RESEARCH ARTICLE

MIS Master's Program and Career Development: Perspectives from Students and Graduates

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine in detail the motivations, expectations, and experiences, knowledge, and skills acquired during the educational process by individuals enrolled in a Management Information Systems (MIS) Master's program. Furthermore, the study aims to reveal the program's impact on career development and access to sectoral opportunities. The research also seeks to investigate the similarities and differences between current students and graduates of the program. The findings indicate that both graduates and current students enrolled in the program achieved significant gains in terms of both technical and managerial competencies throughout the program. Among the common motivational factors for both groups, the acquisition of technical knowledge, coding skills, and specialization in the field stand out. Graduates emphasize practical and career-oriented gains, particularly in areas such as project management, professional advancement, business process analysis, and promotion opportunities. Students, however, prioritize academic and employment-focused acquisitions, such as gaining technical knowledge and skills, analytical thinking, problem-solving, and job finding potential. The program is evaluated by both groups as a comprehensive learning process that fosters personal development, self-confidence, adaptation, and sectoral awareness. These findings demonstrate that the MIS Master's program contributes to the personal and professional growth and career advancement of its participants by developing their technical, analytical, and managerial skills.

Keyword: MIS, Management Information Systems, Career Development, Graduate Program

1. Introduction

In the contemporary world of rapidly increasing digitalization, the areas of application for information technologies are expanding on both individual and corporate scales, becoming one of the fundamental elements for achieving competitive advantage (Kountios et al., 2023; Minaya et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022). Particularly in recent years, the information sector has gained a more dominant position compared to traditional sectors such as services, manufacturing, and agriculture, adopting an intertwined structure with all other sectors. The effective utilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) provides speed and accuracy in businesses' decision-making processes and offers significant contributions to core functions such as efficiency, resource management, and strategic planning (Alam et al., 2022; Kılıç, 2019). These developments directly influence not only the private sector but also public institutions and the educational system. The rapid transformation in information technologies and the need for digitalization across sectors have necessitated the restructuring of university curricula (Özgür et al., 2023) and led to an increased focus on information-based educational programs to adapt to the requirements of the era (YÖK 2025). In this context, one of the prominent disciplines is the field of Management Information Systems (MIS). MIS is an interdisciplinary field of study that focuses on the integration of information technologies with business management, centering on the interaction of technology, people, and organizations (Bensghir, 2002). Bringing together various disciplines such as computer science, management, economics, statistics, and engineering, this field aims for individuals to acquire both technical competencies and managerial skills.

MIS has gained importance as an interdisciplinary field that ensures the integration of information technologies with management processes. This area, which fundamentally and systematically addresses the relationship between technology, people, and organization, has become increasingly critical as digitalization accelerates on a global scale. Education provided in the field of MIS offers individuals professional advantages beyond personal development. These programs not only develop participants' technical knowledge, strategic management, analysis, and decision support skills but also enhance their

personal capacities, such as self-confidence, critical thinking, and communication competencies (Aslay et al., 2021; Mohammed & Ozdamlı, 2024; Uğur et al., 2016; Werber & Bevanda, 2019). Established for the first time in Turkey at Boğaziçi University in 1995, this department currently offers education at the undergraduate level in approximately 80 universities and at the postgraduate level in numerous universities (Yavuz et al., 2023). Research specific to Turkey reveals notable increases in the professional performance of individuals who have pursued postgraduate education in applied fields (Maden & İlhan, 2015; Sevim & Akın, 2021). Management Information Systems (MIS) Master's programs are available at various universities across Turkey. Specifically in Ankara, programs in this field are offered by public universities such as Yıldırım Beyazıt, Gazi and Hacı Bayram Veli, as well as private non-profit universities including Başkent, Ufuk, and Ankara Bilim. These programs prepare individuals for both technical and managerial positions with course contents such as data analytics, software development, and project management.

A career encompasses all professional experiences acquired by an individual from the beginning of their working life (Hall, 2002), and this process plays a vital role in shaping the individual's professional development, goals, and achievements. Career development, on the other hand, refers to the progress individuals achieve in their professional lives. While career development offers the opportunity to recognize one's current position in the business world and plan where and in what role one desires to be in the future, organizations also strive to align individual goals with their own strategic objectives (Baruch, 2006). Significant findings regarding the adaptability and career potential of MIS graduates in the job market are documented in the literature. For instance, the study by Çegen & Başar (2025) demonstrates that MIS undergraduate programs largely align with the competencies required in job advertisements. Dulkadir (2025) states that MIS graduates are suitable for undertaking roles in the business world in both information technologies and managerial capacities, suggesting they can play a crucial bridge role in technical and organizational contexts. Education is a determining factor in shaping a career. In this context, understanding the effects of the MIS Master's program on its participants is of great importance for both individual career development and the effectiveness of educational programs.

This study aims to comprehensively examine the motivations, expectations, and experiences, knowledge, and skills acquired during the educational process by individuals enrolled in the MIS Master's program. In addition to assessing the program's contributions to participants' career development and access to industry opportunities, the research aims to reveal the similarities and differences in experiences and perceptions between current students and graduates of the program. This topic is significant because, in today's rapidly digitalizing business environment, MIS Master's programs enhance individuals' technical and managerial skills, increase their career opportunities across different sectors, and strengthen their professional competencies. Investigating the program's impact on participants will provide valuable insights into the quality of educational programs, the effectiveness of course contents and career developments.

2. Methodology

This study aims to examine the motivations, expectations and the experiences and skills acquired during the educational process by individuals enrolled in the MIS Master's program, revealing the program's effect on career development and sectoral opportunities, as well as the differences in experiences and perceptions between current students and graduates. In this context, the research questions (RQs) of the study are as follows:

RQ1. What are the individuals' reasons and expectations for enrolling in the MIS Master's program?

RQ2. What experiences, knowledge and skills did individuals acquire during the educational process?

RQ3. What are the effects of MIS education on individuals' career development?

RQ4. What is the program's contribution to access to sectoral opportunities and professional development?

RQ5. In which aspects do the experiences and perceptions of graduates and current students of the MIS program show similarities or differences?

Population and Sample: The population of this research consists of individuals who have participated in the Management Information Systems (MIS) Master's program in Ankara. The sample, consistent with the qualitative research approach, comprises a total of 20 participants, reached through the snowball sampling technique, consisting of 10 graduates and 10 current students. Snowball sampling is a chain-referral sampling technique where initial participants recommend new individuals to access hard-to-reach groups (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981).

Data Collection: Data for the research were obtained using the semi-structured interview technique. The interview form consisted of two main sections: The first section included questions related to the participants' demographic information, and the second section contained questions regarding the Management Information Systems (MIS) Master's program's impact on career development. Each participant was interviewed for an average duration of 40 minutes via face-to-face or online platforms.

Ethical approval for the implementation of the study was obtained from the Social, Human, and Art Sciences Research Board of Başkent University with the decision dated 11.08.2025 and numbered 17162298.600-266.

Data Analysis: QDA Miner software, a tool commonly preferred in qualitative data analysis, was used for the analysis of the collected data. Furthermore, the content analysis method was chosen for data interpretation. The content analysis process occurs in four fundamental stages (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016): (1) Systematic coding of the data, (2) The emergence of themes, (3) The structuring of the gathered data in line with these codes and themes, and (4) The interpretation and contextualization of the findings.

3. Findings

3.1. Demographic Information

The demographic findings regarding the participants' gender, age, sector of employment, duration of employment in the sector, program preference, and in-field/out-of-field background are presented in Table 1 for graduates and in Table 2 for students. According to Table 1, five of the graduate participants were female (50%) and five were male (50%). Regarding the age variable, the highest proportion (30% each) was found in the 27-31 age group and the 32-36 age group, with 3 participants in each. This was followed by the 22-26 age group with 2 participants (20%). In the older age group, there was one participant (10% each) in the 37-41 and 42+ age categories. Examination of the participants' sectors of employment showed the highest participation (5 individuals, 50%) was from the IT/Software sector. The Public sector accounted for 2 individuals (20%), while the Education, Banking and Fintech sectors each accounted for 1 individual (10% each).

Table 1. Demographic Information of Graduates

Variables		Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	5	50%
	Female	5	50%
	Total	10	100%
Age	22-26	2	35%
	27-31	3	30%
	32-36	3	30%
	37-41	1	10%
	42+	1	10%
	Total	10	100%
Sector of Employment	Education	1	10%
	IT/Software	5	50%
	Banking	1	10%
	Fintech	1	10%
	Public Sector	2	20%
	Total	10	100%

Table 2 provides the demographic information of the student participants. Eight of the student participants were female (80%), and two were male (20%). Regarding the age variable, the highest proportion (5 participants, 50%) was in the 22-26 age group. This was followed by the 32-36 age group with 3 participants (30%) and the 27-31 age group with 2 participants (20%). Examination of the participants' sectors of employment showed the highest participation (4 individuals, 40%) was from the Defense Industry. The IT/Software sector accounted for 3 individuals (30%), while the Education, Freelance, and Construction sectors each accounted for 1 individual (10% each).

**Tablo 2.** Demographic Information of Students

Variables		Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Female	8	80%
	Male	2	20%
	Total	10	100%
Age	22-26	5	35%
	27-31	2	20%
	32-36	3	30%
	Total	10	100%
Sector of Employment	Defense Industry	4	40%
	IT/ Software	3	30%
	Education	1	10%
	Freelance	1	10%
	Construction	1	10%
	Total	10	100%

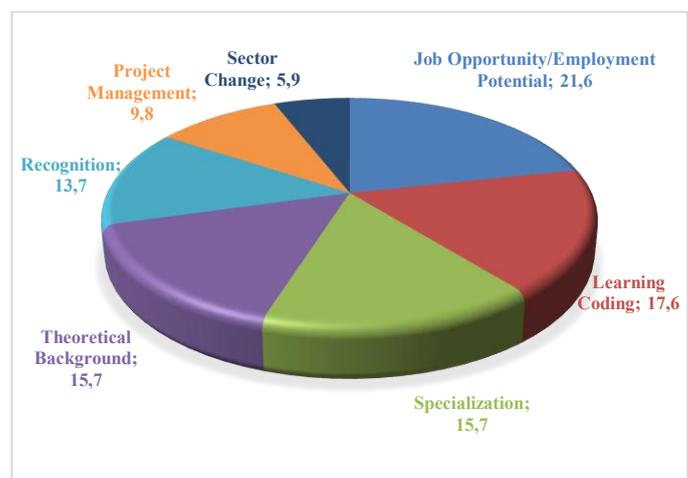### 3.2 Participation Motivation and Expectations

The theme of participation motivations and expectations emerged based on the participants' responses regarding their reasons for enrolling in the MIS Master's program and their expectations from the program. The analysis results for this theme were conducted separately for graduates and current students. Furthermore, similarities and differences observed in the codes were examined, and the results are presented below.

Figure 1 illustrates the related codes under the theme of participation, motivation, and expectations for graduates. The code cited with the highest frequency was Project Management at 23.9%. This was followed by Career Progression and In-depth Learning codes, both at 17.4%. Subsequently, Learning Coding accounted for 13.0%. Theoretical Background and Industry Requirements followed at 10.9%. The lowest proportion was observed for the Need to Stay Up-to-Date at 6.5%.

Figure 2 presents the related codes under the theme of participation, motivation, and expectations for students. The code cited with the highest frequency was Job Opportunity/Employment Potential at 21.6%. This was followed by Learning Coding at 17.6%. Specialization and Theoretical Background followed with an equal proportion of 15.7%. Subsequently, Project Management accounted for 9.8%, and the lowest proportion was observed for Sector Change at 5.9%.
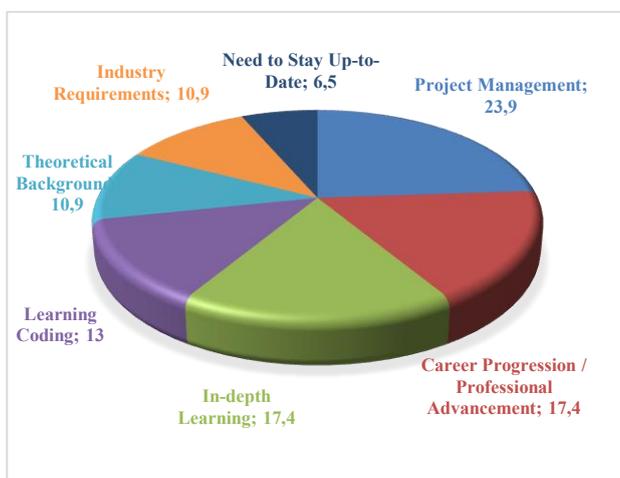
Figure 1. Graduates' Motivation and Expectations

Figure 2. Students' Motivation and Expectations

3.2.1 Similarities and Differences in Participation Motivations and Expectations between Graduates and Students

Similarities and differences are observed when comparing the participation motivations and expectations of the student and graduate groups. The codes Learning Coding and Theoretical Background are common to both groups, indicating that the acquisition of technical knowledge is a significant motivational factor for both. However, clear differences exist in the priority rankings between the groups: The highest proportion for students is seen in the Job Opportunity/Employment Potential code at 21.6%, whereas the highest proportion for graduates belongs to the Project Management code at 23.9%. Additionally, Learning Coding ranks second for students at 17.6%, while this rate is 13.0% for the graduate group. For graduates, Career Progression and In-depth Learning stand out at 17.4% each. For the student group, the codes Specialization and Theoretical Background are noteworthy at an equal proportion of 15.7%. The lowest proportions are found in the Sector Change code for students (5.9%) and the Need to Stay Up-to-Date code for graduates (6.5%). These findings demonstrate that while both groups share some common motivations, their expectations from the program differ. Students primarily focus on employment opportunities and the acquisition of technical skills, while graduates prioritize career development goals such as project management, specialization, and professional advancement.

3.3. Acquired Competencies

The theme of Acquired Competencies emerged based on the participants' responses regarding the knowledge, experience, and areas of development gained during the MIS Master's program process. The analysis results for this theme are presented separately for graduates and students. Figure 3 presents the related codes under the acquired competencies theme for graduates. The code cited with the highest frequency was Project Management Competency at 31.8%. This was followed by the Acquisition of Technical Knowledge and Skills at 18.2%. Subsequently, the codes for Analytical Thinking and Business Process Analysis gained, both at 13.6%. Academic Career and Managerial Skill were both at an equal proportion of 11.4%. This distribution reveals that graduates gained the most competence in the areas of project management and technical knowledge acquisition during the program. Figure 4 presents the related codes under the acquired competencies theme for students. The code cited with the highest frequency was Acquisition of Technical Knowledge and Skills at 42.1%. This was followed by Analytical Thinking at 31.6%. Subsequently, Project Management Competency and Problem-Solving Skill followed with an equal proportion of 10.5%. The lowest proportion was observed for the Critical Thinking Skill code at 5.3%. This distribution indicates that students gained significant competencies, particularly in technical and analytical areas.
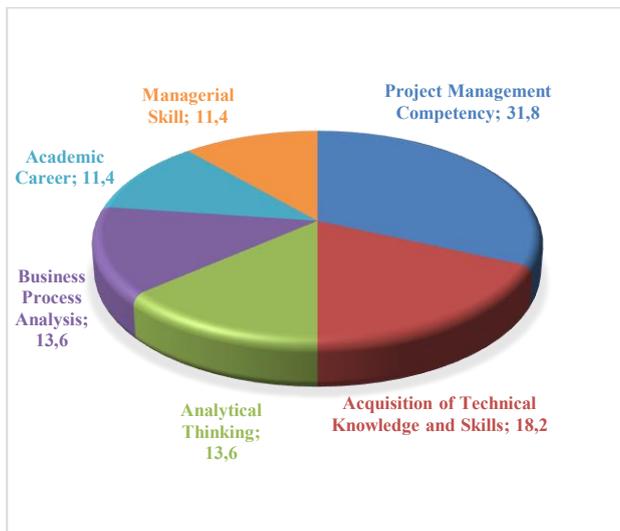

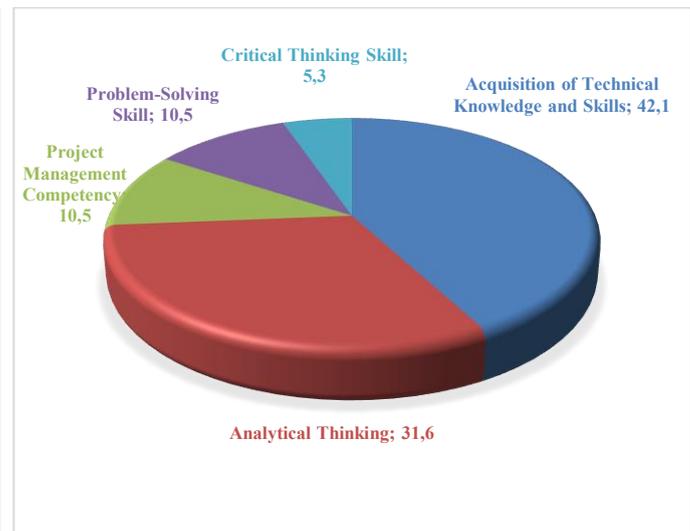Figure 3. Graduates' Acquired Competencies   Figure 4. Students' Acquired Competencies

3.3.1. Similarities and Differences in Acquired Competencies between Graduates and Students

When comparing the evaluations of acquired competencies by the student and graduate groups, notable differences are observed alongside some similarities. Both the Acquisition of Technical Knowledge and Skills and Project Management Competency are common codes across both groups, indicating that technical and managerial competencies are important for all participants. However, a difference in the priority rankings for acquired competencies stands out between the two groups: For graduates, the highest rate is observed in the Project Management Competency code at 31.8%, while this rate is only 10.5% for students. Conversely, the highest rate for students is seen in the Acquisition of Technical Knowledge and Skills code at 42.1%. Additionally, the rate for Analytical Thinking is quite high among students at 31.6%, while it remained at 13.6% for graduates. Graduates also focused more on skills geared toward professional application and career planning, such as Business Process Analysis, Academic Career, and Managerial Skill. In contrast, cognitive skills such as Problem-Solving

and Critical Thinking stood out among students. These findings suggest that graduates tend to acquire skills shaped by their work experience, whereas students focus more on technical and analytical thinking skills.

3.4. Impact on Career Development

The theme of Impact on Career Development emerged based on the participants' responses regarding the reflection of the MIS Master's program on their career goals, professional advancement, and working lives. The analysis of this theme, as depicted in Figure 5 for graduates, shows that the code with the highest frequency was Contribution to Job Performance (29.2%), followed by Prestige / Recognition (21.8%) and Career Planning Competency (12.7%). Adaptation, Promotion / Advancement, and Self-Confidence were also significant, all at an equal proportion of 10.9%. The lowest rate was observed for Academic Advancement (3.6%). This distribution indicates that graduates particularly felt an increase in their job performance and professional recognition post-program. Conversely, the analysis for students, presented in Figure 6, reveals the highest rate belongs to the Personal Development code (39.4%), followed by Self-Confidence (21.4%). Prestige / Recognition, Adaptation, and Job Change were all noted at 10.7%, with Academic Advancement being the lowest at 7.1%. Overall, this distribution shows that students primarily emphasize gains in personal development and the acquisition of self-confidence in relation to their career progression.

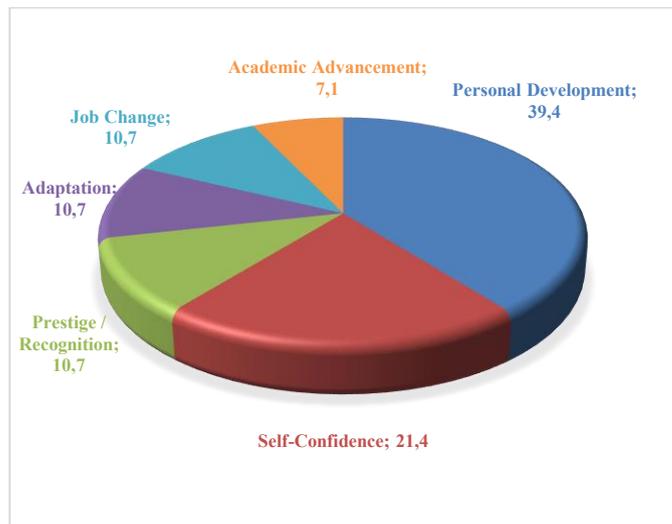**Figure 5.** Graduates' Career Development   **Figure 6.** Students' Career Development

3.4.1. Similarities and Differences in Career Development Themes between Graduates and Students

When comparing the evaluations of acquired competencies by the student and graduate groups, notable differences are observed alongside some similarities. The code Adaptation is present at similar levels in both groups. Furthermore, the Prestige / Recognition code, which follows Adaptation, is also present in both groups. This indicates that professional recognition and the ability to adapt to change are important for both graduates and students. However, there are significant differences in the prioritized areas: The code with the highest proportion for graduates is Contribution to Job Performance at 29.1%, whereas this code is not present among students. Conversely, the code with the highest proportion for students belongs to Personal Development at 39.3%. While graduates mostly focus on concrete work-life gains such as professional efficiency, career planning, and promotion, students prioritize dimensions of individual transformation, such as self-confidence and personal development.

3.5. Sectoral Opportunities

The theme of Sectoral Opportunities emerged based on the participants' responses regarding the reflection of the MIS Master's program on their career goals, professional advancement, and working lives. Figure 7 presents the related codes under the sectoral opportunities theme for graduates. The code cited with the highest frequency was Promotion / Advancement Opportunity at 34.2%. This was followed by Working in Different Sectors at 28.6% and the Acquisition of Sectoral Awareness at 20.0%. Active Role followed at 14.3%. The code with the lowest proportion was International Opportunity at 2.9%. This distribution reveals that, following the program, graduates gained significant advantages, particularly in terms of promotion opportunities, inter-sectoral mobility, and sectoral awareness. Figure 8 presents the related codes under the sectoral opportunities theme for students. Here, the highest rate belongs to the Job Finding Potential code at 55.0%. Working in Different Sectors followed at 30.0%. Entrepreneurship was observed at 10.0%. The code with the lowest proportion was Participation in Projects at 5.0%. This distribution indicates that students believe the MIS Master's program significantly increases their employment potential and their opportunities to work in different sectors.
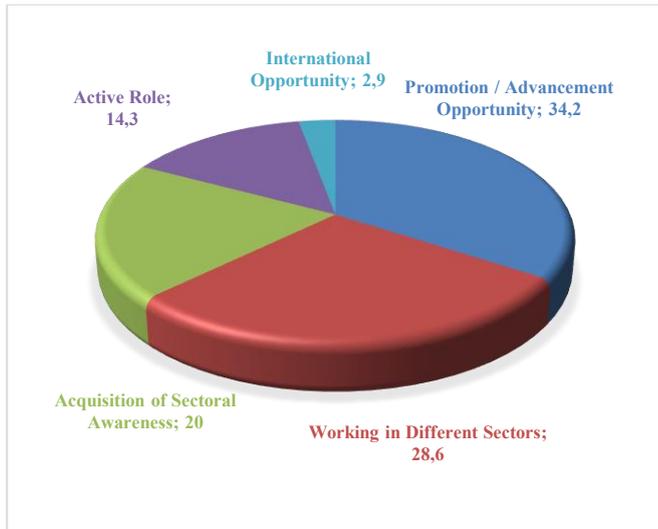
Figure 7. Graduates' Sectoral Opportunities

Figure 8. Students' Sectoral Opportunities

3.5.1. Similarities and Differences in Sectoral Opportunities Themes between Graduates and Students

Similarities and differences are observed when comparing the evaluations of sectoral opportunities by the student and graduate participants. The code Working in Different Sectors stands out in both groups, indicating that the program contributes to inter-sectoral mobility for both. However, there are distinct differences in their priorities. The code with the highest proportion for students belongs to Job Finding Potential at 55.0%, whereas this code is not present among graduates, suggesting that students primarily evaluate the program based on employment expectations. Conversely, graduates cited the Promotion / Advancement Opportunity code with the highest proportion at 34.3%. While graduates focused on more strategic and long-term opportunities such as the Acquisition of Sectoral Awareness and International Opportunity, students prioritized more application-oriented opportunities like Entrepreneurship and Participation in Projects. Overall, the findings suggest that students evaluate the program more in terms of short-term career opportunities and experience gain, while graduates assess it in terms of long-term career development and strategic opportunities.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Management Information Systems (MIS) education stands out today as a strategic educational process that supports both the personal and professional development of individuals, given the rapid technological advancements and the centrality of digital transformation in business life (Laudon & Laudon, 2020; Turban et al., 2018). In this context, MIS Master's programs not only provide participants with technical knowledge and skills but also enable them to develop their analytical thinking, problem-solving, strategic management, and decision support competencies. These programs support individuals in gaining a competitive advantage in the labour market while undertaking a significant role in planning and guiding their professional career paths. Within this framework, the study examined the motivations, expectations, and experiences, knowledge, and skills acquired by individuals enrolled in the MIS Master's program and assessed the program's contribution to participants' career development and access to sectoral opportunities. Furthermore, findings revealing the similarities and differences in experiences and perceptions between current students and graduates were obtained. The findings of the study, within the framework of themes and codes derived from content analysis, were presented under four main headings: (1) Participation Motivations and Expectations, (2) Acquired Competencies, (3) Impacts on Career Development, and (4) Sectoral Opportunities. These findings were supported by frequency analyses and figures obtained through QDA Miner software.

In line with the qualitative analyses conducted within the scope of the study, the examination of participants'' motivations and expectations for the program revealed that areas such as the acquisition of technical knowledge, obtaining a theoretical foundation, and project management stand out. Saiti et al. (2017) stated in their study that students prefer universities with high quality and status, and the underlying motivation for these preferences is personal development and level advancement. Another study highlighted technical background and course contents as important preferences (Adefulu et al., 2020). Students also acquired gains in self-confidence and personal development during the educational process, and these gains directly contribute to their academic and professional competencies (Jonas & Hall, 2022). Regarding career development, graduates indicated that the program increased their job performance, provided prestige/recognition, and offered promotion opportunities, whereas students prioritized elements such as self-confidence, personal development, and the acquisition of sectoral awareness. In the context of sectoral opportunities, both graduates and students emphasized that gaining the

flexibility to work in different sectors was one of the significant outcomes of the program. These findings demonstrate that the MIS Master's program holistically develops participants' technical, analytical, and managerial skills, contributes to their personal and professional development, and offers significant opportunities for career and sectoral alignment.

In light of these results, various recommendations have been developed for both academia and the industry, aligning with the MIS Master's program's impact on individual development and sectoral transformation. One of the prominent findings of the research was the need for technical knowledge and coding skills. Accordingly, it is recommended to increase the number of technically focused courses in the MIS Master's curricula, such as software development, data analytics, and system development. Furthermore, the restructuring of the academic framework to align with sectoral requirements is crucial. In today's rapidly accelerating digitalization, it is suggested that curricula be organized according to the needs of the industry and updated periodically with the contribution of sectoral stakeholders. In addition, private and public institutions related to informatics should be encouraged to direct their employees toward such postgraduate programs. This guidance holds strategic value for institutional digital transformation processes, alongside individual development. To enable the long-term monitoring of the labor market impact of MIS graduates, future studies are recommended to establish alumni tracking systems and conduct comparative analyses of programs across Turkey in terms of content, quality, and impact.

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