WORKING AND NON-WORKING MUSIC STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF A MUSICIAN'S CAREER IN TURKIYE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY*

Gülce Özen GÜRKAN[1], Ayrin ERSÖZ[2]

[1]Ph.D. Candidate, Yıldız Technical University, Institute of Social Sciences, Music and Performing Arts Doctorate Program, gulceozen@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4553-8483

[2]Prof. Dr., Yıldız Technical University, Institute of Social Sciences, Music and Performing Arts Doctorate Program, ayersoz@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9501-2981

Abstract

This study explores the differing perceptions of the music profession among undergraduate music students in Turkiye, comparing those who actively work in the music industry during their studies with those who do not. In this article, we draw upon qualitative interviews and participant observations. The first author, a former music student herself, conducted the fieldwork and contributed autoethnographic reflections that illuminate the data. The study reveals how employment status influences students' understanding of musicianship, career expectations, identity, and socio-economic realities. Findings show that working students tend to develop more pragmatic, protean approaches to their future careers, while non-working students often retain idealized or institutionally influenced views. The study also examines the impact of early music education, parental attitudes, financial instability, and the limitations of current academic curricula on students' career readiness. The results highlight the need for undergraduate music programs in Turkiye to incorporate career planning and industry awareness into their curricula to better support students' transition into professional life.

Keywords: Music Education, Music profession, Working students, Career expectations, Protean career.

SEKTÖRDE ÇALIŞAN VE ÇALIŞMAYAN MÜZİK ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN TÜRKİYE'DE MÜZİSYENLİK KARİYERİNİ ALGILAMA BİÇİMLERİ: KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ÇALIŞMA

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki lisans düzeyinde müzik eğitimi alan öğrencilerin müzik mesleğine dair algılarını, çalışmakta olan ve olmayan öğrenciler arasında karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemektedir. Nitel görüşmeler ve katılımcı gözlemlerinden faydalanılarak elde edilen veriler, alan çalışmasını yürüten ve kendisi de eskiden müzik öğrencisi olan ilk yazarın otoetnografik iç gözlemleriyle birlikte değerlendirilmiştir. Öğrencilerin çalışma durumlarının müzisyenlik kimliklerini, kariyer beklentilerini ve müzik mesleğine dair sosyoekonomik farkındalıklarını nasıl etkilediği analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, müzik sektöründe aktif olarak çalışan öğrencilerin daha gerçekçi ve protean (çok yönlü ve değişken) kariyer stratejileri geliştirdiklerini; çalışmayan öğrencilerin ise müzik eğitim kurumlarının idealize edilmiş bakış açılarını daha çok içselleştirdiklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca öğrencilerin erken yaşta aldıkları müzik eğitimi, ebeveyn tutumları, mali belirsizlikler ve akademik müfredatın yetersizlikleri gibi etkenlerin, öğrencilerin mesleki yeterlilik algılarına ve gelecek planlarına etkileri tartışılmıştır. Çalışmadan çıkan sonuçlar, Türkiye'deki lisans düzeyindeki müzik programlarının, öğrencileri mezuniyet sonrası müzik endüstrisine hazırlamak amacıyla kariyer planlaması ve sektör bilgisi içeren derslerle desteklenmesi gerektiğine işaret etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Müzik Eğitimi, Müzisyenlik, Çalışan öğrenciler, Kariyer beklentileri, Protean kariyer.

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1. INTRODUCTION

"My music group called me and said:

– Good news, Gülce! We finally managed to get a four-day-a-week deal with Grand Club![1] The pay is as good as we anticipated! Get ready to start next week!

And what I said in return was:

– Oh, I'm sorry, I need to take a break from the stage jobs; I am attending a music school now and don't think I can pull off both." (G. Gürkan, self-interview, January 26, 2025)[*]

This dialogue is a memory of Gülce Özen Gürkan, one of the writers of this article. In this conversation, the music student declines a professional music opportunity, citing her music education as the reason — even though such a role is typically considered a direct outcome of that very education. Despite the music schools' aim to prepare the students to become a part of a professional musical environment, the school itself becomes the reason for rejecting a professional job. Considering the number of music graduates who earn a living out of the music industry and have a hard time stabilizing their finances, rejecting the job opportunities in the music industry under the pretext of having an intense school schedule may be caused by the student's big expectations out of a music school that makes regular income and networks expendable. Accordingly, Gürkan states that she was so hopeful about the academic and sophisticated musician's career that her music education would provide her with that, she cast away all her musicians' network and stage jobs until then. In this case, aside from the school-related expenses, the music school seems to play another counter role in the music student's finances by giving the impression of a better career at the price of sacrificing less-paid or less-respected jobs in the music industry.

Gürkan mentions that this conversation occurred right after she started her undergraduate music education around 20 years ago. She remembers that, while some of her schoolmates kept working and networking, she was one of the students who passionately believed that her identity as an artist depended on her music education and that she must prioritize her classes before any paid or unpaid musical activity. And after 20 years, due to her observations in the music department she lectures in, the researcher claims that there has been an ongoing and significant difference between the working and non-working music students' perceptions of being a professional musician in Turkiye and their career goals in the music industry. The question that constituted the starting point of this research was whether the current music education in Turkiye establishes a particular perspective on the musical career of a formally educated musician and whether this perspective is related to the undergraduate music students' employment status.

1.1. Background

The professions derived from the performing art disciplines, including music, hardly promise stable work hours, regular income, job insurance and job security.[2] In accordance with these conditions, a career path in these professions is also ambiguous and unstable. However, due to the similar undergraduate education circumstances and the basic requirements of surviving and having a satisfying life, the students' hopes and expectations on their work life and daily life are also expected

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[1] A Club for wealthy residents of Istanbul which incorporates cafes and restaurants that organize live music shows on a regular basis.

[*] This conversation is a memory of Gülce Özen Gürkan, who is the first author and a former music student herself. Gürkan conducted fieldwork among undergraduate music students and contributed autoethnographic reflections that illuminate the data drawn from qualitative interviews and participant observations.

[2] The similarities with the other creative and/or stage performance-based professions indicate another broad issue that might require different research questions. In this research, the focus is on the music profession; the possible research questions on the other professions are excluded in order to keep the focus and left to another or broader research. The comparisons made in this essay between the music profession and the other prevalent professions may also exclude these professions for the same reason.

to be similar to the undergraduate students from the other departments, such as law, medicine, engineering, and education. Moreover, since musicians need to constantly market the image of sparkling work and daily life in order to keep their networks, expand their audience, and get more stage jobs, the differences between a musician's and a white-collar worker's working conditions and their reflections on the socioeconomics of daily life become further invisible to the music students. Some of these students get regular or occasional jobs in the music industry during their undergraduate life, and some wait for their graduation to embark on their journey in work life. The music students who work in various sectors of the music industry get the chance to be disillusioned because of the similarities in their identity and economic conditions as musicians, even when they become more capable musicians through their music education.

Compared to most of the music departments of the conservatories in Turkiye, a few music departments, including the Istanbul Bilgi University Music Department, have a versatile student profile, including students who have never made money from music, who occasionally take music performance or sound engineering jobs, who regularly take such jobs, and who already work in the music education sector. Despite majoring in the same department, these students have differing musical backgrounds, which, as a matter of course, impact their observations, evaluations, hopes, and expectations. As a lecturer in the department, Gürkan mentioned that she had the opportunity to observe the students closely. During her conversations with the students, she realized that there are similarities between her past experiences as an undergraduate student and the music students at Bilgi University. She also mentioned that she noticed differences in their perceptions of a musician's career in Turkiye, and these differences mostly emerge from their music industry experiences or inexperience. This research results from the differences between working and non-working music students' perspectives on a music career in Turkiye and its commonalities with Gürkan's background as a past undergraduate music student.

1.2. Objective

This research aims to provide an understanding of the differences between the experiences, challenges, thoughts, and expectations of the music majors who take paid jobs in the music industry and who do not work at all. Through this understanding, the researchers aspire to reinterpret and contribute to the current formation of the curricula of the undergraduate music departments, focusing on how much they prepare the music majors to the social and financial challenges of the music industry. Another outcome to be aimed for is revealing at least some of the many possible challenges of studying and working in the music industry at the same time, when even most professional musicians face financial instability, irregular work hours, and insecure work environments. Since most of the music scholars are also musicians who have worked or have been actively working in the music industry, viewing the working students' challenges in a career-based light instead of their lack of attendance or focus in the classes may also contribute to the relationship between professors and students.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research is based on the data acquired for the Ph.D. dissertation work focused on the representation and positioning of the music profession in discourse in Turkiye. In this qualitative research, in-depth interviews were held with eight students from the Istanbul Bilgi University Music Department to understand the differences between working and non-working students' perceptions of the social and economic status of the music profession in Turkiye. Three of these students stated that they have not been actively working in the music industry; four stated that they regularly perform or do other jobs at several venues and make money on the stage; and one said that they do music tutoring. Their statements were coded via MAXQDA due to the stage in which they started their music education, their thoughts on the time-wise balance between their studies and music production, the support and/or criticism they receive from their family and friends, their perspectives on the music profession and where they see themselves in the music industry in the future. To understand if the

results are peculiar to the socio-economic dynamics of Turkiye, the codes that emerged in the coding process are compared with the related research focused on students and graduates from other countries.

The participants in the research will be referred as:

L: Non-graduate students who work in the live music sector.

E: Non-graduate students who work in the music education sector.

NW: Non-graduate students who are non-workers.

During the discussion based on the results, interviews with the participants L1, L2, L3, L4, E1, NW1, NW2, and NW3 will be mentioned and cited.[3] Gendered pronouns will be used instead of neutral pronouns to reveal if there is a gender-based difference in their experiences, opinions, and expectations. Since none of the participants mentioned a trans identity, and given that the current gender-binary social discourse affects all the members of the society due to the gender assignments based on appearances, their pronouns will also be assigned considering their appearances. Here is the participants' basic demographic information:

Table 1. *Participant demographics.*

Participant ID	Gender	Age Range	Income Description
L1	Male	18-24	Getting by, cutting back on certain basic needs
L2	Male	18-24	Getting by, cutting back on certain basic needs
L3	Male	18-24	Getting by, cutting back on certain basic needs
L4	Female	25-34	Getting by, cutting back on certain basic needs
E1	Female	18-24	Getting by, cutting back on certain basic needs
NW1	Male	18-24	Getting by, cutting back on certain basic needs
NW2	Female	18-24	Getting by well, limited consumption of luxuries
NW3	Male	18-24	Getting by, cutting back on certain basic needs

The research also includes Gülce Özen Gürkan's (female, 44, getting by with an income that is not enough for luxury consumption) participation as a former undergraduate student of music who experienced both working while studying and being a non-working music student. Her participation emerges in the research as an analytical autoethnographic perspective on the related memories of the researcher's experiences and observations as a music student. She wrote an autobiography about her undergraduate music student experiences and subjected it to a separate coding process since her undergraduate days were about 20 years away from the present music academy. The codes were compared with the interview codes, and their commonalities were considered part of the research. The differences were considered irrelevant since the differences in the music career perceptions of the present and the former music students are not included as a research question in this research. Gürkan's participation in the study will be represented in the text as excerpts from the mentioned autobiography.

2.1. Limitations of the Study

This research draws on data from eight music students, along with Gürkan's autoethnographic reflections. All participants are affiliated with music departments whose curricula focus on composition and sound technologies across several genres, including classical, avant-garde, and popular music. The participants play various instruments, and some of the working students use these instruments in the music industry; however, their departments do not provide formal instrumental training. Although music graduates in Turkiye may face common challenges rooted in the current state of the music industry, the findings and interpretations presented here should be understood as

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[3] All the interviews were held in Turkish. The citations were translated into English by Gülce Özen Gürkan, the primary author of the article.

excluding the perspectives and challenges of students enrolled in conservatory music departments or music education departments.

2.2. Gürkan's Reflexivity Statement

As one of the researchers of this article, I thought that I cannot act as if I only observe the issues mentioned in this research as an outsider. I had several music educations, including an undergraduate education, just like participants. Besides this, all the participants are majoring in the music department I work for, and their struggles were my initial motivation to do this research. After observing them and then interviewing them, I noticed the similarities with my struggles and views from the times when I was an undergraduate music student. This is why I positioned myself in this research as one of the subjects in question and reviewed my former experiences as qualitative data for comparison. I do not assert that I have a completely objective perspective on the issue, but I believe that reflecting on my formal music education with an academic point of view after 20 years and having a research partner as a critic of and a contributor to the process of composing the results and a discussion out of ethnographic and auto-ethnographic data support the methodology and ethical aspects of this research.

3. COMPARATIVE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The coding stage of the interviews revealed the commonalities and differences between working and non-working students' views on the music profession, their career expectations, and their thoughts on when to start their music career due to their ongoing music education. Table 2 shows the themes and sub-themes of the findings that are formed due to the initial codes:

Table 2. *The themes and sub-themes.*

Themes and sub-themes	*n* of participants contributing (*N*=8)	*n* of transcript excerpts assigned
Theme 1: Music students' music education starts at an early age	8	0
Theme 2: The students have a hard time managing their lives between school and work	4	7
Sub-theme 2.1: Working students tend to get lower grades	1	1
Sub-theme 2.2: Working students miss stage jobs because of their studies	4	4
Sub-theme 2.3: Working students tend to have an unhealthy lifestyle	2	2
Theme 3: Music students' parents have several concerns about a musician's career	8	9
Sub-theme 3.1: The parents have concerns on their children's safety at stage work	1	1
Sub-theme 3.2: The parents have concerns on their children's social status in the future	6	6
Sub-theme 3.3: The parents have concerns on their children's employement and finances in the future	4	2
Theme 4: The working and non-working students have differentiating thoughts on music as a professional work	8	16
Sub-theme 4.1: Working students consider their music career has been already going on and their school supports their career, while non-working students wait for their graduation to start their career	7	3
Sub-theme 4.2: Working students tend to make more realistic connections between their work life and finances	8	5
Sub-theme 4.3: Working students are more open to a portfolio or protean career than non-working students	8	8

There are also commonalities with several findings of Gürkan's coding on her written self-interview, first as a working student and then as a non-working student (January 26, 2025). Along with the others, these findings will be grouped and presented under categories based on the themes and sub-themes in Table 2, and they will be discussed through the literature that confirms or challenges these statements.

3.1. Music Education Starting at an Early Age

Music education has been considered a part of general education since as early as the Ancient Greek era. Both Plato (2018: 86-94) and Aristotle (1998: 229) state that, although music education is a crucial part of general education, music should be taught in moderation since music is supposed to loosen the body and mind more than desired. According to Aristotle (1998: 237-238), even if musical instruments could be taught to children as a part of their general education, the reflection of this education in adulthood should be limited to becoming good listeners, since it was not high-status citizens but only slaves or low-status citizens who were allowed to become musicians. This perspective on music education is still respected to the point that, in Turkiye, instrument playing is not included in primary and secondary music education curricula (MEB, 2018), but since music instruments are a big part of the Eurocentric music tradition and teaching the basics of this tradition requires including instruments, the basic instruments like alto recorder and melodica are included in many primary and secondary schools. The more inclusive instruments of Eurocentric music tradition that most of the music productions in Turkiye are based on, such as piano or violin, are avoided or considered a private educational matter. Undergraduate music students are chosen via various exams, including an aptitude test, in which their success depends on their private music education, which starts at an early age. Some of these students experience professional stage work before their formal music education, and this experience is positively considered in the interviews or their portfolios, which are also included in their applications. On the other hand, the path to majoring in professions such as engineering, law, medicine, or humanities is carried through the general education from the beginning to the end of high school, and working experience is not evaluated in the application stage.

Gürkan describes her experience before her undergraduate music education as it is similar to this profile. Her private music education started in middle school, and she did not get formal music education until she was twenty. Despite stating her desire to become a musician at an early age, during her primary and secondary school years, and even in her first university experience in an engineering department, her music learning process was secondary to her general education. She states that music being a side education in her life always gave her the impression that her music education and her experiences in the music industry were not the real ones. She also states that, before her undergraduate music education, she had already learned how to sing in various music genres and how to play the piano and the guitar to accompany her singing. Moreover, she composed theater music and songs performed on the stage by herself and various singers, arranged songs for ensembles including instruments from multiple music cultures and a choir, maintained weekly stage jobs in several music genres, and organized concerts. She emphasizes that none of these projects were related to her primary and non-musical education path, and she was always expected and sometimes forced to prioritize her non-musical education as a condition to maintain her musical projects. Despite these circumstances, she already had a musician's life before her undergraduate music education.

Like Gürkan's experience, all the participants mentioned that their music education has been going on since childhood. Participant E1 states that, besides a few breaks for a couple of months, her piano and violin training centered on music education has continued since she was five. The beginnings of the other participants' musical training vary between the ages of seven to ten, through piano, guitar, violin, and drums. None of these skills are self-taught; they all state that they started with instrument courses or private lessons. A basic difference between Gürkan and the other participants is that most of them start to learn about music technologies at an early age, since these technologies are easier to use and more accessible to them compared to 20 years before. This is why, along with instrument playing, sound engineering education also starts at an early age. L1 mentions that he started to play

with mixers and trained himself in sound engineering when he was fourteen. L3 mentions that he started to earn money from DJing before high school, and L4, during high school. According to their answers to the demographic information form, although all these students are financially supported by their families, none of their families are wealthier than the average middle class in Turkiye. In these circumstances, they all managed to have access to the music devices that allow them to produce music without using an acoustic instrument.

Along with a few more music departments, Istanbul Bilgi University Music Department's terms of application are less strict than the music conservatories in Turkiye. For instance, the 2023-24 aptitude test guide of one of the most well-known conservatories in Turkiye asks for a violin department candidate to be under 25 and memorize and play a five-piece repertoire, including a violin concerto (2023/2024 Eğitim-Öğretim Yılı İstanbul Devlet Konservatuvarı Müzik Bölümü Yetenek Sınavları Kılavuzu, 2023: 11). To meet these requirements, one should start violin training at an early age and keep training without long breaks. Even though Istanbul Bilgi University Music Department has no age limit, and its entrance requirements are less challenging than a conservatory's (*About Entrance Exam*, 2024), the music student profile still includes music training starting at an early age. Since most professionals such as doctors, teachers or white-collar workers start their professional education after graduating from high school, after four to six years of university education, they become qualified enough to find a job and work in the relevant industries, having regular income and insurance provided by their institutions. Many undergraduate music students fulfill these years and more before their acceptance to a university's music department.

Studying a musical instrument starting at an early age also means money-wise investment in a musical career. Instruments become worn out or broken, and staying up to date requires keeping up with the latest music technologies. Moreover, except for the limited free music education resources such as part-time education in conservatories and public education centers, many primary or secondary school students in Turkiye learn to play instruments through paid courses or private lessons. This means several years of extra investment besides the expenses of regular primary and secondary education.

Despite spending more time, effort, and money to have a career in music, compared to the other mentioned professions, in terms of working conditions musicians are at a disadvantage in Turkiye. A musician's income and working hours are usually irregular, and standard requirements of a job, such as security and social insurance, are mostly either not provided or not even mentioned by workplaces such as bars, clubs, hotels, and venues (Dudu et al., 2022: 20-21). Recent research on musicians' conditions in Turkiye revealed that 55% of the musicians have a monthly income from music under 2/3 of the national minimum wage, and only 12% of the musicians have social insurance covered by their workplace (Sarıaltun et al., 2025: 6). The participants react to this imbalance in several ways such as engaging in more than one line of work in the music industry or entirely giving up on making money on music.

3.2. Time and Life Management between School and Work

It is not unusual for undergraduate students to work at part-time jobs when they do not have enough income. Undergraduate students from several majors work part-time, and usually their jobs are not directly relevant to their majors. A qualitative research that includes 22 undergraduate participants from İstanbul, Ankara, Mardin, Kocaeli, and Karabük shows that all of the participants have part-time jobs that do not require a specific qualification; none of them work at a job relevant to their major (Kırlıoğlu & Özdemir, 2023: 44-45). However, many undergraduate music students choose to work in the music industry. They perform at bars, clubs, hotels, and restaurants, or they work as technical staff for professional musicians, or they tutor in the music education field. Since these jobs are also opportunities for networking, and considering many of these jobs have financial and schedule-based instabilities, the students usually accept these conditions and try to fit their working schedule

to their academic schedule, or vice versa. As a result, they experience difficulties managing their time and life conditions.

The working participants of this research stated these difficulties in three categories: Getting lower grades, missing stage jobs, and an unhealthy lifestyle.

3. 2. 1. Getting Lower Grades

Most music students who choose to work in the live music industry do not have the option of choosing regular working hours or regular working days of the week, since most of the professional musicians and the other live music industry workers also do not have this option. They work project by project, and they make mostly verbal contracts with the venues for a certain day, or at most, for a certain day of the week that lasts a few months. When these working conditions are combined with the academic musical training, most of the music students sacrifice their studies and ask their instructors for favors on the course liabilities and the exams. Even when the instructors try to support these students as much as they can, the requirements of the courses limit the favors, and the working students encounter the consequences of their choices as lower grades and, more to the point, a half-benefited music education.

Gürkan, who is currently a music instructor at Istanbul Bilgi University's music department, explained her experience on this issue from an instructor's perspective. She says:

> When it comes to working students, I always try to find a balance between two responsibilities: The responsibility of providing a fully experienced course and the responsibility of staying out of the students' way of building their careers or earning the money they need to go on with their studies. I define the second one as a responsibility of a music academic as well, because the primary duty of a music instructor is preparing the student for a professional career. If an instructor chooses to ignore this responsibility and focuses only on the content of their course, to me, this means that the instructor, who is also a music industry worker, is denying the intense conditions of the music industry in Turkiye, ignoring the needs of their students to survive in this industry, and giving the false impression that the student's working life starts right after they graduate and the technical training is enough for them to find a job.

Gürkan's views as a music department instructor can be discussed as music education activism or an ethical stance, but these views are not formal expectations of any music department in Turkiye. Therefore, it is not a formal obligation of a music department instructor to support the working music students. Hence, it becomes harder for a working student to get good grades compared to a non-working one.

Balancing work and music study becomes even harder for the students who need to work to earn money to go on with their music studies. Participant L4 explains her situation with these words:

> It is quite difficult to pursue both work and studies because the courses I take are already hard enough. And because these courses are hard, it comes down to choosing one over another. I must either work or study, and I can't cover my school expenses if I don't work. It is extremely hard for me to find a balance between them. For example, I can't work when the final exams are going on, and this affects me so badly. I don't know what kind of solution would do, but honestly, it's too hard for me to manage them both.

This statement from a participant who was on the edge of losing her scholarship due to her grades portrays the studying challenge of a working music student.

Working students make money, network, and experience out of the music industry at the cost of lower grades, while the non-working students have more time to spend with their studies and get better grades they can use for the future applications of their graduate studies. At the end of the day, both positions function for different career plans.

3. 2. 2. Missing Stage Jobs

Since getting jobs in the music industry mostly depends on networking, many working music students have the opportunity to get more jobs through their expanding networks. However, because of their studies, they are not in a position to take all these jobs; or at some point, they face the necessity to choose one over another. Some of the students choose to drop or delay their studies and focus on their jobs, and others choose to miss some of the jobs at the cost of losing several networks and earning less money to support their lives and studies. The experience Gürkan has shared as a dialogue at the beginning of the essay is one of these instances. She also mentioned that she has lost most of her network from that music scene, and her budget has dropped so severely that she was not able to buy the technical equipment she needed for her studies for at least a couple of years. Another issue she mentioned was how she lost at least some of her abilities as a singer, that her communication with the audience was more natural and inclusive before her undergraduate studies, when she was working at least two or three nights a week. Besides the money and network, losing some skills due to less practice might be considered another consequence of missing stage jobs.

The other participants also have similar complaints. L1 is concerned about not being able to work enough: "Under normal circumstances a musician is able to work on the weekdays or late on the weekends because they do not attend a school. I don't really have this chance. I take jobs on the weekdays only if I am too short of money or if someone really needs me." L2 chooses the jobs that pay more: "I had several jobs in the music industry before I applied for the school, and thanks to the network I had out of these jobs, now I have the privilege to balance my studies and work by choosing more paid ones." L3 waits for his graduation to improve his musicianship through getting more experience: "It is not possible for me to become a full-time DJ and attend to school at the same time, but after graduation I will be freer, spend more time with professional jobs, and become a better DJ." L4 states that she financially has a tough time when she misses stage jobs: "I need to get events to earn my life, but my final exams are equally important, and I need to pass them. Because of this dilemma, there were times when I couldn't get events for one or two months, and it put me in a financially tricky situation, because I don't have any income besides the money I make out of my stage jobs." All the working participants miss stage jobs because of their studies, and this situation has negative consequences in their lives.

3. 2. 3. An Unhealthy Lifestyle

Participant L1, who works for popular musicians and thinks that he does not have a lot of chance to decline jobs if he wants to keep his network, mentions how he compromises on his health in order to balance his studies and his work: "I don't have time, but I have the energy. From time to time, I get sick due to energy loss, but besides that, sometimes I work without getting any sleep, come back home early in the morning, sleep for two hours, go to school, attend classes until evening, and go to another job. Doing these unhealthy things, I try to bring myself to a more decent place in the music industry."

Even though the other working participants did not mention how their efforts of balancing their work and studies affect their lives in terms of physical and mental health, it would not be surprising to hear that their health is also affected by their intense schedule. Gürkan mentioned that, before her undergraduate studies, when she was attending a full-time music certificate program and trying to keep her studies in balance with her stage jobs, she had also been having a tough time protecting her physical and mental health. She says, "I was constantly complaining about her lack of sleep, and since I was both singing on the stage and having intense vocal training, my voice was getting hoarse easily, and I often used medicine with severe side effects to fix my voice. I remember that one time that I was on the stage with a severe fever, and I had an important exam the next day. I managed to do my job, slept in my group mate's car on the way back home, and managed to take the exam too."

E1 mentions a different aspect about how her job in the music education sector affects her mental health:

I am tutoring at a private music institution. The families position music education as something their children can give up whenever they feel like it, and I feel confused and disappointed between my life as a student and my life as a tutor. It is hard to treat music as a hobby when I am attending a music school and doing my best on my studies to become a professional musician. I feel less motivated about both my work and my studies.

Building a balance between work and studies has challenges for the students who are having this experience at the end of their teens or in their early twenties. They learn to control various aspects of their lives, while their non-working classmates focus only on their music studies, get better grades, and live a healthier life. In return, the working students already have jobs and networks when they graduate, so instead of looking for a job, they keep expanding their circles.

3.3. Parents' Reactions to the Choice of a Musician's Career

The surroundings of an undergraduate music student may have an impact on their career. The studies on music majors' parents from several cultures as the universe show that parents from diverse cultures have different approaches to their children's choice of music career. A large-scale quantitative study compares how Chinese parents approach the studies of their music-majoring children, comparing authoritative and authoritarian methods (Zhang et al., 2024: 1). The comparison itself is a matter of questioning why the parents are involved in an undergraduate music student's studies, but in the course of this article, if the evaluation of their approach is reduced to the dual thinking of rejection or support, it falls into the support category. Another quantitative study on the relationship between music majors' perfectionism and their relationship with their parents is conducted at South African University and reveals that parental expectations and parental criticism have a considerable impact on how they approach their music studies (Botha & Panebianco, 2018: 227). These two studies both presume parental involvement in the music majors' studies. Despite the differences, their support or rejection of parents also has an impact on music majors and their career choices in Turkiye.

Gürkan, who was born and raised in Turkiye, describes the parental involvement in her musical career in these words:

There was always a challenge of proving to my parents that music studies might lead to a respected career. To me, a respectful career was one where I do what I desire to do as a job and earn money from these efforts. To my parents, a respected career was a job with enough regular income that allows us to save some for a house and a car and a job that is respected and praised by society in terms of dignity and morality. In the end, according to any of these definitions, we were wrong about music being a respectable career.

She also emphasized the difference between her mother's and her father's reactions to her decision to become a musician:

My mother was quite supportive before high school; she even encouraged me to attend a fine arts high school, but my father opposed. He also opposed my decision to major in music. He asked, "Are you willing to become Gülben Ergen?" I couldn't even think of what was wrong with becoming Gülben Ergen, who was singing and acting, because my father was comparing me to Ergen in the context of being open to exposing parts of my body. I felt ashamed and answered, "Of course I won't become Gülben Ergen." Now I think that I was also being disrespectful to Ergen by responding to my father this way, and I also admit that even though I like composing and researching music, becoming a composer or a music researcher was also a getaway from being labeled only as a singer. I feel like if my parents were more receptive and respectful of my career as a singer, I would focus more on voice performance.

Being a singer or a voice performer in general, combined with being a woman in the music industry, comes with its challenges. Gürkan (2023: 106) addresses these challenges to representing a historically and culturally in-between position in the society in terms of performing not only as a musical sound producer but also as a bodily communicator between the audience and the stage, including the other

instrument players. Since the thought processes of parents are also shaped by the ongoing discourse in an affirmative or opposing manner, their involvement inevitably contributes to the concerns and decisions of their children majoring in music. The concerns of Gürkan's parents can be examined in three categories, and these categories match with the concerns of the other participants' parents: safety, social status, and income.

3. 3. 1. Safety as a Concern for Stage Work

Since the streaming era made the recorded music profits of the non-star musicians extraordinarily little, if any, earning money from the music mostly became dependent on the live music sector. Most of the live music is performed in the evening and at night, at the venues that earn money not only from the tickets but also from the alcoholic drink sales. Although these drinks make the atmosphere less controllable, a considerable number of the venues in Turkiye do not have strong security regulations that protect the live performers. The precautions are so loose that it becomes possible for a musician to be murdered with the motive of him ignoring the requested song (Müzisyen Onur Şener Öldürüldü., 2022). In these circumstances, parents become more concerned with their undergraduate children working in the live music sector.

L3, who works as a DJ in the night clubs, expresses his parents' concerns with these words: "Night life disarranges the regular order of life because you work and return home late at night. Istanbul has a dangerous side at night, so [my parents] were concerned, but I assured them about my safety. Probably they would be less concerned if I had chosen to become a classical orchestra musician instead of becoming a DJ." His parents are not interviewed, so it is uncertain to this paper whether they are not concerned anymore or hide their concerns to support their son's career.

3. 3. 2. Concerns about Social Status in the Future

Although becoming a musician takes years and often decades in a person's life, society tends to assume that it is only a matter of talent. It is not rare for a musician in Turkiye to get reactions like, "I have a nice voice too," or "I can play guitar a bit," right after telling people about their profession. A report from 2020 shows that the profession that people in Turkiye know the second least about is music (Sunar, 2020: 113). However, the same report reveals that people expect the musicians to be educated at the high school level or more (Sunar, 2020: 118). According to the overall results of the occupational dignity ranking, music comes 39th after football player, nurse, store manager, football referee, and hotel/restaurant manager, while doctor, judge, lawyer, engineer, teacher, scholar, writer, and actor are on the upper ranks (Sunar, 2020: 144). In these circumstances, it is not unusual for the parents to expect a lower social status from the career path of their music major children.

The participants mentioned various reactions of their parents and other family members. NW1 starts his university education with computer engineering and then decides to switch to music. He says, "At first my parents were concerned about me losing a bright career as an engineer, but now I have their full support." NW2's parents have similar concerns: "My mom was a little strict, and she pressured me to attend a science high school and after that to major in a math-based profession. She was uncomfortable with my choice of music major. Even now, she wants me to at least become a music teacher." NW3 also talks about a similar process: "When I was in high school, my parents were very strict about not letting me become a musician, and my first major, engineering, was their decision, not mine." Gürkan's experience was also like these participants; she narrates that her parents made her choose engineering because her father was an engineer, and she had a tough time making them accept her career choice as a musician. These experiences from different time periods have the common consideration that music is a less dignified profession than engineering, which is in accordance with Sunar's report.

L1 faces her mother's concerns at an early age: "I decided to become a musician when I was 12-13 years old, and my mother was trying to support me, but I knew that she was worried about me. Certainly, she would be concerned if I decided to become a doctor or a teacher at that age." L2's parents provide conditional support: "They always seemed to support me, but they also wanted me to

support my musician's career with an 'actual job.' Thanks to this pressure, I gained a lot of skills and learned a lot of jobs that can support me." L4 had her father's support; about her mother: "She wanted me to make a career in the health sector; probably she wanted me to have an easier life." Considering health workers are often complaining about their working conditions and demanding a better work life, L4's mother's suggestion might have arisen from a similar perspective on the dignity rank of professions.

3. 3. 3. Concerns about Employment and Irregular Income

A musician's career in Turkiye is usually not a financially stable, secure, and regular one. A report from 2022 revealed that 67% of the music laborers in Turkiye are working part-time (Dudu et al., 2022: 16). 67% of the music laborers face temporary employment, and 63% do not have social insurance (Dudu et al., 2022: 18-19). 32% have a second profession, and 71% seek a second job for extra income (Dudu et al., 2022: 24). A more recent report revealed that only 37% of the musicians in Turkiye manage to earn their living on music (Sarıaltun et al., 2025: 6). According to these two reports, besides the safety and respect concerns, the decision of building a career on music in Turkiye gives several reasons to parents of the music majors to be concerned about their employment and income.

The music students are mostly aware of their parents' concerns. L1 stated that, "My mom's concerns are mostly about how I will manage the financial challenges. Because, in my experience, when you earn money, you earn good. But there are many times when you earn nothing. And I mean, it often comes to a bankruptcy declaration." When a music major, who has not even graduated and has not fully engaged in his professional life yet, is already aware of a bankruptcy risk that is not even a low one, the situation gives a parent quite a lot to be concerned about. L4's parent has a similar concern: "Because of the difficult working conditions, my mom never wanted me to become a musician." L2's parent's wish of an "actual job" is also connected to the financial concerns, as much as to the concerns of reputation. E1 also states that, even though she already started to earn money from music tutoring while she is studying, her parents and relatives often ask how she will make money out of music in the future. Both L2's and E1's parents suggested that they pursue music as a hobby, instead of a professional career. NW1 also mentioned his parents are worried about his finances in the future.

Parents having concerns about their music-majoring children does not mean that they withdraw their support. The participants who do not need to work while studying are an indicator of at least financial support. Moreover, all the participants mention that they eventually managed to earn their parents' support to some point. Gürkan narrates a long and compelling process on earning support:

> My parents were completely against my choice to become a professional musician. When I dropped my engineering major and started to prepare for a music school, they cut their financial support completely. They expected me to give up, but I did not give up. I took musical and non-musical part-time jobs while training myself for the music school exams, to the point of occasionally enduring hunger. They were convinced when I managed to get a full scholarship from a private music school that had the policy of not giving full scholarship. I had been giving them a lot to brag about me since my childhood; it was a matter of social stance to them, I understand that. This story gave them a good one after a while. I think they also understood that I wasn't just enjoying my musical talent; I proved my dedication to having a professional career as a musician. They started to support me financially and, to some point, emotionally too.

Although the differences between the concerns of parents are mostly related to the observable and even measurable challenges of being a musician in Turkiye, these concerns might also be related to these parents' views on the meaning of welfare and its aspects, depending on considerations such as their own finances, social status, religious views, and even the era of Turkiye they experience as parents. Gürkan was born in 1981, a year after a military coup in Turkiye, which occurred after two decades of increasing political radicalism, which caused financial, social, and political insecurities in the society (Zürcher, 2004: 256-267). The other participants mostly have parents that had experienced the eras that promised more financial welfare and security, in comparison to the parents who became

adults through the years of political radicalism. Even then, the two reports mentioned on the economic status of musicians in Turkiye provide enough reason for any of these parents to have several social and financial concerns about the future career of their children majoring in music. At the same time, the participants who work in the music industry seem to proceed in assuring their parents that they will somehow work it through by creating a sample of their musician's life in the future.

3.4. Thoughts on Music as a Professional Work

The participants had different perspectives on defining music as a line of work and considering the music profession as a qualification that leads to a regular job in Turkiye: a job that provides an income that is enough to live by; a contract of employment that regulates the relations between the employer, the employee, the co-workers, and the clients; and a social insurance including healthcare and retirement that is provided by the workplace (Turkish Labor Law, 2003). One view was common for all the participants: None of them expected all these outcomes at once out of the profession they had been preparing themselves for since an early age. In the meantime, their demands from the music profession had the common ground of providing their basic needs: Food, accommodation, and some spare time to produce more music.

Most of the participants had similar dreams about or expectations from music as a job. NW2 defined her needs as "I would not expect significant amounts of profit out of my music; a wage to keep me going on making my music would be enough." When she was asked about the requirements of continuing to make music, her answer was, "Being independent might be a requirement. This means meeting my basic needs. Setting aside time for myself, I don't know, having a home, staying healthy, getting my nutrients, etc. If my music meets these basic needs, I will be able to make music, so these would be enough." L1 rephrases similar expectations as his beliefs: "I believe that after graduation I can make a life off music easily, I don't know, I believe that I can pay my rent and buy food easily." L1, who states that he continually works at sound engineering jobs, and NW2, who states that she had never worked a paid music job, had similar and limited expectations from music as a paid job. L2, who mentioned that he educated himself with various musical skills and knowledge even before his undergraduate education started, is also hopeful about his economy as a musician after graduation. He thinks that the improvement in his musical skills after he started his undergraduate education is an indicator of how his musical career after graduation will socio-economically proceed.

L3 and L4, who each work as DJs in different musical scenes, have different expectations. L3, who works at popular electronic music clubs, states that he is already content with his jobs as a DJ, and he thinks that he can make a comfortable life out of music. On the other hand, L4, who is involved in underground electronic music scenes, expresses her concerns as, "I hear sad things from my musician circles about their economy, and not being able to predict my future concerns me. I hope that I will be able to use what my formal music education will have given me to support my economy as a musician."

Gürkan, as a musician who started to take stage jobs several years before her undergraduate music education, describes her expectations on her social status after graduation when she was an undergraduate student in an analogous way to L1 and L2. She narrates that, because of the progressive music education her school provided to her, at some point, she stopped thinking about her future finances and only focused on her musical skills and knowledge. She started to think that dedicating her life to becoming a composer and a performer who only works on contemporary genres based on extended techniques and discoveries is more interesting and noble. But since her parents cut off their financial support right after her graduation, she found herself trying to invest her musical skills into the jobs that could provide her with a regular income. This experience is in accordance with music graduates from other parts of the world; a composition graduate from an Australian conservatoire explains her work experience after graduation as being based on what is available at the time and whether she has the time and skills to do that work (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2014: 9). In the same research, a jazz performance graduate states that most of his paid hours are spent on teaching, and

another jazz performance graduate becomes a full-time government officer because she could not get enough income from her time-wise and money-wise irregular stage jobs.

One of the non-working participants, NW3, tends to give up on the opportunities for paid music jobs. He states that he works on supposedly paid music jobs, but every time they end up with him not being paid but spending money out of his pocket: "I work as a sound engineer at a film production company, I do field recordings and post-production…I haven't made any money out of these jobs; instead, I spend money on the projects to continue. I dream of making money on music jobs, but I don't have any expectations. I need extra sources of income to keep serving in this field." In contrast to NW3, NW1 is hopeful that he can make a life off music; he states his reasoning as "I think, not just music but generally whatever you do, if you put your heart into it, you will definitely make enough money out of it." Despite being in contrast with NW3's opinions, NW1 also avoids defining music as a job but leaves it in an unclear position of "something."

Both NW participants' definitions of music are closer to the definition of an occupation than to that of a profession. Frederickson and Rooney (1990: 190) claim that the conditions for an occupation to become a profession are creating a market, claiming to have a monopoly over that market, and creating a surrounding culture that justifies a monopoly over the socio-economy of the business; but because the music occupation failed to associate music education with the market through a licensure, it also failed to assert a cultural authority on the music industry. In contrast to several professions like medicine, education, engineering, and academics, even 35 years after Frederickson and Rooney's statement, except for the limited job opportunities in the institutions such as the State Opera and Ballet or a few philharmonic orchestras sponsored by private institutions, formal music education through universities is still not associated with the music industry through licensure.

The musicians in the industry who do not have a formal music education but still work in several kinds of music jobs support the discourse that everybody can make music and make money out of music as a profession. This occurs in such a country as Turkiye, in which a license of formal education is a non-negotiable condition to legally work as a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer, or an architect. The arguments on the reasons for this difference are set aside, this current situation causes difficulties with the definition of music as a professional career, or at least its relevance to a formal education. These difficulties are hardly mentioned in any music school's curriculum; the intense technical and theoretical music education included in these curricula implies preparation for a well-defined and socio-economically well-positioned profession. This might be asserted as at least one of the reasons that many music students either expect their formal education to improve their socio-economy as professional musicians or do not think about their socio-economic situation after their graduation at all and concentrate on their student life as much as a medical student or an engineering student would do.

3. 4. 1. Building a Career on Music the Musician Identifies with

Having a formal music education in Turkiye has a particular effect on the musician's identity in terms of producing music in specific genres or in terms of approaching any music genre in a particular way of thinking. Along with many music schools worldwide, the music schools in Turkiye teach the Western notation system as the basics of music. A standard notation system provides easier and broader musical communication, but these standards come with the discourse of a hierarchy between genres and musical structures, because the Western standards are a result of the Western art music tradition, which has spread across and dominated the music scenes of many countries through Western colonialization. The hierarchy that is based on the genre and the structure can also be read as a result of Western modernity: to stay in tune and not to be left behind by the mind-centered Western enlightenment discourse, the structure and the designer of the structure are also placed in the center of the Western art music tradition (Kramer, 1995: 36). The complexity of the structure and the genres that are organized around this complexity were positioned as more sophisticated, highbrow music; the "high" in highbrow represents the cultural status of Western countries over the colonized ones

(Guthrie & Chowrimootoo, 2020: 328). The curricula of the music schools based on this musical language inevitably reflect this discourse to music students. As a result, music students identify themselves as a part of this discourse of sophistication, and as the musicians who are educated to hold the formal degree of a musician, they expect to achieve a better socio-economic status through the knowledge of highbrow music. However, only a minority of the audience regularly listen to highbrow music. Popular music, which is considered lowbrow, is preferred by the majority of the population. This constitutes a challenge for music graduates who identify with highbrow music but need to produce lowbrow music to economically survive.

Gürkan mentions that she had a similar experience. Even in the music academy she attended for two years before her undergraduate education, which had the premise of educating on various music genres, she had a strong impression in the classes that Eurocentric art music and jazz were superior to the other genres. Even though she was singing songs in many popular genres on the stage and gaining a decent amount of money out of this scene, her expectations of a musician's life after graduating a music school were mostly based on writing and performing pieces of 20th-century New Music. When her undergraduate education started, she quit her popular music stage jobs and focused on her education to achieve this career goal. However, despite her academic achievements, her career expectations did not meet her basic economic necessities. She has been writing and performing New Music since her graduation, but let alone making a life out of these pieces and performances, she has been struggling to find enough opportunities to release or perform them in front of the audience. Since the sophistication hierarchy is engraved on her mind, she found it degrading to return to the popular music scenes and focused on teaching these music standards with its internalized hierarchy to have an income.

The participants who mentioned that they do not focus on professional music jobs also made similar statements. NW1 mentions that he is eager to graduate and open himself to music jobs, thinking that, as mentioned above, spending enough time on a music scene will surely result in a decent income. NW2 mentions that she does not make music even for herself because she prefers to focus on her studies. She also finds live music stages overly commercial, and she condemns the aim of profit that causes these performances to be produced and consumed like fast food. She hopes for a musician's life in which she can live independently, provide her basic needs such as having a home and healthy meals, spare some time for herself, and make her own music. NW3 says, "I have never utilized music as a means for making money like a merchant. This is why I don't know and can't achieve making money out of music."

The thoughts of the participants who focus on both their studies and music jobs differ from the non-working ones. L1 does not consider his music education a turning point in his career but an intellectual support to his progress. He says, "I am already working actively on various music projects and earning money, but let's say, I would not be acquainted with that important letter a musician wrote to another, if it wasn't for my school." L2 also positions his formal education in a supportive role in his double career as a composer and a craftsperson. L3 states that he already makes money out of the music he likes, and he also sees his formal education in a supportive role. L4's expectations from school are more centered around networking and job opportunities than the intellectual improvements: "I think we already agree on the musical knowledge and connections a music school provides…But I don't think a music school is the main factor that will make me a professional musician." Because these participants already work in the music industry, they have a realistic perspective on the relationship between formal music education and the music industry. They all assign functionality to their education in their ongoing musical career and engage in what they learn with their professional career and intellectual improvement.

At this point, a difference becomes apparent in how the working music students and the non-working ones define the role of their formal education and what they expect out of it in terms of their identity as musicians. Non-working participants are more engaged in their studies than their professional musician's life, and they assign making money on music a secondary role, while the

working participants are focused on building their lives as professionals and positioning their musical education as technical or academic support to their ongoing working lives. This difference might result from music departments' curricula that create a particular viewpoint on how a musician's life will proceed.

Research based on interviews with eight cellists who work in several roles in the music industry, including performance, composition, music business management, and lecturing in the music academy, results in the suggestion that the curriculum of undergraduate music education should emphasize more on improving the essential professional skills (López-Íñiguez & Bennett, 2020: 8-10). However, the situation in Turkiye does not seem to meet this requirement. The current undergraduate curriculum of each music department in Turkiye was examined, and it was found that only nine of them had Career Planning as a first-semester-only course. The Bilgi University Music Department, the department the participants in this research attend, does not have a Career Planning course, but instead, there is the Current Issues in the Music Industry course planned for the fourth year. Overall, the undergraduate music education in Turkiye does not take the socio-economic aspects of the music profession as a matter to focus on, and this approach creates a difference between how working and non-working music students perceive their future profession.

3. 4. 2. Financial Expectations out of a Musician's Career after Graduation

Music students have various financial expectations from their undergraduate music education. A study that is situated at an Australian conservatory reveals that most of the undergraduate music students desire to have a professional career in performance or composition, and more than half of the participants are confident that their desire will come to life (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2014: 5). According to another research that collects data from undergraduate music majors from 12 state conservatories in the U.S., fifty percent of the participants expect to build their careers on numerous freelance jobs in the live music industry, and the other fifty percent aim to have a career in music education (Munelly, 2017: 137-138). Research that includes the entire first-year music students at Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University reveals its findings in three categories: 55% of the students expect competitive careers that proceed in a linear and institutional way; 30% expect a non-linear and diverse career of self-employment; 13% are willing to take financial risks to seek personal creative satisfaction (Tolmie, 2014, 78). Although these survey-based studies have limited sample sizes that may not represent the expectations of the undergraduate music students that study and plan a career in music in different countries, the similarities in the findings show that there are at least some basic commonalities in what they hope and expect from the music profession.

It is also expected that there might be a difference between the expectations of a music student who is already engaged with the music industry and a student who experiences their music education in the university as an eternal present. Gürkan states that she was experiencing her undergraduate music education as an everlasting information exchange circle, in which she was only expected to learn about music and produce music without thinking about music as a professional service or a cultural product, without considering any potential clientele, and without trying to make a sustainable earning out of her music, even when occasionally there's a financial return involved. She adds that this school experience also shaped her expectations from her career and subjectivity as a musician. She remembers that, after her graduation, she felt not only disappointment but also a shock about the difference between how she was identified as a future musician during school and how she was defined as a musician in several sectors and side-sectors of the music industry.

When the music schools fail to prepare the students to the challenges they will face in the music industry, making a life out of music while studying music might help the students proceed from the student identity that creates an unrealistic vision of a musician's career in Turkiye to a realistic way of planning their career after graduation. The difference between working and non-working participants' thoughts on their career after graduation also supports this view. The non-working participants' statements are more about their dreams and feelings. NW1, who thinks that putting one's heart into

their careers would be enough for making enough money out of music, states that he is enthusiastically waiting for his senior project and graduation. NW2 has different wishes: "I would love to earn my life only from the stage, but even if I can't manage to have that many stage jobs, I want to perform from time to time and support my life with other jobs, like being a music academic or having a music store." NW3 settles for paying from his pocket to make music: "I see myself more in project-based music jobs, more in artistic works. I don't expect it, but I only hope to make money with these jobs. Otherwise, I am open to working in non-musical fields and investing the money I earn in my musical or music-related projects." Only NW1 out of the NW participants is focused on being a full-time musician, and his thoughts are more wishful thinking than solid plans. NW2 and NW3 are comfortable with a solution of working in other jobs and positioning music, the field they are already majoring in, as a side job in their lives.

The participants who experience music not only as a study but also as a job have different opinions than the non-working ones. L1, who mentions his ongoing jobs in several fields of the live music and recorded music sectors, states that "I don't think any musician or music industry laborer who has somehow secured their lives did this through music jobs. They do it through investments and private insurance, and I think I will do the same in the future." L2 thinks that networking enough to choose the music jobs regarding their budget would be a solution: "I have been taking professional music jobs before the school, and since I don't need a luxurious life, I can get on well enough through my music jobs. Moreover, I have enough experience and a wide enough professional musicians' circle to pick the stage jobs by their cachet." L3, who takes regular stage jobs as a DJ, feels concerned about his finances after graduation: "A DJ can finance themselves through the gigs they play, but it's not based on a monthly salary; this fact makes things complicated. I think my financial security depends on becoming successful in my field, making good connections, and building an active social network." L4 expresses her concerns about her finances both in the present and in the future. Although she admits that her music education will improve her as a musician, she does not strictly distinguish her career as before and after her graduation. E1, who works in the education field, thinks that she needs to support her live music income with her music tutoring income.

These students who work in the live music and music education fields are taking the industrial conditions into consideration. They manage to plan their career based on music, and at the same time, they think about a financially sustainable future. Their hopes, concerns, frustrations, and preparations are all within this thinking process. They complete the realistic career vision their school does not provide with their observations and experiences in the music industry. According to the statements of the working students, this career vision indicates a portfolio or protean career that includes work and skills from several disciplines and fields.

3. 4. 3. Thoughts on a Protean Career

Many musicians who earn their living out of the music industry specialize in more than one field, including performance, composition, production, education, organization, etc. Since most of them do not regularly work with a manager, they also do networking and self-promotion, including social media management and fashion, and they directly communicate with the music directors of the venues, music studios, and labels. The simplistic definition of a musician as a professional who makes music for some audience and earns money in return defines only a small part of a 21st-century musician's life in Turkiye. The new definition often includes being the entrepreneur of themselves as the brand and the product. This way of making a career may be considered a portfolio career, which is originally defined as putting different kinds of work together in an institutional work environment (Handy, 1995: 72). In time, due to the circumstances of a neoliberal economy, the definition passed beyond the career activities in a stable work environment. The term "portfolio career" in the 21st century implies the pattern of engaging with multiple jobs or tasks at the same time, under the risk of degrading or underqualified work (Haapakorpi, 2022: 443). When the musicians choose or feel forced to handle the rest of the work stated above, they face the same risk of creating or performing works of poor quality.

Since the undergraduate music departments in Turkiye do not include most of these skills and specialties in their curricula, the music majors must gain them through self-education or majoring in these fields. This vision of curriculum is a part of the globally prevalent understanding of constituting music education on a technical basis and excluding the required skills from the other fields (Bartleet et al., 2012: 36-37). However, given that the discourse of being a professional musician is unavoidably shaped by the curriculum of the music school they graduate from, it is not unusual for them to see these specialties as a burden. They become enforced entrepreneurs of their one-person businesses (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2014: 12). Although it is not rare to have a portfolio career that includes various skills and specialties, Bennett (2009: 311) maintains that the portfolio career that is built out of enforcement should be called as a protean career, that is more of a survival tactic than a willingly extended career definition.[4] A Protean career is defined as a career that is not driven by an organization but assembled by the person due to the skills they feel connected, proud, satisfied, and accomplished with (Hall, 1996: 8). According to Bennett (2009: 312), protean careers have long become a norm in the creative industries, and since then, it has been indispensable for an artist to build a protean career in order to meet their needs. Bennett (2009: 313) also mentions the danger that music majors are often taking the already successful performers as role models without regarding their personal progress with all its advantages and disadvantages and not being able to create a realistic perspective on the progress of their future careers. This might be a result of the music education curricula that isolate the students from the realities of the music industry. The students who are educated only on the technical aspects of music have the musicians that come to their school as guests to talk about their success stories as their only references on the industry, and since the schools invite the guest lecturers because of their success stories, an unrealistic view of the average musician's life becomes unavoidable.

The non-working participants in this research provide a similar profile. NW1 thinks that the way of surviving in the music industry is "putting your heart into your music." This expression is quite like the empty signifier words of the musicians who do many jobs in a protean way to survive and make a heroic story out of it for more self-promotion, which is part of the survival process as well. NW2 states that she is extremely uncomfortable with how commercial the live music scene has become: "I don't deny that a musician should also earn some money from the stage, but it has become so commercial that it's similar to fast food." NW3 expresses his need to have even less uncomfortable conditions to become a real artist: "I don't think I can produce art in the current clarity of my life. I need to starve, I need to suffer, I need to pay for my decision to become a musician." The statements of NW2 and NW3 tend more to live an artist's dream than to embrace music as a job to earn a life on.

The working participants have more portfolio or protean approaches to the profession. L1 mentions the various jobs he took in the music industry, despite still being a student: "I worked as a studio ton meister, a record engineer, a producer, an instrument player, a singer, a mixing engineer, a mastering engineer, a roadie, a sound technician, and a stage manager. I did most of the jobs." In comparison to the portfolio of L1, L2 has a more protean approach:

> I have been learning a lot of jobs because I don't want to starve. I have a team, and we produce film music. I take stage jobs that pay me well… I consider my education as gaining the skills of attack and defense. I am a composer, I am open to composing either art music or commercial music. I study my instruments, but I take jobs in the music business too. I also study sound engineering. I sometimes take jobs as a drum technician. I also play electric guitar. If I manage to gather six people in one body, I know that I will at least survive.

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[4] The word "protean" takes from Proteus, the god of sea and rivers in Greek Mythology, who transforms into different forms when he senses a danger. The metaphor used in this career model has the indicative touch that Proteus does not change his form willingly or skillfully; he does it in a clumsy and desperate way in order to survive (Inkson, 2006: 51-52). This situation of Proteus is similar to a music graduate who tries to do much more than they are educated for, again, in order to survive in the music industry.

L3 also develops his own tactics in his field: "I know that I won't have an easy path as a musician. I like being a DJ, but I also know that it won't be enough. I need to constantly produce and release my own music. I also plan to learn mixing so that I can use it in the industry too." L4, who also works as a DJ in the live music industry, is also aware that she will need to do multiple jobs and states that she is trying to figure out what kind of jobs she needs to build her career on: "I want to add the paths of sound design and pole to my career, but the things I've been hearing about the finances of musicians concern me a lot." E1 is also aware of the financial necessity of doing more than one job:

If I stay in Turkiye, I need to do more than one job. Otherwise, I cannot handle my finances. I cannot only perform because it is a freelance and financially unstable job. I think I can manage to stay in the music education sector and progress from tutoring. I will be a composer, a performer, and an educator.

There is an apparent difference between the thoughts of working and non-working participants about the factuality of their career plans. Non-working participants have a more idealistic approach, but they do not draw a career path on their idealistic thoughts. On the contrary, the working participants have a more pragmatic approach, and many of them have already started to build their careers in a protean way. Their motivation of protean thinking does not derive from their music education in school but from their experiences so far in the music industry. It would also be possible for them to share these experiences with their non-working classmates and contribute to the transformation of their ideas into more realistic ones, but within the scope of this research, this sort of exchange is not observed.

4. CONCLUSION

All the participants stated that they have started their music education at an early age, and they studied music not within but as an addition to their general education because the primary and secondary education in Turkiye does not include enough music education to lead to a university music department and a career in music, as it is discussed above in 3.1. Supporting themselves with the accessible music technology, some of them started to earn money out of stage when they were middle or high schoolers. And carrying these experiences through their undergraduate music students' lives, they became students that work in the industry of the profession they are studying. This is an opportunity they share with the majors of several professions; despite the impossibility of professional work for law, medicine or engineering undergraduates besides their internships, many students who are majoring in humanities, including literature, philosophy, language, performing arts, and visual arts, are in the position to find regular or irregular jobs in their fields before their graduation.

The findings of this research and discussions in this essay have shown that undergraduate students who take this opportunity and start to build their careers while studying develop a more realistic understanding of the music profession compared to the students who do not have this sort of experience. However, in view of the music undergraduates' need to gain this sort of realistic perspective, the music departments in Turkiye are not formally in the position of relying on these experiences, and their undergraduate curricula lack comprehensive career guidance. Moreover, since the curricula mostly focus on the technical requirements of becoming a musician, the professors and the other academic staff do not have any obligation to support their working students or to lend their assistance, and then the students fall into disadvantage at school because of their jobs in the industry. These circumstances lead the students to a less beneficial school and work life, including lower grades because of less time and energy to attend classes or study for the exams; missing jobs and accordingly losing networks and money; and leading an unhealthy lifestyle due to malnutrition, lack of sleep or social disorganization.

Parents also have their concerns about the working conditions of their undergraduate children who work in the music industry in the meantime. This research has a limited universe and sample and does not claim that all the possible reactions of the parents are examined, but the findings indicate at least three categories of concern about their children's choice of a career in music. First, parents are

concerned about the music students' safety. Most of these students are at the beginning of their twenties, and their younger age is often linked to inexperience and impatience in several matters, including survival. Since there are many cases in which musicians are inflicted violence to the point of getting murdered, and since most of the stage jobs in Turkiye are at night and they do not include contracts that include measures to provide safety to the music laborers, it becomes one of the main concerns of the music students' or the musicians' parents.

Another concern is the social status of music students' future life since status is a means to both socially and financially survive. Social status and finances are in a reciprocity, particularly in the music business, because social status provides a network and a network brings more music jobs. For the reasons mentioned in 3.3.2, music does not have a high rank on the list of the social status of the professions in Turkiye. This is why, even though the parents support their children's undergraduate music studies, they also state in the present or in the past that they want an 'actual job' for their children. And the third concern, which is related to the second, is parents' concerns about their children's employment and finances. The findings of two recent reports mentioned in 3.3.3 indicate that there are many predictable financial hardships waiting for music majors in their future careers. Some of the working participants affirm these concerns through their work experiences so far, mentioning the irregularity of the earnings, if there are some considerable ones.

The biggest difference in the way of thinking between working and non-working music students becomes apparent through their views on music as professional work. First, the non-working music students think in a more idealistic way about building their careers on the music they identify with, but they do not have a realistic plan on how to reach these ideals. Instead, their comments are similar to the general advice of a personal growth professional or success stories of the musicians who need to emphasize their achievements and cover their failures in order to keep their social status and connections. Second, the non-working participants do not have particular expectations on their finances out of their musical career. Some of them even find it degrading to think about money while producing music as an artistic creation and state that they prefer to live as an impecunious artist rather than sell out their ideals. The students are more open to producing and performing music in a more professional way, as the term refers to being able to do several sorts of jobs within the several fields of industry. They are open to making or contributing to the musical projects that they do not identify with in order to make money out of music. In relation to this perspective, they are not just open to building a protean career, but they are already building their protean career with the diversity of the music jobs they work in.

These considerable distinctions between the views of the working and non-working students stem from the difference in the standpoints they are positioned on. The non-working students' views on the music profession are mostly shaped by their isolated school lives on the campus, the concerts that are designed to please the audience, their professors who have already secured their regular income through the university they work in, and the success stories they listen to in the seminars. There are emerging grassroots musicians' organizations that focus on becoming conscious about the conditions of an average musician in Turkiye, and they call for music students as well, but since they are not widespread yet, they do not have many undergraduate members, and the times they have an impact on the discourse on the music industry and the circumstances of musicians are yet to come. Further research on how to enhance the undergraduate music curricula and academic culture to prepare the students for the music industry and support the students who already work in the music industry is needed.

Disclosure Statements

1. The authors of this article confirm that their work complies with the principles of research and publication.

2. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

3. This article was screened for potential plagiarism using a plagiarism screening program.

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