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Vocational Orientations of Senior Female Students of Higher Religious Education: The Sample of Fırat University

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Vocational Orientations of Senior Female Students of Higher Religious Education: The Sample of Firat University

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to reveal the post-graduation career orientations of senior female students of higher religious education. The quantitative study was conducted using a descriptive survey model. The sample consisted of 191 female students in their final year at the Faculty of Theology at Firat University who voluntarily participated in the study. The data of the study were obtained through a two-part questionnaire developed by the researchers after reviewing the relevant literature and consulting with experts. The data obtained were analyzed using the SPSS software package in terms of frequency (f) and percentage (%) and presented in tables. According to the results, it was determined that 92.1% of female students in their final year at the Faculty of Theology wanted to work after graduation, while 7.9% had not yet decided whether to work after graduation. It was found that 64.8% of female students wanted to become teachers of Religious Culture and Ethics Course, 8.1% wanted to become Quran course instructors, 7.1% wanted to become academics, and 5.1% had not yet decided on the profession they wanted to pursue after graduation. The study revealed that senior female students pursuing higher religious education do not show interest in professions within the Presidency of Religious Affairs. It was determined that 53.9% of these students stated that compatibility with their beliefs was an influential factor in their career choice, while 34% believed that compatibility with their gender was influential. Additionally, 67.5% of female students in their final year believed that injustices or difficulties in the examination system posed obstacles to achieving their career goals. Furthermore, 70.7% of female students believed that they would obtain their preferred profession after graduation, and 80% stated that if they failed to obtain their preferred profession in the first year, they would prepare again to achieve it. The study also revealed that more than half of the students (68.6%) believed they would graduate from the Faculty of Theology with at least some of the necessary skills for their chosen profession. Finally, it was concluded that although students considered gender an important factor in their career choices, they believe it will not create disadvantages in their future professional lives.

Keywords: Religious Education, Faculty of Theology, Female Students, Vocational Orientation, Career Choice.

Yüksek Din Öğrenimi Gören Son Sınıf Kız Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimleri: Fırat Üniversitesi Örneği

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı yüksek din öğrenimi gören son sınıf kız öğrencilerinin mezuniyet sonrası mesleki yönelimlerini ortaya koymaktır. Nicel olarak tasarlanan araştırma, betimsel tarama modeli ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın örneklemini çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılan Fırat Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi son sınıfta öğrenim gören 191 kız öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmanın verileri, araştırmacılar tarafından ilgili alan yazının incelenmesinden sonra uzman görüşü alınarak geliştirilen ve iki bölümden oluşan anket formu kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Araştırmada elde edilen veriler, SPSS paket programı aracılığıyla frekans (f) ve yüzde (%) olarak analiz edilmiş ve tablolar halinde sunulmuştur. Araştırma bulgularından hareketle ulaşılan sonuçlara göre, ilahiyat fakültesi son sınıf kız öğrencilerin %92,1'inin mezuniyet sonrası çalışmak istedikleri ve %7,9'unun ise mezuniyet sonrası çalışıp çalışmama konusunda henüz bir karar vermedikleri belirlenmiştir. Son sınıf kız öğrencilerin, %64,8'inin Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi öğretmeni olmak istediği, %8,1'inin Kur'an kursu öğreticisi olmak istediği, %7,1'inin akademisyen olmayı istediği ve %5,1'inin ise mezun olduktan sonra yapmak istedikleri mesleğe henüz karar vermedikleri tespit edilmiştir. Çalışmada, yüksek din öğrenimi gören son sınıf kız öğrencilerin Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı bünyesindeki mesleklere rağbet göstermedikleri görülmüştür. Son sınıf kız öğrencilerin %53,9'unun İnançlarına uygunluk faktörünün meslek tercihinde etkili olduğunu belirttikleri, %34'ünün ise cinsiyetlerine uygunluk faktörünün meslek tercihinde etkili olduğunu düşündükleri belirlenmiştir. İlahiyat fakültesinde öğrenim gören son sınıf kız öğrencilerin %67,5'inin sınav sistemindeki adaletsizliklerin veya zorlukların, tercih edecekleri mesleğe ulaşmada bir engel olduğunu düşündükleri sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Çalışmada ayrıca yüksek din öğrenimi gören son sınıf kız öğrencilerin, %70,7'sinin mezuniyet sonrası tercih edecekleri mesleği elde edeceklerine inandıkları ve %80'in ise tercih edecekleri mesleğe ilk yılda ulaşamama durumunda hedefledikleri mesleği elde etmeye yönelik tekrardan hazırlanacağı tespit edilmiştir. Araştırmada öğrencilerin yarısından fazlasının (%68,6) ilahiyat fakültesinden tercih edecekleri mesleğe yönelik kısmen de olsa yeterli donanımla mezun olacaklarına inandıkları görülmüştür. Son olarak öğrencilerin, cinsiyetlerinin meslek tercihinde önemli bir faktör olduğunu belirttikleri fakat gelecekteki meslek hayatlarında ise cinsiyetlerinin kendilerine herhangi bir dezavantaj oluşturmayacağını düşündükleri sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Eğitimi, İlahiyat Fakültesi, Kız Öğrenciler, Mesleki Yönelim, Kariyer Seçimi.

Introduction

According to the data announced in January 2025, Turkey's population was 85,664,944. Of this population, 42,853,110 were males and 42,811,834 were females. According to statistics from the Council of Higher Education for the 2024–2025 academic year, 3,536,439 individuals were enrolled in undergraduate programs, including 1,681,804 male and 1,854,635 female students. Among them, 66,933 female students are studying at faculties of theology and Islamic Sciences, which together serve a total of 109,326 students. These figures show that 61.33% of undergraduate students receiving higher religious education are female, a notably higher proportion than their male counterparts.¹ This group constitutes approximately 3.6% of all female undergraduate students in Türkiye. In other words, around four out of every 100 female undergraduates are enrolled at faculties of theology and Islamic Sciences. While the overall proportion of female undergraduate students (52.44%) is slightly higher than that of males (47.56%), the percentage of female students in faculties of theology is considerably higher. This discrepancy raises important questions about the post-graduation vocational orientations of students studying in these uniquely positioned faculties.

The faculties of theology, where today there are more female students than male students, were established by *Article 4 of Tevhid-i Tedrisat on March 3, 1924*.² When asked whether female students would be admitted to the Faculty of Theology, which was "established to train qualified religious scholars", İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, the head of the Darülfünûn, stated that anyone who met the requirements would be accepted.³ In 1933, only two female students enrolled at the Faculty of Theology before it was closed due to enrollment problems, and these

¹ Yükseköğretim Kurulu (YÖK), "Yükseköğretim Bilgi Yönetim Sistemi" (Accessed July 10, 2025).

² Tevhidi Tedrisat Kanunu (Tevhidi Tedrisat Kanunu), *Madde 4* 430 (March 3, 1924).

³ İleri Gazetesi "İlahiyat Fakültesi Ne Vakit Açılacak" qtd. in Zeki Salih Zengin, *Medreseden Darülfünuna Türkiye'de Yüksek Din Eğitimi* (Adana: Karahan Kitabevi, 2009), 96.

students did not graduate.⁴ From that year until 1949, there were no institutional efforts to provide higher religious education in Türkiye.⁵ The revival of religious higher education began with the establishment of the Faculty of Theology at Ankara University in 1949.⁶

In its first year, 22 female students enrolled at the Ankara University Faculty of Theology, which accepted only graduates of general high schools. The faculty aimed to "enabling the study of religious issues according to sound and scientific principles and to train religious professionals with strong professional knowledge and insightful thinking". When the faculty graduated its first class in 1953, only 9 of the 40 graduates were female students.⁷ Following this, in 1959, the Ministry of National Education established Higher Islamic Institutes, eventually totaling eight, to train teachers and religious scholars.⁸ However, female students were not admitted to these institutions until 1970, when the first female student enrolled at the Konya Higher Islamic Institute. Until the 1980 coup, the number of female students in the distance education section of the Istanbul Higher Islamic Institute (YAYKUR) never exceeded 35. In addition, 10 female students enrolled at Samsun Higher Islamic Institute in 1976, 3 in 1977, and a total of 12 at Bursa Higher Islamic Institute between 1977 and 1982. No data are available on female student enrollment in the Faculty of Islamic Sciences established at Atatürk University in 1971.⁹ After the 1982 coup, with the amendment made to the Higher Education Law by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), the Yozgat Higher Islamic Institute was closed, while the other seven institutes and the Faculty of Islamic Sciences were transformed into

⁴ Z. Şeyma Altın, *Yüksek Din Eğitiminin 100 Yılı* (İstanbul: Dem Yayınları, 2024), 95.

⁵ Münir Koştaş, "Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Kuruluş ve Tarihçesi," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 31/1-4 (August 1, 1989), 8.

⁶ İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, *Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi* (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1966), 31.

⁷ Ankara Üniversitesi Kuruluş Kadroları Hakkındaki 5239 Sayılı Kanuna Ek Kanun, Resmi Gazete 7229 (June 10, 1949), 5424. md. 1.; Koştaş, "Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Kuruluş ve Tarihçesi," 14.

⁸ Halis Ayhan, *Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi* (İstanbul: Dem Yayınları, 2014), 3/240; Öcal, "İlahiyat Fakültelerinin Tarihçesi," 118.

⁹ Hatice Kelpetin Arpaguş, "Tarihsel Perspektiften Kadınların Yüksek Din Eğitimi Kurumlarındaki Konum ve Durumları", *Yüksek Din Öğretimi*, ed. Z. Şeyma Altın (İstanbul: Dem Yayınları, 2020), 112

faculties of theology.¹⁰ Another change made during this period was the introduction of quota restrictions for female students in faculties of theology. In 1981, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) imposed a 4% quota on female students, which was later increased to 7%. These restrictions, which affected the number of female students, were lifted in the 1990/1991 academic year.¹¹ In the 1982-1983 academic year, 5,855 students were enrolled at faculties of theology, of whom 414 were female. In 1990, the quota for female students was abolished. Until 2003, male students outnumbered female students in faculties of theology. However, from 2003 to the present (2025), female students have consistently outnumbered male students.¹²

Female students who graduate from the faculties of theology can work in the Ministry of National Education (as teachers of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge or vocational course instructors in Imam Hatip schools), in the Presidency of Religious Affairs (as Qur'an course instructors, etc.), and in faculties of theology and Islamic Sciences (as research assistants). Additionally, these graduates may also work in various other professions, including as civil servants in different institutions.¹³

Vocational orientation can be defined as an individual's inclination toward a specific occupational field in line with their interests, values, abilities, beliefs, and personality traits. In the literature, studies that examine factors related to students career choice and vocational

¹⁰ Mustafa Öcal, "İlahiyat Fakültelerinin Tarihçesi," *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1/1 (January 1, 1986), 120.

¹¹ Zeynep Özcan - Faruk Karaca, "Karma ve Ayrık Sınıf Uygulamalarının Akademik Motivasyon Üzerine Etkisi: İlahiyat Fakülteleri Örneği," *Yüksek Din Öğretimi*, ed. Z. Şeyma Altın (İstanbul: Dem Yayınları, 2020), 460.

¹² Altın, *Yüksek Din Eğitiminin 100 Yılı*, 117; "Yükseköğretim Bilgi Yönetim Sistemi" (Accessed July 10, 2025).

¹³ Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi (MÜİF) "Marmara Üniversitesi" (Accessed July 10, 2025); Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi "Vizyon ve Misyonumuz," (Accessed July 10, 2025); Sinop Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi "Mission - Vision - Faculty of Theology." (Accessed July 10, 2025); Saadettin Özdemir, "İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin İlahiyat Programı İle İlgili Görüşleri: SDÜ İlahiyat Örneği," *Dergiabant* 7/13 (May 31, 2019), 2.

preferences reveal numerous influencing variables¹⁴ such as gender, age, marital status, social gender, structural characteristics of the occupation,

¹⁴ Leyla Aydemir, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Tercihlerini Belirleyen Faktörlere Yönelik Bir İnceleme," *Anemon Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 6/5 (April 13, 2018), 713–723; Hürriyet Çimen, "Turizm Lisans Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimleri: Akçakoca Turizm İşletmeciliği ve Otelcilik Yüksekokulu Örneği," *Anatolia: Turizm Araştırmaları Dergisi* 19/2 (December 1, 2008), 194–202; Barış Erdem - Mehmet Fatih Kayran, "Balıkesir Üniversitesi Leyla Aydemir, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Tercihlerini Belirleyen Faktörlere Yönelik Bir İnceleme," *Anemon Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 6/5 (April 13, 2018), 713–723; Hürriyet Çimen, "Turizm Lisans Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimleri: Akçakoca Turizm İşletmeciliği ve Otelcilik Yüksekokulu Örneği," *Anatolia: Turizm Araştırmaları Dergisi* 19/2 (December 1, 2008), 194–202; Barış Erdem - Mehmet Fatih Kayran, "Balıkesir Üniversitesi Turizm İşletmeciliği ve Otelcilik Yüksekokulu Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimini Etkileyen Faktörler Üzerine Bir Araştırma," *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 14/1 (2013), 81–106; Gülten Genç et al., "İnönü Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimini Etkiyen Faktörler," *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 8/13 (February 1, 2007), 49–63; Şükrü Keyifli, *İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimleri ve Yeterlikleri* (Ankara: İlahiyat Yayınları, 2020); Türkan Sarıkaya - Leyla Khorshid, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimini Etkileyen Etmenlerin İncelenmesi: Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimi," *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi* 7/2 (June 1, 2009), 393–423; Kübra Cevherli - Kevser Altındağ, "Yönetici Görüşlerine Göre İmam Hatip Lisesi Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimlerine Etki Eden Unsurlar," *Sakarya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 26/50 (December 15, 2024), 703–746; Aman Bhardwaj, "Career Orientation among Senior Secondary Girl Students in Relation to the Location of School and Stream," *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts* 6/4 (2018), 421; Desirae M. Domenico - Karen H. Jones, "Career Aspirations of Women in the 20th Century," *Journal of Career and Technical Education* 22/2 (2006), 3; Veronika Taşner et al., "Gender in the Teaching Profession: University Students' Views of Teaching as a Career," *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal* 7/2 (2017), 67; Tahira Kalsoom et al., "Career Orientation for Girls: Impact of Parents' Level of Education and Profession," *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 57/1 (2020), 424; Carolyn Morgan et al., "The Role of Interest in Understanding the Career Choices of Female and Male College Students," *Sex Roles* 44/5 (March 1, 2001), 313. i Turizm İşletmeciliği ve Otelcilik Yüksekokulu Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimini Etkileyen Faktörler Üzerine Bir Araştırma," *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 14/1 (2013), 81–106; Gülten Genç et al., "İnönü Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimini Etkileyen Faktörler," *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 8/13 (February 1, 2007), 49–63; Şükrü Keyifli, *İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimleri ve Yeterlikleri* (Ankara: İlahiyat Yayınları, 2020); Türkan Sarıkaya - Leyla Khorshid,

family's socioeconomic status, financial expectations, type of school graduated, academic achievement, and the future prospects of the preferred profession.¹⁵ When reviewing the relevant literature on theological faculties -which train teachers, religious officials, and researchers in the field of theology- it appears that there is no study that directly examines the post-graduation vocational orientations of female students in these faculties or the factors influencing these orientations. In Keyifli's (2020) study entitled "İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimleri ve Yeterlikleri" (Vocational Orientations and Competencies of Faculty of Theology Students), which partially addresses this issue, it was found that theology students were inclined towards careers in academia, teaching, Arabic language instruction, and professions within the Presidency of Religious Affairs. Among these professions, it was observed that female students mostly preferred teaching.¹⁶

Although there are some studies conducted on theology faculty students in various fields that partially address post-graduation career choices and profession preferences, none of them focus directly on

"Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimini Etkileyen Etmenlerin İncelenmesi: Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimi," *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi* 7/2 (June 1, 2009), 393–423; Kübra Cevherli - Kevser Altındağ, "Yönetici Görüşlerine Göre İmam Hatip Lisesi Öğrencilerinin Meslekî Yönelimlerine Etki Eden Unsurlar," *Sakarya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 26/50 (December 15, 2024), 703–746.

- ¹⁵ Semai Tuzcuoğlu. "Meslek Seçimi ve Önemi." *Marmara Üniversitesi Atatürk Eğitim Fakültesi Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi* 6/6 (1994), 265–280. Yunus Ömer Beşparmak, *Kadınlarda Meslek Seçiminde Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rolü ve Yaşam Becerileri Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi* (İstanbul Gelişim Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, Master Thesis, 2021); Gamze Çay, "Meslek Seçiminde Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerinin Etkisi: Hemşirelik Mesleği Örneği," (2021); Mualla Dikmen - İlkur Öner, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerinin Mesleki Seçimlerine Etkisinin İncelenmesi," *International Journal of Eurasia Social Sciences* 15/56 (2024), 706; Esra Gedik - Hülya Çakır, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçiminde Cinsiyetin Etkisi: Yozgat Bozok Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Bölümü Örneği," *Kadın/Woman 2000* 20/1 (June 1, 2019), 43–58; Abdullah Atli - Sertan Hamza Gür, "Lise Öğrencilerinin Meslek Tercihleri ve Bu Tercihlerine Etki Eden Faktörler," *Kariyer Psikolojik Danışmanlığı Dergisi* 2/1 (June 28, 2019), 32–53; Muhterem Şebnem Ensari - Hazal Koray Alay, "Meslek Seçimini Etkileyen Faktörlerin Demografik Değişkenler İle İlişkinin Araştırılması: İstanbul İlinde Bir Uygulama," *HUMANITAS - Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 5/10 (December 20, 2017), 409–422; Sarıkaya - Khorshid, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimini Etkileyen Etmenlerin İncelenmesi."

- ¹⁶ Keyifli, *İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimleri ve Yeterlikleri*, 93.

vocational orientations.¹⁷ Unlike these studies, this study directly investigates the vocational orientations of female students. In addition, the factors that are effective in vocational preference will be determined and evaluations will be made based on these factors.

Throughout history, men have been more prominent than women in practicing professions related to theology.¹⁸ This situation continues today in professions other than teaching. Indeed, as of 2025 only 20.12% of the staff working within the Presidency of Religious Affairs are women.¹⁹ A similar situation exists in higher religious education. As mentioned above, there has been a quantitative increase in both the number of theological faculties and the number of female students studying in these faculties over the last 15 years.²⁰ Although female students have constituted the majority of those participating in higher religious education since the early 2000s, males continue to dominate professions related to this field. In this context, this study is important in that it offers a perspective to those developing employment policies and programs for female graduates. In addition, identifying the vocational orientations of female students studying in the faculty of theology and determining the factors that influence these orientations will provide data

¹⁷ Hacı Yusuf Acuner, "İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Din Görevliliği Mesleğine Yönelik Tutumları: Rize Örneği," *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 9/43 (April 2016), 2306–2313; Mustafa Fatih Ay, "İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Memnuniyet Düzeyleri ile Gelecek Beklentileri Arasındaki İlişki," *Marife Dini Araştırmalar Dergisi* 20/2 (December 30, 2020), 743–758; Özer Çetin, "İslami İlimler/İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Öğretmenlik Mesleğine Yönelik Tutumlarının İncelenmesi (Uşak Üniversitesi Örneği)," *Journal of Divinity Faculty of Hitit University* 16/32 (December 15, 2017), 411–432; İlyas Erpay, "Öğrencilerin İlahiyat Fakültesine Yönelik Görüşleri," *Amasya İlahiyat Dergisi* 13 (December 30, 2019), 423–473; Yasemin İpek et al., "İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Öğretim Süreçlerinin Kariyer Eğilimi ve Stresi Açısından İncelenmesi," *MANAS Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 13/1 (January 9, 2024), 368–395; Saadettin Özdemir, "Yüksek Din Eğitiminin Geleceği ve İstihdam Alanlarına Yönelik Program Önerileri," *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 30 (June 1, 2013), 237–249; Recep Uçar Uçar, "İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Profili, Akademik Eğilimleri ve Aldıkları Eğitime İlişkin Memnuniyet Algıları (İnönü Üniversitesi Örneği)," *İnönü Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 8/2 (December 27, 2017), 105–178.

¹⁸ Angeline Savala, "The Nexus between Church and Gender: Understanding Headship as Servanthood," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 6/1 (2020), 124.

¹⁹ Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı "İstatistikler" (Accessed July 14, 2025).

²⁰ Altın, *Yüksek Din Eğitiminin 100 Yılı*, 117.

for those interested in the subject. Furthermore, this study is important in terms of being gender-specific and revealing the obstacles that students face when choosing professions in the field of theology. In this study, which aims to reveal the vocational orientations of female students in the Faculty of Theology, the question "What are the vocational orientations of senior female students in the Faculty of Theology after graduation?" constitutes the research problem.

1. Method

1.1. Research Design

The purpose of this study was to determine the vocational orientations of female students in the faculty of theology. This study was designed and conducted using a quantitative approach with the survey method. The survey method is a research design used to determine participants' opinions on a subject, as well as their interests, skills, abilities, and attitudes.²¹

1.2. Study Population and Sample

In the relevant literature, the concept of population is addressed in two ways: the general population and the study population. The general population includes all individuals related to the phenomenon, while the study population refers to the accessible portion of that population. The general population of this study consists of senior female students enrolled in faculties of theology, whereas the study population consists of senior female students of the Faculty of Theology at Fırat University. The study sample comprised 191 students who voluntarily participated in the research

1.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this study, conducted during the 2024-2025 academic year, were collected through a questionnaire form. The questionnaire form consisted of two sections: The first included demographic information about the students, and the second focused on their career preferences and the factors influencing these preferences. In order to enhance the quality of the study, the relevant literature was reviewed during the preparation

²¹ Şener Büyüköztürk et al., *Eğitimde Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Pegem Akademi, 2020), 15.

of the survey questions.²² The content validity of the questionnaire form, which was developed based on the literature, was examined. The content validity of the research was ensured by obtaining expert opinions on whether the prepared questions measured the targeted characteristics. A pilot study was conducted with 9 senior female students who were not included in the main sample to assess whether the questions were understandable to students and to increase the validity and reliability of the study. Based on the feedback, some statements were simplified, and the final version of the questionnaire was then used in the main study. The questionnaire was revised based on feedback from students. Then, ethical approval was obtained with the decision numbered E-50716868-100-297508, taken at the 2023/03 meeting of Fırat University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, dated 02.02.2023. Following ethical approval, permission was also obtained from the Dean of the Faculty of Theology where the study was to be conducted. The questionnaire form was distributed to the students along with a statement explaining the purpose of the study. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the SPSS software package.

2. Findings

2.1. Students' First Priorities and Occupational Preferences After Graduation

Under this heading, the findings regarding the students' first priorities and professional preferences after graduation are presented. The career priorities of the senior female students in the Faculty of Theology, who constitute the sample, after graduation are presented in the table below.

The Career Priorities	f	%
Becoming a Civil Servant	146	76.5
Graduate Studies	25	13.1
Getting Married	15	7.8
Other	5	2.6
Total	191	100

Table 1: The Career Priorities After Graduation

²² Bilal Sevinç, "Survey Araştırması Yöntemi", *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntemleri*, ed. Kaan Böke (İstanbul: Alfa Basımevi, 2011), 252.

As seen in Table 1, 76.5% of the female students stated that they wanted to become civil servants, 13.1% stated that they were considering graduate education, and 7.8% stated that they wanted to get married. In the open-ended “other” option, students stated that they would like to work in another field. According to these findings, it is seen that the first priority of three-fourths of the senior female students studying in the Faculty of Theology after graduation is to become civil servants (such as teachers, Qur’an course instructors, or other public employees in various institutions).

In the study, students were asked whether they wanted to work after graduation, and their answers are presented in Table 2.

Thinking About Working	f	%
Yes	176	92.1
Undecided	15	7.9
No	0	0
Total	191	100

Table 2: Thinking About Working After Graduation

The answers given by the students were analyzed by the researchers, and it was seen that 92.1% of the students thought about working, while 7.9% were undecided about whether to work or not. Overall, almost all of the students, including those with other after-graduation priorities, are considering employment.

The answers given by female students to the question about which profession they would like to prefer after graduation are shown in table 3.

Preferred Profession	f	%
Religious Culture and Ethics Teacher	124	64.8
Qur'an Course Instructor	17	8.1
Academician	14	7.1
Undecided	11	5.7
I Want to Pursue a Profession Outside the Field of Theology	10	5.1
Imam-Hatip Vocational Course Teacher	9	4.1
Other Posts in the Directorate of Religious Affairs	4	4.1
Other	1	0.5
Total	191	100

Table 3: Preferred Profession

As seen in Table 3, 64.8% of the senior female students stated that they would like to be a Religious Culture and Ethics teacher, 8.1% stated that they would like to be a Qur'an Course instructor, and 7.1% stated that they would like to be an academician. Among the female students, 5.7% are undecided about the profession they want to choose, 5.1% want to choose a profession outside the field of theology, 4.1% want to teach Imam-Hatip vocational courses, and 4.1% want to choose other civil servants' positions within the Presidency of Religious Affairs. According to these findings, more than half (64.8%) of the female students want to be a Religious Culture and Ethics teacher after graduation.

2.2. Factors Affecting and Preventing Students' Occupational Preference

Under this heading, the factors affecting and preventing the senior female students of the Faculty of Theology from choosing a profession are presented. The students were asked a question in which they could mark more than one option regarding the factors affecting the choice of profession, and the answers to the question are presented in Table 4.

Factors Affecting Profession Choice	f	%
Conformity to Faith	103	53.9
Gender Relevance	65	34
Social Prestige	57	29.8
Financial Gain of the Profession	38	19.9
Influence of Family/Environment	34	17.8
Studying at the Faculty of Theology	15	7.8
Other	22	11.5
Total	191	100

Table 4: Factors Affecting Profession Choice

53,9% of the students stated that the factor of conformity to faith, 34% stated that the factor of conformity to gender, 29.8% stated that the factor of social prestige, and 19.9% stated that the factor of financial gain was effective in their choice of profession. 17.8% of the students stated that the family and environment factor, 11.5% of the students stated that other factors (being effective in raising the children of the end times properly, because I love it, because it is my dream, because I am interested in the

field, and because I am a hafiz,²³ etc.) and 7.8% stated that the factor of studying at the Faculty of Theology was effective. According to these findings, it can be said that conformity with faith, conformity with gender, and social respectability come to the forefront in the occupational preferences of female students studying in the Faculty of Theology.

The students were asked to select multiple options regarding the factors that negatively affect their profession choice, and the answers given to the question are presented in Table 5.

Factors Preventing Profession Choice	f	%
Injustices or Difficulties in the Exam System	136	71.2
Inadequate Exam Preparation	77	40.3
Insufficiency of the Education Received	74	38.7
Economic Situation	26	13.6
Family-Related Reasons	21	11
Negative Reactions from Peer Group	8	4.2
Gender	5	2.6

Table 5: Factors Preventing Profession Choice

It was determined that 71.2% of the students considered injustices or difficulties in the examination system, 40.3% considered inadequate preparation for the exams, 38.7% considered inadequate education, and 13.6% considered the economic situation as factors preventing the target profession. 11% of the students stated that religious reasons, and 4.2% stated that negative reactions from the circle of friends were inhibiting factors. Finally, 2.6% stated that gender was inhibiting factors. According to these findings, it is seen that the factors that negatively affect the vocational preferences of female students are injustice or difficulties in the examination system for recruitment to the profession, inadequate preparation for the exams, and inadequate education received at the faculty.

2.3. Students' Preparations and Expectations for the Profession

Under this heading, the preparation of the senior female students in the Faculty of Theology for the profession they will choose after

²³ Hafiz (also spelled hafez) refers to a person who has memorized the entire Qur'an.

graduation are presented. Table 6 shows the students' preparation for the profession.

Preparation for the Intended Profession	f	%
Yes	70	36.6
Partly	63	33
No	58	30.4
Total	191	100

Table 6: Preparation for the Intended Profession

36.6% of senior female students in the Faculty of Theology stated that they are preparing for their preferred profession, 30.4% reported that they are not making any preparations, and 33% said that they are partially preparing.

Based on these findings, it can be observed that more than half of the senior female students (yes + partly) are making preparations for their future profession.

The students were also asked about their beliefs in being able to attain the profession they prefer. The responses provided by the students are presented in Table 7.

Belief in Attaining the Preferred Profession	f	%
Yes	135	70.7
Partly	45	23.6
No	11	5.8
Total	191	100

Table 7: Belief in Attaining the Preferred Profession

As seen in Table 7, when asked whether they believe they will be able to attain their preferred profession after graduation, 70% of senior female students answered "yes", 23.6% responded "partly", and 5.8% said "no".

The vast majority of female students believe that they will be able to reach the profession they prefer.

2.4. Students' Alternative Post-Graduation Plans and Professional Competencies

Under this heading, the findings of the senior female students of the Faculty of Theology regarding their alternative plans after graduation and professional competence are presented.

The findings regarding the alternative path that students would prefer in case they were not to obtain the profession in the first year are presented in Table 8.

An Alternative Path Preferred by Students in Case of Failure to Obtain the Profession in the First Year	f	%
Preparing Again for the Profession	153	80.1
Turning to Other Professions	25	13.1
Not Intending to Work	10	5.2
Other	3	1.6
Total	191	100

Table 8: An Alternative Path Preferred by Students in Case of Failure to Obtain the Profession in the First Year

As seen in Table 8, 80.1% of the students stated that if they could not obtain the profession they would prefer in the first year, they would prepare for the profession again, while 13.1% stated that they would turn to other professions. 5.2% of the students stated that they did not plan to work, and 1.6% were undecided under the other option. According to these findings, it is seen that students are insistent on obtaining the profession they will prefer.

Students were asked about their beliefs regarding whether they are able to graduate with sufficient qualifications for the profession they wanted to choose, and the answers given by the students are presented in Table 9.

Belief in Graduating with Sufficient Qualifications for the Profession	f	%
Yes	69	36.1
No	62	32.5
Partly	60	31.4
Total	191	100

Table 9: Belief in Graduating with Sufficient Qualifications for the Profession

As shown in the Table 9, 36.1% of the students stated that they believe they will graduate from the Faculty of Theology with sufficient qualifications, while 32.5% reported that they do not believe they will

graduate with adequate qualifications. 31.4% of the students indicated that they will partly graduate with sufficient qualifications.

According to these findings, it is noteworthy that two-thirds of the students believe, at least to some extent, that they will graduate with the necessary qualifications for their preferred professions, while one-third expressed a negative opinion.

2.5. The Role of Gender in Students' Post-Graduation Career Preferences

Under this heading, the role of gender in students' post-graduation career preferences is examined. Students were asked whether their gender had an influence on their profession choices after graduation. The responses provided by the students are presented in Table 10.

Belief in Gender in Influencing Career Preferences	f	%
Yes	109	57.1
No	60	31.4
Partly	22	11.5
Total	191	100

Table 10: Belief in Gender Influencing Career Preferences

As seen in Table 10, 57.1% of the students stated that their gender has an influence (positive or negative) on their career preferences. While 31.4% indicated that it has no influence, 11.5% reported that it has partial influence. These findings show that more than half of the students consider gender to be a significant factor in career choice.

The findings related to whether gender creates a disadvantage in pursuing the preferred profession are presented in Table 11.

The Disadvantage of Gender in Practicing the Preferred Profession	f	%
Yes	25	13.1
No	145	75.9
Partly	21	11
Total	191	100

Table 11: The Disadvantage of Gender in Practicing the Preferred Profession

As can be seen in the Table 11, 75.9% of the students stated that their gender does not put them at a disadvantage in the profession of their choice, 13.1% stated that it does put them at a disadvantage, and 11% stated that it puts them at a partial disadvantage. According to the findings, approximately three quarters of the students think that their gender will not create a disadvantage in the profession they will choose. On average, one fourth of the students (yes-partly) think that their gender will somehow disadvantage them in the profession they will choose.

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

In order to determine the vocational orientations of senior female students of the Faculty of Theology after graduation, 191 female students participated in the study conducted at Firat University Faculty of Theology.

It was observed that the first priority of the majority of the female students participating in the study after graduation was to become a civil servant (76.5%). It was determined that almost all students (92.1%) want to work after graduation. A study conducted by Özdemir and Gün revealed similar findings, showing that the vast majority of female students (84%) plan to work after graduation.²⁴ The majority of female students who want to work after graduation stated that they want to be teachers (64.8%+4.1%)²⁵. These findings are similar to the results of the studies conducted by Uçar, Keyifli, and Korkmaz.²⁶ In the study conducted by Uçar et al., it was concluded that the majority of the theology students wanted to be teachers and the proportion of female students who wanted to be teachers was higher. In the study conducted by Keyifli, it was concluded that female students preferred the teaching profession more than male students.²⁷ This situation has also been pointed out in the

²⁴ Şuayip Özdemir - Ayşegül Gün, "İlahiyat Fakültesinde Okuyan Kız Öğrencilerin Rol Model Algıları -Amasya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Örneği-," *Uluslararası İslâm ve Model İnsan Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı*, ed. M. Akif Özdoğan et al. (Kahramanmaraş: Fikir Ajans, 2018), 2/652.

²⁵ Religious Culture and Ethics Teacher and Imam-Hatip Vocational Course Teacher

²⁶ Uçar, "İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Profili, Akademik Eğilimleri ve Aldıkları Eğitime İlişkin Memnuniyet Algıları (İnönü Üniversitesi Örneği)," 148; Mehmet Korkmaz, "İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Fakülteyi Tercih Nedenleri: Erciyes Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Örneği," *Bilimname* 18/1 (2010), 192.

²⁷ Keyifli, *İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimleri ve Yeterlikleri*, 93.

relevant literature, and discussions have been made on the transformation of teaching into a female profession.²⁸ A study conducted by Uygun (2014) concluded that teaching in Türkiye has come to be seen as a female profession. The fact that the number of female teachers is significantly higher than the number of male teachers in the statistics of the Ministry of National Education supports this conclusion.²⁹

In the study, it was observed that the students wanted to choose the teaching profession. Among the teaching fields, it was determined that they were inclined towards Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge teaching and did not show much interest in Imam Hatip vocational course teaching. The fact that students do not show much interest in Imam Hatip vocational course teaching can be evaluated based on the low employment rate of vocational course teachers compared to Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge teachers in recent years. Indeed, in the last five years, the number of Imam Hatip vocational course teachers employed by the Ministry of National Education was 1,254, while the number of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge teachers employed exceeded 9,000.³⁰ Accordingly, it can be concluded that students do not prefer Imam Hatip vocational course teaching due to employment concerns.

In the study, the occupational groups that female students most wanted to pursue after teaching were those within the Presidency of Religious Affairs. It was determined that students particularly wanted to pursue Quran course teaching and did not want to pursue other occupations within the Presidency of Religious Affairs. This situation was also identified in the study conducted by Keyifli.³¹ In Keyifli's study, it was

²⁸ Aysun Erginer - Emine Saklan, "Öğretmenlik Mesleğinin Bir Kadın Mesleğine Dönüşmesinin Yaratabileceği Sorunlara Yönelik Öğretmen Adaylarının Geliştirdikleri Çözüm Önerileri," *Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Eğitimi Dergisi* 6/2 (December 31, 2020), 367; Taşner et al., "Gender in the Teaching Profession," 67; Marina Kammermeier et al., "Feminization of Teaching: Gender and Motivational Factors of Choosing Teaching as a Career," *Frontiers in Education* 10 (May 21, 2025); Marjo Nieminen, "Women Teachers and the Feminisation of the Teaching Profession in a Finnish Journal for Primary School Teachers (The Teacher), 1915–1920," *Paedagogica Historica* 58/1 (January 2, 2022), 139–153.

²⁹ Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB), "Milli Eğitim İstatistikleri - Öğrenci Sayısı" (Accessed January 14, 2025).

³⁰ "T.C. MEB Personel Genel Müdürlüğü" (Accessed October 20, 2025).

³¹ Keyifli, *İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimleri ve Yeterlilikleri*, 101.

also concluded that students were not willing to choose other professions within the Presidency of Religious Affairs besides Quran course instructor.³² It is thought that the students' preference for Qur'an course teaching may be due to the fact that teaching is thought to be a female profession, as mentioned above.

A significant proportion of the participants (53.9%) indicated that compatibility with their faiths played a key role in their career choice. Students also stated that gender appropriateness (34%), social prestige (29.8%), and financial gain (19.9%) were effective in their choice of profession. In the study conducted by Balyer and Özcan, similar to the results of this study, it was concluded that intrinsic factors came to the fore in the occupational preferences of female students.³³ In the study conducted by Tasner et al., it was stated that female students preferred the teaching profession because it was suitable for their gender rather than due to environmental factors.³⁴ In addition, studies conducted by Domenico and Jones and Mutekwe et al., also found that gender factor affects career choice.³⁵ In Aydemir's study on the factors affecting university students' choice of profession, it was determined that factors such as the future importance of the profession, career, and social prestige came to the forefront in students' profession preferences.³⁶ The financial gain of the profession came after these factors. It is thought that the faculties of theology are educational institutions with a religious character, unlike other faculties, is effective in this situation and, for this reason, it can be said that the emphasis on faith comes to the fore in the choice of profession.³⁷ Savickas emphasizes the factor of faith among the factors affecting vocational orientations.³⁸ The fact that female students studying

³² Keyifli, *İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimleri ve Yeterlikleri*, 101.

³³ Aydın Balyer - Kenan Özcan, "Choosing Teaching Profession as a Career: Students' Reasons," *International Education Studies* 7/5 (April 29, 2014), 110.

³⁴ Taşner et al., "Gender in the Teaching Profession." 67.

³⁵ Domenico - Jones, "Career Aspirations of Women in the 20th Century"; Edmore Mutekwe et al., "Factors Affecting Female Students' Career Choices and Aspirations: A Zimbabwean Example," *Journal of Social Sciences* 29/2 (November 1, 2011), 133-141.

³⁶ Aydemir, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Tercihlerini Belirleyen Faktörlere Yönelik Bir İnceleme." 722.

³⁷ Aydemir, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Tercihlerini Belirleyen Faktörlere Yönelik Bir İnceleme." 722.

³⁸ Savickas, "The Theory and Practice of Career Construction." 46.

higher religious education cite conformity with their beliefs as a factor can also be evaluated in this context. It is seen that the findings of this study are similar to the findings of the study conducted by Aydemir, except for the factor of conformity to belief.³⁹ In line with these findings, it is concluded that being a student of the Faculty of Theology plays an important role in the influence of the belief factor on students' career choice.

Among the most important factors that prevent students from choosing a profession are injustices in the examination system, inadequate preparation for the exam, and inadequate education. It is seen that the examination system and the education they receive come to the forefront among the factors preventing students from choosing a profession. In this study, the most prominent reason after the examination system was the inadequacy of the education received. A review of the literature reveals that, in line with the findings of this study, students studying at other faculties also emphasize the inadequacy of the education they receive. Research conducted by Ataizi and Sever (2017) also concluded that communication faculty students stated that the education they received did not prepare them for real life.⁴⁰ Another result of the research is that students do not consider their families and friends as a factor that prevents them from choosing a profession.

When the findings regarding whether the students have made any preparations for the profession they want to choose are evaluated, it is seen that a significant portion of the students (36.6%+33%) have prepared for a profession, even if partially. The rate of students' belief that they can obtain the profession they want to choose is 70%. Only a small portion of the students, 5.8%, believe that they will not be able to obtain the profession they want to choose after graduation. According to these findings, it is concluded that the students' belief in their ability to obtain the profession is high. When asked how they would proceed if they could not obtain the profession in the first year after graduation, four out of five (80.1%) of the students answered that they would prepare to obtain the profession again. It was concluded that the majority of the students are

³⁹ Aydemir, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Tercihlerini Belirleyen Faktörlere Yönelik Bir İnceleme." 721-722.

⁴⁰ Murat Ataizi - Necip Serdar Sever, "Aldıkları Eğitimle İlgili Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Algı, Görüş ve Değerlendirmeleri," *Selçuk İletişim* 9/4 (January 26, 2017), 138.

preparing for the profession, have a belief that they will obtain the profession it, and exhibit a determination to obtain the profession.

This research also investigated whether the students would graduate from the Faculty of Theology equipped for the profession they intend to pursue after graduation. Two thirds (36.1%+31.4%) of the students stated that they would graduate with sufficient qualifications, while one third (32.5%) stated that they would not graduate with sufficient qualifications. In Keyifli's study, it was determined that students perceived the education received at the Faculty of Theology as sufficient in terms of acquiring professional knowledge and skills for teaching, but insufficient in terms of Arabic language proficiency and similar areas.⁴¹ In Taştekin's study, a significant portion of the students stated that the education they received at the Faculty of Theology was insufficient to prepare them for their future profession.⁴² Similarly, Özdemir's study concluded that the programs of the Faculty of Theology are insufficient to solve the problems encountered after graduation.⁴³ Based on this, it can be concluded that theological education is perceived as insufficient in providing the knowledge and skills necessary for the chosen professions.

More than half of the students (57.1%) stated that their gender played an important role in their choice of profession. The study conducted by Sarıkaya and Korshud (2009) also determined that gender is an important factor in career choice. Considering that two thirds of the students who participated in the study wanted to choose the teaching profession (Table 3), the results of this study show that being female is effective in choosing the teaching profession. This situation is also supported by other studies in the literature.⁴⁴ Studies conducted by

⁴¹ Keyifli, *İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Mesleki Yönelimleri ve Yeterlikleri*, 100.

⁴² Osman Taştekin, "Yeni Kurulan İlahiyat Fakültelerinin Öğrenme Ortamına Yönelik Öğrenci Algıları -Şırnak, Erzincan ve Iğdır Örneği-," *Usul İslam Araştırmaları* 19/19 (June 1, 2013), 164.

⁴³ Özdemir, "İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin İlahiyat Programı İle İlgili Görüşleri," 29.

⁴⁴ Sarıkaya - Khorshid, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimini Etkileyen Etmenlerin İncelenmesi: Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimi," *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi* 7/2 (June 1, 2009), 393-423; Selçuk Uygun, "The Gender-Related Role of Teaching Profession in Turkey," *International Journal Of Progressive Education* 10/1 (April 1, 2014), 46-58; Ivana Pikic Jugovic et al., "Gender Differences and Motivation for the Teaching Profession: Why Do Men Choose (Not) to Teach?," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)* 47/9 (September 2022), 1-18.

Uygun (2014), Jugovic (2022), and et al. have also concluded that gender is an effective factor in choosing teaching as a profession.

Another result of the study is that the students stated that their gender would not be a disadvantage in pursuing their profession. This result can be evaluated in the context of discussions about the majority of students wanting to become teachers and the transformation of teaching into a female profession in the literature. Indeed, considering the career orientations of female students, the idea that their genders do not constitute a disadvantage in pursuing a teaching career is consistent with the findings of the relevant literature.

When the overall results of the research are evaluated, it is concluded that the majority of the female theology students prefer the teaching profession after graduation, consider this choice to be compatible with their beliefs and genders, and view obstacles primarily as problems arising from the examination system.

In this study, the vocational orientations of female students studying higher religious education were analyzed descriptively. The following suggestions can be made regarding this issue:

1- This study covers higher religious education; it is recommended that similar studies be conducted in high schools, which are considered an important period in career choice.

2- In order to ensure sample diversity, it is recommended that the study be repeated by including higher religious education institutions in different regions in the sample.

3- Researchers are encouraged to conduct more detailed analyses using measurement tools that allow them to examine different factors and perform detailed analyses.

4- It is recommended that the Presidency of Religious Affairs makes arrangements to increase interest in the profession of Qur'an Course Instructor, which is a profession similar to the teaching profession.

5- It is recommended that the Ministry of National Education develops strategies and policies to increase interest in the profession of Imam Hatip vocational course teaching, as employment opportunities in this field are relatively limited compared to Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge teaching.

6- Policy makers are advised to work to increase the employment of female students.

7- Policy makers are advised to ensure that the examination system is more objective.

8- It is recommended that the programs of faculties of theology be updated to prepare students for their chosen professions in line with their career preferences.

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