



CAREER DECISION MAKING OF FRESHMAN TURKISH ELT STUDENTS: SOURCES AND SATISFACTION

Res. Assist. Havva Zorluel Özer
Çukurova University
English Language Teaching Department
01330 Sarıçam, Adana - Turkey
hzorluel@cu.edu.tr

Abstract

During adolescence, students may experience a state of career indecision. Yet, a number of sources are affective on the career decision making of the students. This study aims at revealing the sources affective on the career decision making of 63 freshman Turkish ELT students and their satisfaction with their career choices. For the objectives of the study, a questionnaire was administered to the students. Three items requiring open-ended responses were analyzed through content analysis, while one item requiring a closed response was analyzed and presented through descriptive statistics including frequency counts and percentages. Results revealed that an interest in teaching profession was the main source for the students' career decisions. Further results regarding the sources and the students' satisfaction with their career decisions pointed out remarkable implications for career guidance and school counselling.

Keywords: Career planning, teaching profession, sources, satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

In 2012-2013 education year, Turkey's education system became acquainted with the 4+4+4 education system which was designed to extend compulsory education from 8 to 12 years. According to the current system, the first 4+4 years comprise the period of primary education that involves a 4-year primary school (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades) and a 4-year middle school education (5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades). The last 4 years comprise the period of secondary education involving a 4-year high school education (9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades).

During the 12-year compulsory education, transition from primary to middle school is implemented with an address-based system, while transition from middle to high school is examination oriented and based on a central placement system. There are different types of high schools for secondary education in Turkey. Students can enroll science high schools, social sciences high schools, Anatolian high schools, religious high schools, fine arts high schools or vocational high schools depending on their needs, abilities and grade point averages determined by the central placement system.

In Anatolian high schools, students are required to select a field of study among science, verbal, equally-weighted or foreign language fields towards the end of the 10th grade. However, selecting an appropriate field of study in high school is a critical task for students due to a number of reasons. First and foremost; students make their first critical career-related decisions within this period. Field selection in high school is influential on students' future career decisions as the students are generally expected to study in an education program in university that is in accordance with the field of study in high school. As a result, it is reasonable to state that field selection in high school is one of the most significant decisions for students to make in their lives. It is a hard task for students to make realistic decisions about their vocational choices during adolescence, "a time of identity formation and self-exploration related to developing views of personal, social, educational, and career selves" (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006, p. 389). During adolescence, students may experience a state of career indecision which causes a deep stress to deal with (Çakır, 2004; Gati & Saka, 2001). Career indecision



may result from such factors as valuation problems and uncertainty about the outcomes which are among the three sources of indecision according to the decision theory (Germeijs & De Boeck, 2003). Julien (1999) points out that a great majority of adolescents face some challenges such as being uninformed about where to go for help in the process of career decision making which also results in career indecision. At this point, a number of sources are affective on the career decision making of the students. Several studies have been conducted to reveal these sources previously (Alexitch & Page, 1997; Osoro et al., 2000; Özyürek & Kılıç-Atıcı, 2002; Bardick et al., 2004; Hargrove et al., 2005; Witko et al., 2005; Domene et al., 2006; Noorafshan et al., 2014).

Osoro et al. (2000) examined the factors which affected career decision making of 240 urban and rural high school students in Kenya and they investigated the major sources of information for students to utilize in field selection. The questionnaires administered to students revealed that geographical location, gender, parents and academic achievement were among the main factors affecting high school students' career decisions. It was found that although rural high school students tended to consult their teachers and parents more than urban high school students, all students were seen to be influenced more from their parents than their teachers in their career decision making. As for the sources of information, it was seen that students mostly utilized career booklets, attended seminars held in churches and non-governmental organizations, interviewed with people working in the field, consulted parents, media and teachers to receive information on career-related issues.

Özyürek & Kılıç-Atıcı (2002) conducted a descriptive research to investigate the sources which are effective on 192 freshman university students' career decision making. For the objective of the study, a 41-item questionnaire was administered to first year students studying in six different departments in a state university in Turkey. Results revealed that family, teachers, academic success in the lessons, interest in the lessons and career booklets were among the most influential sources on the career decision making of the students. It was also found that female students, students choosing science as an academic field of study in high school, students with high abilities, students studying in a department that was among their first choices and students who were eager to study in their university programmes utilized more sources in their career decision making.

Bardick et al. (2004) and Witko et al. (2005) respectively surveyed 7th, 8th and 9th grades and 10th, 11th and 12th grades Canadian high school students to explore their perceptions towards career planning and find out people who they prefer to seek out for assistance with their career plannings. Hence, the former study surveyed junior high school students while the latter study focused on senior high school students. Overall survey results suggested that junior and senior high school students perceived career planning as important at the time in their lives and they mostly preferred to seek help from their parents in the first place to make career-related decisions. Friends were also seen to be strong candidates for both groups of high school students to approach for help with their career plannings. However; results of these two studies indicated that junior students tended to more, while senior students tended to less approach their friends for help with career related issues as age and grade increase.

Acknowledging the role of family in their children's career decision making, Hargrove et al. (2005) implemented a correlational research to find out whether the perceived quality of family relationships plays a role in the vocational identity and career planning attitudes of 123 high school students. Research results revealed that there was a low, but significant relationship between the family environment and career plannings of the students.

In a relevant study conducted by Domene et al. (2006), 483 high school students' preferences for sources of support in educational and career-related domains were investigated with a focus on individual differences. Researchers found that counsellors were the major sources of support particularly for female high school students' educational plannings. However, when it came to career-related plannings, it was seen that family was the most common source of support for most of the students, regardless of gender. Researchers attributed the reason behind this finding to the likelihood



of students' perceiving counsellors as more concerned with school-related tasks such as making a timetable rather than career-related issues.

In a recent study conducted by Noorafshan et al. (2014), a questionnaire was administered to 2600 undergraduate students studying in various fields at a university in Iran in order to find out the most appropriate methods to inform high school students about the academic fields of a university where the relevant study was conducted. Among a number of remarkable findings, it was seen that family and teachers had great effects on the students' decisions about an academic field of study in university. And, adjacency of the university to the students' home town was also found to be influential on the students' career and university decisions.

In addition to the empirical studies above, Deniz (2001) brought a new perspective to the issue and claimed that internet sources have a remarkable role in the career decision making of young people and computer assisted career decisions will gain importance in the following years since we are living at an age of technology. He suggested integrating information technologies into the education programmes of schools as students should be provided with an opportunity to keep up with the current trends in career and take up a career in the light of these current trends accordingly.

All in all, most research in the related area is limited to a description of factors affecting career decision making of the students. There is a lack of research on the presentation of the students' satisfaction with their career decisions which has been suggested as a further study in previous research (Domene et al., 2006). As Yazıcı (2009) states, career decision is not only made to make a living but also to improve one's psycho-social development. Individuals having a dissatisfaction with their vocational choices are highly likely to face burnout syndrome and a stressful life.

The aim of this study is to explore sources affecting career decision making of freshman Turkish ELT students and to describe their satisfaction with their career decisions. The focus in this study was particularly given to a career selection in English language teaching profession.

Accordingly, we aim at answering the following research questions in this study:

1. Which sources were affective on the career decision making of freshman Turkish ELT students?
2. Are freshman Turkish ELT students satisfied with their career decisions?

METHOD

Research Design

Considering the fact that research design is based on the nature of research questions, a descriptive research design was implemented in this study since our attempt was "to describe and to interpret" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 205) the sources affective on the career decision making of freshman Turkish ELT students and to reveal the students' satisfaction with their career decisions.

Participants

63 freshman students studying in English language teaching department in a state university in Turkey participated in this research (18 males and 45 females). The age range of the participants in the study was between 18 and 32. The participants were from 19 different cities which were mostly in the south-east regions of Turkey. All participants were graduates of Anatolian high school and most of them studied in the foreign language field in high school. 7 students studied in the equally-weighted and 5 students studied in the quantitative fields in high school.

Instruments

A questionnaire was administered to participants of the present study. The questionnaire included four questions in total, three items with open-ended responses and an item requiring a closed response as in the following:

1. How did you decide to choose 'English Language Teaching' department?

2. Please rank (1st, 2nd and 3rd) the sources below in terms of their influence on your career decision. (Choices included family, friends, teachers, academic success, interest in teaching profession, written sources, internet sources, other.)

3. Are you satisfied with your career decision? Why / why not?

The first two questions were asked with an intention of exploring the sources affecting the career decision making of the participants. The first open-ended question was asked for a better interpretation of the sources ranked by the students in terms of their influence on their career decisions in the second question. The third question regarded students' satisfaction with their career decisions. For a better evaluation of the students' satisfaction with their career decisions, we asked a fourth question: *If you got a second chance to make your career decision once more, would you make the same decision? If no, what career decision would you make?*

In addition to the above questions, the questionnaire also involved a section on demographic background information including such categories as age, gender, type of high school and field of study in high school.

Data Analysis

The questions requiring open-ended responses in the questionnaire were analyzed through content analysis. The item requiring a closed response was analyzed through descriptive statistics. As Fraenkel et al. (2012) state, descriptive statistics "permit researchers to describe the information contained in many, many scores with just a few indices" (p.187), such as frequency counts and percentages through which results are presented in this study.

FINDINGS

Sources

Analysis of the closed item in the questionnaire regarding the sources affective on the career decision making of freshman Turkish ELT students revealed that an interest in teaching profession was the main source for the students to choose English language teaching as a field of study in university. Below, Table 1 presents the sources and their frequencies as the first, second and third choices of the students.

Table 1: Top Three Sources Affecting Freshman Turkish ELT Students' Career Decisions

Sources	First Choice n (%)	Second Choice n (%)	Third Choice n (%)
Interest in teaching profession	36 (57.1)	6 (9.5)	5 (7.9)
Family	11 (17.4)	14 (22.2)	8 (12.6)
Teachers	9 (14.2)	15 (23.8)	15 (23.8)
Academic success	5 (7.9)	18 (28.5)	18 (28.5)
Internet sources	2 (3.1)	1 (1.5)	2 (3.1)
Written sources		2 (3.1)	2 (3.1)
Friends		3 (4.7)	6 (9.5)
Other		1 (1.5)	

According to Table 1, 36 out of 63 freshman Turkish ELT students, namely, more than half of the students ranked an interest in teaching profession as the first source in their career decision making. Students were also seen to be affected by their family and teachers while making their career plans. Academic success and internet sources were among the first choices of the students as well, although they had low frequencies. The students indicated that neither written sources nor friends were the first sources of help with their career decisions.

In addition to the above results, content analysis results of the first questionnaire item is presented below in order for a better interpretation of the sources ranked by the students in terms of their influence on their decisions.

Table 2: Content Analysis Results Regarding The Sources Affecting Freshman Turkish ELT Students' Career Decisions

Themes	f	%
Interest in teaching profession	24	38.0
Interest in English language	22	34.9
English teacher as a role model	7	11.1
Scores received from the university exam	6	9.5
Limited career choices in foreign language field	6	9.5
Job opportunities	4	6.3
Advantages of teaching profession	4	6.3
Family	4	6.3
Guidance of teachers	3	4.7
Ideal job for a woman	1	1.5
Going abroad opportunities	1	1.5

Content analysis results supported the first table in that an interest in teaching profession was found to be the main source to affect freshman Turkish students' career decisions. Besides an interest in teaching profession, an interest in English language was also seen to be highly influential on the career decision making of the students. More than half of the students pointed out that they wanted to study English language teaching department which was a perfect combination of teaching profession and English language, the two interest areas of most of the students as stated in the following :

"I had an interest in English language since I was a kid and I was also interested in teaching profession. That's why I chose English language teaching department."

In accordance with the first table, the second table indicates that teachers, who were specified as English teachers in particular, were influential on the students' career decisions. The following examples from the students' responses demonstrate the role of teachers in their career plans.

"My English teacher was my role model. I used to emulate my English teacher."

"My English teacher was my idol. I always wanted to be like her."

The score received from the university exam was also found to have an affect on the students' career choices. This theme mostly emerged in a positive sense as it reflected academic success in that students highlighted that they had accomplished to receive enough score to study in the English language teaching department. By one student, however, the score received from the university exam was referred negatively as can be seen in the following:

"I wanted to study translation but I couldn't receive enough score from the university exam. That's why I chose English language teaching department."

Students also mentioned the limited career choices in foreign language field as a factor to choose English language teaching department as in the following:

"Career choices are limited in foreign language field and English Language Teaching seemed as the best choice."

Although family occurred after interest and before teachers as the first choice for the career decision making of the students in the first table, content analysis results revealed that the students mentioned their teachers more than their families in their responses to the open-ended question regarding how they decided to choose English language teaching department. And, interestingly, teachers were found to influence the students' career decisions more by modelling the teaching profession rather than by counselling. The following example demonstrates the affect of the guidance of teachers on the students' career decisions.

"My English teacher in high school encouraged me to choose the department of English language teaching."

According to the content analysis results, teachers as role models were highlighted by 7 students, while the guidance of teachers were mentioned merely by 3 students in their open-ended responses.

Satisfaction

Content analysis results regarding freshman Turkish ELT students' satisfaction with their career decisions revealed that a high majority of the students were satisfied with their career decisions as can be seen in the following table.

Table 3: Satisfaction with The Career Choice

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Satisfied	50	79.3
Unsure	9	14.2
Dissatisfied	4	6.3
Total	63	100

Overall, the students were found to be satisfied with their field of study in university. The following examples which emerged from the students' responses to the third questionnaire item point out the reasons for the students' satisfaction with their career decisions.

"Teaching profession is one of the holiest professions in the world and I like children."

"There are a lot of job opportunities after graduation."

"Teaching profession is the most comfortable profession. It provides an opportunity to live a life of ease."

"It was the best decision I have ever made. It was always my dream to go abroad and meet people around the world."

For a better evaluation of the students' satisfaction with their career decisions, we asked a fourth question: *If you got a second chance to make your career decision once more, would you make the same decision? If no, what career decision would you make?* Almost all the students (n=47) who were satisfied with their career decisions stated that they would make the same decision and choose to study in the English language teaching department again if they got a second chance. 3 students, however, asserted that they wouldn't make the same decision and they would prefer to study in the field of translation, computer engineering or in a conservatory instead even though they were satisfied with their career decisions.

Content analysis results further revealed that 9 students were unsure about whether they were satisfied with their career decisions or not. 8 out of these 9 students indicated that they were not

certain whether they wanted to become English teachers or not, as can be seen from the following example:

"I am always happy about a career related with English language but I am not sure about teaching profession. I am not sure whether I would be a teacher."

1 student thought that it was too early to decide if she was satisfied with her career decision since she was a first year student yet.

When asked what career decision they would make if they got an opportunity once more, 3 students stated that they would make the same decision. 5 students asserted that they would definitely make different decisions and would prefer a career in the fields of translation, English language and literature, Turkish language teaching, child development and law. 1 student felt that she may prefer to study in the field of English language and literature although she was not sure about it.

Last but not the least, 4 students were seen to be dissatisfied with their career decisions. The reason for the dissatisfaction of 3 students with their career decisions was that they were not interested in becoming English language teachers. The fourth student, however, was dissatisfied with his career choice as he was unhappy about the quality of education in the English language teaching department. He stated:

"It is university. It should be the center of free thought and creativity. But, the department requires compulsory attendance. Instructors are old-schooled and far from being creative. It is not a favorable department as teaching is based on rote-learning and students are threatened with attendance policies."

These students replied that they would choose a different career if they got a second chance. 3 students would prefer to study in the field of translation, while 1 student would study in the maths or science teaching department.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was an attempt to reveal the sources affecting 63 freshman Turkish ELT students' career decisions and their satisfaction with their career decisions. For the objectives of the study, students ranked (1st, 2nd and 3rd) a list of sources in terms of their influence on the students' career decisions and an open-ended question was asked to the students in order for a better interpretation of the sources affecting the students' career choices. Overall, results revealed that an interest in teaching profession was the main source for the career decision making of the students. Family, teachers, academic success and internet sources were also among the sources ranked as the first choice by the students, while written sources and friends weren't recorded as the sources of help in the first place to make career decisions.

These results are in accordance with Özyürek & Kılıç-Atıcı's (2002) research in that they also determined family, teachers, success and interest as the most affective sources on the career decision making of the students. However, although written sources such as career booklets were described among the most influential sources in Özyürek & Kılıç-Atıcı's (2002) study, they were not ranked as a first choice and had the lowest frequency of occurrence in the top three choices of the students in our study. Instead, internet sources were found to be among the first sources of help for the students while making career decisions. As Deniz (2001) claims, internet sources may gain more significance in career decision making of the students in the following years.

This study partly supports previous research (Osoro et al., 2000; Bardick et al., 2004; Witko et al., 2005; Domene et al., 2006) in that the students seek help more from their families than their teachers for their career plannings. Interestingly though, while family was ranked more than teachers as the



first source of help for career plannings by the students, content analysis results indicated that the students mentioned their teachers more than their families in their open-ended responses regarding how they decided to choose English language teaching department.

As for the students' satisfaction with their career decisions, according to the content analysis results, approximately 80 % of the students indicated that they were happy about their career choices. Results further showed that nearly 14 % of the students were unsure about their satisfaction, while almost 6 % of the students were dissatisfied with their career choices. The results point out the significance of making appropriate career decisions to avoid later dissatisfaction which may cause a deep stress in an individual's life (Yazıcı, 2009).

Remarkable implications are drawn from the present study for career guidance and school counselling. First, the results revealing that teachers influenced the students' career decisions more by modelling the teaching profession rather than by counselling highlights the significance of teachers as role models in classrooms. Due to teachers' influence on the career decision making of the students who will major in teaching profession, they should be careful about being appropriate role models for their students. Second, it is a matter of concern whether school counsellors guide the students effectively in their career decisions since we found that the minority of the students highlighted the guidance of their teachers in their career plannings in this study. And, the ones mentioning the guidance of their teachers referred to their English teachers in particular, rather than their school counsellors. Considering that approximately 20 % of the students were either indecisive or dissatisfied with their field of study in university, school counsellors should provide active career guidance for the students to avoid future career dissatisfaction. Third, in the light of the findings indicating the family's affect on the career decision making of the students, it is advisable for school counsellors to cooperate with the students' family in the process of career guidance.

The main limitation of this study is the limited number of participants which restricts the generalizability of the research findings. Further research would be conducted with a larger sample to develop a better understanding of the sources affecting the career decision making process. Also, a causal-comparative research may reveal the gender difference in the sources affecting career decision making of male and female students. Such research would shed light to the individual differences in counselling needs. Moreover, this was a descriptive study revealing the sources and satisfaction relevant to the career decision making of freshman Turkish ELT students. A correlational research would be established to investigate the link between the preferred sources of help for career planning and the satisfaction with the career decision which may suggest remarkable implications for career guidance.

WJEIS's Note: This article was presented at 8th International Conference on New Trends in Education - ICONTE, 18- 20 May, 2017, Antalya-Turkey and was selected for publication for Volume 7 Number 3 of WJEIS 2017 by ICONTE Scientific Committee.

REFERENCES

- Alexitch, L. R. & Page, S. (1997). Evaluation of academic and career counselling information and its relation to students' educational orientation, *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 31 (3) : 205-218.
- Bardick, A. D. , Bernes, K. B. , Magnusson, K. C. & Witko, K. D. (2004). Junior high career planning: What students want, *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 38 (2), 104-117.
- Borgen, W. & Hiebert, B. (2006). Career guidance and counselling for youth: What adolescents and young adults are telling us, *International Journal for The Advancement of Counselling*, 28, 389-400.



- Cohen, L. , Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education*, Oxon: Routledge.
- Çakır, M. A. (2004). Mesleki karar envanterinin geliştirilmesi, *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Dergisi*, 37 (2), 1-14.
- Deniz, S. (2001). Bireyin meslek seçimini etkileyen kaynaklar: Yeni teknolojilerden internet, *Muğla Üniversitesi SBE Dergisi*, 6.
- Domene, J. F. , Shapka, J. D. & Keating, D. P. (2006). Educational and career-related help-seeking in high school: An exploration of students' choices, *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 40 (3), 145-159.
- Fraenkel, J. R. , Wallen, N. E. & Hyun, H. H. (2012). *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*, New York : McGraw-Hill.
- Gati, I. & Saka, N. (2001). High school students' career-related decision-making difficulties, *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 79, 331-340.
- Germeijs, V. & De Boeck, P. (2003). Career indecision: Three factors from indecision theory, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 62, 11-25.
- Hargrove, B. K. , Inman, A. G. & Crane, R. L. (2005). Family interaction patterns, career planning attitudes, and vocational identity of high school adolescents, *Journal of Career Development*, 31 (4), 263-278.
- Julien, H. E. (1999). Barriers to adolescents' information seeking for career decision making, *Journal of The American Society for Information Science*, 50 (1), 38-48.
- Noorafshan, A. , Pourahmad, S. , Sagheb, M. M. , Deghani-Nazhvani, A. , Dehshahri, A. , Abdollahi, M. , Mohebbi, Z. , Keshtkaran, Z. , Ahmadi, A. , Kavousipour, S. , Farahmand, F. , Khorrami, H. R. , Soltani, R. & Karbalay-Doust, S. (2014). The students' intentions and satisfaction with the field of study and university, *Journal of Advances in Medical Education & Professionalism*, 2 (4), 176-182.
- Oroso, B. K. , Amundson, N. E. & Borgen, W. A. (2000). Career decision-making of high school students in Kenya, *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 22, 289-300.
- Özyürek, R. & Kılıç-Atıcı, M. (2002). Üniversite öğrencilerinin meslek seçimi kararlarında kendilerine yardım eden kaynakların belirlenmesi, *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi*, 2 (17), 33-42.
- Witko, K. , Bernes, K. B. , Magnusson, K. & Bardick, A. D. (2005). Senior high school career planning: What students wants, *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 6 (1), 34-49.
- Yazıcı, H. (2009). Öğretmenlik mesleği, motivasyon kaynakları ve temel tutumlar: Kuramsal bir bakış, *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*, 17 (1), 33-46.