An Alternative Way for Primary School 4th-Grade Students to Get to Know Professions: Please, Tell About Your Profession

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore primary school students' levels of occupational awareness and their perceptions of different professions through out-of-school learning experiences. The research was conducted during the 2022–2023 academic year with 108 fourth-grade students from four different schools. The study was designed using a qualitative case study approach. A semi-structured interview form was developed and used as the data collection tool to examine students' awareness of professions they aspire to in the future. The data were analyzed using content analysis. During the analysis process, students' responses were coded, categorized, and organized under themes that reflect their perceptions and experiences. The findings indicate that occupational field visits contribute to students' awareness of professions, enhance their interest, and support their understanding of different career options. In addition, such experiences help students form more concrete and meaningful perceptions about professions. The results suggest that introducing professions through experiential learning environments at an early age plays an important role in developing students' occupational awareness and interests.

Keywords: Out of school learning, Primary school students, School trip, Profession visit, Profession promotion.

Introduction

A profession can be defined as a set of knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired through education and experience, enabling individuals to sustain their lives and participate in society effectively. Career-related interests and tendencies begin to develop from early childhood, and primary school years constitute a critical period in shaping students' future educational and occupational preferences (MEB, 2013; Razon, 1983). During this period, children start to recognize their interests, abilities, and expectations regarding future professions. Therefore, providing students with opportunities to explore professions from an early age is considered important for supporting healthy career development.

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Studies indicate that students' career choices are influenced by various factors such as family, teachers, peer groups, socioeconomic conditions, and environmental expectations (Bacanlı, 2008; Edwards & Quinter, 2011; Gati & Saka, 2001). However, students may experience difficulties in making realistic career decisions when they rely on limited information or external expectations rather than their own interests and abilities (Yeşilyaprak, 2021). In this regard, effective vocational guidance practices are important for helping students gain self-awareness and make informed decisions regarding their future careers.

Vocational guidance services in schools aim to support students in recognizing their interests, abilities, and occupational tendencies through educational and experiential activities. Nevertheless, previous studies have shown that vocational guidance practices in schools are often limited to theoretical information and do not sufficiently include experiential learning opportunities that allow students to directly observe professions and interact with professionals (Korkut-Owen & Mutlu, 2016; Yeşilyaprak, 2021). For this reason, activities such as vocational trips are considered valuable in enabling students to gain firsthand experiences related to professions.

Experiential learning environments are thought to contribute positively to students' career awareness, professional motivation, and decision-making processes by allowing them to observe real working environments and communicate with professionals directly. Such activities may also help students develop realistic expectations regarding professions and better recognize their own interests and abilities. Despite the potential contributions of vocational trips, there is still limited research examining these practices through a process-oriented perspective and focusing on students' experiences before, during, and after the activity.

Accordingly, the present study aimed to guide fourth-grade primary school students toward professions aligned with their interests through vocational trips organized under the supervision of school administrators, classroom teachers, and school counselors. Within this scope, the study sought to examine students' feelings, thoughts, preparations, experiences, and evaluations regarding the vocational trips organized to introduce professions. Based on this purpose, answers were sought to the following research questions:

1. What preparations did students make before the vocational trips organized to introduce professions?

2. What were students' feelings, thoughts, and expectations before the trips?

3. What knowledge did students acquire during the trips?

4. What emotions did students experience during the trips?

5. What situations and information did students find interesting during the trips?

6. In what ways did the trips contribute to students?

7. To what extent did the trips meet students' expectations?

8. How did the trips affect students' interests in and awareness of professions?

9. What were students' criticisms regarding the trips?

10. How did the trips influence students' career-related decision-making processes??

Method

Research Design

The study conducted to enable primary school students to become familiar with the professions they aspire to pursue in the future was carried out using a qualitative research method, specifically a case study design. Referred to as a "case study" in the international literature, this method is also known as a case analysis, event analysis, or example case review (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007; Punch, 2005). In this context, reality is sought within individuals' perspectives and experiences (Ersoy, 2016). According to Yin (1984), case studies examine a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Accordingly, in this study, fourth-grade primary school students examined the case that constituted the subject of the research (introducing professions) in its natural setting and shared their views and experiences regarding this case.

Study Group

In this research, the convenience sampling method was employed. Through convenience sampling, the researcher can access the study group easily, quickly, and at low cost (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Considering this, the study was conducted with a total of 108 fourth-grade students—67 girls and 41 boys—enrolled in four different primary schools located in the district where one of the researchers works. During the data collection process, visits were organized to 10 different professions/institutions. The table below presents the number of students who visited each profession/institution. In determining the participants, the professions and institutions that students were interested in were taken into consideration.

Table 1

Distribution of the Study Participants by Schools

No	Professions	Primary School A		Primary School B		Primary School C		Primary School D		Total
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
1	District Governor	3	1	2			4	2		12
2	Director of National Education	4		2		2	2	2		12
3	Judge and Prosecutor	2	2	1	1	4		1	1	12
4	Dentist	2	2	2		4		2		12
5	Bank Employee	3	1	1	1	3		1	1	11
6	Pharmacist	4			1	4		2		11

7	Chief of Police	2	1		2	1	3		1	10
8	Architect	3	1	1	1		2	1	1	10
9	Gendarme	1	2	1		1	3		1	9
10	Firefighter	2			2	1	2		2	9
	Total	26	10	10	8	20	16	11	7	108

Before proceeding to the implementation phase of the study, a Vocational Interest Identification Form was developed to explore students' awareness of and interest in different professions. The form was designed by the researcher considering students' age and developmental characteristics and was refined based on feedback from school counselors. Students were asked to list the professions they were familiar with or interested in and to explain, in their own words, the reasons for their preferences. Additionally, they were asked which professions they would like to observe in real-life settings. These responses provided insight into both students' vocational awareness and their areas of interest. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and content analysis techniques. First, students' responses were coded, and similar expressions were grouped together. These codes were then organized into categories representing different occupational fields. Finally, the frequency of recurring categories was examined to identify the most commonly mentioned professions.

As shown in Table 2, students most frequently referred to professions such as district governorship, directorate of national education, judiciary (judge/prosecutor), dentistry, pharmacy, banking, architecture, gendarmerie, police services, and firefighting. These findings indicate that students' occupational awareness is largely shaped by professions that are visible in their social environment and carry institutional or public significance. Based on these findings, field visits were planned to institutions representing these professions, enabling students to gain direct experience. This stage formed the basis for the subsequent phase of the study, namely the development of the Vocational Field Visit Schedule.

Tools

In the study, semi-structured interview forms were used to collect data, through which students' opinions were obtained before and after the visits. Semi-structured interview forms are tools that enable in-depth examination and provide participants with the opportunity to express themselves (Patton, 2018). During the development of the data collection instrument, input was obtained from four expert classroom teachers, one school counselor, and one school principal. Subsequently, expert opinions were also sought from two faculty members in the field of Social Studies education. The research questions developed were first subjected to a pilot application. After the pilot study, additions were made to the questions, and the final form was created by consulting experts again. The interview questions were prepared to be implemented in three stages: before the activity, during the activity, and after the activity. These stages included pre-activity preparations, the implementation of the activity, and post-activity practices. This process covered a period of 13 weeks (see Table 2).

In the first phase of the research, the professions to be visited were determined according to students' areas of interest. The professions preferred by the students were selected through a joint evaluation conducted by four classroom teachers and one school counselor. Before proceeding to the data collection

phase, legal permissions for conducting the activities were obtained from the District Governorship. In addition, informed consent forms were collected from parents, and necessary safety precautions were taken throughout the activities. Prior to the visits, transportation arrangements were made, and interview forms were delivered—either face-to-face or via email—to the students from four different schools in the district before each activity. Students specified their preparation processes related to the activities in these forms. Decisions regarding which institutions or professional groups would be visited, on which dates, and with how many students were made jointly following meetings with the relevant institutional authorities. During the professional visits, students who did not participate in the visits were included in the process at school under the guidance of their teachers through supportive activities. These students carried out activities such as research assignments on the visited professions, poster preparation, informative bulletin board studies, or in-class presentations. This practice ensured the participation of all students in the process and supported knowledge transfer and experience sharing among students during post-visit sharing sessions.

Interview Process

During the implementation of the activity, in each visit phase one classroom teacher, one school counselor, and one school administrator took part. Each profession/institution ensured the participation of students from different schools. Each activity was conducted face-to-face and lasted approximately 60 minutes. During the interviews, students directed their questions to the host professional/institution representative. In addition, depending on the nature of the institution/profession, authorized personnel explained how the work was carried out, and where necessary, either demonstrated the processes through simulations or presented them directly to introduce the profession. The implementation phase of the activity lasted approximately 13 weeks. This is indicated in Table 2.

Table 2

Vocational Experience Activity Schedule and Visit Timeline

Timeline of "Tell Us About Your Profession" Visits																				
		September			October				November				December				January			
	Weeks and Activities	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
1	Identifying Students' Areas of Interest	x																		
2	Determining the Professions to Be Visited		x																	
3	Determining the Participants			x																
4	Scheduling Visit Appointments				x															
5	District Governor's Office Visit					x														

6	District Police Department Visit				x								
7	District Directorate of National Education Visit					x							
8	Judge and Prosecutor's Office Visit						x						
9	Gendarmerie Command Visit							x					
10	Dentistry Visit												
11	Banking Visit									x			
12	Pharmacy Visit										x		
13	Architecture Visit											x	
14	Fire Department Visit												x

At the conclusion of each activity, students were safely escorted back to their schools by one classroom teacher, one school counselor, and one school administrator. Following the completion of the visits, the semi-structured interview form designed for post-activity evaluation was administered to the students.

Data analysis

Content analysis was employed in the data analysis. In the content analysis, to reach the concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data, the data should first be conceptualized, then these concepts should be arranged in a logical way, and themes that explain the data should be revealed (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this process, data processing, coding, theme creation, visualization, and interpretation were carried out. Within this framework, meaning was brought to the forefront through the interpretation of the findings in their context. Expert opinions were consulted during the interpretation process, and the documents obtained to ensure the reliability of the study were re-examined at certain intervals. The data were reduced to meaningful concepts and codes, and themes were formed by grouping related codes together.

Data Processing

The forms were transferred to the computer environment by assigning numbers to each occupational activity. The professions were abbreviated in the following way.

Table 3

Abbreviations of professions/institutions included in the research

Profession/Institution	Abbreviation	Profession/Institution	Abbreviation
Banking	B	Judge and Prosecutor	J/P
Dentistry	D	Fire Station	F

Pharmacy	P	Command of Gendarmerie	CG
Directorate of of National Education	DNE	District Governorship	DG
General Directorate of Security	GDS	Architecture	A

Semi-structured interview forms were coded according to the occupational group. For example, students in the district governorship group were named DG1, DG2, DG3…. The interview forms were reviewed numerous times, and the data were made ready for analysis, and the deficiencies were eliminated by asking the students for their opinions again on the points that were not understood.

Data Coding

Coding is very important in the explanation of data.Data coding consists of 3 basic stages. The first of these is identifying conceptual categories. Afterward, the relationship between these categories is searched. Finally, these relationships should be explained and conceptualized (Keskin, 2007:44). For example, in the study we performed in this context, students' preparations before the trip were coded as question, rehearsal, research, stationery, file, clothes, personal care, preparing items, and basic needs. Students' emotions before the trip were coded asexcitement, happiness, joy, curiosity, calmness, becoming emotional, impatience, pride, embarrassment, uneasiness, and fear. Students' expectations before the trip were coded as afield trip, a nice activity, experience, receiving information, gift, treat, and good behavior. Depending on the data and nature of the research, the coding was revised in each case in data coding. Accordingly, an increase or a decrease was observed in the number of codings.

Theme Creation

The most common situation in theme creation is that the researcher himself/herselfpresents the terms, concepts, and categories that he/she thinks reflect the data.Thus, there are some drawbacks to using someone else's plan. As stated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), 'selecting data for just another theory tends to inhibit the creation of new categories because the main effort is not to create but to select data.' In the study conducted in this context, original themes were created by bringing together the codes put forward by the researchers themselves.

At this stage, codes with similar meanings were combined to form overarching themes. For example, the codes "question," "rehearsal," and "research" were grouped together under the theme "information hunting." Similarly, the codes "stationery" and "file" were merged to create the theme "school materials," while the codes "clothing," "personal care," "item preparation," and "basic needs" were consolidated under the theme "daily necessities."

Validity and Reliability

To increase the transferability and credibility of the study, criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was employed. In this process, students were selected according to specific criteria, including being fourth-grade primary school students, volunteering to participate in vocational field visits, obtaining parental consent, and being enrolled in schools where the planned activities could be implemented. In addition, attention was paid to including students from different schools and occupational interest groups in order to ensure diversity in the study group. Accessibility and

institutional suitability were also considered during the planning of the vocational visits. Student opinions were taken into account in determining the professions to be visited.

Ethics Committee Approval Information

This study was conducted in full compliance with all ethical principles specified in the "Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions."

Name of the Ethics Committee: Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Sakarya University

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Findings

The data obtained from the study were presented in line with the sub-problems related to the findings before, during, and after the trip in the context of the problem, "What are students' emotions and thoughts before, during, and after the trip organized for getting to know professions?".

Findings Before the Trip

This section presents the findings related to students' preparations, emotions, thoughts, and expectations before the vocational field visits. The findings were organized under themes obtained through content analysis and supported with direct participant statements.

Table 4

Students' preparation before the trip

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	GDS	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
Knowledge hunting	Question	9	5	6	9	5	7	5	4	7	5	62	71
	Rehearsal				3					4	1	8	
	Research		1									1	
School supplies	Stationery	5	7	4	3	6	4	3	5	7	4	48	54
	File				1	1	1		1	2		6	
Daily needs	Clothes	1	2	3	1	2		4		1	1	15	31
	Personal care	2			2			1	2	3	2	12	
	Preparing items				1		1					2	
	Basic needs					1			1			2	
No preparation was done												2	

Total	17	15	13	20	15	13	13	13	24	13	158

As presented in Table 4, students' preparations before the trip were grouped under the themes of knowledge hunting, school supplies, and daily needs. The most frequently expressed preparation theme was knowledge hunting (f=71), followed by school supplies (f=54) and daily needs (f=31). Within the theme of knowledge hunting, students mostly prepared questions (f=62). In addition, rehearsal (f=8) and research (f=1) activities were also identified. Regarding school supplies, students reported preparing stationery materials (f=48) and files (f=6). Under the theme of daily needs, preparations related to clothes (f=15), personal care (f=12), preparing items (f=2), and basic needs (f=2) were expressed. Only a few students stated that they did not make any preparation before the trip (f=2).

Participant statements also supported these findings. One student stated, "I prepared questions because I wanted to learn how people work in that profession." Another student expressed, "I put notebooks and pencils in my bag so that I could take notes during the visit." A different student said, "I prepared my clothes and personal items before the trip."

Table 5

Students' Emotions Before the Trip

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	GDS	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
Pleasure from the Activity	Excitement	8	8	7	6	9	7	5	4	7	9	70	
	Happiness	6	4	3	7	2	4	3	2	5	2	38	125
	Joy	3	4	1	1	2	3		1		2	17	
Other Impact of the Activity	Curiosity		1		2		1				2	6	
	Calmness				1			1		1		3	
	Becoming emotional	1							2			3	14
	Impatience							1				1	
	Pride					1						1	
Avoidance of the Activity	Embarrassment				1	1				2		4	
	Uneasiness and fear					1		1	1			3	7
Total		18	17	11	18	16	15	11	10	15	15	146	

As seen in Table 5, students' emotions before the trip were*"pleasure from the activity (125), other impact of the activity (14), and avoidance of the activity (7)."*In the context of *pleasure from the activity,*students experienced excitement (70), happiness (38), and joy (17) concerning the professions they would visit. This can be interpreted as students' high demands for visits for vocational experience. Y.D., who visited the General Directorate of Security, expressed his emotions regarding this visit in the following way, "I

became very excited. I couldn't stand still. I was very excited to see if the Chief of Police would welcome us. I thought I should behave well and respectfully toward them."

In the context of *other impact of the activity,* students expressed emotional impacts such as curiosity (6/14), calmness (3/14), becoming emotional (3/14), impatience (1/14), and pride (1/14). It was observed that students mostly experienced the emotional impact of curiosity (6) before the visit, which was mostly related to the duties of the profession to be visited. Before the visit to the District Governoship, E.A. expressed his curiosity as follows, "I was very excited and happy before the visit to the District Governoship. I was curious about what and how the District Governor does, etc."

In the context of *avoidance of the activity,* students experienced embarrassment (4/7), uneasiness and fear (3/7). It was found that students were most embarrassed during the visit to the District Governorship. The reason for this may be the fact that the profession of district governor is regarded as a very respected profession in society. Before the trip, E.A. expressed his emotions as follows, "I wondered how the District Governor would welcome us." Students experienced the greatest fearbefore the visits to the General Directorate of Security (1), Command of Gendarmerie (1), and Fire Station (1). This can be associated with the prejudices developed by students toward the professions in question. Prior to the visit to the General Directorate of Security, Y.D. expressed his emotions before the trip in the following way, "I was afraid of what would happen to me."

Table 6

Students' expectations before the trip

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	GDS	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
Team-oriented	Field trip	5	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	21	60
	A nice activity	1	3	2		2		2	2	8	1	21	
	Experience					1	1			7	9	18	
Person-oriented	Receiving information	5	5	7	4		6	3	4	2	5	41	51
	Gift, treat	1		1			1				2	5	
	Good behavior				2	2					1	5	
None			3		3	1	10	7	8	2		34	34
Total		12	12	12	11	7	20	14	16	21	20	145	

According to Table 6, students' expectations before the trip were*"team-oriented (60) and person-oriented (51)."*The *team-oriented expectations* of students before the trip were regarding a field trip (21/60), a nice activity (21/60), and acquiring experience (18/60). On the other hand, in the context of the*person-oriented* theme, students had expectations such as receiving information (41/51), gift, treat (5/51), and good behavior (5/51). Accordingly, it can be said that students' expectations of the trip were mostly regarding acquiring information. There were also students (34/145) who had no expectations before the trip, which can be explained by the fact that students had not done such a trip before.

Findings Obtained During the Trip

In this regard, what information students acquired during the trip organized for getting to know professions, what emotions they experienced, and the interesting situations and information for students during the trip are presented.The findings obtained during the trip are given below.

Table 7

Information obtained by students during the trip

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	**GDS**	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
Technical information	Duties	3	3	8	9	4	8	4	4	6	5	54	98
	Environment	5			1	2		1	3	2		14	
	Difficulty of the profession	2		2		2	1		1	2	2	12	
	Professional tools and equipment	1	6		1	1	2					11	
	Schools graduated		1		2	1	1	1			1	7	
Everyday information	Personal information		4			1	2			6	1	14	30
	Recommendations				2	2	2	1	1	2	1	11	
	Memories		1		2					2		5	
Total		11	15	10	17	13	16	7	9	20	10	128	

As presented in Table 7, students acquired information related to technical information (f=98) and everyday information (f=30) during the trip. Within the theme of technical information, students obtained information regarding duties of professions (f=54), environment (f=14), difficulty of the profession (f=12), professional tools and equipment (f=11), and schools graduated (f=7). Within the theme of everyday information, students obtained information related to personal information (f=14), recommendations (f=11), and memories (f=5).

One student stated, "We learned what duties professionals perform in their jobs." Another student expressed, "I asked questions about the tools used in the profession." In addition, one student stated, "They advised us to work regularly and be disciplined in order to become successful."

Table 8

Students' Emotions During the Trip

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	GDS	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
Pleasure from	Excitement	11	12	7	11	10	7	8	6	10	9	91	156

the Activity	Happiness	6	4	6	5	3	5	5	4	9	1	48	
	Joy	2	2		1	2	2		6		2	17	
Other Impact of the Activity	Curiosity		2	3	5	3	5	2	1	1	4	26	33
	Impatience		1							1		2	
	Pride					2						2	
	Astonishment			1					1			2	
	Becoming emotional						1					1	
Avoidance of the Activity	Uneasiness and fear	1	4	1		2	1					9	11
	Embarrassment			1					1			2	
Total		20	25	19	22	22	21	15	19	21	16	200	

According to Table 8, students experienced emotions related to pleasure from the activity (f=156), other impact of the activity (f=33), and avoidance of the activity (f=11). Within the theme of pleasure from the activity, students expressed excitement (f=91), happiness (f=48), and joy (f=17) toward the professions they visited. Within the theme of other impact of the activity, students experienced curiosity (f=26), impatience (f=2), pride (f=2), astonishment (f=2), and becoming emotional (f=1). Within the theme of avoidance of the activity, students experienced uneasiness and fear (f=9) and embarrassment (f=2). One student stated, "I was very excited during the visit because I learned many new things about the profession." Another student expressed, "I was curious about how professionals performed their duties." In addition, one student stated, "I felt a little afraid during the visit to the dentist."

Table 9

Interesting situations and information for students during the trip

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	GDS	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
Environment-related	Natural environment	11	12	11	2	5	6	1	4	2	2	56	58
	Student groups					2						2	
Person-related	Memories				1		1	3		5	2	12	30
	Information				4		2	2			1	9	
	Character and temperament				2		2			2		6	
	Clothes,							2	1			3	

	equipment, tools												
Total		11	12	11	9	7	11	8	5	9	5	88	

As seen in Table 9, the situations or information that were interesting for students during the trip were "environment (58) and person-related (30)."In the context of environment,most students found the natural environment (56/58) interesting. As the natural environment, most students found visits to the Bank (11/56), Dentist (12/56), and the General Directorate of Security (11/56) interesting. This may be attributed to the fact that students rarely make such visits at school. On the other hand, in relation to the person,students foundmemories (12/30), information (9/30), character and temperament (6/30), clothes, equipment, and tools (3/30) interesting. Students found the memories of the District Governor (5/12) and memories of the fire brigade (3/12) the most interesting. Information that students found the most interesting was obtained at the Directorate of National Education (4/9). B.A., who participated in the visit to the architect, expressed the information that he found interesting as follows, "I found it very interesting that the architect has 1300 projects." During the activity, students were affected only by the character and temperament of the profession of district governor (2/6), judge and prosecutor (2/6), and the Directorate of National Education (2/6). It is seen that students were affected only by the clothes of firefighters (2/3) and gendarmerie (1/3) commanders during the activity.

Findings After the Trip

In this regard, what acquisitions students gained after the trip, the status of the trip meeting the expectations of students, in what way the trip affected students' choice of profession, and students' criticism were presented.The findings obtained from the research after the trip are given below.

Table 10

What students acquired from the trip

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	GDS	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
Cognitive acquisitions	Technical information	9	7	6	7	7	9	8	6	6	9	74	78
	Memories		1						1			2	
	Recommendations				2							2	
Emotional acquisitions	Being determined	1	2		1	2	3		1			10	27
	Courage		1	1		1						3	
	Confidence				1					2		3	
	Helpfulness	1		1								2	
	Entertainment			1							1	2	
	Friendship			1				1				2	

	Joy of profession		1								1	
	Being kind-hearted			1							1	
	Attention			1							1	
	Pride			1							1	
	Struggle									1	1	
Total		11	12	13	11	10	12	9	8	8	11	105

According to Table 10, students obtained cognitive acquisitions (f=78) and emotional acquisitions (f=27) from the trip. Within the cognitive acquisitions theme, students mostly acquired technical information (f=74), followed by memories (f=2) and recommendations (f=2). Students frequently mentioned learning about professional duties, working environments, and technical processes related to the professions they visited. One student stated, "I learned how professionals perform their duties and use their equipment." Another student expressed, "The information given during the visit helped me understand the profession better." Within the emotional acquisitions theme, students reported being determined (f=10), courage (f=3), self-confidence (f=3), helpfulness (f=2), entertainment (f=2), friendship (f=2), joy of profession (f=1), being kind-hearted (f=1), attention (f=1), pride (f=1), and struggle (f=1). One participant stated, "After the visit, I felt more determined about my future profession." Another student expressed, "The trip increased my self-confidence and courage."

Table 11

If I had not made this trip

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	GDS	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
Lost feelings	I would have been sad	4	6	4	6	6	4	5	5	8	4	52	
	I would have wondered			1								1	
Lost information	I could not have learned anything	7	6	5	6	4	7	5	3	3	6	52	
Material losses	Gift								1			1	
Total		11	12	10	12	10	11	10	9	11	10	106	

According to Table 11, students stated that they would have experienced lost feelings (f=53), lost information (f=52), and material losses (f=1) if they had not participated in the trip. Within the theme of lost feelings, most students stated, "I would have been sad" (f=52), while one student expressed, "I would have wondered" (f=1). One participant stated, "I would have been very upset if I had not joined the trip." Another student expressed, "I would have wondered what the professions were really like."

Within the theme of lost information, students mostly stated, "I could not have learned anything" (f=52). Students emphasized that the trip helped them gain information about professions and working environments. One student stated, "If I had not attended the trip, I would not have learned these things." Another participant expressed, "The trip helped me understand the professions better." Only one student mentioned material loss (f=1) in relation to the trip.

Table 12

Status of the trip meeting my expectations

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	GDS	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
Met	Welcome	8	11	3	5	8	2	3	5	6	6	57	88
	Entertainment			4	4	3		4	1	3		19	
	Information	2							1	1	2	6	
	Respect						6					6	
Did not meet		2	1	3	1								7
Total		12	12	10	10	11	8	7	7	10	8	95	

According to Table 12, students stated that the trip met (f=88) or did not meet (f=7) their expectations. Most students indicated that the trip met their expectations, particularly in terms of welcome (f=57), entertainment (f=19), information (f=6), and respect (f=6). Students especially described the visits to the Directorate of National Education (f=4), pharmacy (f=4), firefighter institution (f=4), and General Directorate of Security (f=3) as entertaining. One participant stated, "The trip was more enjoyable than I expected." Another student expressed, "I felt welcomed and respected during the visit."

On the other hand, a limited number of students stated that the trip did not meet their expectations (f=7). Some students explained that they expected more detailed information or longer activities during the visits. One student stated, "I expected to learn more about the profession." Another participant expressed, "Some parts of the trip were shorter than I expected." Overall, students' responses indicated that the vocational trips were generally evaluated positively by the participants.

Table 13

Status of making a decision after the trip

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	GDS	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
It Affected	My Decisions	7	10	7	4	3	7	5	5	3	7	58	58
It Did Not Affect	My Decisions	4	2	4	8	7	6	3	2	9	3	48	48
Total		11	12	11	12	10	13	8	7	12	10	106	

As seen in Table 13, 58 students stated that the trip affected their decisions, whereas 48 students reported that it did not affect their decisions. These findings indicate that the number of students who

considered the trip influential on their decision-making processes was slightly higher than those who did not. In particular, some students stated that the trip contributed to changes in their views regarding their future professions. However, there were also students who reported that the trip did not influence their decisions. This situation may be associated with the fact that some students already had clear and stable opinions about the professions they intended to pursue.

Table 14

Criticisms about the trip

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	GDS	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
Positive	Nice	5	5	4	4	3	7	4		3	5	40	53
	Informative, useful	3		2		1	2	1	1	3		13	
Negative	Environment		1	2			1			1	1	6	15
	Communication	1								2		3	
	Gift	1										1	
	Photograph	1										1	
	Journey			1								1	
	Number of participants			1								1	
	Number of activities			1								1	
	Being tiring								1			1	
Total		11	6	11	4	4	10	5	2	9	6	68	

According to Table 14, students made "positive (53)" and "negative (15)" criticisms about the trip. Within the context of positive criticism, most students (40/53) stated that the trip was nice, while some students (13/53) described it as informative and useful. These findings indicate that the trip generally created positive impressions among students and contributed to their learning experiences. E.T., who participated in the visit to the Directorate of National Education, expressed the knowledge he acquired during the trip as follows: "Our Director of National Education interprets teaching as wealth. Our Director of National Education has been a teacher before becoming the Director of National Education. I have learned important information during this trip."

On the other hand, some students also expressed negative opinions regarding the trip. These criticisms were related to the environment (6/15), communication (3/15), gift (1/15), photograph (1/15), journey (1/15), number of participants (1/15), number of activities (1/15), and being tiring (1/15). The criticisms regarding the environment and communication may be associated with students' expectations about more interactive and comfortable settings during the visits. Similarly, comments related to the number

of participants and activities suggest that some students expected more active participation opportunities throughout the trip. In addition, a few students described the trip as tiring due to the long duration and intensive schedule of activities. C.E.M., who participated in the trip to the pharmacy, made the following criticism about the trip: "I would like to make sales in the pharmacy. I would like to examine the prescription."

Tablo 15

What I Want to Add to the Trip

Theme	Code	B	D	P	DNE	GDS	JP	F	CG	DG	A	Total	∑
Emotions/Values	Sincerity		3	3		2		2	2		2	14	23
	Curiosity						1	1		2		4	
	Entertainment	1			1							2	
	Friendship						1					1	
	Chance						1					1	
	Patriotism								1			1	
Recommendations	Visiting again		1	1	1		1					4	8
	Space area				1		1					2	
	Gift						1					1	
	Number of visits					1						1	
Acknowledgment		1		1	1	2				1		6	
Total		2	4	5	4	5	6	3	3	3	2	37	

According to Table 15, students indicated "emotions/values (23/37)," "recommendations (8/37)," and "acknowledgment (6/37)" as the aspects they wanted to add after the trip. Within the context of emotions and values, sincerity (14/23) was the most frequently expressed feeling by students regarding their vocational experiences during the visits. In addition, some students emphasized feelings of curiosity (4/23), entertainment (2/23), friendship (1/23), and patriotism (1/23). These findings suggest that the trips contributed not only to students' vocational awareness but also to their emotional and social experiences.

In the context of recommendations, students expressed suggestions related to visiting again (4/8), space area (2/8), gift (1/8), and the number of visits (1/8). In particular, students' requests for organizing similar trips again may indicate that they found the visits beneficial and enjoyable. Furthermore, some students expressed acknowledgment and gratitude regarding the trips (6/37).

Discussion

In this study, it was aimed for students to become familiar with professions they may pursue in the future and to believe that every profession is necessary and respectable. Within this framework, through visit activities conducted to different professional groups, conclusions were reached both regarding students' recognition of professions and the outcomes of the implemented activities.

The results of the research suggest that students' recognition of professions and their attitudes toward career choice may be influenced by both individual and environmental factors. In particular, students' greater interest in professions related to educational administration suggests that individuals tend to orient themselves toward professions they feel close to and can associate with their own life experiences. In this respect, the findings are consistent with the "modeling" process emphasized in Bandura's (1986) social learning theory. Individuals shape their career orientations by modeling behaviors they observe in their environment and associate with positive outcomes (Lent, 2017; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Similarly, the study by Lamsa, Sakkinen, and Tujarma (2000) shows that students tend to gravitate toward professions they admire or identify with in their surroundings. Encountering qualified role models is one of the fundamental social learning mechanisms influencing career choice. However, as Rozan (1983) points out, negative examples observed in the environment may also lead individuals to avoidance behaviors, demonstrating the bidirectional effect of social modeling. Likewise, Gati and Levin (2019) state that environmental inputs in career decision-making processes can be interpreted as both supportive and restrictive. The desire to gain social prestige is also an important determinant in the career choice process. According to Eryetiş (2016), individuals tend to orient themselves not only according to their interests but also toward professions that provide social status. This may explain students' higher motivation toward prestigious and administrative professions. In particular, the strong interest in professions requiring managerial and decision-making responsibility is closely related to perceptions of social value and status expectations. Moreover, it has been observed that professions requiring technical knowledge and skills increase students' cognitive curiosity and research behaviors. This highlights the important role of cognitive preparation and curiosity in the career choice process. Savickas (2020) emphasizes that in the process of career development, individuals' construction of personal meaning is as decisive as cognitive awareness. According to Dindar and Şıpka (1995), making career choices consciously increases both job satisfaction and service quality. Ünal (2005) states that career choice provides sustainable satisfaction when it aligns with individuals' personal characteristics and emotional tendencies. In this context, considering not only cognitive awareness but also emotional harmony in students' career orientations is of critical importance for future career decisiveness.

The data obtained indicate that in the career choice process, not only students' individual interests but also environmental and social factors are influential. As Merdan (2011) states, individuals may experience indecision in their career choices due to guidance from family, teachers, or peers, as well as insufficient knowledge about professions. This demonstrates that external factors have a strong impact on students' decision-making processes. Students' initially prejudiced or fearful attitudes toward certain professions reveal that social perceptions and environmental influences can play a determining role in career selection. According to Rozan (1983), labeling certain professions in one's environment as "difficult" or "dangerous" may lead to the formation of negative judgments about those professions. Therefore, while preparing children for their future careers, it is important to organize both in-school and out-of-school activities aimed at overcoming existing prejudices. Indeed, this study shows that

interactive and experience-based activities can be effective tools in transforming students' negative judgments. As Deniz (2001) points out, career choice is a dynamic process consisting of stages such as dreaming, researching, crystallizing, and specifying. During this process, individuals may sometimes experience setbacks; however, what is essential is that students accurately identify professions they feel close to and make informed decisions. In this context, activities that provide students with the opportunity to experience professions directly can be said to support the stages of research and crystallization described by Deniz. Activity-based learning experiences contribute to students' recognition of their own potential, clarification of their professional interests, and formation of more conscious decisions regarding their future.

Analyzing students' pre-activity expectations provides important insights into their learning motivations and career orientations. The data indicate that students' expectations were shaped along two main axes: team-based and individual expectations. According to Diremci and Topaloğlu (2021), the most important element in activities aimed at introducing professions is gaining experience. In this respect, students' expectation of "learning through experience and observation" from the activity demonstrates that they recognize the importance of active participation in learning processes. The findings of Karakaya, Yanırtı, Yılmaz, and Yılmaz (2019) also support this result. According to these researchers, learning environments based on teamwork enhance students' social interactions and strengthen their learning motivation. In this context, it is understood that students' expectations before the activity—such as being informed, receiving positive feedback, and even rewards—reflect not only a desire for entertainment but also a goal of acquiring knowledge and social experience. Moreover, some students' inability to express a clear expectation prior to the activity may be explained by their limited participation in similar out-of-school activities in the past. As Diremci and Topaloğlu (2021) emphasize, a lack of prior experience with learning environments may create motivational uncertainty. This suggests that the continuity of informal learning environments directly influences students' levels of preparation and participation. In conclusion, when pre-activity expectations are examined, it can be stated that students' curiosity for learning, desire for socialization, and aspiration to gain experience come to the forefront, and that such activities function as tools supporting students' professional awareness and career orientations.

The activity process enabled students to recognize professions not only at a conceptual level but also through experiential learning. During the process of acquiring information about different professions, students' growing interest in technical details, job descriptions, and professional tools and equipment indicates the strength of their cognitive learning orientations. As Yılmaz et al. (2004) emphasize, providing information about career pathways at early ages contributes to individuals making more informed career choices in later stages of life. Similarly, Eker (2004) notes that supporting students during primary school years with learning environments that foster cognitive, social, emotional, cultural, and physical development is a fundamental factor shaping their career orientations. Teachers' guidance roles in this process help strengthen students' self-confidence and facilitate their efforts toward achieving specific goals. This effort supports students in identifying professions aligned with their own potential and embracing their future roles. The activities also enabled students to explore the personal and human dimensions of professions. Learning about professionals' hobbies, interests, and personal habits helped students develop a more realistic perspective on occupations. Such interactions contributed to understanding professions not only in terms of duties and technical aspects but also in

their human dimension. Encountering narratives that included professionals' life experiences positively influenced students' attitudes and beliefs regarding career choice. This finding supports studies by Gati et al. (2012), Meldahl and Muchinsky (1997), and Osipow (1999), which emphasize the role of emotional experiences in decision-making processes. In learning environments where emotions are intensely experienced, students' career awareness increases, and this is reflected in their decision-making processes. Furthermore, the activities fostered not only cognitive learning but also value-based awareness. Students expressed values such as friendship, patriotism, pride, and love of profession, highlighting the emotional and cultural dimensions of career choice. The high level of satisfaction reported from the activities once again underscores the importance of active participation in career introduction processes. Students' requests for increasing such activities clearly demonstrate the positive effects of experience-based learning approaches on both cognitive and emotional development.

The diversity of emotions experienced by students during the activity process indicates that career introduction activities support not only cognitive but also affective learning. Students' feelings of excitement, happiness, and joy during the visits point to increased intrinsic motivation toward learning. Emotional engagement is one of the fundamental elements that make learning experiences meaningful. The study by Kozikoğlu and Özcanlı (2020) supports this finding, revealing that when students actively participate in activities, they derive greater enjoyment and satisfaction from the process. The strong presence of curiosity throughout the activity further highlights an important dimension of learning motivation. Curiosity is one of the key cognitive drives directing individuals toward the discovery of knowledge. Students' observations about different professions, their questioning, and their acquisition of new information demonstrate that the learning environment was active and inquiry-based. As predicted by constructivist learning theory, this shows that when students participate actively in the learning process, knowledge becomes more lasting.

The professional environments and experiences that students found interesting during the visit process played a determining role in shaping their career orientations. In particular, the working conditions of certain professions, the tools and equipment used, and the physical characteristics of the workplaces aroused curiosity and enabled students to develop a deeper awareness of how these professions function. This supports the idea that the element of "interest" in learning processes increases attention and enhances retention. The similarity between the findings of this study and Center's (1949) results is noteworthy. Center stated that individuals tend to find professions more attractive when they have opportunities to express themselves and experience engaging activities. From this perspective, encountering attention-grabbing elements during professional visits facilitated students' development of positive orientations toward those professions. It can be argued that experience-based and stimulating activities not only increase students' cognitive engagement but also strengthen their vocational interest and identification processes. Ultimately, the experience of "finding something interesting" appears to function as a turning point in students' career decision-making processes. The ability of career introduction activities to evoke curiosity, admiration, and a sense of discovery plays a significant role in shaping students' future career goals. Therefore, incorporating emotional stimuli and engaging experiences into the design of learning environments should be considered an important factor in enhancing the quality of career awareness education.

During the activity process, it was observed that students' interest in certain professions was associated with the personal characteristics and outward behavioral styles of professionals. In particular, the

attention given to traits and temperament in professions such as district governorship, medicine, prosecution, and positions within the Directorate of National Education suggests that personality–fit plays a determining role in students' career preferences. As emphasized in Kılınç's (2011) study, individuals' psychological traits, personal tendencies, and values significantly influence career choice. This finding indicates that students' preferences are shaped not only by external factors but also by the degree of compatibility they perceive between their own personalities and the profession. Additionally, it was observed that students were influenced by clothing and outward appearance in some professions. In uniform-based professions such as gendarmerie, firefighting, or judiciary roles, external appearance appears to attract students' attention and foster positive perceptions of the profession. Similar findings have been reported in studies by Ağaç and Çeğindir (2006), Armağan and Taşdelen (2012), Koç (2008), Erdal et al. (2013), Akdoğan and Karaarslan (2011), Akıncı (2014), Yavaşcaoğlu (2015), and Peluchette, Karl, and Rus (2006). These studies indicate that individuals perceive external appearance and attire as symbols of professional prestige, discipline, and identity. The impact of clothing and appearance on professional perception is therefore not merely aesthetic but also symbolic in nature. According to Stryker's (1983) findings, the meaning attributed to clothing varies depending on age, gender, and developmental level, and this factor plays a more attention-grabbing role among younger individuals. In this context, the influence of external appearance on students' career preferences is closely related to identity development during early years. Ultimately, professionals' outward appearance, attitudes, and personality traits directly affect students' perceptions of occupations. Therefore, in career introduction activities, it is important to include not only informative components but also representations of professions and the personal characteristics of role models, as this will contribute to students' more holistic understanding of careers.

The fact that the activities were found beneficial by the students indicates that career introduction visits constitute an important tool contributing to the learning process. Providing students with the opportunity to directly experience different professions positively influenced both their level of knowledge acquisition and their attitudes toward learning. Students' evaluation of the activities as beneficial suggests that observing professions in concrete contexts strengthens cognitive awareness and enhances the permanence of learning. Similarly, Diremci and Topaloğlu (2021) emphasize that activities conducted in out-of-school learning environments enable students both to enjoy learning and to acquire new knowledge. In this respect, students' acquisition of knowledge through direct experience and observation during the visits can be considered an effective reflection of experiential learning. Moreover, the fact that the activities were perceived as enjoyable demonstrates that they contributed not only to cognitive learning but also to emotional satisfaction. The alignment of the findings with Livingstone's (2001) research once again highlights the importance of experiential processes and guidance in learning. Livingstone underscored that workplace learning and activities carried out under the guidance of experienced individuals are effective in promoting lasting learning. In this context, career introduction activities can be said to increase students' levels of curiosity and motivation and to render the learning process more meaningful. Studies by Krishen (2013) and Radel, Sarrazin, Legrain, and Wild (2010) further reveal that intrinsic motivation plays a determining role in students' learning processes. These findings support the view that students' active participation in activities is directly related to excitement, curiosity, and willingness to learn. Therefore, career introduction activities should be regarded not only as a means of transmitting information but also as a source of motivation that fosters positive attitudes toward learning. Ultimately, students' perception of the activities as both educational and enjoyable

supports the consideration of career introduction processes as an effective learning strategy. Such activities appear to enhance not only cognitive gains but also students' intrinsic motivation and levels of career awareness.

Negative feedback regarding the activities is also significant in terms of demonstrating students' development of critical awareness toward their learning experiences. Students' unfavorable evaluations concerning the activity environment, number of participants, communication style, travel duration, or physical fatigue indicate the need for improvement in the planning and implementation dimensions of out-of-school learning activities. This situation may stem from the fact that informal learning environments have not yet become sufficiently widespread within the education system. As Bozdoğan (2007) noted, formal education environments still dominate in Turkey, while informal learning experiences remain limited. This finding helps explain the organizational difficulties encountered by students in out-of-school activities. Consequently, to increase the efficiency of career introduction activities, elements such as planning, participant management, and activity duration should be addressed more systematically. At the same time, it was observed that students' intrinsic motivation plays a determining role in such activities. Falk's (2005) research demonstrates that students achieve higher success and participation levels in learning activities designed in accordance with their areas of interest. In this regard, student-centered and interest-based activities may reduce the impact of potential negative experiences and positively shape attitudes toward learning. In conclusion, the negative criticisms expressed by students constitute valuable feedback that should be taken into consideration in the design and implementation phases of career introduction activities. Such feedback provides an opportunity to make these activities more structured, inclusive, and responsive to students' needs.

The extent to which the activities met students' expectations indicates that career introduction visits are effective in terms of both educational and affective outcomes. Students' satisfaction in terms of enjoyment, gaining knowledge, and feeling respected demonstrates that such activities support not only the transmission of information but also emotional and social learning. As Cerasoli, Nicklin, and Ford (2014) argue, elements of intrinsic enjoyment and pleasure in the learning process directly enhance the quality of the activity and strengthen students' levels of participation. In this regard, diversifying activities according to students' areas of interest and grounding them in experiential learning activated students' curiosity and rendered the learning process more meaningful. Falk and Storksdieck's (2010) study similarly supports this finding, emphasizing that active participation in learning environments is decisive in reinforcing and sustaining knowledge. However, the absence of a significant change in some students' beliefs and views about certain professions after the visits may be explained by the fact that their expectations were already shaped in a positive direction. The high levels of interest and determination observed among some students suggest that the activities reinforced their existing orientations rather than transforming them. As Bursal and Buldur (2016) noted, as students' interest in a profession increases, their level of determination toward that profession rises in parallel. Various studies in the literature (Aslan & Köksal-Akyol, 2006; Buldur & Bursal, 2015; Şahin, 2011; Ünal & Şimşek, 2008) similarly indicate that students develop strong commitment toward socially responsible professions such as teaching or public administration. In this context, the continued determination of students toward professions such as district governorship, the Directorate of National Education, and the police department demonstrates that although the activities effectively met expectations, they did not necessarily create a major shift in orientation but rather strengthened existing interests. In conclusion,

the findings suggest that such activities support students' levels of determination and awareness in career choice. Learning environments in which enjoyment, knowledge acquisition, and emotional satisfaction are integrated can be considered among the most effective approaches for fostering students' career awareness and sustained motivation.

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