

Professional Career Development of University Students: Current Approaches

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Abstract

Many factors are effective in the process of choosing the department that students study. Today, digital technologies are used effectively in the field of education, and the importance of digital technologies in the career choices of students is very high, because many professions for human needs have emerged with digital technologies. Some of these professions can be counted as artificial intelligence specialist, digital literacy, technology designer, digital game development, social media specialist. Digital technologies have affected the career choice and career development of university students. The aim of this research is to contribute to the field regarding the professional career development of university students. Qualitative research methods provide flexibility to the researcher in the conduct and design of their research. In the research, the data were analyzed with the content analysis technique. The participants of the research were students studying at a private university in the 2022-2023 academic year. In order to determine the professional career development of university students, a total of 40 participants, 25 female and 15 male, were included. These participants are people who benefit from digital technologies in their career development processes. When the reasons for choosing the departments of the participants are examined, it is seen that it is important whether it is suitable for them in the process of choosing a profession. In addition, the students participating in the study stated that their future careers are important in their career choices and that they are studying in the department they dream of. The majority of the participants stated that they were satisfied with the department they read and that they did not experience any anxiety about their departments. In addition, it was concluded that the participants had problems in their educational goals due to financial inadequacy. The participants who are not satisfied with the quality of the education and who oppose the view that the education provided is sufficient are worried that they will experience problems as regards their goals.

Keywords: Education, Digital technologies, career choice, career development.

Introduction

In our country, the choice of job and profession and the choice of vocational education institutions cannot be made depending on a systematic orientation, which brings along problems such as unwilling work of individuals, inability to follow professional innovations and low productivity.

Being a student, being an employee, being a parent and a child etc. There are many roles acquired throughout our lives, such as These roles can change throughout life. It is seen that when people adapt themselves to the acquired roles, they affect their career choices in their lives. Each individual is guided throughout their career choices, for the professions that suit them, and in line with their needs in their professional life and career preparation processes. Forcing the student to choose a profession by applying pressure brings with it a life full of failure in the future life of the child. Guidance can be made in line with the individual characteristics and abilities of the student in the professional development processes (Özkazanç, Sayılan, & Akşit, 2018).

The student should not be pressured to choose a profession or a profession. Stress factors and anxiety in career choices and education, which cause anxiety and stress in individuals, can cause failure in students (Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010). Vocational guidance is all of the assistance provided in order to provide individuals with the opportunity to choose suitable professions by getting to know different professions, and to prepare them for professions and to develop professionally. One of the factors that affect an individual's happy and successful development in life after a certain age is the choice of profession (Demir, 2010; Chason, Bullock-Yowell, Sampson, Lenz, & Reardon, 2013).

There are studies on career decision making and career indecision based on both information processing theory and other career development theories (Akkoç, 2012; Creed, Patton, & Prideaux, 2006; Germeijs, & Verschueren, 2009; Ginevra, Nota, Soresi, et al. Gati, 2012; Lounsbury, Hutchens, & Loveland, 2005; Kırđök, 2015).

Individuals need to choose their professional development processes not at an early age, but after they reach the age when they have the awareness of professional decision making (Şeker and Kaya, 2019). The personality traits, interests, abilities and competencies of the individual should be taken into account by directing students to professions that make the individual happy financially and spiritually in the future (Demirel, 2016).

It is one of the biggest mistakes made to direct individuals to various professions by considering the gender factor in their career choices. On the other hand, it is the right decision to choose a profession that will bring professional satisfaction in line with the interests and abilities of the individual. Students' parents' guidance, ignoring the wishes of the individual, and directing them to that profession only with the decision of other people may cause the individual to work in a job that will be unhappy throughout his life (Sürücü, & Yavuz, 2013). Objective professional support should be provided to the individual in reaching realistic information about the professions at the stage of professional decision. It is necessary to help him realize that his profession and job is valuable, to appreciate it, and to have a positive attitude towards working (Bacanlı, Hamamcı, & Doğan, 2013). When it comes to different types of profession, work and activities are to provide information from relevant sources (Özteke, 2020); Alkan, 2014; Eagle, 2012).

Many stages determine the career choice of students. To mention a few of these phases;

Temporary stage (11-18 years old): This period is the stage of self-recognition. First, decisions are made in accordance with the profession he likes. Then the individual's abilities are taken into account. Finally, the choice of profession is made taking into account the professional difficulty and the material income angle.

Realistic stage (18-23): During this period, individuals discover professions. They minimize the occupations in their thoughts by making choices and finally make their decisions (Ansari and Alay, 2017).

Career choice culturally; ethnic background, the culture of the living environment, the extended family along with the local population also have an influence on the choice of profession. Culture often shapes values and expectations. As a result, your expectations are effective in most of life, including your career (Yeşilyaprak and Eskisu, 2013; Ünsal, 2014). Another name for this is multicultural career counseling, which is a special field of expertise. The dominant characteristics of a culture are not attributed to one of the individuals, but being aware of the values and expectations of your culture helps you understand how you make your professional choices. How you see yourself as an individual is much more important when choosing a profession (Peker, 2014). At the stage of choosing the department that students study, many factors affect the student in choosing a profession. For example, although the financial benefits of an individual are a priority in choosing a profession, their interest in the profession is also considered important (Wienclaw, 2011; Peker and Ay, 2019). There are also some applications that have been put into service by field academics (Korkut-Owen et al., 2017). These applications are self-guidance (self-service) services in the form of assistance services based on evaluating the user's own characteristics and matching them with appropriate educational /professional fields (Yeşilyaprak, 2012). However, it is not yet possible to say that these programs are widely and functionally used. There is a need for a roadmap suitable for new paradigms in the use of information and communication technologies in this field (Çanga and Soyaliç, 2015; Demir, 2015). At the same time, the benefit of digital technologies is inevitable at the career selection stage.

Technology (digital), the dictionary meaning is expressed as 'application knowledge, application science covering construction methods, tools, tools and tools used, their ways of use'; it is explained as all the information related to them with the tools developed by man in order to control and change his material environment" (TDK, 2023). Today, digital technologies are also being used effectively in the field of education.

Vocational guidance and career psychological counseling programs supported by digital technology are still at the design stage. In this regard, the YÖK, MONE and İŞKUR's websites, especially for students (örn.mbs.meb.gov.tr; <https://yokatlas.yok.gov.tr>, <http://kariyerrehberligi.net> /, <http://career.center.org/>, iskur.gov.tr) provides e-services related to professional guidance (Yeşilyaprak, 2019).

The importance of digital technologies in students' career choices is quite high. Because with digital technologies, many professions have emerged that are aimed at human needs. Some of these professions are artificial intelligence, digital literacy, technology design, digital games, social media specialist, etc. professions such as have emerged. When the literature was examined, a limited number of studies were found about the situations that

students experience in the professional development processes. From this point of view, it has affected the career development of students with the influence of digital technologies in career choice. The aim of this research is to contribute to the field of professional career development related to the department studied by university students.

Method

Qualitative research in accordance with the purpose of the research; Phenomenology was also preferred as a pattern. Phenomenology is a research model that is aware of in daily life and helps to investigate the phenomena in detail and to better understand these phenomena. The cases to be investigated are encountered in various ways throughout life. Qualitative research; It can be expressed as studies in which the qualities of materials, situations, activities or relationships are investigated (Yıldız, 2017). Qualitative research focuses on how people interpret some events and situations they have encountered in their lives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Creswell, 2015). Qualitative research method provides flexibility to the researcher in the realization and design of the research, and it gives the opportunity to develop new approaches and methods, and make changes in the research setup, according to the situation at every stage of the research. Another important contribution of qualitative research is that, due to its exploratory nature, researchers make great use of this type of research in examining and illuminating the subjects that have not been studied in depth enough (Karataş, 2015).

Working Group

In the research, criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used to determine the study group. Criterion sampling is the study of all situations that meet a set of predetermined criteria (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The participants of the research consisted of students studying at a private university in the 2022-2023 academic year. It consists of 40 participants in order to determine the professional career development of university students. Participants consist of 25 female and 15 male participants. More than half of the participants, 30 participants are between the ages of 18-23; 6 participants are between the ages of 24-29 and 4 participants are between the ages of 30 and over. The chapters that the participants read, in order; 15 participants are Guidance and Psychological Counseling, 10 participants are Classroom Teachers, 8 participants are Turkish Language Teaching and 7 participants are Preschool Education students. Considering the education level of the families of the participants, while the parents of 20 participants were primary school graduates; Parents of 10 participants are high school graduates and parents of 9 participants are university graduates. There is 1 participant whose parent has never read. In addition, the participants of the research were those who benefited from digital technologies in their career development processes.

Preparation of Data Collection Tool

In the study, a structured interview form prepared by the researcher was used as a data collection tool. The structured interview consisted of a series of predetermined questions and answers; unstructured interview questions include open-ended questions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). At the initial stage, a draft interview form consisting of four questions was prepared in line with the purpose of the research. In the draft interview form, adjustments were made in line with the opinions of three field experts working in the field of educational sciences. Immediately after the expert opinions, pilot interviews were conducted with three teachers and care was taken to ensure that the questions were understandable. After expert opinions and pilot interviews, interview questions were arranged and the interview form consisted of four questions and the questions took their final form. The researcher was active at every stage of the research, in order to collect in-depth data, the study group was formed from participants with different characteristics, and processes for peer review were used in the development of the data collection tool. The content and face validity of a measurement tool can be evaluated with expert opinions (Büyüköztürk, 2017). The prepared interview form consists of two parts. In the first part, demographic information such as gender, age, parental education status of the participants, and in the second part, interview questions took place. Interview questions are given below.

1. What are your views on the reason for choosing the department you are studying?
2. What are your views on your satisfaction with the department you have read?
3. What are your views on realizing your educational goals in your department?
4. What are your views on digital technologies in the professional career process?

Analysis of Data

In the research, the data were analyzed with the content analysis technique. The main purpose of content analysis is to reach the concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data, and to determine the themes that explain these relationships (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The interview questions created by the researcher through Google forms were collected via e-survey. In the research, the data obtained in line with the opinions of the participants were analyzed by making content analysis, and themes and sub-themes were created. The findings obtained in the study were evaluated comprehensively.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, four themes, sub-themes of each theme and related opinions, which were formed as a result of interviews with 40 university students who participated in the research, are given in order.

Table 1: Students' Reasons for Choosing the Department they are studying.

Theme	Categori	N
Choice of profession	Suitability	19
	Realizing dreams	10
	Relief financially	7
	Don't be amazed	4

When the table is examined, 19 people constitute the suitability category in the theme of choosing a profession. There are 5 students who prefer the department they are studying in order to follow their dreams. Some of the participants, 10 people, chose the department they studied in order to realize their dreams during the career selection stage. Another part, 7 participants stated that they chose the department they studied in order to be comfortable financially. In addition, 4 students stated that they admire their profession.

K2: 'I thought it was suitable for my personal characteristics.'

K10: 'I thought that it would be beneficial for both me and the society to practice a profession that I love and can be happy in the future.'

K4: 'I think I will be financially comfortable after graduating from the department.'

K33: 'It is not a department that I have chosen especially, but teaching is a good profession.'

Table 2: Satisfaction of the participants in terms of the department they studied.

Theme	Categori	N
Glad	My area of interest	12
	Compliance with the target	10
Not satisfied	Difficulties experienced in education	10
	Fear of failing	8

According to Table 2, 12 people are satisfied with their department and are not worried about their departments. Ten of the participants stated that the department they read was suitable for their goals. On the other hand, the dissatisfaction of the participants stated the difficulties experienced in education by 10 people and the fear of failure by 8 people.

K2: 'Yes, I like reading books and my department.'

K8: 'No, I am not. I am dissatisfied with the difficulties that my school imposes on us.'

K24: 'Yes, I am satisfied because having science-based courses is more in my area of interest.'

K10: 'I am partially satisfied, I have great difficulty in reading, which causes me to be dissatisfied with this section. The fact that it is an area that is deeply involved in life makes me love it more and read this chapter with pleasure.'

Table 3: Educational objectives at your university.

Theme	Categori	N
Opinion on educational goals	Satisfaction at the target	17
	Insufficiency	12
	Fear of not reaching the goal	11

When Table 3 is examined, there are 17 students who are satisfied with the educational goal of the participants and progress towards their goals. There are 12 people who have problems in their educational goals due to financial and moral inadequacy. There are 11 participants who are not satisfied with the education level and who do not think that the education provided is sufficient and are afraid of not reaching the goal in this regard.

K33: 'I aim to improve myself in the field of science and to be successful in my field. I want to do my best to give my students a good education in the future.'

K3: 'I consider our university insufficient due to the fact that the courses are online and there are not enough activities.'

K12: 'I am a senior student, when I look back, I face the fact that I could not achieve my educational goals. Unfortunately, I feel inadequate in this regard.'

Table 4: Opinions of the participants on digital technologies in their professional career process.

Theme	Category	N
Positive aspects of digital technologies	Research oriented	8
	Effective use of time	6
Negative aspects of digital technologies	Ease of access to information	12
	Information confusion	6
	Digital addiction	8

According to Table 4, the positive and negative aspects of digital technologies are grouped under 2 themes in terms of the participants' use of digital technologies in their professional career processes.

The theme of the positive aspects of digital technologies of the participants was divided into 3 categories in terms of research-oriented (8 people), effective time use (6 people) and ease of access to information (12 people). When the negative aspects of digital technologies are evaluated, they are divided into 2 categories as information confusion (6 people) and digital addiction (8 people).

K2: 'I learn more quickly what I can do about my career at school by searching the internet.'

K3: 'I can be instantly informed about current developments in my career development thanks to digital technologies.'

K39: 'Thanks to technology, I can easily access all kinds of information. I do my homework by having access to the internet.'

K1: 'Sometimes, wrong information on the internet can cause me to learn the subject wrong.'

K23: 'I get all the information about my department from the internet. I learn almost everything about my profession by inquiring on the internet.'

Conclusion and recommendations

In the research, career developments of university students in their professions were evaluated. When the reasons for choosing the departments of the participants are examined, it is seen that it is important whether they are suitable for the profession selection process. In addition, in the study, students stated that their future careers are important in their career choices and that they studied the department they dreamed of. Another result of the study is that the financial dimension is important in the career choices of the students and they wanted to guarantee their income in their career processes. It is also another result of the research that the participants chose because they admire their career development and the profession.

According to the participants' satisfaction with the department they read, the majority of the participants stated that they were satisfied with the department they read. They do not have any concerns about their departments. In line with the opinions of the participants, it was determined that they were satisfied with the departments they studied, and this shows that this situation will bring them to a better position in their careers in their career development processes. Because when individuals love what they do, it does not appear as work to them, and in this process, the success steps of individuals will come one after the other. On the other hand, another result of the research is that the participants are hopeless about the future with the fear that if they are not successful in the profession, they will be negatively affected in their career development and cause anxiety and anxiety. It was determined that the majority of the participants were satisfied with their educational goals. In addition, it was concluded that the participants had problems in their educational goals due to financial inadequacy. The participants, who are not satisfied with the quality of the education and who oppose the view that the education provided is sufficient, are worried that there will be problems towards their goals. As stated in the study, it is unacceptable for students to experience anxiety due to financial inadequacy in education and training and necessary steps should be taken. Another issue that needs to be emphasized is that students' taking an active role in projects and activities that will support their career development towards their goals will contribute to their career development after graduating from school.

It has been stated that digital technologies have positive and negative aspects in terms of the participants' use of digital technologies in their professional career processes. The participants' views were evaluated in terms

of the positive aspects of digital technologies, research-oriented, effective use of time and ease of access to information. When the negative aspects of digital technologies are evaluated, they are divided into 2 categories as information confusion and digital addiction. It is seen that there will be many benefits when students use digital technologies correctly and effectively in their professional career development. In addition, the problematic use of technology is another result of the research that will cause digital addictions.

There are participants who prefer the department they are studying now with the feeling of future anxiety, escape and realization of dreams, but the general harmony has been reflected positively and positively on the table. Although the number of people who are satisfied with the department they read is higher, the number of people who regret it is not to be underestimated, which tells us that young people are suspicious and hesitant about the department they read. Most of the students have difficulties due to education and inadequacy, and the satisfaction of the majority of them in their goal has a positive effect on the result. The vast majority are satisfied with their goal. One of the results with the most negative data, which we see the most negativity, is that a large number of students experience educational difficulties. The problem of dialogue between the student and the teacher stands out as the main theme, this situation should be investigated and addressed. It is necessary to examine the relationship between school-teacher-student. Most students are confident in the department they are studying now and are confidently moving towards their future. These results reveal how important the attitude of the school and the teacher is in adapting to the department.

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