regarding expected salaries for their first jobs (Figure 3), 42% of students in 2024 indicated they anticipated a salary between 725 and 1000 USD (dollar exchange rate for January 2024: 29,70 TL). Meanwhile, 7.2% expected a salary of 500 USD (approximately equal to the minimum wage in 2024), and 8.8% reported having no salary expectation. In 2022, the majority of students expected a salary between the minimum wage and 8,500 TL (27.5% + 28.6%), 8.8% anticipated earning the minimum wage, and similarly, 8.8% had no salary expectations. For reference, the exchange rates were 5.29 TL/USD in December 2018, 7.38 in December 2020, and 18.70 in December 2022. Accordingly, the equivalent of the minimum wage was approximately 300 USD in 2018 (1,603 TL), 400 USD in 2020 (2,943 TL), and 295 USD in 2022 (5,004 TL).

A significant portion of students—92.8% in 2024 and 94.5% in 2022—believed that finding a job would not be easy. Students expressed similar views in 2020. However, in 2018, the majority (62.7%) believed that they would be able to find a job easily (Figure 4).

Another question about professional life asked whether students would consider pursuing other fields if they could not find employment. In 2018, 62.7% answered affirmatively, with the percentage increasing to 81.2% in 2020, 78% in 2022, and 69.6% in 2024 (Figure 5).

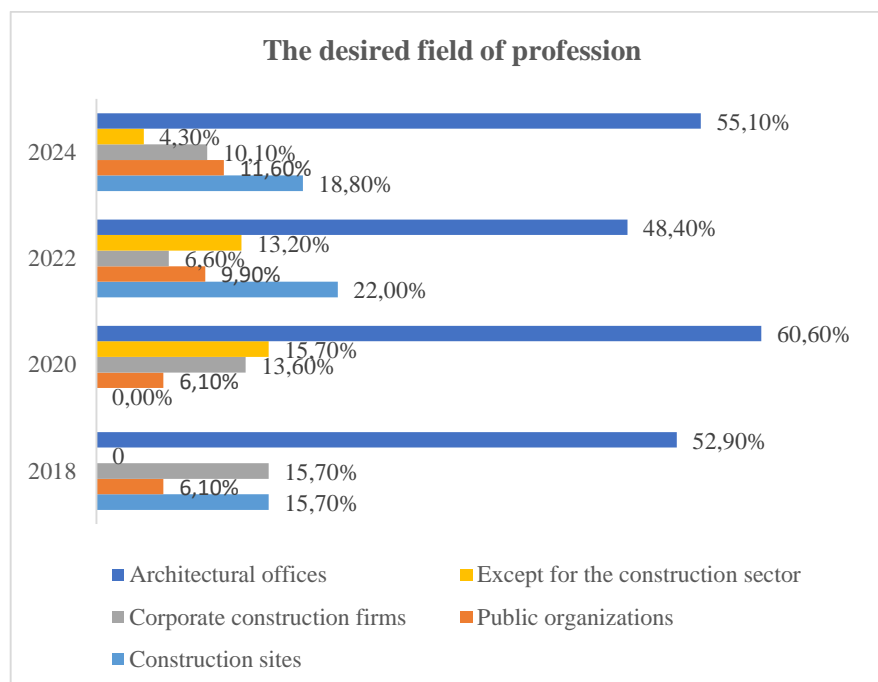


Figure 2. The desired field of profession

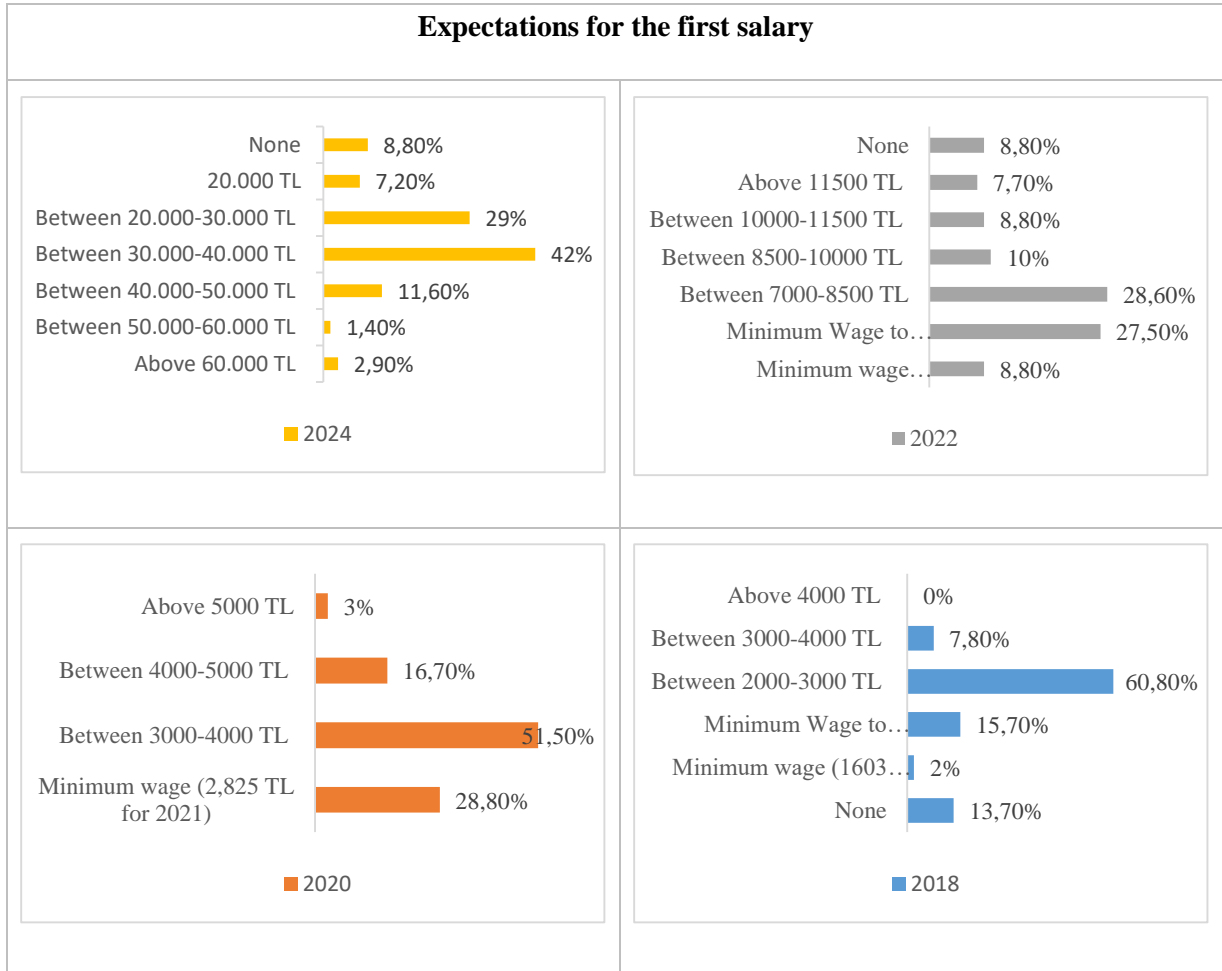


Figure 3. Expectations for the first salary

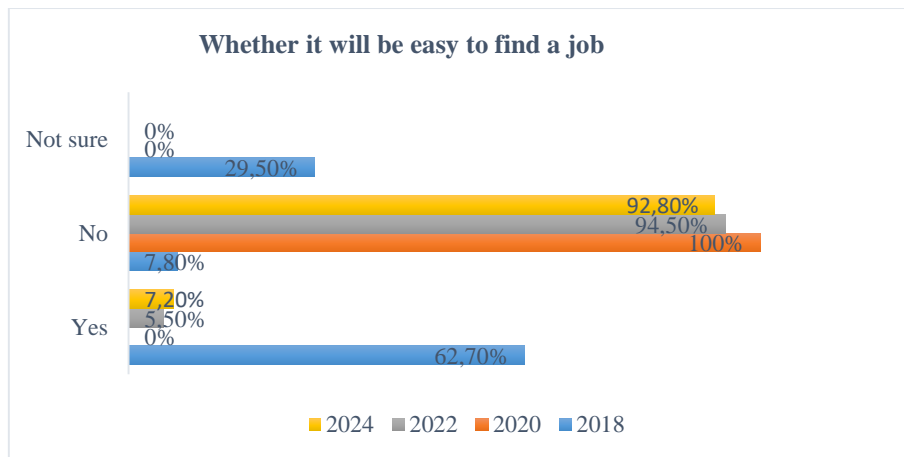


Figure 4. Whether it will be easy to find a job

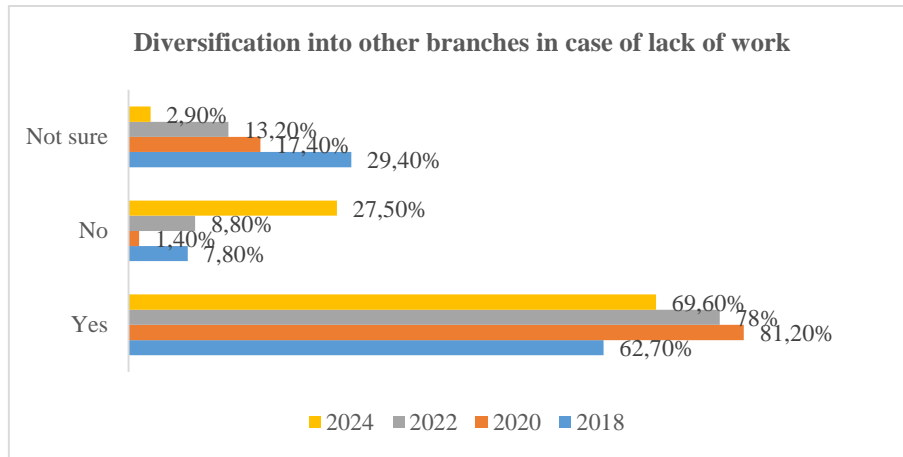


Figure 5. Diversification into other branches in case of lack of job

3.3. Awareness of the Issues: Responses to Open-Ended Questions on the Future of the Profession

In order to gather students' opinions on the challenges emerging within the professional field, they were asked open-ended questions regarding their short- and long-term expectations from the profession. In this section, particularly striking responses from students are presented without any alterations. Students' short- and long-term expectations regarding the future of the profession include:

- “The architectural profession receiving the recognition it deserves, and the supervision of buildings constructed in our country.”
- “The creation of job opportunities that can adapt to living conditions.”
- “Architects not falling victim to modern slavery in the industry.”

Students were asked the question: "There has been a noticeable decline in the university entrance rankings for architecture programs. What are your thoughts on the reasons behind this trend?" Selected responses are presented below:

- “The construction sector has been negatively affected due to the economic crisis.”
- “I think people are influenced by factors such as the failure to highlight the positive aspects of architecture, the mostly negative discourse on social media about the profession, and the ongoing narrative that studying architecture ruins a young person's university life.”
- “Architecture is not respected enough by the public. People think they can do it themselves, which devalues the profession. Civil engineers also tend to belittle architecture.”
- “A temporary search for solutions within the education system.”
- “The significant decline in the quality of education is the main factor in the decrease in student quality, which in turn lowers entrance scores.”
- “Sometimes, the pressure of university education is unnecessarily high without being instructive or distinctive. There is a lack of appreciation for disciplines outside of architecture, a lack of innovative and instructive studio courses, and overall poor quality.”
- “The difficulty of architecture programs could be the primary reason. Since student preferences determine rankings, students may feel they are not capable of coping with such a demanding field.”
- “As with many programs, this field is experiencing similar issues. The policy of opening universities in every city has led to rootless institutions. Academics lacking sufficient qualifications have been appointed to these universities, which has caused a collapse in the quality of education. Additionally, the widely acknowledged issue of instructor bullying in some departments might also play a role in this situation.”
- “The architecture profession has fallen behind as a modern career path. One of the reasons is that people now prefer professions that offer easier employment opportunities or better life conditions.”

Another is the fact that, despite the intense workload, architects are often underpaid. Therefore, students may no longer rank it among their top preferences.”

- “In recent years, as part of Turkey’s policy to open universities in every province, the quality of architectural education has declined—just as in many other departments. Especially with low entrance scores allowing many to become architects, there has been a serious oversaturation in the field. This has created a labor market imbalance, allowing employers to take advantage of the surplus of unemployed architects. Office managers are easily able to find architects willing to work for low pay under poor conditions, perpetuating a 'you can leave, someone else will come' mentality. Moreover, since success in Turkey is often equated with financial gain, architecture is no longer seen as an attractive career path. Consequently, entrance scores for architecture departments have declined, deepening the quality issue.”

Overall, these responses collectively highlight systemic challenges within architectural education and practice, including issues related to education quality, labor market conditions, and professional recognition, which together shape students’ perceptions and career choices.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Discussion of Findings about Professional Motivation

Architecture is often perceived as a creative and prestigious profession, offering individuals the opportunity to design socially beneficial structures and leave lasting works. These characteristics make it an attractive career choice for many. However, personal motivation and the initial appeal of the profession can diminish over the course of architectural education due to various challenges. These challenges often include the demanding nature of studio courses, an excessive workload, insufficient academic guidance, and outdated curricula. In addition, personal motivation and professional appeal may be affected by societal perceptions that increasingly frame architecture not as an art-oriented discipline, but as a part of the service sector. This shift in perception can lead to disappointment among students and diminish their interest in the profession. In line with this perspective, in 2018, the idea that "being an architect sounds appealing" was noted as a significant factor in career choice. However, over the years, this factor appears to have lost its influence on students’ decisions. Similarly, expectations regarding high financial returns and the notion of architecture as a popular profession have also declined over time.

These findings suggest that without targeted interventions, students may enter the profession with diminished motivation and unrealistic expectations, potentially affecting their career satisfaction and professional performance. This decline in motivation is not only an individual issue but also reflects a systemic problem: the misalignment between architectural education, labor market realities, and societal perceptions of the profession. As observed in the longitudinal data, factors such as declining university entrance scores and reduced financial expectations reveal that students are gradually internalizing a narrative of professional devaluation, which, if left unaddressed, will further weaken the profession’s social standing.

4.2. Discussion of Findings about Perspective on Professional Life

Working conditions include the work environment, duration, colleagues, office resources, and working hours, all of which strongly influence the decision to remain in the sector. However, in architecture these conditions are often unfavorable: long working hours extending into nights and weekends, insecure employment with short-term contracts, lack of health and social benefits, low wages, and even unpaid internships problems that weigh most heavily on young architects. Many architects criticize this situation, arguing that their work and responsibilities deserve fairer recognition and better pay. Today, architectural practice has increasingly been shaped by a market-oriented model of project production, which, in many cases, contributes to projects that threaten the integrity of natural, historical, and social environments [14].

While architecture students’ expectations regarding professional life are shaped by a desire to participate in creative and prestigious projects, these aspirations are often undermined by significant challenges such

as unemployment due to the oversupply of architecture graduates in Turkey, low wages, long working hours, workplace bullying, and job insecurity. Furthermore, deficiencies in practical training during their education, limited fieldwork opportunities, delayed exposure to the industry, and insufficient use of technological tools hinder students' preparedness for professional life. Internships being reduced to a formality and the lack of familiarity with real-world industry conditions may lead to a lack of self-confidence among graduates.

These difficulties negatively influence students' hopes and expectations for their professional careers, diminishing the overall appeal of the architecture profession. One of the key findings of this study is the notable decline in students' professional expectations in 2020. That year, students expressed little to no hope of finding employment, and the highest percentage across all years indicated their willingness to accept minimum wage. Similarly, financial gain was cited as a motivation for choosing architecture at the lowest rate compared to other years.

This trend may be partially attributed to the ongoing pandemic in 2020 and its impact on the construction sector, which likely influenced students' perceptions of the profession. Student responses to questions about professional expectations in 2020 reveal a strong sense of pessimism: many indicated a willingness to work outside the construction sector, had no salary expectations, or were willing to accept low wages. A majority also believed they would not find employment easily and stated they would turn to other fields if unable to secure a job in architecture. These responses suggest a significant lack of confidence in both the profession and their future careers.

Moreover, if young architects are forced to seek employment in other sectors, it is likely that similar challenges such as unemployment and low wages, will persist in those fields as well. Nevertheless, by 2024, an increase in salary expectations was observed. This suggests that the changes in the architecture sector between 2018 and 2020, which appear to have significantly influenced students' professional outlooks, warrant further investigation.

Responses to open-ended questions concerning the future of the profession predominantly reflect concerns about entering the professional world. These views must be taken seriously and addressed in a comprehensive manner.

These findings indicate that the transition from education to practice represents a critical bottleneck for architecture students. The repeated concerns about unemployment, low wages, and inadequate practical preparation suggest that professional dissatisfaction is rooted in structural conditions rather than temporary crises such as the pandemic. The longitudinal comparison further shows that while short-term shocks exacerbate pessimism, underlying structural issues—such as an oversupply of graduates and insufficient professional regulation—continue to undermine students' confidence in their career prospects. Therefore, without systemic changes in both education and labor market policies, the slight optimism observed in 2024 may remain fragile and unsustainable.

4.3. Discussion of Findings about Awareness of the Issues: Responses to Open-Ended Questions on the Future of the Profession

The open-ended responses show that architecture students are aware of the key challenges facing their profession and the factors shaping their education and career paths. They emphasized societal recognition, sustainable employment opportunities, and fair working conditions. The decline in entrance scores was attributed to economic constraints, negative public perceptions, gaps in education quality, and under-resourced universities. Students also noted the mismatch between acquired skills and professional demands, as well as low remuneration and heavy workloads. Overall, these responses highlight the interplay of structural, social, and educational factors influencing student aspirations and the status of the profession. This awareness demonstrates that students are not only experiencing the effects of these challenges but also critically analyzing their causes. By explicitly linking issues such as declining entrance scores to broader structural and economic dynamics, students reveal an ability to situate their personal struggles within the larger professional and societal context. This indicates a paradox: while they

feel disempowered regarding their own career prospects, they nonetheless display a strong analytical understanding of the systemic weaknesses of architectural education and practice. Recognizing and incorporating this student awareness into policy-making and curriculum development could provide valuable insights for shaping reforms that address both educational quality and professional sustainability.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study seeks to contribute to discussions that aim to better understand architecture students, while also highlighting persistent shortcomings in architectural education. As a continuation of a broader research series conducted by the authors, several critical insights have emerged. However, the study was conducted with a limited sample consisting solely of students. Therefore, its findings cannot be generalized to represent all architecture students in Turkey. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into architecture students' motivations, expectations for professional life, and awareness of the future of the profession. The findings can be grouped under three overarching themes: first, students' initial motivations for choosing architecture tend to weaken over the course of their education; second, their expectations regarding professional practice are negatively shaped by structural issues such as unemployment, low wages, and lack of social security; and third, they express strong concerns about both the quality of education and the social position of the profession. These themes offer a structured understanding of students' hopes and anxieties.

As highlighted throughout the study, the devaluation of the profession, the decline in student profiles, and the increasing unemployment among architects are interlinked phenomena that mutually reinforce each other. Breaking this cycle requires coordinated attention from both policy and educational sectors. The students' own words include striking and powerful expressions. It must be remembered that the future of the architectural profession is closely tied to a balance between students' hopes and expectations and the challenges they will face in professional life. Therefore, the following key areas are emphasized as points for further reflection, providing a foundation for future studies to build upon.

Educational Planning:

- Improving the quality of architectural education
- Regulating the number of architecture faculties
- Updating educational content to reflect current professional demands
- Strengthening academic staff through merit-based appointments
- Revising hands-on training to align with professional practice expectations
- Structuring architectural education to integrate with other disciplines

Professional Guidance and Societal Support:

- Raising public awareness to improve perceptions of the architectural profession
- Facilitating closer communication between architects and the public during project development
- Encouraging active engagement of architectural chambers and academic institutions in sectoral advancement
- Providing career counseling and mentorship for students
- Enhancing collaboration between universities and the professional sector

Review of Policy Frameworks:

- Ensuring economic stability to support the architectural profession
- Promoting transparency and competition-based approaches in public project tenders
- Developing long-term strategic planning in the built environment
- Strengthening the role of architects within construction processes
- Increasing awareness of challenges in the field of architecture and fostering solution-oriented approaches

Enhancing architectural education and professional practice through the abovementioned measures will facilitate a more effective transmission and implementation of the discipline. Shedding light on the hopes

and concerns of architecture students is of great importance not only for the future of the profession, but also for the future of society as a whole. Educators, practitioners, professional organizations, and policymakers must collaborate to address students' anxieties, instill a sense of hope, and build a brighter future for the field of architecture.

Future research should build on these insights by examining how targeted improvements in curriculum design, career mentoring, public awareness, and policy implementation influence students' perceptions of the profession and their preparedness for practice. Such studies can generate actionable knowledge to strengthen architectural education and support the career development of future architects.

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