ANKARA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES
PROGRAM OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

GENDER BASED OCCUPATION SELECTION ASPIRATIONS OF FOUNDATION UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN TURKEY

MASTER'S THESIS

HİLAL ÜLKÜ AY

ANKARA
JANUARY, 2025

ANKARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ

1946

ANKARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ
EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ

EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ANABİLİM DALI
EĞİTİM SOSYOLOJİSİ PROGRAMI

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ VAKIF ÜNİVERSİTESİ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN CİNSİYETE DAYALI MESLEKİ SEÇİM ESİNLENMELERİ

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

HİLAL ÜLKÜ AY

DANIŞMAN: PROF. DR. MUSTAFA SEVER

ANKARA
OCAK, 2024

To the Graduate School of Educational Sciences of Ankara University,

This study titled "Gender Based Occupational Aspirations of Foundation University Students", prepared by Hilal Ülkü AY was unanimously accepted as a Master's Thesis by the members of the jury in the Department of Educational Sciences / the Program of Sociology of Education.

	Examining Comitee Members	Signature
Chair	Prof. Dr. Mustafa SEVER	……………………..
Member	Doç. Dr. Cengiz ASLAN	……………………..
Member	Doç. Dr. Hakkı KAHVECİ	……………………..

APPROVAL

This thesis was accepted by the jury members on __/__/___ and by the Graduate School of Administrative Board on __/__/___ in accordance with the relevant articles of the graduate Education Regulations of Ankara University.

……………………………………

Prof. Dr. Mehmet İkbal YETİŞİR

Director

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WOTH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

I hereby declare that I have reported all the information in the thesis in accordance with the accordance with the academic writing rules and that I have obtained and presented them in accordance with ethical principles (including all cited works in the sources, accessing the information and documents used in the thesis through official means and using them without destroying the originals, etc.)

(İmza)
Hilal Ülkü AY

ÖZET

VAKIF ÜNİVERSİTESİ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN CİNSİYETE DAYALI MESLEKİ SEÇİM ESİNLENMELERİ

AY, Hilal Ülkü
Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Eğitim Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı
Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Mustafa SEVER
Ocak, 2025, xv + 138 Sayfa

Bu araştırma, Türkiye'deki vakıf üniversitesi öğrencilerinin cinsiyete dayalı meslek seçim beklentilerini, eğitim ve kariyer tercihlerini etkileyen faktörleri anlamaya odaklanarak incelemektedir. Çalışma, öğrencilerin kararlarını şekillendiren cinsiyet dinamikleri, kişisel ilgi alanları, eğitimsel beklentiler ve algılar üzerinde durmaktadır. Teorik çerçeve, kadın ve erkek arasındaki güç ilişkilerini ve buna bağlı olarak ortaya çıkan cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini vurgulayan Sosyalist Feminizm Teorisi üzerine kurulmuştur.

Çeşitli alanlarda önemli ilerlemeler kaydedilmesine rağmen, kadınlar bilim, teknoloji ve liderlik rollerinde hala yeterince temsil edilmemektedir. Bu çalışma, vakıf üniversitesi öğrencilerinin seçtikleri alanlarla ilgili algılarını araştırarak cinsiyete dayalı mesleki ayrışmanın altında yatan nedenleri ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, Beşeri ve Sosyal Bilimler ile Mühendislik ve Doğa Bilimleri Fakülteleri'nde okuyan öğrencilerle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler kullanarak nitel fenomenolojik bir tasarım benimsemektedir.

Bulgular altı ana tema ortaya koymaktadır: Kariyer Esinlenmeleri, Eğitim ve Ailenin Etkisi, Toplumsal cinsiyet Dinamikleri, İş Piyasası Kaygıları ve Finansal Beklentiler, Destek Sistemleri ve İş Yaşam Dengesi. Öğrencilerin kişisel ilgi alanları ve akademik güçlü yönleri, eğitim tercihlerinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Net kariyer planları ve seçtikleri alanla ilgili ön bilgiye sahip olmaları, daha bilinçli kararlar almalarına yol açmaktadır. Aile etkisi, rol modelleri ve kolaylık da tercihlerini etkilemektedir. Özellikle, Beşeri ve Sosyal Bilimler öğrencilerinin kendilerini insan odaklı, Mühendislik ve Doğa Bilimleri öğrencilerinin ise nesne odaklı olarak gördükleri gözlemlenmiştir. Cinsiyet dinamikleri, öğrencilerin kariyer seçeneklerini cinsiyet stereotipleri ve toplumsal beklentiler doğrultusunda nasıl farklı algıladıklarını ortaya koymaktadır.

Çalışma, mesleki beklentilerdeki cinsiyet eşitsizliklerinin devam ettiğini vurgulamakta ve bu eşitsizliklerin giderilmesi için müdahalelerin gerekliliğini belirtmektedir. Öneriler arasında, tüm çalışma alanlarında cinsiyet çeşitliliğinin teşvik edilmesi, kariyer danışmanlık hizmetlerinin geliştirilmesi ve geleneksel cinsiyet rolleri ve stereotiplerini sorgulayan bir eğitim ortamının yaratılması bulunmaktadır.

Bu araştırma, cinsiyete dayalı eğitim tercihlerini ve sosyal ve ailevi etkilerin rolünü anlayarak, eğitimde ve işgücü piyasasında cinsiyet eşitliği konusundaki daha geniş tartışmalara katkıda bulunmakta ve hem erkekler hem de kadınlar için daha eşitlikçi kariyer fırsatlarının önünü açmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Meslek Seçimi Esinlenmeleri, Cinsiyet, Akademik tercihler, Yüksek Öğretim.

ABSTRACT

GENDER BASED OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF FOUNDATION UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

AY, Hilal
Master's degree/ Department of Educational Sciences
Advisor: Prof. Dr. Mustafa SEVER
January, 2025, xv + 138 Pages

This research investigates the gender-based occupational selection aspirations of foundation university students in Turkey, with a particular focus on understanding the factors influencing their educational and career choices. The study examines how gender dynamics, personal interests, educational aspirations, and perceptions shape the students' decisions. The theoretical framework is grounded in Socialist Feminist Theory, which emphasizes the power relations among men and women and the resultant gender inequalities.

Despite significant advancements in various fields, women continue to be underrepresented in science, technology, and leadership roles. This study aims to explore the perceptions of foundation university students regarding their chosen fields of study to uncover the underlying reasons for gender-based occupational segregation. The research employs a qualitative phenomenological design, utilizing semi-structured interviews with students from different departments in the faculties of 'Humanities and Social Sciences and Engineering and Natural Sciences'.

The findings reveal six main themes: Career Aspirations, Influence of Education and Family, Gender Dynamics, Job Market Concerns and Financial Expectations, Support Systems, and Work-life Balance. Students' personal interests and academic strengths play a significant role in their educational choices. Clear career plans and substantial prior knowledge about their chosen fields lead to more informed decisions. Family influence, role models, and convenience also impact their choices. Notably, students from Humanities and Social Sciences tend to view themselves as people-oriented, while those from Engineering and Natural Sciences are more things-oriented. Gender dynamics further reveal how students perceive their career options differently based on gender stereotypes and societal expectations.

The study highlights the persistence of gender inequalities in occupational aspirations and emphasizes the need for interventions to address these disparities. Recommendations include promoting gender diversity in all fields of study, enhancing career counseling services, and fostering an educational environment that challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

By understanding the gender-based educational preferences and the impact of social and familial influences, this research contributes to the broader discourse on gender equality in education and the labor market, aiming to pave the way for more equitable career opportunities for both men and women.

Key Words: Occupational Aspirations, Gender, Higher Education, Educational Choices.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been a momentous expedition in my scholarly and personal growth, and I am appreciative to have received the assistance and direction of numerous individuals throughout this undertaking.

First and foremost, I would want to convey my utmost appreciation to my adviser, Prof. Dr. Mustafa SEVER, for his invaluable expertise, patience, and support. Your perceptive input and steadfast support have navigated me through the obstacles and achievements of my research. Below is a revised thank-you text modeled on the original structure, but with updated names and differently phrased sentences. Feel free to adjust any part as you see fit.

I would first like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Ahmet Kaysılı for his invaluable support throughout my research. He generously offered his insights and resources at every stage of this process, patiently addressing my questions and motivating me to push my limits.

I am also deeply indebted to Prof. Dr. Berna Aslan, Prof. Dr. Celal Deha Doğan, and Doç. Dr. Gökhan Atik for their significant contributions to my academic development through their master-level courses. Their guidance and encouragement have played a vital role in shaping my professional perspective.

My family has been a pillar of strength for me during this journey. I would like to thank my dear parents and my brother for their unwavering belief in my abilities. Without their constant support and love, this study would have been far more difficult to accomplish.

My deepest appreciation also goes to my wonderful friends and colleagues, Inst. Zeynep Doğu and Inst. Betül Keskin, whose advice, encouragement, and heartfelt support have continually inspired me. Their readiness to assist and their confidence in my work have been truly uplifting, making me feel stronger every step of the way.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Inst. Kardelen Kaya, Inst. Beyza Köroğlu, Inst. Seda Erenoğlu, Inst. Kübra Asrav, and Inst. Nazlı Bulut for their positive energy and friendship, which have enriched both my personal and professional life. I am also profoundly grateful to Inst. Yeliz Arslan, Inst. Eylem Öztekin İblikçi, Dr. Zeynep

Rana Selimoğlu, and Dr. Siray Lengerli Aydemir for their generous contributions and thoughtful feedback. Their collaborations and readiness to help have been invaluable in elevating this study.

Ultimately, this research has provided me with valuable insights into the intricate relationship between gender dynamics and educational objectives, significantly enhancing my comprehension in this area. This experience has strengthened my dedication to promoting gender equality and emphasized the significance of further study in this area.

To all oppressed women…

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table **Page**

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure **Page**

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

STEM	Disciplines of mathematics, engineering, agricultural sciences, physical sciences, biological sciences, engineering technologies, computer sciences, and information sciences.
YÖK	Turkish Council of Higher Education

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Education system, defined as a transmitter "of skills and knowledge necessary for the establishment of a reconfigured society", is controlled by the state which is "a key institution in generating regulating and maintaining social relations" (Stomquist, 1990). As the knowledge is cumulative and shaped by those in power, women perception and the way of thinking is not involved (Smith, 1987). The exclusion of women voice is visible in many areas but one of the most important ones is 'gender inequalities in educational access and attainment' due to the push factors started in family and maintained by the school forcing women to stick to the oppressed position (Acker, 1987; Stromquist, 1989).

As well as the idea of male dominance, female oppression is not new. However, encountering the concept is different from truly grasping its meaning. To be able to understand male hegemony, we must recognize it as series of distinct instances where women have already accepted a male dominated culture, its legal frameworks, and their subordinate role within it Rowbotham (1973; as cited in Arnot, 1982).

Inequality in education is studied by traditional theories on such as functionalist, reproduction, and conflict theories. However, the problem of 'underrepresentation of women in education' and relatively in labor is a universally existing and neglected phenomenon, since it is not particularly covered in terms of 'social class' by "the best-known theories about social inequalities in education" (Stomquist, 1990: 140). To recapitulate as Stomquist claims: "These theories, however, cannot be used to account for gender differences because they contain nothing in their arguments to explain differences within social classes" (1990: 141). For this reason, to understand the devaluation process of women in education as well as in society, feminist theory is studied as theoretical framework of my thesis.

According to Arnot (1982), women occupy a distinct position in the hierarchy of social classes compared to men. There are significantly fewer women taking the roles of high-status occupations such as employers, managers, high-status and supervisors. Consequently, very few women have the opportunity to issue directives and ensure compliance. It’s more likely for women to work as teachers or social workers as Bernstein (1977) defines as the agents of “symbolic control”. Taking into account the importance of women’s position in social life, which is mostly defined by their economic conditions, future career is a possible outcome of educational background. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that gender segregation is a prevalent characteristic found in all higher education institutions. Specifically, many comparisons have demonstrated that the lack of female representation in scientific professions is a global phenomenon (Ramirez & Wotipka, 2001). Simultaneously, prior research has established that there are substantial variations between countries in the extent to which women are underrepresented or overrepresented in certain academic fields. The extent to which gender segregation varies across different fields in different countries is still a topic of ongoing inquiry. Charles and Bradley (2002) emphasize a significant divergence between the overall level and the unique correlation between gender and major of study. Since higher education is the last step of the education process in Turkey, desegregation which described as a “long term trend that occurred slowly but surely” (Ramirez & Wotipka, 2001) should be considered extensively. However, there are only a few studies covering this phenomenon in Turkey.

The lack of female representation in STEM fields and careers has significant implications for both women and society as a whole. Science and innovation that do not integrate women’s perspectives are likely to yield outcomes with enduring negative consequences (Kahn & Ginther, 2017).

Considering that the students’ majors are possible predictors of their future social stance, their experiences and perceptions of their occupation selection aspirations should be examined. In my research, I try to understand gender based occupational selection aspirations of foundation university students. To have a deeper understanding in their preferences, Socialist Feminist Theory is used as a theoretical framework of my study. Occupational aspirations are covered as the conceptual framework to understand their future career goals and career-oriented perceptions.

The study is conducted using qualitative research method because “meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions” (Lune & Berg, 2017) are expected to be understood. As the study is experience based, phenomenological research design method is applied using semi-constructed form in interviews with the participants.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that women currently participate in the workforce in large numbers, they still tend to be concentrated in occupations that are historically associated with females and are generally paid less than their male counterparts. Despite significant advancements achieved by women in traditionally male-dominated fields like medicine and law, where women now make up half of the entering students, there are still several areas in the occupational world that exhibit considerable gender segregation. Beyond the general shortages, women continue to be significantly underrepresented in numerous quantitative disciplines, including economics, engineering, and computer science. The gender disparity in STEM education affects both equity and efficiency. Fields with the lowest female representation are often the highest paying, meaning that gender differences in specialization play a role in sustaining the gender pay gap (Owen, 2023).

Occupational aspirations have a significant impact on the lives of most women. Therefore, it is crucial for women to select career paths that they feel personally rewarding, fulfilling, and financially viable. However, the data presented by numerous academics indicate that a significant proportion of women continue to choose a limited variety of traditionally female occupations that offer lower salaries, resulting in major wage disparities compared to men, even while working full-time (Rojewski, 2005).

Government, industry leaders, and academics consider expanding and growing the STEM workforce to be a crucial problem. Although there have been significant advancements in education and employment opportunities for girls and women over the past five decades, the improvement has not been consistent, and specific scientific and engineering fields continue to be predominantly male-dominated (Hill, Corbett, & St Rose, 2010).

This research looks for an understanding of students' perceptions about their major of study choices to analyze gender inequalities and their effect on the choice of field of study. "Participation of women in university education and their concentrated presence in only a few fields would be seen as the cumulative result of discrimination and socialization of women that … discourages them from seeking challenging careers" (Stomquist, 1990).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research 'Gender Based Occupational Selection Aspirations of Foundation University Students in Turkey' is to understand the perceptions and underlying reasons result in students' choice of current majors related to the social sex roles they inherent from society or from their families. In this research I try to grasp information about foundation university students' gender based educational preferences and inequality of 'educational opportunity by gender' The aim of my study is to understand their way of making sense about the occupational choice they've made with the help of semi-constructed interviews with participants from different departments of study. The selection of academic disciplines has been found to account for around 15 to 25 percent of the variance in income between male and female (Brown & Corcoran, 1997; Bobbitt-Zeher, 2007). Consequently, it is crucial to address this topic in order to understand gender inequality in the labor market. We have chosen to concentrate on the career decisions and attitudes of young adult foundation university students, specifically in relation to gender-typed roles. This is because the early adulthood stage is a critical phase for making choices that have long-term implications for future professions (Erikson, 1989; McCormick et al. 2011).

Significance of the Study

There are very limited studies about educational practices of higher education students in Turkey in terms of gender equity, particularly foundation university students. To understand what social codes students carry, how they shape their perceptions of occupations and their majors in terms of gender differences or to comprehend "how educationally stratified our society is in gender" (Lynch, 2000: 93), this study is essential for filling an irremissible gap in literature.

Since the 1970s, scholars have been discussing the reasons for the lower presence of women in the STEM (e.g., Ceci & Williams, 2007; Ceci, Williams, & Barnett, 2009; Gallagher & Kaufman, 2005; Watt & Eccles, 2008). The number of women who both have a degree in mathematics and are employed in the field is less than half of the number of males. The underrepresentation of women in these fields may indicate that these factors, which influence career choices, vary based on gender.

The insufficient representation of women in STEM is a worldwide issue. Although women are adequately represented in natural and life sciences, as well as in medical and health-related disciplines, their overall involvement in STEM subjects remains inadequate. Notwithstanding attempts to rectify this disparity, gender inequalities in STEM disciplines have endured for decades (NSF, 2019 as cited in Özkurt and Yakın, 2020). The continuation of these differences highlights the urgent necessity to examine the variables affecting women's involvement in these areas.

This study aims to illuminate an underexplored topic within the Turkish environment by concentrating on foundation universities. Comprehending the dynamics inside these institutions is essential for devising successful methods to advance gender parity in higher education and STEM involvement.

Assumptions

It's assumed that participants answer the questions honestly during the interviews.

Limitations

The study included male and female students from either the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences or the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at foundational universities in Ankara. Participation is restricted to students from four departments in the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences and three departments in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Therefore, the results of this study may not be applicable to students from other faculties or universities, or to students from various locations of Turkey. The research sample was confined to students attending foundation institutions in Ankara, thereby constraining the range of opinions, as students from public universities or other locations may possess differing experiences or viewpoints. Incorporating students from other faculties and regions may provide a more thorough comprehension of the subject. The research concentrated solely on student viewpoints, omitting other pertinent stakeholders like faculty members, academic advisors, or parents, whose ideas could have enriched the findings' context.

Definitions

Sex versus Gender

The distinction portrayed by Arnot (1982) emphasizes that gender and sex are separate concepts that are frequently confused yet have independent definitions. Sex generally pertains to the biological traits that categorize persons as female or male, characterized by bodily aspects such reproductive organs and chromosomes. However, gender is a societal concept that covers the societal expectations, attitudes, and duties that are linked to being either male or female. Sex is determined by biological factors, but gender is a social construct that can differ throughout cultures and change over time. Gender as a category is captured by Eileen Byrne (1978) in a sharp definition: “Gender is the collection of attitudes which society stiches together (dress, behavior, attributed personality traits, expected social roles, etc.) to clothe boys and girls. (p.254)”

It is also pertinent to note that gender is a cultural factor that is closely connected with the dynamics of class and power. The formation of gender in society is shaped by dominant cultural beliefs and conventions, which frequently exhibit hegemonic characteristics. These cultural ideas influence and maintain gender distinctions, relationships, and power dynamics in society. Gender, as a cultural construct, is intricately intertwined with the wider framework of class and power dynamics. The interaction between gender, class, and power relations highlights the intricate nature of the construction, preservation, and perpetuation of gender identities and roles within societal frameworks (Arnot, 1982).

Another view from Eisenstein (1984) is that biological sex and social gender were distinct ideas that could be differentiated when considering development. From a biological standpoint, the sex of a typical newborn is readily apparent based on anatomical characteristics observed at the time of delivery. Psychologically, the development of a distinct awareness of one’s own sexual identity as either male or female, as a “boy” or “girl,” often occurs at approximately eighteen months of age. That is, it might be demonstrated to be gained by cultural means. Additionally, research has demonstrated that the cognitive sense of gender, referred to as the “cognitive sense of gendered self” by Nancy Chodorow (2018), is acquired apart from, and in rare instances contrary to, anatomical characteristics.

The perception of one’s gender, in brief, was developed as a result of the family environment and the dynamics between parents and kid. The production of the response was primarily psychological and social in nature, rather than physiological, and was triggered automatically by mechanical or physical stimuli. Conceptually, it was feasible to differentiate between sex and gender. The term “sex” pertains to the biological classification of an infant determined by their anatomical characteristics at birth, determining whether they are male or female within the human species. Gender refers to the set of expectations, qualities, and behaviors that are culturally and socially given to individuals based on their biological sex at birth (Eisenstein, 1984).

STEM Fields

The term “STEM” encompasses the disciplines of ‘mathematics, engineering, engineering technologies, physical sciences, biological sciences, agricultural sciences, computer sciences, and information sciences’. Furthermore, the disciplines of social and behavioral sciences, encompassing areas such as psychology and economics, as well as healthcare practitioners like physicians and nurses, are excluded from the aforementioned. If possible, STEM faculty members from colleges and universities are included (Hill, Corbett, & St Rose, 2010). The terms “STEM,” “science, technology, engineering, and mathematics,” and “scientific and engineering fields” are used correspondently in this study.

Foundation Universities

A foundation university is an institution that functions independently under the governance of a foundation, rather than being directly associated with the state. In Türkiye, foundation universities are formed by legislation based on the suggestion of the Council of Higher Education. The formation of such universities transpires either via the inception of a new university or by conferring university status onto an existing higher education institution. A Foundation Higher Education Institution, as defined by Law No. 2547, denotes a higher education institution established by the government (Erguvan, 2010).

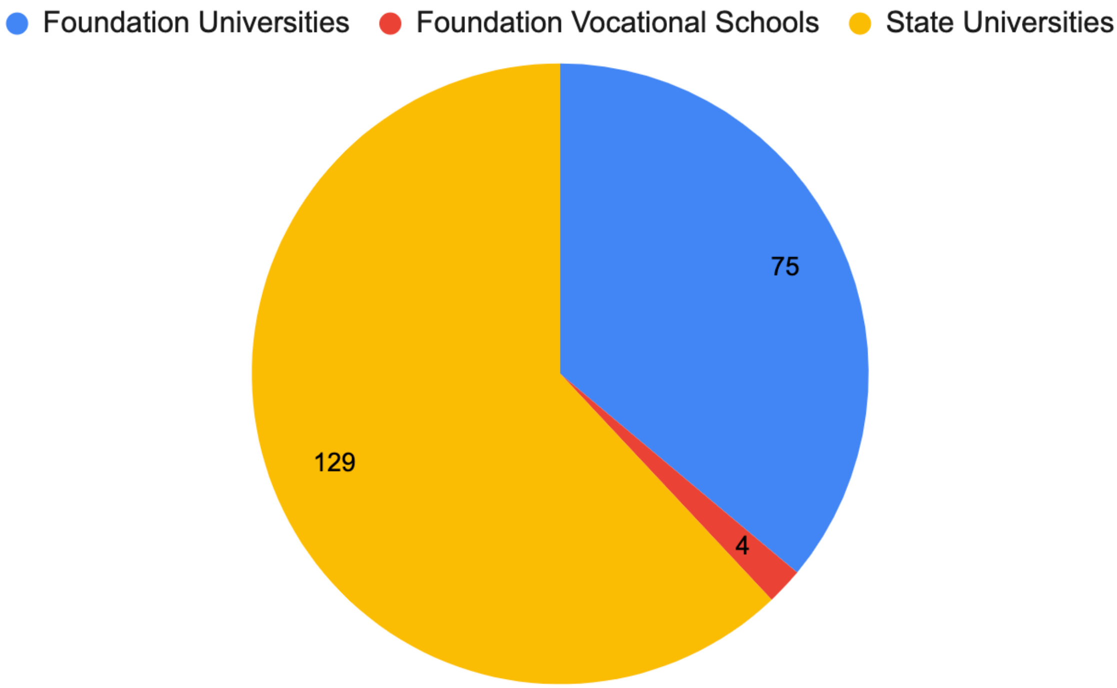

Figure 1. Number of foundation universities in Turkey

(YÖK, 2024)

Figure 1 illustrates that foundation universities constitute 36% of higher education institutions in Turkey. Considering their prominence in the higher education sector, it is imperative to undertake more comprehensive research on these institutions. According to Wissema (2009), the history of higher education institutions or universities can be categorized into three major groupings. The initial group comprises universities whose principal objective is exclusively the dissemination of knowledge. The group termed "First Generation Universities" was succeeded by institutions that not only disseminated knowledge but also conducted research and produced new material, identified as "Second Generation Universities." The final category, referred to as "Third Generation Universities," encompasses institutions that extend beyond the mere production and dissemination of information to guarantee its practical implementation. A distinctive trait of Third Generation Universities, frequently regarded as the pinnacle of university evolution, is their entrepreneurial disposition.

Concurrent with technological and industrial improvements, expectations of universities have evolved in recent years. Universities are increasingly anticipated to transcend their regional functions and assume proactive roles on both national and international stages. They are immediately affected by numerous causes, propelled by both internal and external dynamics, which compel them toward this transition. In this period, colleges are extensively collaborating with industry, resulting in the establishment of technology-focused centers in practically every school.

The transition to mass education in universities and the allocation of financial resources by central governments have engendered the notion of accountability. This has resulted in societal expectations for universities to generate creative outcomes with concrete advantages, while simultaneously raising anticipations for their leadership role at the regional level across all facets. Universities based on the Humboldtian tradition have been central to change due to these and other influences. Wissema (2009) identifies several factors driving substantial change in Humboldtian second-generation universities, including increased student enrollment, globalization, interdisciplinary research, escalating research expenses, the rise of private research institutions, the evolution of universities into economic hubs, and the growth of entrepreneurship.

The classification of foundation universities in Turkey can be elucidated not only as third-generation entrepreneurial institutions but also through an alternate framework which can be defined as "*world-class elite*", "*semi-elite*", and "*non elite and demand absorbing*" institutions according to the classification of Levy (2006).

Private higher education in Turkey has developed to serve two primary functions: first, as an alternative that absorbs demand when public universities are unable to meet the increasing need for higher education, and second, as institutions that provide quality status, improved job prospects, and a sense of political stability (Levy, 2006). The second role developed as public universities faced challenges in fulfilling both national and international demands of the higher education sector and societal needs. While no foundation universities in Turkey have attained "world-class" or elite status, several exhibit characteristics of "semi-elite" institutions. These institutions exhibit characteristics that place them between the top public universities and other foundation and public institutions in the nation (Levy, 2006). It is important to note that no foundation universities in Turkey are ranked among global institutions of high standing.

A defining characteristic of semi-elite universities is their student demographics and admission selectivity. These institutions frequently draw high achievers from the centralized university entrance exam (ÖSS) and graduates of prestigious secondary schools. Turkish foundation universities can be classified into two main categories based on these characteristics. The first group comprises isomorphic, non-elite, demand-absorbing universities, whereas the second group encompasses distinctive, semi-elite, and academically rigorous institutions. (Levy, 2004, 2006, 2008, as cited in Mizikaci, 2010).

Taking into consideration all this information, it is essential to point out that this study was carried out with students who are now enrolled in foundation institutions in Ankara, which are considered to be demand-absorbing universities. In particular, the study focused on students who were enrolled in demand-absorbing universities. These students, due to their poor performance in university entrance examinations, were unable to obtain admission to the programs that they wished at their preferred public universities. The reason for selecting universities in this category is that, with a few exceptions, the majority of universities in Turkey fall under the non-elite, demand-absorbing category.

CHAPTER 2

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Smith (1987) explains the concept of 'everyday world' as the total representation of our experience which is not only shaped by our relations to macro processes but also framed by locally formed acts. In other words, she describes experience as a processed notion molded by regional practices and greater processes. In her significant work, Smith (1987) explains those practices and processes which shape the understanding of everyday life and the way we behave or think as mediators of male dominance. To be more specific, she argues that the input we sense from all means of communication tools, media, social environment, or any kind of information is a representation of the 'ruling power' which is in control of men with the absence of women voice. Smith also states: "the means women have had available them to think, imagine, and make actionable their experience have been made for us and not by us." (1987: 19) As she defines the position of women dependent to the mainstream expectations and forms of living which are also in a male-centered point, Smith opposes the idea of 'universal knowledge' as it is only constructed by male authorities, and it represents either the voice of men or the ideas limited and framed by men. In other words, the knowledge which we tent to accept as 'universal' contains ideas influenced or produced by men or has an underlying invisible male perspective. Consequently, Smith (1987) notes a significant need for a feminist point of view developed from women's position by practices of women.

Millett's research revealed that the term "normal" had different connotations for females and males. Specifically, for females, it denoted passivity, but for males, it signified activity. Men possessed instrumental characteristics, including tenacity, aggression, curiosity, ambition, strategic planning, responsibility, originality, and competitiveness. Women exhibited expressive characteristics, like as affectionate, obedient, responsive to sympathy and approval, happy, kind, and friendly. Women were compelled to comply to societal expectations of expressing themselves, while men assumed the role of being rational and powerful (Millett, 2016).

Considering the fact how we define the 'everyday world as a representation of our experiences, shaped by macro and locally formed acts as argued earlier, the input we perceive from communication tools, media, and social environments represents the 'ruling power' of men, with women's experiences being made for them. And the idea of 'universal knowledge', which is only constructed by male authorities and contains ideas influenced by men. There is an inevitable feminist perspective based on women's practices. Having different connotations for females and males, with men exhibiting instrumental characteristics and women exhibiting expressive characteristics, the subordination of women and how different genders make career choices based on gendered occupational aspirations will be examined through feminist lenses.

Feminist Theory

The feminist thought we are familiar with today has originated from that era but has evolved and expanded via an ongoing process of discussion, analysis, and contemplation. Consequently, various branches of theory have emerged at different stages of this development (Jackson & Jones, 1998).

Feminist theory looks for an understanding of the way women perceive the world and how they develop their cultural beliefs in terms of being a woman. The theory opposes the notion that men and women are born with an unfair difference which should not be argued. According to the feminist theory as the knowledge is generated and shaped by men, women are not active contributors of it (Jackson & Jones, 1998). Being in line with Smith's (1987) argument they claim:

> Feminist modes of theorizing contest androcentric (or male-centred) ways of knowing, calling into question the gendered hierarchy of society and culture. Feminist theory is about thinking for ourselves – women generating knowledge about women and gender for women (Jackson & Jones, 1998)

As well as the differences among women such as ethnicity, origin, socioeconomic background, the shared features, and the concerns of women are also focused by the theory. As the feminist theory has its roots both from the most basic level in the society and from the academic studies, its shift has been moved to the academic studies lately to free itself from the hegemonic perspectives (Jackson & Jones, 1998). The concept of feminism is classified as liberal, radical, and socialist by Jaggar (1983) in her meticulous study unraveling theory with the communion of its main supporters. Marxist feminism will not be reviewed in this study, considering its fused concepts with Socialist feminism and the fact that it takes a position neglecting to focus on gender discrimination in education (Donovan, 2000; Stromquist, 1989).

Maynard (1995) discusses the motion and the shifts over the time on the feminist theory indicating its continuous nature, she argues that it is not simple to put it into certain categories, and Maynard (1995) also discusses the functionality of the categorization of the theory as the lines are blurry and interpreted differently in various aspects by different studies. “In truth contemporary “Marxist feminism” is more appropriately called “socialist feminism” to point up that it no longer presents and undiluted Marxism, but a Marxism modified (primarily) by radical feminism” (Donovan, 2000). However, as stated before the theory is mostly classified as ‘socialist, radical, and liberal feminism (Eisenstein, 1984; Jaggar, 1983). The complexity and interchangeability of feminist theory is codefined by Jaggar as:

> Feminist theorists and activists do not always wear labels and, even if they do, they are not always agreed on who should wear which label. Moreover, there are differences even between those wearing the same label and, in addition, dialogue between feminists of different tendencies has led to modifications in all their views (1988, p. 124).

Putting aside the discussions on vague classifications of feminist theories, in this thesis the theories are classified as ‘socialist, radical, and liberal feminism’ and socialist feminist theory is studied as the theoretical framework of this MA thesis because of its stance against education which will be discussed in the following parts.

Liberal Feminist Theory

Liberal feminist theory mainly focuses on the concept of equality between men and women and the theory claims even if men and women have no differences except for the biological productive notion of women, should be considered as ‘same’ in all areas of everyday life. However, women experience inequalities arising from the exposure of internal and external factors which are transmitted by socialization in terms of fixed sex-stereotypes trapping them into certain disadvantaged social roles. In terms of educational perspective, equality, socialization, and sex discrimination are the main concerns of the theory (Acker, 1987; Jaggar, 1983; Sancar, 2016; Stromquist, 1989). Even though socialization practices and gender discrimination are the core points of liberal feminism, the issues about participation and attainment to education are not addressed (Stromquist, 1989).

The Radical Feminist Theory

The Radical Feminism theory suggests that the social system we all live in undermines women and puts them in a disadvantaged position (Firestone, 1970; Millet, 1971). “Radical feminism considers that the main cause of women’s subordination originates from power relations based on sexual differences” (Stromquist, 1989). In other words, the negative positioning of women in the society is due to the predetermined primary roles of them as mothers (Stromquist, 1989). Radical feminists question the roots of women’s subordination which is believed to be created by family and supported by school in terms of sexual differences. According to radical feminist point of view, school is considered as a transmitter of gender roles as “men adopt the position of ‘breadwinners’ and assign women the role of keeping children and house for them” (p. 171) and hegemonic ideas in favor of men (Stromquist, 1989). However, “this perspective has not been used to account for differences in educational participation and attainment” and “it fails to grasp class relations and defines the gender problem primarily on the basis of ideological determinants (Stromquist, 1989).

On the other hand, “socialist feminism is committed to the basic Marxist conception of human nature as created historically through the dialectical interrelation between human biology, human society and the physical environment” (Jaggar, 1983, p. 125). Jaggar draws a map underlying the key differences of the categories in feminist theory by differing socialist perspective from radical and liberal feminism by many significant notions, noting its emphasis on the distinction “by age, sex, class, nationality, and by racial and ethnic origin” by noting:

> Liberal political theory has tended to ignore or minimize all these differences. Marxist political theory has tended to recognize only differences of class. The political of radical feminism has tended to recognize only differences of age and sex, to understand these universal terms, and often to view them as determined biologically. By contrast, socialist feminism recognizes all these differences as constituent parts of contemporary human nature and seeks a way of understanding them that is not only materialist but also historical (1983: 126).

Socialist Feminist Theory

The theoretical framework of this thesis is built on Socialist Feminist Theory to explain the gender inequalities through power relations in a wider perspective. To support the idea Jackson (1998) also notes, giving meaning to the inequalities of men and women has been the core concern of socialist feminist theory which emphasizes the power relations between them. Jackson also states, “the challenge for socialist feminist theory is to analyze the localized contexts of women’s everyday existence and the meanings women give to their lives without losing sight of structural patterns of dominance and subordination” (1998). In the 1970s, social scientific ideas played a prominent role in feminist analysis. However, they have subsequently been overshadowed by literary and cultural theory, which has taken over as the dominant framework. The change can be described as a ‘cultural turn’ in feminist theory, where the focus has shifted from ‘things’ to ‘words’ (Barrett, 1992, as cited in Jackson 1998). Previously, feminist theory focused on tangible matters like household chores, disparities in employment opportunities, and male aggression. However, it has recently shifted its attention towards intangible aspects such as language, representation, and individual experiences.

Several textbooks on feminist theory suggest that feminists were divided into two contrasting factions: Marxist or socialist feminists and radical feminists. Indeed, the theoretical differences that arose throughout the 1970s were far more intricate. Instead of a clear division between two separate forms of feminism, there was a continuum where some individuals perceived women’s subordination as a result of capitalism, while others attributed it to patriarchy, a system of male dominance (Jackson, 1998).

The fact that a diverse group of theorists have explored various explanations for male dominance, focusing on the exploitation of labor was discussed by Jackson (1998). Orthodox Marxists attribute women’s subordination to capitalism, while radical feminists argue that the productive processes of modern society involve both capitalist and patriarchal relationships. This analysis was established based on two key elements of women’s economic circumstances. Women’s position in the labor market differs from men in several ways. Firstly, they tend to receive lower pay, have fewer job options, experience more gaps in employment, and often work part-time. Secondly, in addition to their paid work, women are typically responsible for unpaid domestic work in their homes.

In the same vein, Delphy and Leonard (1992) argues that the family is an economic system characterized by labor relations that favor men and exploit women. It is challenging to precisely define such an argument in relation to the present portrayals of the various aspects that are believed to be encompassed by multiple forms of feminism. Therefore, it serves as a prime illustration of the challenges that naturally arise in the feminist categorization process.

For individuals with traditional Marxist concerns, the most apparent course of investigation was to establish a connection between these facts and the capitalist system. Women's job conditions resulted in their being referred to as a 'reserve army of labor', serving as a readily available and expendable workforce that was inexpensive and adaptable, able to be utilized by capital when necessary and dismissed during other periods. Although this concept is effective in certain circumstances, such as when women adopt the duties of men during times of war. If women are hired due to their labor being more cost-effective than that of men, why are they not consistently prioritized for job opportunities over men? Although women possess the ability to adapt and change their work patterns, their flexibility is not fully utilized to replace male workers. Women typically occupy distinct vocations from males, resulting in a limited overlap in employment roles between the genders. Furthermore, this strategy fails to provide a rationale for why women should be the ones to make up the reserve army. It is assumed without justification that women's main function is within the household, which consequently makes them less relevant to the labor (Jackson, 1998).

Women Subordination in Domestic Labor

The discussion, which only concentrated on integrating housework within Marx's labor theory of value, lost its original feminist drive and had reached its conclusion by the late 1970s. The challenges were found to be unsolvable due to the fact that domestic labor operates under different conditions than wage labor and cannot be adequately explained using a theory intended for the analysis of wage labor. Furthermore, many involved in the discussion on domestic labor accepted without question the allocation of tasks between men and women. They never stopped to reflect on the reasons behind women being responsible for domestic labor or why men seemingly 'need' it to be done on their behalf. The conflicting assertions regarding the worth of household labor were totally dependent on the role of the housewife's spouse inside the capitalist economic system. Her work was conceptualized based on his labor. However, the dynamics of marital relationships, namely the imbalances within them, were mostly disregarded. According to Delphy and Leonard (1992), most Marxists did not consider the possibility that working-class men may oppress their own families or that women from the middle class could also experience oppression.

French materialist feminists, particularly Christine Delphy, were developing a distinct perspective to domestic labor starting in the early 1970s. Delphy argues that the unique characteristics of housework are a result of the social relationships in which it is carried out. She contends that these relationships are characterized by male dominance and that males consistently exploit and get advantages from women's labor within a home system of production (Delphy, 1976, 1977, 1984, as cited in Jackson, 1998). Women engage in domestic labor as a personal service to a male family leader. He successfully takes control of her entire being and the labor she represents, allowing for the possibility of endless tasks that are based on his needs. Therefore, housework lacks a defined job description and does not entail a direct exchange of a specific number of hours or a predetermined amount of work for a specific compensation. The spousal maintenance a wife receives is not contingent upon her own labor contributions, but rather determined by her husband's income and his level of benevolence. The explicit appropriation and absence of reciprocity in women's labor becomes evident when a wife is employed and earns enough to cover her own expenses, yet is nevertheless obligated to perform household chores. It is evident in this scenario that she is laboring without receiving any compensation. Delphy asserts that in the context of the domestic mode of production, men form a class of individuals who exploit others, while women are a class that is subjected to exploitation (Jackson, 1998).

Another view on women subordination in family is from Walby focusing more on the ways in which the benefits that men receive from their wives' work are mediated through the exchange of labor power, rather than on the direct benefits that men receive from their wives' employment. She contends that a man is able to appreciate the value of the domestic labor that he has appropriated when he trades the labor power that his wife's job has produced for a wage that he is in charge of. According to Walby, this is the primary mechanism of exploitation that occurs within the patriarchal system of production itself.

According to Jackson (1998) both Delphy and Walby do not believe that the subordination of women is solely based on the fact that they are exploited inside the home mode of production. A further, obviously material part of the situation that women find themselves in is the disadvantageous position they hold in the economic market. In light of what we have observed, this cannot be directly explained using Marxist notions that are already in existence. In a capitalist economy, Marxism is unable to provide an explanation for why women and men should not be exploited in the same manner.

As Acker (1987) interpreted in her study the purpose of the socialist feminists is to eliminate women oppression by eliminating the capitalist notions. From the classification made by Eisenstein (1984), we can understand that class, as a representer of socioeconomic status in capitalist system, is an important part of socialist feminism engaging it with ‘gender and race’. The theoretical framework of this study is built upon socialist feminist theory because of its comprehensive perspective on women subordination differing it apart from other feminist theories as mentioned earlier (Jaggar, 1983: 126).

The Role of School

From the socialist feminism perspective because of the gender division it creates, family also plays a vital part in the oppression process but in terms of reproduction (Stromquist, 1989). As well as family, the role of school in women subordination is also discussed by socialist feminists. “Socialist feminists analyze the role of the school in the perpetuation of gender divisions under capitalism” (Acker, 1987). In other words, she emphasizes the importance given by Socialists feminists to the role of education system is the reproduction of ‘class and gender division of labor’. Schools are seen as a location of reproduction which restrains women as low-cost workers and influence them to carry on domestic roles (Deem, 1978; Kelly & Nihlen, 1982; Wolpe, 1978 as cited in Stomquist, 1989). With these pre-set roles as inexpensive workers and mothers, socialist feminists address education in terms of ‘gender inequalities in participation and attainment’ (Stromquist, 1989).

> The large number of illiterate women in the world can be attributed to women’s double role as (a) reproducers of children and the family and (b) workers in the reserve labor force. Their time, particularly that of low-income women, is generally taken by domestic and, to a lesser extent, remunerated work (Stromquist, 1989, p. 172).

It is also clarified by Stromquist (1989) that because of the indoctrinated gender roles transmitted by school and family, women tend to have either lower levels of education or choose domestic fields of study especially in higher education which both consequently put them in a deprived position in their work and private lives. In other words, the underrepresentation of women in labor is a consequence of both their attainment in education (especially higher education) and their fields of study which will determine their probable occupation. For this reason, in this study the student's preferences about field of study will be examined through socialist feminist perspective.

Additional socialist-feminist analyses have investigated the connections between education and motherhood. Miriam David (1984) identifies many methods employed by British primary schools to encourage mothers' involvement in school activities. Prior to the beginning of formal education, it is anticipated that women, particularly those in the middle socioeconomic class, will undertake the responsibility of educating their children and providing them with cultural capital, in order to maximize the benefits of schooling. In instances where resources are diminishing and in socially privileged areas, schools depend on the assistance of unpaid mothers, some of whom are certified instructors. These mothers contribute by fixing books and assisting with classroom routines. The limited school hours and holidays in Britain impose significant constraints on the work opportunities available to moms with small children. Schools reinforce and maintain a gender-based division of labor within households (Acker, 1987).

In addition to social gender roles, schools significantly influence students' self-efficacy beliefs regarding specific subjects, such as mathematics. This aspect is examined within the context of the reproductive role of schools in gender studies. Longitudinal research by Fryer and Levitt (2010) and Penner and Paret (2008) demonstrates that boys and girls exhibit comparable math skills at the onset of kindergarten; however, a male advantage emerges in the early grades and marginally increases by fifth grade. The results suggest that gender differences in mathematics performance develop gradually and are relatively minor, challenging the idea of inherent disparities at the beginning of schooling.

Moreover, this influence of schools contributes to a pattern where women may be less inclined to pursue math-intensive, high-paying fields, perceiving themselves as less competent compared to their male counterparts. This perception often places women at an economic disadvantage in terms of earnings potential, leading to a cycle of dependency on their partners for financial stability. As a result, many women find themselves confined to traditional domestic roles, perpetuating a systemic cycle of gender inequality. This dynamic underscores the interplay between educational practices, gendered self-efficacy beliefs, and broader societal structures that reinforce traditional gender norms.

The Role of Gender

Gender is constructed through four interconnected dimensions, each contributing to its complex framework. Symbolic representation highlights how language, metaphors, and cultural symbols articulate gender, emphasizing the historical and cultural contexts that shape gender relations. Social institutions and norms explore the role of structures like family, education, and the workplace in reinforcing traditional gender roles. Subjectivity and experience focus on how gender shapes individual identities and collective societal constructs. Lastly, power relations examine the intersection of gender with social hierarchies, emphasizing its role in perpetuating systems of oppression and inequality (Scott, 2007).

The differentiation among individuals is rarely as unequivocal or universally acknowledged as the biological distinctions between male and female. Nonetheless, sexuality includes more than merely biological characteristics. From an individual's viewpoint, sexuality is established as a social category from the very beginning of existence. This category progressively influences an individual's cognitive, emotional, and experiential landscape toward sexuality. This fabricated realm is what we characterize as gender. Gender denotes the comprehension of a particular sex, coupled with the societal expectations and roles associated with this comprehension (Vatandaş, 2007). As Oakley (2016) argues, "sex" refers to the biological distinctions between male and female, such as differences in genitalia and procreative functions, while "gender" is a cultural construct that classifies individuals into "masculine" or "feminine" categories. These gendered classifications are shaped and reinforced by societal structures, which have historically perpetuated unequal power dynamics.

Femininity and masculinity, associated with behavior, attitudes, and roles, constitute two distinct dimensions influenced by one's sex. This distinction is essential for societies, as Oakley (2016) observes that societies are often "organized around the differences rather than the similarities between the sexes" (p. 149). Consequently, these areas are distinctly delineated from one another. An individual is classified as either female or male, thereby categorizing them as a woman or a man. Society mandates that individuals conform to the fixed standards associated with their biological sex, necessitating the adoption and enactment of designated behaviors. Mixing of behaviors, roles, or attitudes based on gender is prohibited; any confusion is not tolerated, and neglect or indifference to this issue is addressed promptly. (Vatandaş, 2007). Deviation from these prescribed behaviors is often met with stigma and social repercussions, a phenomenon Oakley (2016) attributes to the "cultural conditioning" of gender roles during childhood (p. 51).

Millett attributed the responsibility not only to Freud himself, but also to the scholars in social psychology who had contributed to the development of an ideology centered around sex roles. These were strict guidelines that prevented women from behaving in ways that were not considered normal or desirable, for fear of being seen as odd or undesirable, or even mentally ill. Sex roles and sex-role stereotypes were mechanisms employed by society to maintain women's subordination to the patriarchal system (Eisenstein, 1984:7).

Social mythology, as defined by Janeway (as cited in Eisenstein, 1984), provides another explanation for the persistence of gender roles. She examined the historical progression of the belief that women should be confined to the household, highlighting that the concept of the "home" as we know it now emerged relatively recently, around the 18th century. This shaped the structure of family, in which women were primarily responsible for domestic duties. The concept of the woman's "role" originated from these developments and does not have a direct equivalent to any man's function. As Janeway argued, the identity of a mother, homemaker, or wife became closely tied to a woman's biological sex, a belief further reinforced by cultural narratives. In contrast, men were not subject to similar restrictions, as their identities were primarily defined by their professional accomplishments rather than their gender.

The cognitive theory posits that the development of gender roles arises from an understanding and evaluation that children can achieve upon reaching a specific level of cognitive development. Children initially develop an understanding of their own gender identity before recognizing the gender identities of others. Subsequently, individuals acquire the stereotypical attitudes linked to their respective gender. Subsequently, they recognize the necessity of conforming to gender-related stereotypes in their behavior. Cognitive theory posits that individuals can exhibit gender-stereotyped behaviors only after progressing through specific developmental stages. Upon adopting the appropriate gender role, individuals no longer require distinct reinforcement for specific behaviors.

Cognitive theory posits that children learn to exhibit gender-stereotyped behaviors and develop biases related to gender roles (Vatandaş, 2007).

Tan observes that numerous social scientists attribute the origins of gender discrimination to the beginning of labor division. Tan posits that the discovery of metals, the domestication of animals, advancements in weaving and agriculture, and the shift of surplus value to familial ownership resulted in a transformation of gender roles, undermining the equality of women’s statuses and relegating women to more domestic responsibilities (Tan, 1979).

The prevalent theory posits that the allocation of household labor is connected to the physiological traits of the sexes, indicating that gender roles originated in the past, largely as a result of the inherent physiological distinctions between men and women. This distinction is grounded in women’s capacity for pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing. In ancient societies, women predominantly dedicated their adult lives to pregnancy and child-rearing, unlike contemporary times. Even the healthiest women experienced certain behavioral restrictions during and after pregnancy, which requires proximity to their children while nursing. The relatively greater physical strength and speed of men resulted in their predominance in tasks involving travel, strength, or endurance, as these outdoor activities were typically performed by men rather than women. Consequently, men assumed roles as hunters, shepherds, or warriors, whereas women remained at home to care for children, engage in farming, and manage household responsibilities. The differentiation of roles progressively encompassed all facets of life. Consequently, men were characterized as brave, strong, independent, and adventurous - traits advantageous for hunting and combat - while women were viewed as warm, passive, quiet, and nurturing - attributes conducive to domestic responsibilities and child-rearing (Vatandaş, 2007).

The historical delineation of gender roles, especially the preeminent position of women in reproduction and child-rearing, alongside the handling of domestic responsibilities and hesitance to delegate them to males, can be elucidated by the internalization of the conventional femininity ideology transmitted to women. Furthermore, it may be seen as a reluctance to share their comparatively elevated position in the domestic realm - derived from their knowledge, experience, and proficiency in home duties - with their husbands, so maintaining their authority within the household (Çelebi, 1990).

The division of household roles by gender is perpetuated by the encouragement of boys and girls towards gender-specific activities and behaviors, supported by parental endorsement of gender-conforming conduct and the emulation of same-sex parents. This differentiation reinforces children's assimilation of gender roles (Tolan, 1991). Role distinction initiated within the home is subsequently reinforced through the educational process in schools. The curriculum content and textbooks, coupled with educators' attitudes shaped by traditional values, significantly influence this matter. Women are ascribed passive identities in public life, whilst men are designated active positions. Men are urged to engage in the public domain, whereas women are linked to their spouses, offspring, and domestic responsibilities. This framework, linking women to domestic labor and men to familial provision, confines women to traditional roles, resulting in adverse conditions and restricted opportunities in both vertical and horizontal occupational segregation relative to men. Analysis of women's experiences regarding professional segregation reveals that, although possessing equivalent education and professional skills as males, women occupy lower-status positions and earn reduced earnings.

In conclusion, the historical evolution of gender roles, fundamentally based on physiological distinctions and fueled by diverse social frameworks, has had enduring impacts on both private and public domains. Although conventional gender roles have transformed, they nonetheless influence societal expectations and behaviors, perpetuating enduring disparities, particularly in professional settings. The division of labor, both domestically and in societal roles, perpetuates gender preconceptions, frequently constraining prospects for women and reinforcing stereotypes. Comprehending the historical underpinnings of these roles is essential for tackling the systemic obstacles that sustain gender inequalities in modern society.

Conceptual Framework

In this thesis, occupational aspirations are framed as the conceptual theme because it mediates as a predictor of future careers (Schoon & Parsons, 2002; Gottfredson, 2002: 205). As higher education is the last step before occupational attainment in Turkey, the students' perspectives and reasoning's will be explored to understand their gender-based motivations.

Several career development theories suggest that beliefs and attitudes significantly influence gender-specific behavior such as future career choice (Eagly et al., 2000; Eccles, 1987; Gottfredson, 1981, as cited in Didonato & Strough, 2013). For instance, Eccles' (1999) proposes that individuals select a future path based on their perception of its value and their expectations of their own performance in that career. These expectations of success are influenced by gender stereotypes. In addition, according to the theory of social role (Eagly, 1987), the roles that both sexes fulfill in social life contribute to the development of certain stereotypes based on gender. This theory suggests that there is a cycle in which individuals choose jobs and roles depending on the prejudices they have (Eagly et al. 2000). This study utilizes these ideas to examine how gender stereotypes, which are widely accepted in the broader cultural environment, may influence individuals' attitudes towards gender-typical employment for themselves and others. In this study, we examined the correlation between individuals' opinions towards their preferred jobs and their actual choices of academic majors and careers among a group of foundation university students in Turkey.

Occupational Aspirations

Occupational aspirations are roughly described as "expressed career-related goals or choices" by Rojewski referring to the well-known question "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Defining them as one's 'expressed career-related goals or choices', Rojewski sees those aspirations not only as an interest but also as perceptions of the social world, career-oriented practices, and the idea of the self (2005: 131). To avoid a possible misconception with the term 'interest', Rojewski sheds the light on the meaning by stating; "aspirations represent individual goals given ideal conditions, while interests reflect and individual's emotional disposition toward particular career options" (2005: 132). Another attempt to make the concept plain is to differ it from 'occupational expectations' is also mentioned by Rojewski as: "aspirations are viewed as desired career goals given ideal circumstances and reflect the degree of attraction toward or preference for a particular occupation. Occupational expectations on the other hand, reflect the perceived likelihood of actually entering a particular occupation" (2005:133).

In support of this idea, the study of Strong also shows that occupational aspirations have an inevitable connection to future careers of young adults (1953 as cited in Rojewski, 2005). According to another study on the relation between occupational aspirations and career choices aspirations do have a predictive role in future careers (Gottfredson & Becker, 1981).

As mentioned above future occupational choices are believed to be in line with the aspirations of career. It's worth noting that, occupational aspirations are reflections of one's own experiences of everyday life and social status which are also in line with one's race and sex (Gottfredson & Becker, 1981). The study points out the importance of the conceptualization of everyday world by stating:

> Children may be aware of jobs "people like them" usually hold and so circumscribe their aspirations to conform to their social class, race and sex self-concepts long before they explore the suitability of their abilities, interests, and values to their remaining option (Gottfredson & Becker, 1981: 133).

To recapitulate Gottfredson and Becker, it is no coincidence that people tend to pursue careers in accordance with their occupational aspirations because deep down they know that they have the potential to attain those jobs as they are available for them because of their social stance as they are likely to recognize jobs that they associated with people they know (1981: 133). To put it in a different way, according to Gottfredson and Becker, it's possible that "rather than guiding or determining eventual attainment, aspirations are possible reflections of past experience and societal perceptions" (1981 as cited in Rojewski, 2005).

In addition, the study draws attention to the sequence of the occupational aspiration process in detail to explicate how it's shaped based on past experiences and social stance. It's claimed in the study that "field aspirations are secondary to level aspiration" because occupation-based objectives or career goals cannot be shaped without conceptualization of social world (Gottfredson & Becker, 1981: 133).

Vocational interests are also defined by Holland (1966) as "the expression of personality in work, hobbies, recreational activities, and preferences". As inferred from the statements of Rojewski (2005) and Holland (1966), the aspirations determining career choices are shaped by individual's interests, conceptualization of the world, self-perceptions, and personal decisions.

To have a deeper understanding in vocational choices Holland vocational interests are categorized into six types by Holland (1966), structured in a circular form known as RIASEC. The types include "Realistic" interests, which involve things, gadgets, or outdoor related activities; "Investigative" interests, which revolve around 'science, including mathematics, physical and social sciences, and biological and medical sciences'; "Artistic" interests, which focus on creative expression, such as writing and art performance; "Social" interests, which involve activities with people like helping; "Enterprising" interests, which pertain to roles of leadership or persuasive roles aimed at goal achievement; and "Conventional" interests, which involve jobs in well-structured environments, particularly business settings. Prediger (1982) posited two contradictory dimensions of work tasks that form the basis of Holland's hexagon: working with "things versus people" and working with "data versus ideas".

Interest plays a significant role in determining academic choices (Benbow & Minor, 1986; Hansen & Sackett, 1993), degree completion (Webb, Lubinski & Boggs, 2002), occupational choices in STEM and non-STEM fields (Parsons, Adler, & Meece, 1984; Strong, 1943), and job satisfaction (Barge & Hough, 1988; Morris, 2003). The primary reason cited for women transitioning out of STEM majors and careers is a lack of interest in the discipline or a greater interest in other fields (Preston, 2004; Seymour & Hewitt, 1997). Interest is frequently recognized as a crucial determinant that can lead to the absence of women in certain disciplines.

The connection between interest and achievement is examined by Marsh and Yeung (1998). They elucidate the reason behind boys developing stronger self-perceptions in mathematics and girls developing more stronger self-perceptions in English (Marsh, 1986). Additionally, the distinct patterns of educational and occupational choices between men and women were studied by Eccles and her colleagues (Eccles, 1994; Parsons et al., 1984). They identified interest, which is a component of subjective task value, as a significant factor contributing to women's tendency to not opt for the same occupational fields as men, specifically in the fields such as physical sciences, engineering, and applied mathematics. Additional research (e.g., Betz & Schifano, 2000; Cook et al., 1996; Jacobs, Davis-Kean, Bleeker, Eccles, & Malanchuk, 2005) provides insight into how the socialization process (such as role modeling, expectations of parents, and academic experiences) affects the levels of interest and the evolving patterns of interests in both boys and girls.

People versus Things

Vocational psychology researchers have extensively recognized that there are differences in interests across sexes, both individual level items and at the scale level.

This acknowledgement is supported by studies conducted by Betz and Fitzgerald (1987), Fouad (1999), Hackett and Lonborg (1993), and Johansson (2003). Typically, women tend to be inclined than men to have social and artistic interests, whereas males tend to be express 'interest in scientific, technical, and mechanical pursuits' (Betz and Fitzgerald, 1987). According to Thorndike's (1911) claim that the most significant distinction between men and women is "in the relative strength of the interest in things and their mechanisms (stronger in men) and the interest in persons and their feelings (stronger in women)" (p.32). As indicated by these statements, men and women inherently develop significantly different interests. As previously mentioned, these interests lead to gender-based differences in future field selections and, consequently, in their associated careers.

Considering the research of Lippa (2001) which is based on an analysis of masculinity and femininity, it is suggested that the traits of masculinity and femininity are closely related to the professional interests related to the People-Things dimension.

Su, Rounds and Armstrong (2009) holds a similar position with their study investigating disparities in interests that exist between males and females, particularly focusing on the topic of "Men and things, women and people." The findings of this study demonstrate the major dissimilarity in interests that exist between both genders, particularly considering the way in which they relate to "people to things." Drawing from the findings, it is clear that there are significant differences in preferences between the sexes with regard to these attributes. Having an understanding of these disparities in "interests" between the sexes can have repercussions for many other aspects of society, such as schooling, career choices, and social relationships. Variations in individual preferences based on gender implementing the theory of Holland and (1996) and Prediger (1982) are illustrated by Su, Rounds and Armstrong (2009) as in the diagram.

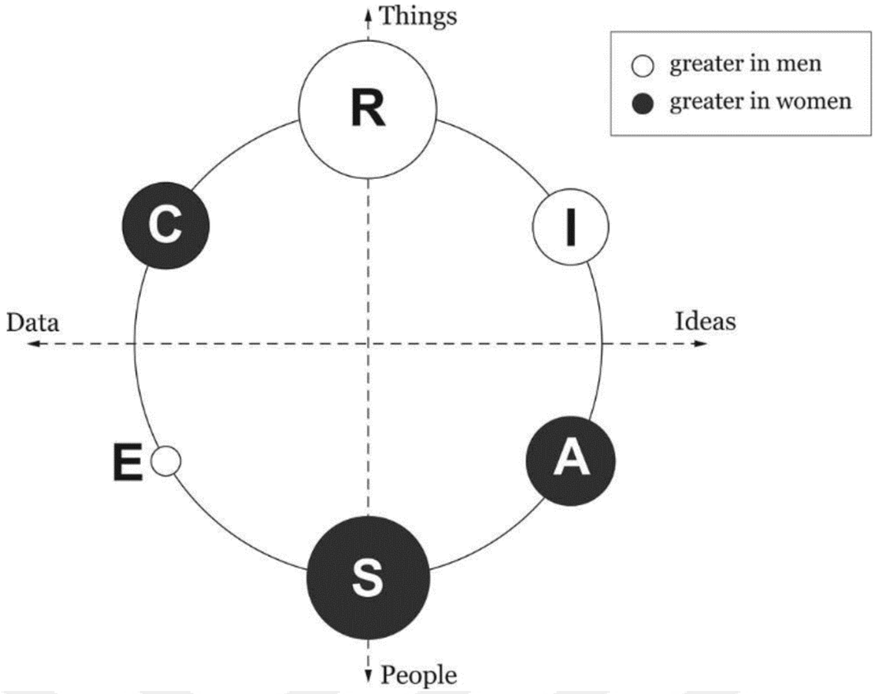

Figure 2. ‘Effect size of RIASEC interests. R = Realistic; I = Investigative; A = Artistic; S = Social, E = Enterprising C = Conventional’

(Su, Rounds, & Armstrong, 2009)

The results of the study showed that the disparities within groups were significantly greater than the disparities between groups in the STEM disciplines, for both genders. This highlights the importance of taking into account differences in vocational preferences. The current study, however, uncovered significant disparities between males and females in their vocational preferences. The most significant disparity between men and women was observed in relation to the “Things-People dimension”, where males tended to be drawn towards occupations that are focused on things, while women tended to be drawn towards careers that are focused on people. Men typically exhibit a higher inclination towards “Realistic and Investigative interests” and indicate a greater preference in the STEM professions. In contrast, women tend to have a greater tendency towards “Artistic, Social, and Conventional interests” and demonstrate lower interest in the STEM fields (Su, Rounds, & Armstrong, 2009).

In the light of foregoing findings, the concept of occupational aspirations will be examined through feminist lenses because as it’s avowedly elucidated in many studies (Apostal & Bilden, 1991; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Davey & Stoppard, 1993; Seller, Satcher, & Comas, 1999; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000, as cited in Rojewski, 2005) that gender is one of the most superior notion in students’ major choices which will result in probable occupational choices in the future which will be discussed later in the following chapters of this study.

School and Reproduction of Gender Roles

The role of the schools is emphasized in transmitting and reinforcing gender norms and roles, as highlighted by Bhog and Ghose (2024) who also emphasize that schools are significant agents in shaping knowledge, values, and gender perspectives, contributing to the socialization process. Nurjanah (2024) further supports this notion by underlining that schools are pivotal in molding gender roles and socializing individuals into specific gender norms. This process can lead to the internalization of societal expectations, as discussed by Bowles and Gintis (1976) and Althusser (1971), where working-class boys are taught obedience, discipline, and submission to hierarchy, traits often associated with femininity. Consequently, boys may face challenges in reconciling these learned behaviors with traditional masculine expectations, as they navigate differing social norms and gendered attributes within the educational system. This underscores the intricate relationship between schools and the reproduction of gender roles, highlighting the need for a critical examination of educational practices to promote gender equality and challenge stereotypical gender norms.

Bourdieu (1977) posits that bourgeois school culture elicits a response from individuals, particularly in terms of femininity, leading to resistance through the adoption of behaviors like the use of “coarse” language and attire to maintain class identity and safeguard masculinity from being undermined by the perceived “effeminate” nature of bourgeois culture. This resistance, as argued by Bourdieu, is more pronounced among working-class boys who are taught traits associated with femininity such as obedience and passivity, creating a conflict with traditional masculine ideals. As Bowles and Gintis (1976) also highlight schools are structured in a way to teach obedience, discipline and docility which working class boys are highly resist. According to Bourdieu girls from the same social class are submissive because of their feminine identity which is formed by their families. In a related argument Arnot (1982) states:

> The resistance of girls only leads them to accept even more voluntarily their futures as dependent and subordinate to men, and as semi- or unskilled workers with low pay and insecure working conditions, and often in dead-end jobs. (Arnot, 1982)

This dynamic underscores the intricate interplay between social class, gender norms, and educational experiences. In a similar vein, Bhog and Ghose (2024) highlight the crucial influence of schools in shaping gender perspectives and reinforcing societal expectations, further emphasizing the influence of educational institutions in perpetuating gender roles. The negotiation of school life and values by working-class girls, as suggested by Bourdieu, is influenced by the feminine attributes instilled within their familial contexts, emphasizing the complex ways in which schools serve as transmitters of gender reproduction, impacting individuals' identities and behaviors within educational settings.

The statement by Clarricoates (1980) highlights the pervasive influence of patriarchy in society, where women are consistently positioned in relation to men, particularly fathers and husbands, leading to their oppression. This oppression is rooted in the hierarchical structure of society, maintained through marriage, family structures, and the sexual division of labor, all of which central to women's subjugation. Clarricoates further suggests that schools, by symbolically separating the sexes, play a role in legitimizing and perpetuating this oppression, effectively endorsing the gender inequalities present in society by stating:

> It is patriarchy in the male hierarchical ordering of society, preserved through marriage and the family via the sexual division of labor that is at the core of women's oppression; and it is schools, through their different symbolic separation of the sexes, that give their oppression the seal of approval (Clarricoates, 1980, p. 40)

This perspective aligns with Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction and cultural capital, which posits that school systems transmit and reward the culture of the dominant class, thereby reinforcing existing power dynamics and gender norms within society (Dumais, 2002).

The education experience of women despite their potential is built upon the internalization of "learning to lose" because as it is emphasized by Brewster (1980) achievement is often equated with masculinity, positioning women as expected underachievers who are supposed to defer rather than excel. As the role of school is also recapitulated by Arnot (1982) 'sex role ideology' is a pervasive belief system that is both a result of and a contributing factor to gender inequality within society, particularly within educational settings. As each new generation of students transitions into roles as parents, teachers, employers, and other societal positions, they carry forward the assumptions embedded in this sex role ideology. This perpetuates a cycle where learned attitudes of one generation constrain and influence the next, creating a continuous loop of gendered expectations and behaviors. This concept of ‘reproduction’ in the context of sex role ideology underscores how societal beliefs and norms are transmitted across generations, shaping individuals’ perceptions and interactions within society.

To recapitulate one obvious method of sustaining male dominance is through education, where it is easiest to convey specific gender roles, relationships, and distinctions while maintaining an appearance of objectivity. In our society, the dynamics of politics and economy among genders are perpetuated by the organization of educational institutions. However, schools also play a crucial role in reproducing class cultures and their organizing principles. The codes of gender can be linked to an examination of class codes in schools (Arnot, 1982).

According to Arnot (1982) to make sense of the different experiences of boys and girls, we should focus on how the relationship between home and work is shaped by schools and how they prepare each gender for these roles. The concept of public and private, family and work and gender roles are viewed differently by boys and girls. Boys are trained to emphasize the distinction between these areas and envision their futures in terms of paid work, with little to no focus on fatherhood by schools. Boys learn to uphold strong classifications between work and non-work, and masculinity and non-masculinity, avoiding subjects deemed “feminine,” “domestic,” or emotional. Their sense of masculinity relies on maintaining these separations, as their power is based on this hierarchy. Conversely, girls are taught to merge family and work, extending domestic skills to the workplace, and using their jobs to support their domestic roles rather than themselves. This approach maintains a division of work and family that is accepted as natural for men, despite being different for women. Powell and Clarke (1976) highlight that both genders’ possible activities are framed around the oppositions between work and non-work, management and labor, and work and leisure, but for women, the family and non-family distinction is the most prominent.

Consequently, it is crucial to comprehend the school’s function in order to elucidate gendered choices, as the cultural influences that contribute to gender segregation are remarkably enduring. This is primarily due to various structural advancements within educational and occupational institutions that perpetuate these influences (Barone, 2011).

Gender Stereotypes

The preservation of cultural hegemony remains an ongoing battle that requires constant effort and success. From this perspective, women, whether consciously or unconsciously, give their “consent” to their subordination in the face of male dominance. They are strongly pushed to willingly select their subordinate position and to acquire their exploitation as something inherent and normal. The formation of gender disparities plays an important role in this preservation and reproduction of gender, serving as a location for the management of gender (Arnot, 1982). The formation and preservation of gender disparities are under the control of bourgeois class as they set standards for female education. The patriarchal pattern in schools is fueled by bourgeois family emphasizing the role of women as “mother and dependent wife” (Davin, 1979).

Another view on women in education from human capital theorists is that women’s education is either considered as “consumption or an unprofitable investment” due to the possible future duties related to family (Woodhall, 1973, p.9). As Arnot (1982) also states “the returns in terms of cost-benefit analysis on women’s education would therefore be low and hardly worth the effort”. The perspective fails to consider multifaced benefits of empowering women through education by narrowing down the women’s education to a simple cost-benefit analysis.

In the same vein, the construction of gender disparities through a hierarchical system based on social class has its origins in the past, as evidenced by the works of Davin (1979) and Hall (1980). The bourgeois family structure characterized male as the “breadwinner” and female as the “dependent wife” was developed and imposed through educational institutions. The social construction demonstrates the concept as two distinct spheres which distinguishes the worlds of men and women, placing men as the representatives of public and women as private. This ideological division which is a production of bourgeois hegemony also attributes work and family different meanings. Therefore, the concept of work is predominantly associated with masculinity, despite the fact that many women work within it. Conversely, the concept of family is predominantly associated with femininity, even if men also contribute to constructing a home alongside women (Arnot, 1982). In a related argument Powell and Clarke (1976) argue that this division not only creates the invisibility in labor for women with the identification of women exclusively “private” sphere of the family but also disguise the presence of men in family.

The study conducted by DiDonato and Strough (2013) among US college students confirms that students exhibit a preference for gender-stereotypical occupations while considering their own career choices. Women's preferences for gender-typed occupations, but not men's, were considered to be an undeniable predictor of their choices about their academic major and intended career. Both males and females expressed that men should focus solely on traditionally masculine professions, while women should engage in both masculine and feminine professions.

Gender-typed attitudes regarding employment have been documented through descriptive study. Gender-specific attitudes towards employment can be observed in children and adolescents (Alpert & Breen, 1989; Archer & Lloyd, 1985; Kriedberg et al., 1978; Li, 1999; Looft, 1971; Siegel, 1973, as cited in Didonato & Strough, 2013). Gender may exert effect on these attitudes. Several studies indicate that gender-specific attitudes towards career choices persist throughout college (Judd & Oswald, 1997; Liben & Bigler, 2002; Wolfe & Betz, 1981, as cited in Didonato & Strough, 2013). Nevertheless, the number of these investigations is somewhat limited.

Liben and Bigler (2002) conducted a study which demonstrates that college students, regardless of gender, tend to show a higher inclination towards endorsing traditional jobs, not only for themselves but also for others. For instance, males exhibited a higher tendency than females to express a preference for pursuing a career in mechanics and to hold the belief that this area should be exclusively occupied by men. Women had a higher inclination than males to express a preference for working as dental assistants and to hold the belief that only women should be employed in this sector. Oswald (2008) conducted a study where he compiled a list of vocations that are commonly associated with feminine and masculine stereotypes. This allowed him to assess the career preferences of female college students. He suggested that women who conform to feminine stereotypes are more likely to prefer feminine jobs, especially when these stereotypes are emphasized. Wolfe and Betz (1981) indicated that the support for gender stereotypes strongly influenced the career choices of female undergraduate students.

The study conducted by Wolfe and Betz (1981) investigated the correlation between the level of adherence to traditional professional choices and sex-role orientation, and the degree of compatibility between personality and work environment in female college students. The occupational preferences of the subjects were categorized as conventional, moderately traditional, or nontraditional, depending on the proportion of women in the occupation. Subjects were classified into one of four sex-role categories based on their scores on the Bern Sex Role Inventory. The results revealed a robust correlation between the alignment of choices with one's personality type and the level of traditionality in the chosen professional sector. Specifically, women who pursued atypical career paths were considerably more inclined to make choices that matched their personality type compared to women who opted for conventional career fields. Additionally, no significant correlation was found between sex-role orientation and either congruence or traditionality. However, women who exhibited masculine-typed traits were more inclined to choose nontraditional careers that aligned with their personal interests. Besides, most women who displayed feminine-typed, androgynous, and undifferentiated traits expressed a preference for traditional career fields.

According to Didonato (2013) it is possible that the perspectives of college students regarding the career paths that are suitable for women and men can indicate the degree to which cultural and values influence decisions regarding the jobs that are most suitable for the individual. According to the gender image theories proposed by Martin and Halverson (1981) individuals receive information that is communicated to them by classifying it according to their gender. These classifications are then utilized to construct schemas on proper attitude. Liben and Bigler (2002) discovered that college women, differ from men, expressing a more flexible attitude (that is, more gender-neutral) regarding the jobs that they considered to be appropriate for others. However, their behavior regarding the occupations that they considered to be suitable for themselves conformed to gender stereotypes. Both women and men found job applicants more desirable when the candidate was male applying for a traditionally male-dominated role or female applying for a typically female-dominated role, according to the findings of a study that explored the gender-typed behavior that college students have about other people (Judd & Oswald 1997).

For Charles and Bradley (2002), gender norms maintain sex segregation in education, and they are particularly hard to change, which is the reason why sex segregation in education is in such a strong position. These forms of preconceptions can be easily reconciled with the "equal but different" perspective, which is widely accepted in society (Charles & Grusky, 2004). From this perspective, legal gender parity does not rule out the possibility of 'natural' variations in the abilities and preferences that are exhibited by males and girls. In other words, as long as individuals do not consider gender stereotypes as discriminatory, they will remain challenging to contrast.

Occupational Gender Segregation

The majority of women are employed in occupations that have a primarily female workforce, while the majority of men are employed in occupations that have a predominantly male workforce. The practice of assigning tasks based on gender may be traced back to the oldest human societies and continues to exist in the contemporary workforce. However, although gender-based divisions of labor persist, the specific forms and extent of these divides differ. In cultures characterized by hunting and gathering, men engaged in the pursuit of large game, while women focused on the collection of wild herbs. However, it is worth noting that both genders participated in the killing of small animals. Within modern market economies, there exists a division between male and female in terms of their employment, as well as their sector and workplace (Preston, 1999).

The process of industrialization in the early 1800s created opportunities for a wider range of jobs in the workforce. As new work roles emerged, they quickly became largely gender-segregated, with some jobs being predominantly filled by women and others predominantly filled by men. Men had all supervisory positions and were responsible for picking and carding tasks, while women were exclusively employed in machine-tending roles (Dublin, 1979). Over time, women started to join certain occupations that were previously dominated by men, to the point that these occupations became predominantly female.

By the close of the 21st century, the occupation of both clerical labor and teaching was predominantly held by women (Davies, 1982; Preston 1993). Other studies clearly indicate that women are frequently observed to surpass males in the teaching profession, whereas men predominate over women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields (Charles, 1992; Meece, 2006; Reskin, 1993; Ross & Gatta, 1999) which put them in a disadvantaged position in terms of lower income and fewer opportunities.

In the late 1800s, economists began measuring the level of segregation and found that there was a decline in occupational gender segregation throughout this time. Bertaux (1991) observed a significant decrease in the dissimilarity index between 1870 and 1900. She draws the conclusion that the decline in gender segregation during that period was primarily due to changes in the gender composition of specific jobs, rather than changes in the labor. The proportion of occupations predominantly held by either women or men shifted, and she suggests that this decrease in segregation was caused by industrialization.

She argues that the rise of industrialization led to a decrease in women's employment in domestic service. However, this was accompanied by the expansion of the business-oriented service sector, which created more opportunities for women, particularly in industries such as cigar-making and footwear production. In general, industrial activity continued to be highly segregated.

Goldin (1990) takes a similar stance by suggesting that the majority of employees in manufacturing were working in highly gender-segregated fields and job options. Female workers were mostly employed in jobs that were exclusive to the textile industries, whereas male operatives constituted the overwhelming majority of workers in other industrial fields.

In the 1960s, there was an increase in men entering female-dominated professions and a more modest increase in women entering male-dominated roles such as sales and clerical work. This led to a decrease in segregation, although it was not the main factor (Beller, 1982). The largest decrease in segregation occurred in the 1970s, when women entering male occupations played a significant role in reducing segregation (Blau, Simpson, & Anderson, 1998). In the 1980s, desegregation proceeded at a slower pace. This was primarily due to women choosing traditionally male-dominated careers, rather than men choosing traditionally female-dominated careers. During the 1970s and 1980s, women had a higher propensity to pursue white-collar and service professions as opposed to blue-collar jobs. Despite accounting for their sluggish growth, the inclusion of women in blue-collar jobs displayed minimal growth in comparison to other occupational fields (Blau, Simpson, & Anderson, 1998).

Furthermore, if a significant number of women persist in seeking careers in fields which are increasingly dominated by women, the phenomenon of occupational segregation may experience an upward trend. Furthermore, women who want to pursue a career in a field that is largely male-dominated may not necessarily attain the same level of prestige as their male colleagues. In contrast, studies examining women's entry into these occupations indicate that they often secure the least attractive positions (Cohn, 1985; Epstein, 1983; Preston, 1995). Vertical segregation frequently arises within a profession when the number of women entering it increases (Reskin & Roos, 1990).

Multiple theorists, including various feminist researchers, have proposed that a contributing factor to the gender disparity in the United States is the prevailing perceptions and views regarding gender-specific roles in workforce (Eagly et al., 2000; Eccles, 1987; Gottfredson, 1981; Lapan et al., 1996; Lent et al., 1994; Liben & Bigler, 2002; Merssersmith et al., 2008, as cited in Didonato & Strough, 2013). In a related argument Ceci and Williams (2011) claims the opinions or preferences of women may exert a more significant influence on employment choices in the United States than external obstacles.

According to Didonato and Strough (2013), while attitudes are considered significant in several theories, solely a limited number of research explore the relationship between attitudes and the choices people make about their future careers. Furthermore, a significant portion of the existing study examining gender-biased attitudes about jobs mostly focuses on women.

Gender Segregation in Higher Education

Traditional gender stereotypes are generally in line with the decisions that women and men make about their college majors (Bradley, 2000; Charles & Bradley, 2002; Dickson, 2010; England & Li, 2006; Wilson & Boldizar, 1990). Women and men frequently choose to major in separate areas of study. Historically, certain majors have been believed to be more traditionally aligned with male gender roles., such as mathematics; however, other majors have traditionally been viewed as more appropriate for women, such as education (Forgasz, 2004). According to a recent study, on the other hand, reveals that gender stereotypes about which majors are appropriate for women and men no longer reflect the current enrollment percentages of women and men in these fields of study. A more evenly distribution has seen in many majors, despite the fact that there are still programs with a significant gender divide, where women are the majority. While the fields such as nursing, literature, and language are still dominated by women, engineering, physics and computer science are also gender-segregated programs that are dominated by men (Bradley, 2000; Charles & Bradley, 2002; Dickson, 2010; England & Li, 2006; Wilson & Boldizar, 1990).

Research has shown that occupation choices often align with gender stereotypes, as evidenced by studies conducted by Oswald (2008) and Wolfe and Betz (1981). This trend persists even in disciplines such as STEM majors, where more women are now earning college degrees, as highlighted by Glass and Minnotte (2010). A recent study discovered that there has been no significant increase or change since 2000 in the number of women and men choosing jobs typically linked with the opposite gender. (Hegewisch et al., 2010). According to Weisgram (2011), as of 2010, 80% of occupations were predominantly occupied by either males or females. Therefore, it seems that although there have been shifts in the proportions of women and men pursuing different areas of study, the job market remains divided along gender lines and largely mirrors traditional gender roles and expectations.

The study conducted by Didonato and Strough (2013) expands the scope by showing that women exhibited a preference for stereotypically feminine professions, such as social worker, over stereotypically male occupations, such as engineer. Men, on the other hand, expressed a belief that traditionally masculine professions were more suitable for them personally, as opposed to feminine occupations. Students do, in fact, have gendered beliefs regarding the kinds of jobs that other women and men ought to be working in. There were gender-typed attitudes held by both sexes regarding the occupations that males are supposed to hold; but, regarding the roles that women should occupy, their opinions were more flexible. The findings concerning the adaptability of attitudes as they pertain to jobs were characterized by a significant impact size. To be more specific, both women and men shared the opinion that women who held occupations that were traditionally associated with men were more suitable than men who held occupations that were traditionally associated with women. This discovery aligns with the prevailing cultural norms, indicating that it has become more socially acceptable for girls and women to engage in activities traditionally associated with masculinity, such as being a "tomboy" or playing sports; however, for boys to engage in activities typically associated with femininity is not as socially acceptable as it is for girls, such as 'playing with dolls' or 'being a homemaker' (Schope & Eliason, 2004).

Studies indicate that, in general, the conventional position of men is more inflexible and offers less adaptability compared to the conventional role of women (O'Brien, 2000). Although the research by Didonato and Strough (2013) shows that although both women and men view it as appropriate for women to pursue traditionally male-dominated jobs, women's personal beliefs about suitable careers still tend to align with gender stereotypes. It is possible that this discovery could have significant ramifications for comprehending the underrepresentation of women in STEM professions and other industries predominantly occupied by men, such as construction. The scarcity of women in STEM fields may worsen the adverse consequences of the gender disparity in careers for women, as STEM careers often provide better income and greater social status (Bernstein & Russo, 2008; Brown & Leaper, 2010). Therefore, our research indicates that women's adherence to traditional gender norms regarding professional preferences may hinder their selection of occupations that provide higher financial and career advantages compared to the occupations that are generally associated with women. Upon analyzing the relationship between women's attitudes toward gender-typed occupations and their academic majors, it was found that these attitudes reliably predicted their choice of major when the majors were categorized according to traditional gender stereotypes. However, this prediction did not hold true when majors were categorized based on the actual segregation in gender (i.e., the proportion of women and men participated in each major). Women with a lower inclination towards masculine professions tend to choose a major that aligns with traditional gender roles. According to Oswald (2008) and Wolfe and Betz (1981), female students tend to choose occupations that align with traditional gender roles. Their study expands upon the existing body of research by proposing that the choice of undergraduate women in academic majors may also conform to traditional gender roles and expectations. This discovery has significance as the choice of career for college graduates frequently relies on their academic major and the degree they have obtained.

Sikora and Pokropek (2012) conducted another study on the gender-based division in science career aspirations among adolescents from 50 different countries also is consistent with the findings of the research conducted by Haladyna and Shaughnessy (1982) and Weinburgh (1995), indicating girls seem to have a greater inclination towards biology or the study of "living systems". In contrast, boys exhibit a stronger interest in mathematics, physics, or computing. Students' opinions and career intentions are influenced by their job choices and gendered attitudes, which in turn reflect their preferences.

Furthermore, the research conducted on the segmentation of the labor market (Charles, 2005) reveals that occupational structures in postindustrial societies have a tendency to encourage the prevalence of women in specific occupations. This is due, for example, to the growth of sales and care employment. As a result of the links that exist between academic and vocational destination, it is concluded that these forces contribute to the perpetuation of segregation in higher education (Charles & Bradley, 2002).

Another force contributing to the segregation in higher education is social stereotypes (Barone, 2011) opposing female masculine characteristics such as rigor and detached reasoning are contrasted with feminine characteristics such as empathy and sensitivity. In light of this, it seems that women are more likely to be drawn to fields of study that, in their opinion, place a greater emphasis on a deeper emotional connection and empathy towards their chosen field of study. On the other hand, the fields characterized by deductive reasoning and a high level of formalization are more likely to be selected by men. The cultural conflict between disciplines that place a greater emphasis on the importance of psychological emotion and empathy in comprehension and academic disciplines that are more guided by rule-based reasoning is, in a nutshell, the primary criterion that distinguishes humanistic fields from scientific subjects.

A further significant contribution is the analysis presented below, which will offer a straightforward and intuitive comprehension of the primary patterns of gender segregation. Barone (2011) demonstrates an estimate that attempts to describe the impact that gender has on the selection of academic majors. The baseline categories for gender and academic major are economics and males, respectively. Males are utilized as a reference category. Because of this, it is possible to investigate the impact that being a female has on the likelihood of graduating from one of the remaining thirteen subject areas. As the strength of this influence increases for a particular field, the field in question becomes more feminized.

According to Barone (2011) if a field is strongly gendered, then this result is significantly stronger, and the field will be situated in the uppermost portion of each graph. The feminized fields are shown at the top of the graph, he masculinized fields, on the other hand, are situated at the bottom of each graph. It is important to note that if a field has a value that is near to zero, it is considered to have a gender composition that is relatively balanced. As an illustration, the areas of law, architecture, and agriculture are examples of fields that are considered to be gender-balanced. Across the board, it is clear that women are disproportionately represented in disciplines related to humanities, while the proportion of men working in scientific majors is significantly higher.

It is important to note, however, that the level of feminization that exists within the two main fields varies substantially. Almost everywhere, for instance, there is a clear hierarchy between the fields of teacher education, the humanities, and the social sciences in terms of the percentage of women who are employed in those fields. Whereas the role of social work in connection with teacher education and the humanities is somewhat variable from country to country, social work is strongly feminine in every country. Similar to this, we can observe a hierarchy in the scientific field, which can be seen in the following order: 'medical, biology, mathematics, physics, computing, and engineering'. The majority of the disproportionate representation of men. is found in the latter subjects, whereas the former fields are not (Barone, 2011).

The graph below offers a vivid depiction of gender segregation in academic disciplines across eight European nations, emphasizing the influence of female gender on the selection of study topics. The findings align with previous studies, indicating a pronounced feminization in professions like education and social work, but engineering, computing, and physics continue to be primarily male-dominated. This pattern highlights the enduring influence of conventional gender standards on academic and career paths. Barone's (2011) claim that cultural preconceptions and societal expectations profoundly impact educational decisions is distinctly illustrated in the graph. Furthermore, the research indicates that even in gender-equitable cultures, ingrained biases persist in directing women and men into separate academic trajectories, hence sustaining occupational segregation. This underscores the necessity for structural reforms to eradicate gendered stereotypes in educational and professional spheres. Across the various countries of Europe, women are either underrepresented or overrepresented in fields that are roughly equivalent to one another. Because of this, significant similarities have been found among countries in terms of the qualitative pattern of gender segregation (Barone, 2011:168).

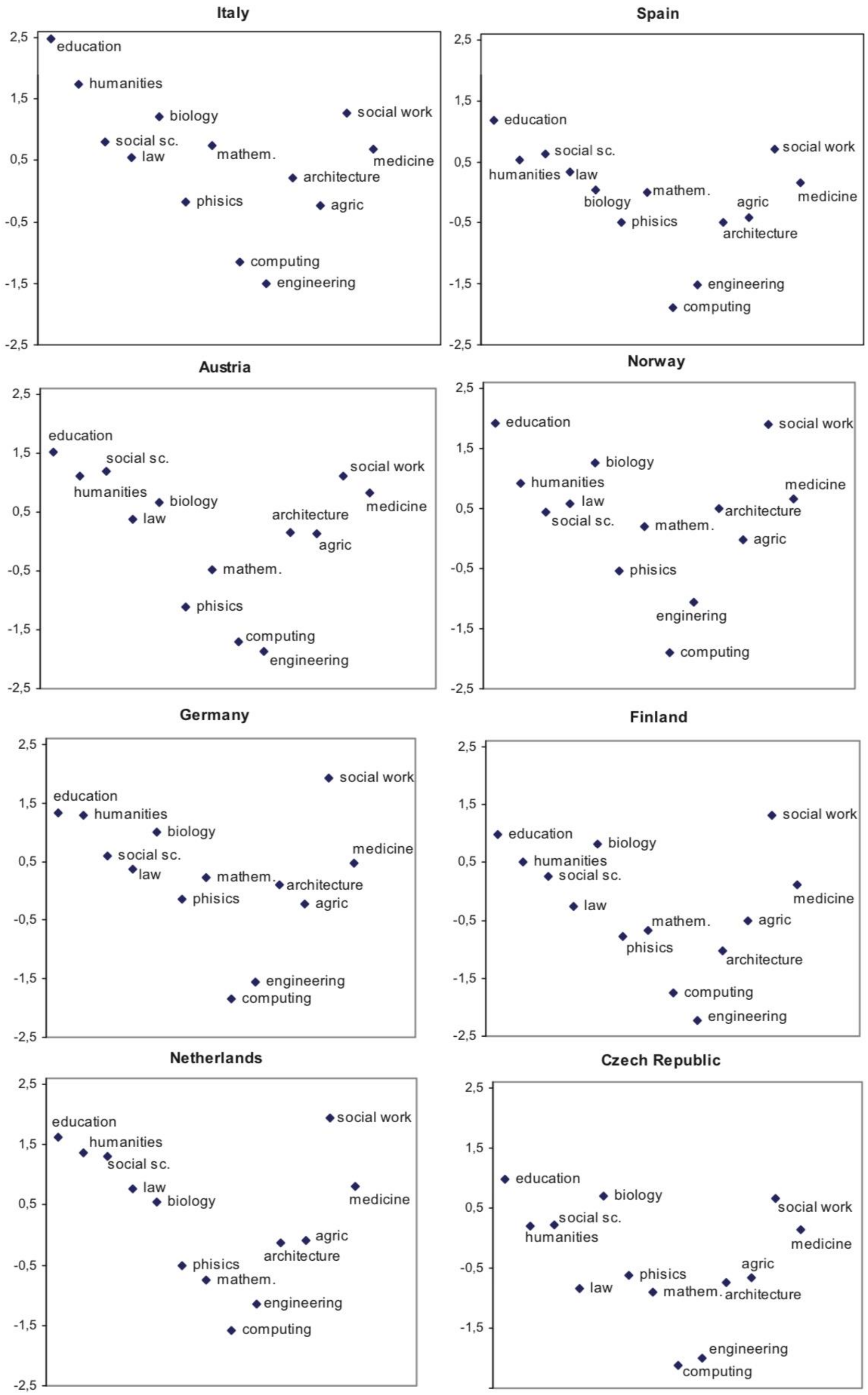

Figure 3. “Gender segregation in eight European countries: the effect of being female on field of study choice.”

(Reflex, 2005; as cited in Barone, 2011:167)

Gender Disparities in Higher Education in Turkey

It is clear that women have not gained equal representation with men at all levels of society. One of the key causes of this gap is the barriers that women encounter in obtaining an education. Throughout history, issues concerning women's education have constantly been among the most serious concerns in practically every country. It might be claimed that women's conditions in modern Turkey have not improved considerably. Women's educational disadvantage compared to men must also be considered in terms of its impact on promoting a healthy society and maintaining a balanced and harmonious family structure. Despite continued attempts, gender disparities persist in Turkey, particularly in the field of education. These discrepancies are clearly visible at all levels of the educational system (Aktürk, 2006). Societal gender roles are also found to have a significant impact on the occupations that women pick or pursue (Özaydınlık, 2014).

As previously mentioned, the selection of academic disciplines is often regarded as a precursor to gender-based disparities in professional life. Considering this, the differentiation in higher education preferences based on gender among students in Turkey becomes particularly noteworthy. The educational status of women in Turkey can be analyzed through certain statistics. According to 2024 data, a noticeable gender-based polarization is observed among students in specific academic fields in Turkey.

Whereas the literature often encompasses studies and reports on the gender distribution of students engaged in or graduating from STEM disciplines globally, research in the Turkish context is notably scarce. A significant study, Özkurt and Yakin (2020), analyzed the gender-based comparison of students in STEM programs at Turkish universities from 2013 to 2019. This study sought to examine enrollment trends and elucidate variations in student populations across time. Their findings indicated that throughout all years and educational tiers - associate, bachelor's, and postgraduate - the enrollment of male students in engineering and technology-related STEM fields consistently surpassed that of female students during the designated timeframe, thereby enhancing the existing body of literature.

A notable contribution to this topic is the research conducted by Korkut-Owen and Mutlu (2016), which employed ÖSYM statistics from 1999 to 2013. The study indicated that female students predominantly favored natural sciences, mathematics, and statistics, whilst male students exhibited a greater inclination towards computer science and engineering fields. A study by Korkut-Owen, Kelecioğlu, and Owen (2014), utilizing

ÖSYM records from 2002 to 2012, indicated a general rise in the percentage of female students across all disciplines over the analyzed timeframe. Nonetheless, despite this rise, the proportion of female students in certain STEM disciplines, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, remained markedly low. These findings further emphasize the enduring gender differences in higher education program preferences in Turkey.

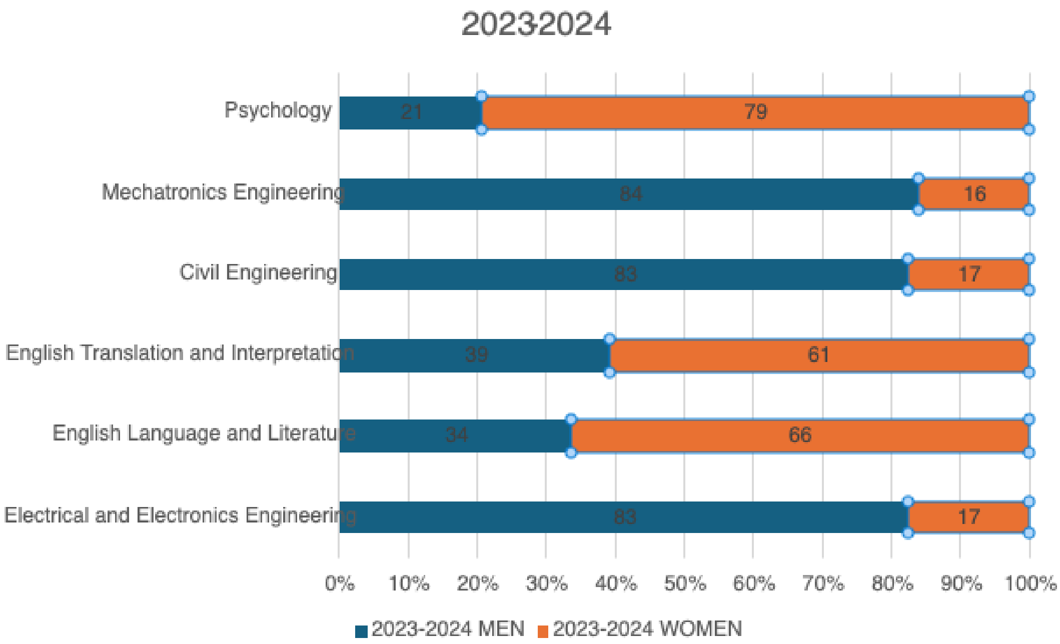

Figure 4. Gender distribution of students in specific higher education programs in Turkey. (YÖK, 2024)

The purpose of this graph is to depict the gender distribution of students who are enrolled in particular higher education programs in Turkey in the year 2024. The graph was built using data from YÖK (2024). Psychology, Mechatronics Engineering, Civil Engineering, English Translation and Interpretation, English Language and Literature, and Electrical and Electronics Engineering are some of the programs that are being investigated. The graph demonstrates that 79% of students enrolled in the Psychology program, 61% of students enrolled in the English Translation and Interpretation program, and 66% of students enrolled in the English Language and Literature program are female. When looking at programs that are primarily comprised of male students, it is interesting to note that only 16 % of students enrolled in the Mechatronics Engineering program, 17% of students enrolled in the Civil Engineering program, and 17 % of students enrolled in the Electrical and Electronic engineering program are female. This considerable gender gap is consistent with the existing body of literature, which emphasizes the ongoing gendered division that exists in domains related to information technology and the humanities (Cheryan, S., Ziegler, S. A., Montoya, A. K., & Jiang, L. (2017). It is possible to ascribe the larger participation of women in programs such as Psychology and English Language and Literature to cultural and sociological reasons. At the same time, women have traditionally been more encouraged to pursue jobs in subjects connected to communication and caregiving. In the meanwhile, the underrepresentation of women in engineering and technology-related fields is indicative of persistent problems. These challenges include preconceptions, a dearth of role models, and cultural expectations that continue to influence career choices (Gilbreath, 2015). This pattern highlights the significance of tackling gender imbalance in educational pathways, with emphasis placed on the need to make efforts to promote greater diversity in sectors that are traditionally dominated by men.

Humanistic – Scientific Divide

Children are encouraged in their everyday routines to communicate their ideas, aspirations, and objectives in accordance with the existing gender classifications, which also includes having sex-stereotyped preferences for schooling. These preferences will ultimately influence their decision on which college major to pursue (Marini, 1996). Students are required to learn how to control their conduct based on the prevailing societal ideas about femininity and masculinity as they engage in the continuous process of “doing gender.” Therefore, women tend to engage in more frequent reading during their free time, which allows them to develop a greater appreciation for subjects and activities that need empathetic and aesthetic abilities, as opposed to attributes traditionally associated with masculinity, such as formal reasoning and strict logic (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). The presence of cultural forces is a widely recognized factor that explains the division between males and females in education, with regards to humanistic and scientific subjects.

Nevertheless, a significant portion of the literature on gender issues highlights the fact that gender stereotypes place great importance on the caring role of women and their presumed innate inclination towards activities involving nurturing (Charles, 2005; Reskin, 1993). Studies frequently document these data of nursing or social work degree programs in order to comprehend the prevalence of women, that train students for occupations involving usual care (Bradley, 2000; Jacobs, 1995). Considering the widespread existence of gender classifications, it is reasonable to anticipate that female students would have a tendency to favor professions that are closely associated with the traditional home role, either in terms of function or symbolism (Charles & Bradley, 2002, p. 102). Furthermore, it is plausible to expect that women may also show a preference for areas such as psychology or medicine, which frequently offer work opportunities that are closely associated with traditional nurturing responsibilities. This is due to the unique focus of these fields on the well-being and personal growth of clients. To be more specific, the preceding argument suggests that certain scientific disciplines may not be equally attractive to girls: Individuals who have stronger affiliations, either directly or indirectly, with occupations that closely match traditional gender roles are more likely to attract stronger interest in educational paths (Barone, 2011).

Workplace cultures play a significant role in influencing career choices. For instance, engineering is commonly seen as a more suitable and natural career choice for men compared to women (Faulkner, 2007). Moreover, the growth of the service sector leads to an increased need for employment that requires emotional labor, effective communication, and other abilities that are typically associated with women (Charles & Grusky, 2004). The development of pink-collar occupational ghettos, where both skilled and unskilled care employment is of great importance. Structural advancements perpetuate cultural biases toward gender by establishing specialized areas of work and education that are predominantly associated with women, commonly referred to as ‘care niches’.

Barone’s research (2011) on gender segregation in higher education across eight countries in Europe reveals that earlier studies have primarily concentrated on the division between scientific and humanistic fields. However, Barone’s research emphasizes that this division only explains half of the correlation between college major and gender. The extent of gender disparity varies significantly among scientific disciplines as well as within humanities disciplines. The findings can be better understood by acknowledging the presence of a second gender barrier, known as the care-technical split, which is similarly significant. His study demonstrates how these dimensions collectively explain almost 90 percent of gender segregation in the countries being analyzed.

To further clarify, according to the study of Barone gender disparities in higher education are structured based on a division between humanistic and scientific fields.

Undoubtedly, the sociological discourse has primarily centered around the issue of women being inadequately represented in scientific domains. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain if this division fully encompasses the entirety of gender segregation in higher education. The statistical analysis in this study suggest that this disparity explains less than 50% of the correlation between gender and choice of college major. Furthermore, these studies indicate that the extent of gender disparity varies significantly among scientific disciplines as well as within humanities disciplines. He suggests that these findings can be comprehended by acknowledging the presence of another, equally significant gender disparity in higher education, which might be referred to as the "care-technical divide."

Care – Technical Divide

Families may be convinced that programs in the area of humanistic or teacher-training are more suitable for their girls. As a result, daughters may be encouraged to concentrate on these topic areas by their parents (Entwisle, Alexander, & Steffel, 1994). Consequently, students who choose to pursue these specific paths tend to cultivate an appreciation for humanities, pedagogy, or psychology, which is subsequently able to influence their future academic choices. Furthermore, an additional justification exists to anticipate that women tend to pursue humanistic and care-oriented disciplines, whereas men would be more inclined towards scientific and technological fields (Barone, 2011).

An additional thing to consider is that, based on this theoretical framework, Barone (2011) anticipates discovering not only a difference between the scientific and humanistic approaches in higher education, but also a divide between the care and technological approaches. 'Natural' distinctions between males and females constitute the basis for both social prejudices, which are established by society. On the other hand, it is necessary to differentiate between them since it is not valid for all fields of humanistic or scientific exhibit the same technical orientation. For example, although disciplines for teaching are not less humanistic than disciplines for philosophy, the former are more focused on providing care; even though biology is just as scientific as computing, there are several reasons to anticipate that the latter is considered more masculinized due to technical orientation it has; medicine as a scientific discipline frequently creates jobs that are focused on providing care. As a point of interest, it is important to note that the scientific–humanistic difference is rooted in the substance of degree programs' curricula, whereas the care–technical division is more closely associated with the future job applications of the individuals involved. Therefore, the assumption that is being made here is that the choice of academic major is determined by both decision factors as can be seen in the table presented by Barone (2011:165).

	Humanistic–Scientific Divide		Care–Technical Divide	
Field of Study	Humanistic	Scientific	Care	Technical
Teacher training education	1	0	2	0
Humanities	1	0	1	0
Social sciences	1	0	1	0
Economics	0	0	0	0
Law	0	0	0	0
Biology	0	1	1	0
Physics	0	1	0	0
Mathematics	0	1	1	0
Computing	0	1	0	1
Engineering	0	1	0	1
Architecture	0	0	0	1
Agriculture/veterinary	0	1	0	0
Social work	0	0	2	0
Medicine	0	1	2	0

Figure 5. 'Matrices Defining the Topological Model for the Association between Gender and Field of Study'

(Barone, 2011:165)

As can be inferred from the illustration presented by Barone, evaluating the variations in career choices determined solely by gender will not suffice to fully comprehend the trajectory of these differences as he also states:

> Two separate matrices will be used … one identifying scientific fields and the other humanistic fields—but a few fields are not assigned to either of the two. In substantive terms, this means that for some college majors, the humanistic–scientific divide does not give compelling reasons to expect a prevalence of either male or female students. However, this does not necessarily imply that in these cases the topological model predicts a balanced gender composition: Much depends on the second gender divide, to which we now turn (Barone, 2011).

The second gender divide mentioned by Barone (2011) refers to the care–technical divide as the third and fourth matrices. As discussed earlier, the implications of gendered socialization practices for educational and vocational inclinations, the nurturing role that women were expected to play was highly emphasized, while males were expected to have expertise in manual and technical work. Technical disciplines include engineering, computers, and architecture, all of which place a special focus on applied technical competence as their constitutive element. This is in the context of the classification that is being utilized.

According to Barone (2011) care fields refer to academic disciplines that equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge for employment in care-related professions. A significant body of sociological research has thoroughly analyzed these vocations and identified their fundamental components. England's (2005) comprehensive analysis of the literature reveals that care jobs possess two distinct characteristics: direct engagement with customers face-to-face and job responsibilities specifically focused on promoting their well-being and self-development. For instance, the initial criterion distinguishes a psychologist from a manager, whereas the second criterion distinguishes a social worker from a front-office assistant. Therefore, based on this description, vocations such as doctor, nurse, psychologist, social worker, and teacher can all be classified as care employment. Unsurprisingly, all of them exhibit a relatively high or growing proportion of female employees. Furthermore, despite their differences in various aspects, all these vocations can be categorized as having functional or symbolic proximity to conventional female household responsibilities (Barone, 2011).

To better understand the division, Barone (2011) classified the topology model as three distinctive types using the matrices as 'care fields', 'fields open to care jobs' and 'fields unrelated to care jobs'. According to his classification, teacher training education and social work are categorized as 'care fields'; biology, mathematics, humanities and social sciences are in the category of 'fields open to care jobs'; economics and engineering are classified as 'fields unrelated to care jobs'. When it comes to the middle group, there are majors that, despite not being specifically meant to train students for care professions, do provide access to care jobs rather regularly. These majors typically provide access to care jobs through teaching (for example, biology) or welfare state work (for example, psychology). The operationalization of the theoretical argument on the second-best employment possibilities in the choosing of college major is the purpose of this specification. For further clarification, he elucidates the topology model stating:

> The overall logic of this topological model should be clear: Female students develop a preference for humanistic disciplines and for fields of study that display direct or indirect connections with care jobs, whereas male students are more inclined toward scientific subjects and tend to avoid care-oriented fields in favor of technical fields. According to this topological model, the gender compositions

> of different fields result from these two principles: The highest share of women should be found in faculties that combine a humanistic curriculum with an explicit care pro- file (e.g., education); and humanistic faculties characterized by more indirect connections with care jobs, mostly related to teaching as a second-best job option (e.g., philosophy), should be less feminized and even less so in the case of scientific faculties that are only potentially related to teaching (e.g., mathematics), whereas scientific fields with a strong technical curriculum should be a male monopoly (Barone, 2011).

As the extent of gender imbalance varies significantly within both types of subjects, the dichotomy between humanistic and scientific disciplines does not fully explain gender segregation. This outcome can be regarded as proof of the significance of the division between humanistic and scientific approaches. Nevertheless, there remains a significant portion of the correlation between gender and the subject of study that is unexplained by this division. This indicates that it is impossible to simplify gender segregation to the divide between humanistic and scientific perspectives. Therefore, there is unequivocal evidence supporting the concept that gender segregation in higher education is structured around two divisions, rather than simply one (Barone, 2011:169).

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Qualitative research method is applied in this study as I seek to understand "meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions" (Lune & Berg, 2017: 12) of foundation university students' gender-based occupational aspirations studying different fields of study in an "interpretive naturalistic approach" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 3).

In my research, I used qualitative type of inquiry because I tried to understand how students make sense of their occupational aspirations which mostly predict their stance in labor. I tried to grasp information on whether gender has a role in this selection or if their interpretations differ according to their gender or their social experiences. In this respect, qualitative research method is more convenient for my study because it is important "to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 3). Phenomenological design will be used "among the five different qualitative designs: narrative research, case studies, grounded theory, phenomenology, and participatory action research" (Creswell & Hanson, 2007).

Research Design

In my dissertation, phenomenological research design was used to have an insight on how students experience their educational attainment processes, conceptualize occupational aspirations in their choice of major.

In 1970s, the word "the phenomenography" was invented and used for "analysis and understanding of experiences" by Fenence Marton. Marton describes this form of inquiry as "content-oriented and interpretative description of the qualitatively different ways in which people perceive and understand their reality", (Marton, 1981: 177-178).

In this dissertation, with the help of phenomenological research design, I aimed to capture various means in which students "experience, interpret, understand, apprehend, perceive or conceptualize various aspects of reality" (Marton, 1981: 177) in their choice of majors and how they conceptualize their occupational aspirations. To achieve their perception of realities semi-structured interview with male and female students from different fields of study was conducted to understand how the students choose to study in that particular program, their perceptions of their departments, the way they experience the school life in accordance with their gender, social factors in their study of major preferences, the conceptualization of their occupational aspirations, and future expectations and how they make meaning in their future careers. I sought to understand what occupational aspirations male and female students from different departments "have in common as they experience" higher education which will determine their future social stance. The use of phenomenological approach is fundamental as it is "well suited to studying affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015: 28).

Participants

The sampling in phenomenology is that the phenomenon participants have experienced is investigated (Corben, 1999; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999, as cited in Watson, McKenna, Cowman, & Keady, 2008, p. 238). For this reason, purposeful sampling method was used in my research because the agents who assumably experienced the phenomenon were selected and interviewed using semi-structured research questions to understand deeply the way they construct the meaning. In my qualitative inquiry research design, purposeful sampling method was applied because participants who are predicted to have experienced the phenomenon were selected deliberately (Cresswell & Clark, 2011: 173). In this sampling, students were expected to meet some criteria for the sake of the study. First, they should be studying at a foundation university enrolled in a program in either Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences or Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. I was able to reach participants from mentioned faculties. I intended to interview students from 3 different fields in both mentioned faculties. The use of purposeful sampling was crucial for the study because the sampling was expected to mirror the overall phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015: 97).

The study revealed how students of higher education in foundation universities shape their occupational aspirations considering the gendered differences. 19 students were interviewed as demonstrated in Figure 3. The group consisted of foundation university students residing in Ankara. The criteria were;

1. Being a student at a foundation university
2. Studying in one of the undergraduate programs offered by the specified faculties:
    - Faculty of 'Engineering and Natural Sciences'

- Faculty of ‘Humanities and Social Sciences’

Table 1

Data of the Participants

Participants	Gender	Grade	Scholarship	Field of Study	Faculty
Engineering and Natural Sciences					
P1ENGM	Men	2	% 100	Electrical-Electronics Engineering	
P2ENGM	Men	2	% 40	Electrical-Electronics Engineering	
P3ENGM	Men	4	% 50	Software Engineering	
P4ENGM	Men	3	% 0	Civil Engineering	
P5ENGF	Women	1	% 40	Electrical-Electronics Engineering	
P6ENGF	Women	3	% 65	Mechatronics Engineering	
P7MATF	Women	3	% 75	Mathematics	
P8MATF	Women	1	% 100	Mathematics	
P9MATF	Women	2	% 50	Mathematics	
Humanities and Social Sciences					
P10TRAM	Men	1	% 100	English Translation & Interpretation	
P11TRAM	Men	1	% 15	English Translation &Interpretation	
P12TRAF	Women	1	% 15	English Translation & Interpretation	
P13TRAF	Women	1	% 0	English Translation & Interpretation	
P14ELLM	Men	3	% 100	English Language and Literature	
P15ELLM	Men	3	% 75	English Language and Literature	
P16ELLF	Women	3	% 75	English Language and Literature	
P17ELLF	Women	3	% 50	English Language and Literature	
P18PSYM	Men	2	% 0	Psychology	
P19PSYF	Women	1	% 100	Psychology	

Data Collection Methods

In this thesis, semi-constructed forms was used as a data collection method, so direct utterances from participants about their experiences were be recorded (Patton, 2015, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 105). “The semi-structured interview is in the middle, between structured and unstructured. In this type of interview either all of the questions are more flexibly worded, or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions” (Merriam & Trisdell, 2015: 110). As the interview questions in semi structured forms are more flexible in terms of wording, sequence, and the type of the questions (Merriam & Trisdell, 2015: 136), its application is highly adequate for a better understanding of the experience.

Data Analysis

Each interview was recorded and transcribed right after the meeting. During the transcription process, key words and possible overlapping ideas will be noted to have a depth insight about the process during the analysis process. Collected data were analyzed through thematic approach. Thematic analysis is a widely used method in qualitative research for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. This approach is flexible and insightful, enabling researchers to capture the complexities of participants' experiences and perspectives. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is particularly valuable because it is not tied to any specific theoretical framework, making it applicable across a wide range of research questions and contexts. This method also allows researchers to generate rich, detailed descriptions of the data while maintaining a clear focus on specific research aims (Nowell, 2017).

In this study, thematic analysis was employed to explore key themes emerging from interview data related to participants' career aspirations, the influence of education and family, gender dynamics, job market concerns, support systems, and work-life balance. The rationale for using thematic analysis stems from its ability to systematically identify and interpret the underlying themes that reflect participants' lived experiences, crucial for understanding how they navigate their professional and personal lives (Clarke & Braun, 2018). The data collection and analysis were completed all at once since "collecting qualitative data is a bit misleading because collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process in qualitative research" (Merriam & Trisdell, 2015: 195). The data analysis is basically the process of making sense of the collected data by categorization and explanation in detail (Flick, 2014: 5). As Merriam and Tisdell advice the data analysis process was done simultaneously with the data collection process to get feedback from each interview and make necessary improvements for the next ones so that I could construct the arguments as consistent as possible. Another advice of the researchers that was certainly followed during the data analyses process was to remember the purpose of the study, the frame of the problem and the starting point before reading the transcriptions (Merriam & Trisdell, 2015: 196). To start analyzing the data through thematic approach, the repetitive notions and potentially remarkable information sets were focused. "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and presents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 82). Coding process was followed by the attribution of the relevant themes which were identified and named immediately to construct the meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 87). The steps taken for the thematic analysis were as follows:

1. **Familiarization with the Data:** The analysis began with an in-depth reading of the interview transcripts to gain a thorough understanding of the content. Initial notes were taken, and significant phrases or ideas relevant to the research questions were highlighted (Braun & Clarke, 2013).
2. **Generating Initial Codes:** The next step involved systematically coding the data to identify meaningful units of text that captured specific aspects of the participants' experiences. Each code represented a significant feature of the data related to the research objectives. This coding process helped reduce the data into manageable chunks while retaining the essence of participants' narratives (Saldaña, 2021).
3. **Searching for Themes:** The codes were then grouped into broader themes based on their similarities and patterns of co-occurrence. This involved collating codes into potential themes and gathering all relevant data extracts to support each theme. The focus was on identifying themes that were both frequent and meaningful in explaining participants' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
4. **Reviewing and Refining Themes:** The identified themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately captured the data. This process included checking for coherence within themes, ensuring each theme was distinct, and considering the overall narrative the themes represented. Themes that were too broad or lacked sufficient supporting data were either redefined or merged with other themes (King & Brooks, 2018).
5. **Defining and Naming Themes:** Once the themes were finalized, they were defined and named to clearly communicate their essence. This involved writing detailed descriptions of each theme and selecting representative quotes from the data to illustrate them. This step ensured that the themes were both analytically sound and accessible to the reader (Braun & Clarke, 2019).
6. **Producing the Report:** Finally, the analysis was compiled into a coherent report that presented the themes in a structured and logical manner. The report included a detailed discussion of each theme, supported by direct quotes from the data, and explored the relationships between themes. The findings were

situated within the broader literature, highlighting how the identified themes contributed to existing knowledge in the field (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Thematic analysis, as employed in this study, provided a robust framework for uncovering the intricate ways in which participants' backgrounds, experiences, and perceptions shape their professional and personal trajectories. The insights gained from this analysis offer valuable implications for educators, policymakers, and practitioners working to support individuals in navigating their careers and lives.

Ethical Considerations

The present thesis was carried out with the approval of the Ethics Committee of Ankara University. A semi-structured interview form was completed and submitted to the Ethics Committee at Ankara University for the purpose of assessing any violations of ethics in the study.

Participation in this study was contingent upon the explicit agreement of the individual. Participants were informed of their entitlement to decline participation in the study at any point or to withdraw subsequent to its initiation. Given that the findings of this survey serve scientific objectives, all the remarks submitted by the participants were used exclusively within the parameters of the research. No fees were collected or solicited from the participants for the interview conducted. Within this particular framework, participants willingly and voluntarily agreed to the use of their personal information for scientific investigations, without any kind of pressure or coercion. Their interpretations have been applied under the scenario that the confidentiality regulations are achieved within the parameters of the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section of the study, the results derived from the conducted interviews is presented and discussed. Six main themes have emerged from these interviews. These themes are identified as "Career Aspirations, Influence of Education & Family, Gender Dynamics, Job Market Concerns, Support Systems, and Work-Life Balance," and their respective categories provide detailed insights into the professional choice inspirations of students attending foundation universities. The frequency of these themes was analyzed to understand their relative importance and prevalence in the context of participants' experiences.

Table 2

Themes and Categories

Themes and Categories	Career Aspirations
	Field of Study Interest
	Long-term Career Goals
	Career Exploration
	Influence of Education & Family
	Family Influence
	Educational Pathways
	Gender Dynamics
	Gender Stereotypes
	Gender Expectations
	Equality in Opportunities
	Job Market Concerns and Financial Expectations
	Financial Concerns
	Job Market Competitiveness
	Financial Expectations
	Support Systems
	Peer Support
	Family Support
	Mentorship
	Work-Life Balance
	Work-life Balance Concerns
	Job Satisfaction vs. Workload

The results highlight the aspects of participants' lives are most central to their narratives. By quantifying how often each theme was mentioned, the analysis provides insight into the dominant concerns and priorities that shape participants' professional and personal trajectories. This quantitative perspective complements the qualitative variety of thematic analysis, offering an understanding of the data. The following section explain each theme briefly.

- **Career Aspirations:** Aspirations of the participants reflects the goals, ambitions, and professional paths participants are considering or pursuing. The results demonstrate that it is strongly influenced by other factors such as education, family, and job market conditions. It also highlights that students tend to pursue fields in which they see themselves as proficient and interested.
- **Influence of Education & Family:** The impact of participants' educational experiences and family backgrounds on their career choices and values are captured in the theme. It also serves as a foundational theme that shapes many aspects of participants' lives.
- **Gender Dynamics:** This theme represents how gender-related expectations and biases influence participants' experiences, particularly in their professional lives. It is an important theme, especially in contexts where gender plays a significant role in career progression and work-life balance. The theme explores how students perceive gender in relation to their career and field choices.
- **Job Market Concerns:** This theme encompasses participants' concerns about job availability, stability, and working conditions in the current market. It often influences career decisions and aspirations, reflecting the practical considerations participants must navigate. The theme demonstrates that students prefer fields where they believe they will be academically successful and talented. The theme shows that future career plans related to their chosen fields play a major role in this decision. The certainty of career plans and the specificity of their professional goals significantly influence their decision-making process during the selection period.
- **Support Systems:** This theme highlights the importance of mentorship, peer networks, and institutional support in helping participants achieve their goals. It is a critical theme that intersects with many others, providing the necessary resources and guidance for success. According to the students' statements, it is observed that they tend to make choices based on their current city of residence to avoid burdening themselves and their families.
- **Work-Life Balance:** This theme addresses the challenge of balancing professional responsibilities with personal life. It is closely linked with support systems, gender dynamics, and career aspirations, reflecting participants' efforts to maintain a healthy equilibrium between work and life.

Table 3

Themes, Categories and Codes of the Study

Themes	Codes	Participants
Career Aspirations		
	Field of Study Interest	P1ENGM, P3ENGM, P4ENGM, P6ENGF, P7MATM, P9MATF, P15ELLM, P16ELLF, P19PSYF
	Long-term Career Goals	P1ENGM, P7MATM, P9MATF, P14ELLM, P16ELLF, P18PSYM, P19PSYF
	Career Exploration	P1RNGM, P2ENGM, P4ENGM, P5ENGF, P5ENGF, P6ENGF, P7MATM, P8MATF, P10TRAM, P12, TRAF, P15 ELLM
Influence of Education and Family		
	Family Influence	P1ENGM, P4ENGM, P5ENGF, P6ENGF, P9MATF, P13TRAF, P17ELLF, P15ELLM
	Educational Pathways	P8MATF, P10TRAM, P12TRAF, P14ELLM, P17ELLF, P19PSYF
Gender Dynamics		
	Gender Stereotypes	P1ENGM, P2ENGM, P4ENGM, P5ENGF, P6ENGF, P7MATM, P8MATF, P9MATF, P13TRAF, P14ELLM, P16ELLF, P17ELLF, P18PSYM, P19PSYF
	Gender Expectations	P1ENGM, P7MATM, P15ELLM, P17ELLF
	Equality in Opportunities	P2ENGM, P3ENGM, P7MATM, P8MATF, P9MATF, P11TRAM, P15 ELLM, P17ELLF,
Job Market Concerns and Financial Expectations		
	Financial Concerns	P1ENGM, P3 ENGM, P7MATM, P9MATF, P12TRAF, P15ELLM, P16ELLF, P18PSYM
	Job Market Competitiveness	P1ENGM, P4ENGM, P6ENGF, P15ELLM, P17ELLF, P19PSYF, P5ENGF
	Financial Expectations	P1ENGM, P3ENGM, P11TRAM, P15ELLM, P9MATF
Support Systems		
	Peer Support	P4ENGM, P5ENGF, P7MATM, P8MATF, P9MATF, P19PSYF
	Family Support	P1ENGM, P6ENGF, P9MATF, P10TRAM, P12TRAF, P13TRAF, P15ELLM
	Mentorship	P1ENGM, P8MATF, P9MATF, P15ELLM, P17ELLF, P18PSYM
Work-Life Balance		
	Work-Life Balance Concerns	P8MATF, P11TRAM, P15ELLM, P16ELLF, P19PSYF
	Job Satisfaction vs. Workload	P1ENGM, P3ENGM, P11TRAM, P12TRAF, P15ELLM

Career Aspirations and Preferences

Participants' long-term career goals and specific career interests were captured via semi-constructed interviews. The data conducted from interviews reflect the diverse pathways that participants are considering and the factors influencing their decisions. Career aspirations are shaped by personal passions, experiences in their field of study, and perceived opportunities in the job market. The data also highlight how some participants are still exploring different career options as they evaluate various professional trajectories. The data conducted from participants were revealed in three sections as Field of Study Interest, Long Term Career Goals and Career Exploration in this section.

Field of Study Interest

Interests often drive academic and career decisions, reflecting a passion for specific subjects or disciplines. As previously stated, career goals encompass not only personal interests but also perceptions of the social environment, work-focused behaviors, and self-concept (Rojewski, 2005: 131). In order to clarify any potential confusion over the term ‘interest’, Rojewski explains that ambitions refer to individual aims in ideal circumstances, whereas interests indicate an individual’s emotional inclination towards specific career choices. (2005: 132) According to Gottfredson & Becker, children may limit their career aspirations based on the jobs typically associated with people who are similar to them in terms of social class, race, and gender. This happens even before they consider their own abilities, interests, and values in relation to other career options (1981: 133).

Based on this information collected from the interviews, it is observed that students develop interests related to their fields of study while also engaging in various sports, arts, and music activities. When comparing students’ hobbies to their dream professions, it is evident that many have not been able to pursue these professions for various reasons, yet their inclination towards these fields remains clear. Participant P3ENGM, for example, integrates his dream of being a basketball player into his life as a hobby. Additionally, he is considering continuing his side job as a basketball coach in the future.

> I love what I’m doing, so I thought, why not study it at university? I started to develop myself in this field (P1ENGM).
> More in [My goal has always been] software and computer science rather than engineering. I thought starting with mathematics would be better... (P7MATM).

> I chose this department because it's more logical and not just about memorization. It's about understanding the brain and human behavior. I love talking to people and understanding their thoughts (P19PSYF).

The statement of P1ENGM, a male student from the Engineering Faculty, indicates that his choice to pursue this field is driven by a deep passion for his work, supporting Rojewski's (2005) claim that personal interests and self-concept play a crucial role in shaping academic and career aspirations. This indicates that his career objectives are influenced by an intrinsic motivation to succeed in a field he truly enjoys, highlighting the predictive significance of interests in career choices (Ainley, Jones, & Navaratham, 1990, as cited in Perera & McIlveen, 2018).

The information from P7MATM, a male student in the Mathematics Faculty, indicates a strategic decision to start with mathematics prior to shifting to software and computer science, reflecting an alignment of his interests with his long-term career goals. This is consistent with the findings of Su and Rounds (2015), which highlight the significance of investigative interests in STEM fields as a foundation for educational and career choices.

The statement of P19PSYF, a female student in the Psychology Faculty, indicates her interest in understanding human behavior and engaging in meaningful conversations, demonstrating a strong inclination toward social and people-oriented interests. Su and Rounds (2015) indicate that individual and environmental factors, including academic majors and professional culture, significantly influence the fulfillment of interests, thereby supporting her career choice in psychology as a logical extension of her personal inclinations.

Considering the process of choosing a career and deciding on a related educational path interests are seen as the most significant notion for individuals (Webb, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2002). Individuals are naturally drawn to academic or professional settings that align with their personal interests, highlighting the direct impact of these interests on their educational and career choices (Holland, 1997) as participant P15ELLM also states:

"…I have a great interest in English, which is why I chose the English Language and Literature department…" (P15ELLM)

It is also argued that individual interests play a pivotal role in shaping participation within occupational groups. In professional contexts, individuals tend to prefer work environments that resonate with their personal interests. The uneven gender distribution across different sectors of the labor market can largely be attributed to inherent differences in core interests between men and women (Su & Rounds, 2015).

> Physics was also a personal interest of mine (P7MATM).
> I wanted to be in a field where I could produce and repair things. Mechatronics seemed like a good fit (P6ENGF).
> I love learning languages. I try to learn Spanish and other languages at home. My math skills aren't great, so I thought English would suit me better. I also felt it aligned with my future goals (P16ELLF).

The data revealed by the interviews with the students also shows that interests are noteworthy predictors of academic and occupational selection (Ainley, Jones, & Navaratham, 1990, as cited in Perera & McIlveen, 2018).

> I thought about what I was interested in. I said I could work with machines. I looked at my desires. After graduation, what kind of work would I enjoy? Electronics was more suitable for me... (P6ENGF).
> No, I think it's [suitable for men or women, especially those related to your field - Mathematics] independent of gender and more about personal interests (P8MATF).

Research indicates that investigative interests serve as the strongest predictor for pursuing education or careers in STEM fields. Consequently, Investigative interests are less commonly observed in female adolescents compared to their male peers. The connection between STEM fields and Investigative interests is strongly shaped by three specific interest types—Enterprising, Social, and Artistic—particularly for women. (Su and Rounds, 2015). However, participant P6ENGF as a woman pronounced her interests in taking parts off and putting parts back of an electronic tool which can indicate investigative patterns at an early age.

> Since childhood, my biggest hobby with my siblings was playing with radios and TVs. My mom encouraged us to take things apart and put them back together with screwdrivers that wouldn't hurt us. I had a truck, a doll I could sit in it, a science kit, and a tea set. As I grew up, I leaned towards repairing and fixing things. My hobbies developed in that direction. (P6ENGF).

P6ENGF, a female student in the Engineering faculty, demonstrated an interest in mechatronics, consistent with the research of Ainley, Jones, and Navaratham (1990), which highlights that personal interests significantly influence academic and career choices. Her interest in a traditionally male-dominated STEM field seems to contradict the observations of Su and Rounds (2015), which indicate that investigative interests, such as engagement with mechanical systems, are less common among female students. Su and Rounds (2015) propose that the gendered difference in interests may contribute to the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields. P6ENGF's statement contests this trend, emphasizing that certain female students demonstrate investigative interests, potentially guiding them toward STEM careers.

Both an individual and an environment can be characterized in relation to social or people-oriented interests. Individuals can be defined by their inclination toward such activities, while environments can be described by their potential to fulfill these interests. Environments may be conceptualized at various levels, including academic majors, professional fields, organizational culture and atmosphere, or interactions within work teams and with supervisors (Su & Rounds, 2015).

"I wanted to work with tangible things. I didn't want to sit in front of a computer all day. So, civil engineering seemed like a good fit." (P4ENGM).

The statement of P4ENGM, a male student in the Engineering faculty, indicates that his career choice is consistent with the assertion of Su and Rounds (2015), which posits that individuals are attracted to fields that correspond with their personal interests. P4ENGM indicated a preference for engaging with tangible objects rather than dedicating extensive hours to computer work, a sentiment frequently observed in disciplines such as civil engineering. This underscores the importance of individual preferences, such as the inclination towards practical work, in influencing academic and career decisions. Furthermore, his selection illustrates the wider trend in STEM fields, where investigative and enterprising interests frequently direct male students towards engineering disciplines, as indicated by Su and Rounds (2015).

Long-term Career Goals

The data derived from semi-constructed interviews with the participants represents participants' clear and defined career objectives, often related to their field of study. These goals are typically long-term and reflect a strong commitment to a particular professional path.

> I just want to be a psychologist… First, I want to gain experience in a hospital. Then, I hope to work in a private clinic (P19PSYF).

> Like most people, I am closer to clinical psychology. But... The reason is that it interests me more. Social psychology also interests me, but I have no certainty. I am just getting used to the department… Yes, definitely. I hear a lot about clinical psychology and neuroscience. I also hear a lot about child psychology. But 80% want clinical psychology (P18PSYM).

From the data derived via interviews, it can be concluded that participants from STEM majors have more defined and structured career goals while participants from non-STEM majors have uncertainties about the professional steps they are about to take.

> For the electrical field, there are opportunities in power management and energy sectors. For electronics, there are opportunities in the defense industry and technology sectors. (P1ENGM)
> …eventually work in software development from home (P7MATM).

…teaching as the second-best option

Graduates from various disciplines, particularly within the Humanities and Social Sciences, often lack well-defined career paths compared to fields like engineering or computing, where the transition from education to employment is more structured. In these cases, teaching often emerges as a secondary career choice. Given the alignment of teaching with traditionally feminine nurturing roles, female students may view teaching as a more acceptable compromise. Conversely, male students often associate teaching with lower status and femininity, which may lead them to pursue what they perceive as more prestigious or masculine professions (Barone, 2011; Teichler, 2007). This tendency can also be observed in participant responses. For instance, P16ELLF stated:

"It's more of a backup plan to work as a teacher in the state, but I'm also considering becoming an academician because I like being at the university. However, becoming an academician is tough, so I'm not entirely sure." (P16ELLF).

Similarly, P14ELLM highlighted a multifaceted approach to their career path, but the overall plan is teaching again expressing:

> My current goal is to get a teaching certificate, do a master's degree, and become a research assistant simultaneously. I want to take the most suitable path forward. (P14ELLM).
> … And since I had given up on psychology at the last moment, I thought maybe I could become a teacher. At least it could be a way for me to communicate with children at any primary, secondary, high school, or university level. So, I chose it a bit based on my ranking being better than expected (P12TRAF).

> I thought I could do anything as long as it was in English. I wanted to be a teacher, and since I chose the easier path by studying language, I thought teaching would be easier… (P14ELLM).

While participant P14ELLM contradicts Teichler's (2007) idea by considering teaching as an option despite being a male student in the Humanities and Social Sciences, participant P15ELLM aligns with the notion that teaching is neither a prestigious nor a masculine career. I also noted P15ELLM's reaction when asked if teaching was an option for him. He appeared shocked, and his response was immediate: "*Teaching? No way*!"

> From my perspective, at least according to my desires and wishes, I would very much like to work in the private sector, in something like copywriting, that is, outside of teaching, in the private sector. It could be in the media field. And as I said, there is nothing else; I might turn to something else. (P15ELLM)
> It's still not clear, but generally, like everyone else, I might give private lessons. Maybe I'll stay at the university. I'm also thinking of studying software. One of my friends genuinely loves math, but most others chose it because it was their only option. Their future plans usually involve teaching, tutoring, or possibly becoming an academic (P8MATF).

Unlike students from Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines who may view teaching as a more acceptable or secondary career path (as suggested by Barone, 2011), this participant seems uncertain and open to various possibilities.

As the data collected from participants also suggest individuals with pronounced realistic interests are inclined toward educational paths in technical and mechanical fields, such as engineering, and are significantly less likely to pursue studies in the humanities or social sciences. (Päßler & Hell, 2012, as cited in Perera & McIlveen, 2018).

> I want to work in a big company, preferably in a software-related field. I envision myself in a professional setting, possibly in a managerial role (P9MATF).
> For the electrical field, there are opportunities in power management and energy sectors. For electronics, there are opportunities in the defense industry and technology sectors (P1ENGM).

As we can conclude from the data gathered by the interview with participant P9MATF and P1ENGM who both chose to study in a STEM major, there is a clear vision for the work environment which is highly realistic in terms of the setting of the work environment. Another example of realistic goals from the same participant can be seen clearly as the participant even projectors the sector he wants to pursue in:

Career Exploration

As we can conclude from the data collected through interviews, participants who are still exploring their career options, consider multiple paths before settling on a specific goal. It reflects the uncertainty and openness to different possibilities that some participants experience. An examination of the assertions made by students who have varied degrees of prior knowledge about their respective subjects is carried out in this part.

> I wanted to be an architect. I admired architects a lot, especially as I got closer to the fourth grade and started thinking about professions more seriously. Even now, I still consider architecture and might do something related to it… I love the English Language and Literature department, but I might want to study another university or a different field to pursue different careers. I'm considering interior design or decoration. I want to graduate from this department and also study something else to explore different opportunities. (P15ELLM)

Participant P15ELLM's statement about considering a career in architecture, yet feeling drawn to English Language and Literature, reflects the exploration of multiple career paths and the search for alignment with personal interests. This resonates with the research by Rosenzweig (2024), which highlights that college students often experience psychological stress due to the vast number of career possibilities, particularly in STEM fields. The student's contemplation of different careers mirrors the challenges discussed by Fouad et al. (2006), who noted that career decision-making in college can be a stressful process due to uncertainty about the future. Furthermore, P15ELLM's desire to explore different opportunities by possibly pursuing interior design or decoration aligns with Rosenzweig's (2024) observation that even minor career shifts can affect motivation and satisfaction, suggesting that the student may be exploring these alternatives to solidify their career path.

"In case I didn't like this field. They are related, and it's easier to transition. There are many opportunities..." (P1ENGM)

Participant P1ENGM's remark about choosing a field that provides flexibility and transition possibilities highlights the importance of career adaptability. This aligns with the findings of Chen (2024), which emphasize the need for STEM students to feel confident in their ability to transition between related fields, like engineering disciplines. The idea that a shift within the STEM field does not need to be drastic is relevant here, as P1ENGM views the choice as a flexible foundation for future opportunities. Moreover, Rosenzweig (2024) support the notion that students who feel uncertain about their initial choice may contemplate other fields as a backup, which is reflected in P1ENGM's backup plan mentality regarding career flexibility. P1ENGM, a student of electrical and electronics engineering, presented a well-defined strategy for his future career and a comprehensive understanding of the field he desired to work in. He highlighted his interest in the embedded systems and defense industries. On the other hand, students who were enrolling in English Translation and Interpretation reported uneasiness and a lack of prior knowledge regarding their respective disciplines.

"I chose mathematics so that I can transfer to computer engineering later. I chose mathematics for that reason." (P8MATF)

Participant P8MATF's statement about choosing mathematics as a pathway to computer engineering speaks to the importance of early career planning and the role of self-concept in shaping academic choices. Chen et al. (2024) discusses how students with a stronger STEM self-concept are more likely to aspire to and persist in STEM careers, suggesting that P8MATF's decision might stem from a belief in the compatibility of mathematics with future career aspirations in computer engineering. This also underscores the idea that students are drawn to fields where they perceive themselves as capable, a key concept in both career exploration and STEM engagement.

"I considered computer engineering as a backup plan." (P2ENGM)

"The job scope is very wide. I think this is a good advantage… It caters to different branches." (P5ENGF).

Participant P5ENGF's observation about the wide job scope and the versatility of her engineering degree is also consistent with the literature. Rosenzweig (2024) found that students who perceive a broad range of career opportunities in their chosen field tend to feel more motivated and satisfied with their decision. This student's view of engineering as offering diverse career paths reflects the advantages of pursuing a flexible STEM career, as described by both Rosenzweig (2024) and Chen (2024), who noted that an expanded view of career opportunities can contribute positively to a student's career aspirations.

Similarly, P7MATM, a mathematics student, describes her field comprehensively and sees it as a steppingstone to various job opportunities, highlighting this as an advantage provided by her field:

“When people hear mathematics, they often think of teaching or banking. However, everything that engineers do today begins with mathematics, so there is a broad future if it is evaluated correctly.” (P7MATM).

Students such as P5ENGF and P7MATM underline the significance of the extensive breadth of their subjects and the vast variety of work prospects that are available to them as key advantages. The P5ENGF course recognizes the numerous job opportunities available in the field of electrical and electronics engineering, whereas the P7MATM course places an emphasis on the fundamental role that mathematics plays in a variety of professions. This highlights the adaptability and extensive future prospects of the students’ studies.

For another participant studying mechatronics engineering, the reason for choosing the field includes the dual career chance, as expressed in the following words:

“I am considering a double major. I don’t want my two years there to go to waste. Currently, I am very enthusiastic about the defense industry. My reason for entering the mechanical field might be related to that.” (P6ENGF).

P6ENGF’s consideration of pursuing a double major in mechatronics engineering and the military industry exemplifies a strategic approach to maximize career options and matching academic pursuits with employment aspirations. In addition, the topic of dual career paths is obvious in the fact that P6ENGF is considering pursuing a double major in them.

The data, taken as a whole, demonstrate that the educational choices that students make are influenced by a combination of job aspirations, the versatility of their professions, and the opportunity for parallel career pathways. This reveals that students take a comprehensive approach to their future professional lives. These comments demonstrate how students’ reflections on their career choices are influenced by a combination of personal interests, academic backgrounds, and the broader career environment, which resonates with the studies mentioned above. The academic literature provides a context for understanding how these students navigate their academic paths, reflecting both the psychological challenges and the opportunities for career exploration within and beyond STEM fields.

Influence of Education and Family

In this part the impact of participants' educational backgrounds and family influences on their academic and career choices are examined. The data highlight how family support, early educational experiences, and the influence of teachers shape participants' decisions. Also, it underscores the significant role that external factors, such as parental expectations and educational environments, play in guiding career paths. There is a significant amount of impact that comes from both parents and teachers on the profession choices that pupils make. This subject emphasizes the influence that educational experiences, parental expectations, and role modeling have on the interests and professional aspirations of pupils based on their educational experiences. Personal attainment is deeply shaped by how individuals interact with and are influenced by established social and structural norms, a core point of contention among various conceptual frameworks (Xu, 2017).

In this section the data derived from the participants are presented in two sections as Family Influence and Educational Pathways.

Family Influence

The role of family in influencing participants' educational and career choices is captured through the information gathered via interviews. Family members, particularly parents and siblings, often provide guidance and encouragement that shape participants' aspirations. Parental and teacher influence is observed as a significant factor affecting students' career choices. The socialization process (such as role modeling, parental expectations, and educational experiences) affects the levels of interest and the evolving patterns of interests in both boys and girls (Cook et al., 1996; Jacobs, Davis-Kean, Bleeker, Eccles, & Malanchuk, 2005; Betz & Schifano, 2000).

Specifically, the statements from P9MATF and P13TRAF highlight the significance of family in the socialization process that has an effect on career routes. These statements indicate how parental guidance can influence academic decisions. One of the factors that has a significant impact on P9MATF is her father's belief that teaching is an appropriate choice for women, particularly in the field of mathematics. In a similar vein, P13TRAF's academic decision is strongly influenced by her mother's encouragement to pursue language studies. This exemplifies the tremendous impact that family expectations have on the educational paths that children choose to pursue.

As evidenced by the statements of P9MATF, a mathematics student, it is clear that her father's influence extends not only to the profession of teaching but also to the specific subject she should teach.

> My father says it is a very suitable profession for a woman to be a teacher… he says it is a very comfortable profession. Moreover, he believes that mathematics, regardless of gender, is an ever-lasting field. My father encouraged me to study mathematics. (P9MATF)

Similarly, the statement of P13TRAF, a Translation and Interpretation student, indicates that her mother's guidance has significantly influenced her academic choices.

> My mother supported me. She always wanted me to study languages… She always says, 'I couldn't do it, my daughter, you do it (P13TRAF).
> My mom encouraged us to take things apart and put them back together with screwdrivers… (P6ENGF).
> I wanted to be a soldier… My mom said my dad had a fascination with uniforms, maybe it passed on from him. But I never saw that in my dad (P5ENGF).

According to Simpson (2001 as cited in Porter & Umbach, 2006), it has been found that social capital and cultural capital, which are mostly represented by the influence of parents, have a considerable impact on major choice.

"My father encouraged me to study mathematics. He [participant's father] sees mathematics as a field that will always be in demand, especially for teaching. He thinks it's a secure career path for women." (P9MATF).

The information indicates that parental influence significantly shapes students' career and academic choices. P9MATF, a female student in the Mathematics faculty, noted her father's perspective that mathematics represents a stable and continually challenging discipline, particularly in the context of teaching. This corresponds with the framework proposed by Eccles and Jacob (1986), which posits that parental gendered stereotypes influence children's self-perceptions, with mothers specifically guiding daughters toward careers deemed "appropriate" for women, such as teaching. This suggests that parental guidance may focus on long-term career stability, particularly for daughters, which aligns with societal expectations of secure professions for women.

> She [participant's mother] values independence and believes teaching is a reliable profession for women. It's a mindset stemming from how she was raised…It was partly my idea, but my mom also influenced me. She often suggests things she

> thinks I'm good at. She thought I was talented in this area and encouraged me to become a teacher, a profession she herself values highly (P17ELLF)

P17ELLF, a student in the English Language and Literature faculty, indicated that her mother's support for her teaching aspirations was shaped by the importance her mother attributes to the profession, highlighting its reliability for women. This aligns with the findings of Eccles and Jacob (1986) on the generational transfer of gendered attitudes concerning career choices, particularly directing women towards fields considered more suitable or "secure." She emphasizes the *power of* parental impact in the decision-making process. The participant recognizes their initiative in selecting the teaching profession while emphasizing the substantial influence of their mother's encouragement and values. The participant's career choice seems to be influenced by the mother's perception of the participant's talents and her esteem for the teaching profession.

Both P9MATF and P17ELLF highlight gender-specific expectations in their parents' encouragement which frames teaching as an "appropriate" career for women, reinforcing traditional norms about acceptable professions based on gender roles. Such perspectives align with previous findings where non-pecuniary payoffs, such as social approval and identity alignment, drive career decisions.

> Yes [family support in his choice] … No [any objections] (P15ELLM).
> My family, like most families in Turkey, wanted me to become a doctor due to job security. They added those options to my preference list, but they also said it was my decision since I would be the one studying. They supported my choice to study engineering. (P1ENGM)

This statement illustrates a negotiation between conventional parental expectations and the individual's personal agency. In Turkey, the cultural focus on professions such as medicine is largely due to their associated prestige and stability, reflecting parental aspirations for their children's financial and social security. The family's readiness to respect the participant's choice illustrates conditional autonomy in decision-making. Their efforts to direct the participant toward a culturally esteemed profession, coupled with support for an alternative choice (engineering), indicate a flexible parenting style that prioritizes the individual's long-term satisfaction over rigid adherence to parental aspirations.

The influence of parents, including their parenting style, motivational strategies, and level of involvement, has been shown to impact a wide range of outcomes. These include academic motivation, attitude, self-regulation, academic achievement, and study habits, such as the amount of time spent on studying (Carroll & Roche, 2004, as cited in Niu, 2016).

Additionally, parental beliefs were shown to have a greater impact on the decision to enroll in supplementary math courses compared to the children’s actual performance. Consequently, gendered stereotypes influence children’s perceptions of specific subjects and contribute to wider gender disparities in educational and career decisions (Eccles & Jacob, 1986).

Parental influence may result in women steering clear of high-paying, math-intensive fields, thereby perpetuating a cycle of economic disadvantage. Women who do not engage in these profitable sectors are more prone to occupy financially disadvantaged positions relative to men as mentioned earlier. This disparity frequently emerges in later stages of life, as women may experience financial dependence on their partners owing to their relatively lower income levels. This financial dependency reinforces traditional domestic roles as covered earlier, thereby perpetuating a systemic cycle of gender inequality. These patterns demonstrate the significant impact of familial attitudes on women’s educational and professional paths, highlighting the necessity of addressing these deep-rooted stereotypes to foster gender equity in education and other areas.

Educational Pathways

In this part how participants’ educational experiences and interactions with teachers have guided their academic and career choices is highlighted. Positive experiences in specific subjects often lead participants to pursue related careers.

“I never considered teaching because I didn’t want to spend another 20 years in a school environment. I chose translation because it offers more job opportunities and doesn’t involve as much memorization as literature.” (P10TRAM).

P10TRAM’s assertion demonstrates a pragmatic strategy for selecting an academic trajectory, informed by perceived employment prospects and individual inclinations, consistent with the findings of Fouad et al. (2006). Their decision indicates an understanding of professional options and underscores the necessity for explicit assistance regarding career pathways, as evidenced by research on career services. This decision-making process highlights the necessity of furnishing students with precise information regarding career paths and the competencies needed for various professions.

The reluctance to teach due to environmental factors suggests a psychological influence on educational choices, along with the relationship between psychological discomfort and profession preferences explored by Benton et al. (2003).

> I initially wanted to study computer engineering, but my scores weren't high enough for a good university. During the preference days, a professor suggested I choose mathematics and then transfer to computer engineering later. I chose mathematics for that reason. (P8MATF)

This case exemplifies how institutional advice can significantly influence educational pathways. P8MATF's reliance on a professor's suggestion demonstrates the importance of mentorship in career decisions, a key aspect highlighted by Fouad et al. (2006). This decision also reflects the role of strategic planning in academic choices, where students may select alternative routes to achieve their long-term goals. The participant's experience aligns with findings that stress the importance of providing students with tailored guidance to navigate academic and vocational challenges effectively.

> Initially, I was preparing for German. My high school's main language was German. But in my final year, they didn't open a German class, so I had to switch to a school with an English class. I then prepared for and entered the English exam. (P17ELLF)

P17ELLF, a female student from the English Language and Literature department, reflects on her academic journey, emphasizing how institutional constraints influenced her educational path. Initially preparing for German due to her high school's language focus, she was compelled to switch to English in her final year when a German class was no longer available. This experience underscores the pivotal role institutional resources play in shaping students' academic decisions, as highlighted by Kahn et al. (1999), who noted how perceptions of institutional support can impact educational trajectories. Her ability to adapt and succeed despite such disruptions also resonates with findings by Fouad et al. (2006), which emphasize the importance of career guidance and institutional flexibility in facilitating students' transitions during unforeseen challenges.

Gender Dynamics

In this study how gender perceptions influence participants' academic experiences and career decisions are explored. The study delves into the stereotypes and expectations that participants encounter based on their gender, and how these perceptions shape their professional identities as gender serves as a primary predictor of educational pathways (Parker et al., 2012, as cited in Sinclair, Nilsson, & Cederskär, 2019). The continuation of occupational segregation necessitates an examination of processes that transpire earlier in the life course, which influence young women and men to select gender-differentiated educational trajectories that, however imperfectly, direct them into distinct employment (Morgan, Gelbgiser, & Weeden, 2013). Previously, it was mentioned that previous knowledge on gendered-specific interests demonstrates that, in general, women tend to show interest in social and artistic pursuits. On the other hand, males are more likely than women to express interest in mechanical, technical, and scientific pursuits (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). The challenges faced by participants as they navigate fields traditionally dominated by one gender is also highlighted along with their perspectives on equality in opportunities.

Gender Stereotypes

Gottfredson's (2002, 2005) conceptual framework emphasizes that occupational aspirations are deeply intertwined with the self-image formed through socialization, beginning in early childhood and extending into adolescence. This process involves comparing one's self-perception with the perceived image of a profession and assessing the degree of alignment between the two. In this context, the gendered perception of an occupation plays a critical role in career selection, often outweighing considerations of prestige or personal interests, as an incongruent gender type is seen as more discordant with an individual's self-concept.

The experiences of participants who have faced or observed gender-based stereotypes in their fields is captured through the interviews. These stereotypes often manifest as doubts about their capabilities or assumptions about their interests based on gender. Gender stereotypes are a fundamental part of a broader belief system that shapes attitudes about the familial responsibilities of men and women, professional roles, and individual gender identities. These stereotypes, often viewed as binary constructs, posit masculinity and femininity as mutually exclusive characteristics (Worell, 2001).

The strong association of mathematics with masculinity not only challenges traditional gender norms for young men who choose non-STEM fields but also appears to hinder their career aspirations, much like the discouraging effect these stereotypes have on teenage girls pursuing STEM careers. When STEM-related courses in schools are heavily linked to masculine traits, the likelihood of students, regardless of gender, enrolling in a STEM major at the university level diminishes. However, the findings indicate that gender-science stereotypes exert a more pronounced negative influence on female students' STEM aspirations. For women, a strong masculine image of math and science significantly reduces the likelihood of pursuing a STEM major, while for men, only the masculine association with math appears to impact their enrollment choices (Makarova, Aeschlimann, & Herzog, 2019).

As it can be concluded from the statements of some participants, the perception of traditional gender along family is a contributing factor for career aspirations of the students. Gender-differentiated socialization imposes continuous, nuanced, and potent demands on individuals of all life stages to adhere to sex-typical professional trajectories and choices (Jacobs, 1989). Normative societal expectations that designate women as primary caregivers often steer them toward career choices that align more closely - or are perceived to align more closely - with family responsibilities. This aligns with Hakim's "preference theory," which suggests that such roles are chosen to better accommodate family life (2002).

"She [participant's mother] believes teaching is a reliable profession for women." (P17ELLF)

"He [participant's father] thinks it's a secure career path for women." (P9MATF)

Viewed from another standpoint, women tend to be more responsive to negative feedback than men, especially in contexts commonly perceived as traditionally male-oriented (Kugler, Tinsley, & Ukhaneva, 2021). The avoidance of negative feedback can result in the absence of women in male-dominated fields as P6 also suggests:

"They often question if a girl can handle it, thinking it's a tough field. There's a lot of gender bias in perceptions" (P6ENGF).

P6ENGF, a female student from the Engineering Faculty, underscores the ongoing gender bias she encounters in her discipline, accentuating the doubt over women's capacity to manage demanding technical positions. This illustrates the persistent impact of gender preconceptions, as observed by Kugler, Tinsley, and Ukhaneva (2021), who contend that these biases frequently dissuade women from entering male-dominated professions. The participant’s experience corroborates Jacobs’ (1989) claim that gender-specific indoctrination perpetuates societal norms regarding suitable roles for men and women, hence constraining women’s entry into technical professions. This mistrust may be connected to the overarching narrative that correlates STEM professions with masculinity, hence diminishing women’s representation in these domains (Makarova, Aeschlimann, & Herzog, 2019).

> For example, although it is said that women can also do heavy work, I think men are more suitable for such jobs due to the risks and the adaptation effects brought by time. Heavy jobs, like construction site work, are more suitable for men because of the heavy lifting and risks involved. For women, jobs in accounting or areas requiring thought might be more appropriate (P1ENGM).
> I think men are more preferred in fieldwork (P6ENGF).
> In general, physically demanding jobs might be more suited for men, but otherwise, I don’t think gender should dictate job suitability (P7MATM).

P1ENGM, a male engineering student, and P6ENGF, a female engineering student, and P17MATM, a male Mathmatics student discuss the perception that men are more suited for physically demanding work. This aligns with traditional gender roles, as highlighted by Charles and Bradley (2009), which categorize certain professions based on physical differences. Such perceptions, while rooted in biological traits, often ignore the broader capabilities of individuals, reinforcing the persistence of horizontal gender segregation in technical fields.

A significant factor that leads to the propagation of gender-stereotypical views is the continued existence of horizontal gender segregation in educational and occupational areas. These beliefs suggest that women are more naturally suited to jobs that are more expressive and human-centered, while males are better suited to careers that are more technical and math-intensive **(**Charles & Bradley, 2009).

“… Women’s brains are more developed for verbal tasks, so more women choose this field. Men are more drawn to engineering because it satisfies their masculine hormones.” (P19PSYF).

A female psychology student, P19PSYF, attributes gendered profession choices to biological and psychological differences, such as women's brains being more responsive to verbal tasks and men's “masculine hormones” drawing them to engineering. This perspective shows how historical and societal narratives have traditionally linked physiological differences to occupational segregation (Vatandaş, 2007). In Scott (2007)'s symbolic portrayal of gender, language and cultural metaphors reinforce sex-based assumptions about innate skills and preferences.

Although biological distinctions like women's caregiving and vocal communication have been emphasized (Oakley, 2016), contemporary research shows that societal conditioning shapes gendered expectations. Oakley's distinction between “sex” as biological and “gender” as cultural shows how social factors, not genes, steer women toward people-centered careers and men toward technical ones. The participant's association of engineering with masculinity reflects cultural conditioning, which commonly associates male-dominated industries with independence and technical skill, according to Vatandaş (2007).

The participant's use of “masculine hormones” to explain men's inclination for engineering parallels Millett's critique of sex-role ideologies, which restricted women's behavior under the pretext of natural differences (Eisenstein, 1984). Janeway's theory (quoted in Eisenstein, 1984) of how societal mythology links women's identities to domesticity and caregiving perpetuates occupational segregation and limits women's admittance into engineering and physical sciences supports this position.

Modern gender theories, like Vatandaş (2007)'s cognitive approach, emphasize that gender roles are learnt and reinforced during development, challenging the deterministic view of biological differences. Socialization, mimicry of same-sex parents, and education encourage gender-typed behaviours in children (Tolan, 1991). Thus, P19PSYF's statement internalizes these longstanding narratives rather than assessing abilities or preferences.

> There’s a traditional perception that fields like mathematics and engineering are more suited for men, whereas health sciences are seen as more suitable for women (P9MATF).
> My mom was initially very against me studying a language, especially after considering becoming a pilot. She questioned it a lot, wondering if I was doing it for a girl or something. Fortunately, I wasn’t in a relationship then. Other than that, there wasn’t an issue. (P14ELLM).

P9MATF, a female mathematics student, and P14ELLM, a male English Language and Literature student, both touch upon how societal and familial expectations shape gendered career perceptions. P9MATF mentions the ingrained stereotype that health fields are female-oriented, while STEM fields are male-oriented, aligning with Charles and Bradley’s (2009) findings that horizontal gender segregation perpetuates these divisions. Similarly, P14ELLM reflects on the familial bias against language studies for men, highlighting the societal association of verbal fields with femininity (Barone, 2011). These narratives underscore how early gendered socialization influences career choices, reinforcing Gottfredson's (2002, 2005) framework, which emphasizes the role of self-concept shaped by societal norms in career selection.

"Probably because of the gender bias in the past. Engineering, especially electrical and electronics, was seen as a male profession." (P5ENGF).

Both male and female students generally perceive a significantly higher proportion of men in STEM than is accurate, reflecting a strong and mistaken tendency to view STEM fields as male-dominated at the University. When students evaluate their compatibility with a field, they may develop biases that lead them to either overestimate or underestimate their chances of success (Kugler, Tinsley, & Ukhaneva, 2021). Also, women tend to rate their performance on math and science tasks less favorably than men with similar achievements, which in turn contributes to simulated gender gaps in employment and earnings. In other words, Men tend to be overly confident, while women often underestimate their performance compared to others especially in male-oriented fields (Owen, 2023:2).

Self-perceptions and preconceptions regarding academic disciplines and professions develop throughout an individual's life, with gender disparities in children's beliefs manifesting as early as six years of age (Bian, Leslie, & Cimpian, 2017).

Parents and educators play a significant role in formulating gender stereotypes along with the early environments which stimulates the beliefs, performance and choices of students (Carlana, 2019, as cited in Owen, 2023).

> I think there is a gender difference. I don't know if this comes from the family or because I live in a rural area. There's always this stereotype: teaching for girls, engineering for boys. This might create a perception in society that lasts for years. I don't know what experts say about this, but I believe there is a perception that engineering is not for women and that it might be challenging for them.Having a woman in a construction site is really difficult. When we talk about civil engineering, it might be the toughest among all engineering fields in terms of the working environment and site conditions. In an office, both women and men are comfortable, but a construction site has harsh winter and summer conditions. You can't expect a woman to work as a laborer there because men and women are created differently. That's why having a male-dominated workforce on construction sites doesn't seem strange. (P4ENGM).

P4ENGM, a male civil engineering student, addresses the obstacles encountered by women in construction settings, highlighting the physical requirements and adverse conditions typically linked to male-dominated labor. This viewpoint illustrates the incorporation of biological distinctions into society norms, as seen by Jacobs (1989), wherein physical strength serves as a surrogate for occupational appropriateness. The participant recognizes structural inequities in his area, aligning with Worell's (2001) finding that masculinity and femininity are frequently perceived as mutually exclusive notions, hence restricting the acceptance of women in physically demanding positions.

> There seems to be a perception that health fields are more female-oriented, while engineering, mathematics, and physics are more male-oriented. We grow up with certain family structures, and perhaps this is ingrained in our subconscious. When someone says they are a nurse, you expect them to be female. (P9MATF).
> Generally, jobs based on physical differences, like construction work or the military, are more suited for men. It's not that women can't do them, but men find them easier. I think women's intelligence should be utilized in different areas. (P14ELLM).

Thorndike (1911), the most important difference between men and women is "in the relative strength of the interest in things and their mechanisms (stronger in men) and the interest in persons and their feelings (stronger in women)" (p.32). This is the most significant divergence between the sexes. The comments presented here demonstrate that men and women naturally have interests that are markedly different from one another. As was indicated earlier, these interests result in gender-based disparities in the future field selections that individuals make, and consequently, in the occupations that are connected with those field picks. Lippa (2001) proposed that the characteristics of masculinity and femininity are closely associated to the professional interests related to the People-Things dimension. This conclusion was reached based on a study of research that was conducted on the subject of masculinity and femininity. As a result, 'people' related fields are considered female-dominated while 'things' related fields are associated with male-dominance. Given this information, interviews were analyzed to understand which divide students' self-perceptions align with more closely. It was observed that students primarily in the 'Humanities and Social Sciences' faculties tend to describe themselves as more people-related, whereas students in the Engineering and Natural Sciences faculties describe themselves as more things-related.

> Being able to see people's characters very clearly. It could be from some written things or reflecting them very well. I love my department, yes (P17ELLF).
> And I think adding any language will provide us with an advantage or improve our relationships with people (P13TRAF).

P17ELLF, a female student in the English Language and Literature department, and P13TRAF, a female student in the Translation and Interpretation department, both characterize their disciplines as centered on interpersonal relationships and the capacity for engagement with others. P17ELLF conveys pleasure in comprehending and analyzing individuals' personalities, whereas P13TRAF underscores the significance of language in cultivating connections. These assertions correspond with Thorndike's (1911) claim that women are inclined towards people-oriented activities, and Lippa's (2001) research on the People-Things dimension, which links feminine characteristics to professions necessitating empathy and communication. Their self-identifications as people-oriented further entrench the gendered segregation of disciplines, wherein the humanities and social sciences are regarded as more appropriate for women due to their focus on emotional and interpersonal competencies.

"I wanted to work with tangible things. I didn't want to sit in front of a computer all day. So, civil engineering seemed like a good fit." (P4ENGM).

P4ENGM, a male student in the Civil Engineering department, expressly states his love for engaging with tangible objects, which influenced his field selection. This self-perception strongly coincides with Thorndike's (1911) finding that men exhibit a greater interest in objects and their mechanics. Lippa's (2001) research on the People-Things dimension substantiates the notion that males are more inclined to seek occupations in technical and mechanical domains. P4ENGM's decision underscores the influence of social and individual notions of masculinity on academic and professional selections, hence reinforcing the gendered dichotomy between object-oriented and interpersonal careers.

In the same vein, the study of Lippa (2005) women are generally inclined to enter people-centered or natural sciences fields, while men with comparable skills in mathematics and science are more likely to pursue careers focused on objects and systems. Participants who emphasized their interests with people are currently enrolled in natural sciences:

"I love communicating with people and talking to them." (P5ENGF).

"Spending time with people is one of the things I enjoy." (P18PSYM).

P5ENGF, a female engineering student, and P18PSYM, a male psychology student, both demonstrate a keen interest in interpersonal connections, emphasizing their pleasure of communication and social engagement. These assertions correspond with Lippa's (2005) findings, which demonstrate that women are typically more predisposed to engage in people-oriented professions, especially in the realms of natural sciences or technical disciplines. P5ENGF's pursuit of engineering, despite her inclination towards interpersonal interests, indicates a deviation from conventional gender stereotypes, possibly mirroring changing views on women's responsibilities in STEM disciplines.

P18PSYM's case also underscores Lippa's observation that individuals with mathematical and scientific skills may still choose paths that emphasize human connections. Psychology, as a field that intersects science and human interaction, exemplifies how interests in human relations can influence academic decisions irrespective of gender. These narratives demonstrate the complex interaction between individual interests and society expectations, where the conventional distinction between people-oriented and object-oriented areas becomes ambiguous, yet continues to play a crucial role in structuring educational paths.

On the other side of the people-to-object dimension, the participants enrolled in from STEM fields, representing the other side of this dimension, reported that they were not particularly adept at interpersonal relationships and expressed a greater preference for working independently:

> I am suitable for teamwork. But it depends on the team. Other than that, I don't like people much. I prefer to work individually (P2ENGM).
> I wanted to be in a field where I could produce and repair things. Mechatronics seemed like a good fit (P6ENGF).

P2ENGM, a male engineering student, indicates a predisposition for solitary work rather than collaborative interaction, highlighting the contingent nature of his compatibility with teamwork. This viewpoint corresponds with Thorndike's (1911) claim that men have a greater propensity for objects and mechanisms than for individuals, a trend further corroborated by Lippa's (2001) research on the People-Things dimension. His inclination towards autonomy in his profession confirms the conventional link between male-dominated fields such as engineering and object- and task-oriented interests.

P6ENGF, a female mechatronics engineering student, emphasizes her affinity for production and repair activities, which corresponds more closely with traditionally male-associated characteristics on the People-Things dimension (Lippa, 2005). Her selection of a technical, systems-oriented discipline like mechatronics indicates a departure from the prevailing inclination of women towards people-centered professions (Lippa, 2005). This divergence may indicate a changing perspective of gender roles in STEM fields and the growing opportunities for women in historically male-dominated careers.

The prevailing view that gender-based differences in career choices are rooted in stable, deeply embedded preferences for caring or nurturing roles is illustrated by Williams and Ceci (2012). When coupled with the perception that science is incompatible with caring roles, these preferences contribute to the lower likelihood of women pursuing STEM careers:

> Maybe women are more patient than men, which is why they prefer academia or teaching. I have never had a male teacher in my department. So, I think women might prefer these fields because they require more patience (P16ELLF).
> I chose this department because it's more logical and not just about memorization. It's about understanding the brain and human behavior. I love talking to people and understanding their thoughts (P19PSYF).

P16ELLF, a female English Language and Literature student, attributes women's academic and teaching success to their patience. Williams and Ceci (2012) found that caregiving traits, traditionally associated with women, influence career choices in nurturing and interpersonal skills domains. Her department's all-female faculty illustrates how academic roles are gendered.

P19PSYF, a female psychology student, combines logic and human behavior with a strong propensity for interpersonal engagement. Her choice coincides with traditional female inclinations for people-centered disciplines (Lippa, 2005), but her focus on logic and analysis defies the distinction between "caring" and "technical" fields, suggesting a more integrated perspective.

This analysis reveals that students' self-perceptions align with the type of interaction they prefer in their future careers. Humanities and Social Sciences students tend to view themselves as people-oriented, emphasizing their interest in understanding and communicating with others. Conversely, Engineering and Natural Sciences students often identify as things-oriented, focusing on working with objects, systems, and processes. This distinction highlights the varying motivations and preferences that influence students’ academic and career choices.

Math- and science-oriented fields may be viewed by women as less suitable due to anticipated gender bias (Fouad, Fitzpatrick, & Liu, 2011). Consequently, even when their interests align with STEM careers, women may choose alternative fields that align with their interests but carry a lower risk of encountering bias or discrimination. Women with diverse interests, even those strongly inclined toward STEM, may still lean away from STEM careers. This occurs when other career paths appear equally suited to their interests but present a lower likelihood of negative experiences, such as gender bias and discrimination. (Cardador, Damian, & Wiegand, 2021).

Men in female-oriented careers seem less deterred by gender bias penalties compared to women, with high Investigative and Social interests prompting them to choose occupations that align more with interests outside of Investigative fields (Williams, 1992).

Educational choices are significantly shaped by gender traits, with both boys and girls making decisions influenced by gender stereotypes. This impact is especially pronounced among girls and begins as early as the onset of secondary education, around age 14. Evidence suggests that subject specialization follows gendered patterns that are not attributable to differences in abilities between genders. Notably, girls are more inclined to select academic paths traditionally linked to lower financial rewards, aligning with societal expectations tied to their gender roles (Favara, 2012).

Educational choices are strongly influenced by gender stereotypes, especially during the early decision-making process for girls. While boys are more likely to follow their talents, even when it requires making unconventional choices, girls tend to be more affected by societal expectations. As a result, girls may prioritize conforming to stereotypical paths over pursuing fields that offer higher financial rewards (Favara, 2012).

Gender Expectations

In this part the data are used to explain the societal and cultural expectations placed on participants based on their gender. These expectations can influence the roles they are expected to take on and the fields they are encouraged to pursue. Some students expressed gender-related differences regarding other students in their departments, while others used gender-based expressions related to their fields of study. Some students, however, stated that gender would not make a difference except for jobs requiring physical strength. People are generally inclined to stay in settings that align well with their characteristics and motivations, while moving away from those that do not. They actively seek environments where they feel a sense of compatibility, allowing them to thrive and achieve personal growth. As a result, individuals' preferences for certain work environments serve as a key pathway through which they shape their career decisions and professional development. Studies consistently show that women, in comparison to men, display a stronger inclination toward workplace environments that emphasize collaboration and interpersonal interaction (Su & Rounds, 2015). Beyond financial considerations, students take into account how their choices align with their self-identity and social roles. In this regard, gender norms play a pivotal role. Specializing in a field that aligns with societal gender expectations provides psychological reinforcement, enhancing a student's self-image and sense of congruence (Favara, 2012).

Assumptions about men being inherently "brilliant" in disciplines that prioritize such traits contribute to the underrepresentation of women in these areas. These brilliance-related stereotypes influence STEM education at all levels, beginning in early childhood, when girls internalize the notion that they are less brilliant than boys (Bian et al., 2017; Bian, Leslie, & Cimpian, 2018). Over time, this perception can diminish their interest in STEM fields and reduce their likelihood of being considered for professional roles within these disciplines (Bian, Leslie, & Cimpian, 2018).

> I don't think there's a gender distinction in this field. It's suitable for everyone…Maybe men prefer to enter the business world, while women want to continue researching and improving themselves. Many of our professors are still pursuing higher degrees and progressing in their careers…It seems that more women choose to stay in academia (P15ELLM).
> I wouldn't consider engineering in a traditional sense [certain professions are more suited for men or women]. I'm more interested in software and coding rather than general engineering tasks (P7MATM).

The participants' statements illustrate the complex impact of gender expectations on career choices and professional aspirations, consistent with existing literature on societal and cultural norms that influence academic and occupational decisions.

Participant P15ELLM's response indicates an awareness of gendered preferences in career paths, noting that women tend to pursue academia, whereas men are more likely to enter the business sector. This viewpoint is supported by research indicating that women are attracted to settings that prioritize personal development, collaboration, and intellectual stimulation, characteristics commonly found in academia (Su & Rounds, 2015). This supports Favara's (2012) assertion that selecting a field consistent with societal gender expectations can strengthen self-identity, as women in academia may experience a greater alignment with collaborative and research-oriented roles traditionally perceived as more “feminine.” The reference to professors advancing their careers highlights the representation of women in higher academic positions, indicating a possible counter-narrative to gendered stereotypes that depict women as less ambitious or capable in intellectually rigorous domains.

Participant P7MATM’s response indicates an understanding of gendered perceptions within particular professional fields, especially engineering. The participant differentiates software and coding from conventional engineering, implicitly invoking the stereotype of engineering as a male-dominated discipline that necessitates physical strength or practical technical skills, which may deter women due to societal norms or insufficient exposure. This is consistent with the findings of Bian et al. (2017, 2018), which indicate that stereotypes linking brilliance to men can discourage women from entering fields such as engineering. The participant's preference for software, a field increasingly acknowledged for its creativity and problem-solving rather than physical demands, indicates a potential shift in the perception of engineering subfields towards greater gender neutrality. This preference indicates that individuals actively pursue environments that correspond with their traits and motivations, suggesting that software development may be perceived as a domain with fewer gendered obstacles by the participant.

These statements demonstrate the subtle influence of gender norms and societal expectations on career preferences, often directing individuals toward paths that align with their gendered identities. Although certain sectors, such as academia and software, may appear more inclusive for women, enduring traditional gender norms persistently influence decisions, thereby reinforcing occupational segregation.

> I see a lot of ambition, especially among the male students. There’s a drive to get the highest grades and be the best. Maybe it’s because they want to stand out, especially among female students (P17ELLF).
> Yes, both genders can succeed in our department. Women bring different perspectives, and men can develop skills in thinking and calculation. Both benefit from the education (P1ENGM).

Participants' comments indicate that gender expectations shape perceptions of ambition, ability, and contributions in academic and professional contexts. These observations illustrate the dynamic relationship between societal gender norms and individual experiences, as documented in the literature.

The observation by Participant P17ELLF regarding the pronounced ambition among male students suggests a possible internalization of societal expectations that dictate men should demonstrate competitiveness and pursue visible success. The statement, "*Maybe it's because they want to stand out, especially among female students,*" implies that male ambition may be influenced by a perceived necessity to assert dominance or achieve excellence in mixed-gender contexts. This is consistent with research showing that gender norms frequently link traits such as brilliance and assertiveness to men, promoting a competitive culture that motivates them to excel beyond their peers (Bian et al., 2017; Favara, 2012). This perception may reinforce implicit biases by establishing male success as a benchmark, potentially overshadowing the achievements of female students, even when their capabilities are equal to or superior to those of their male counterparts.

Participant P1ENGM presents a balanced viewpoint, recognizing the contributions of both genders to their department. The statement that "women bring different perspectives, and men can develop skills in thinking and calculation" acknowledges the variety of cognitive and problem-solving strategies, consistent with research highlighting the importance of collaborative and inclusive settings (Su & Rounds, 2015). The portrayal of men as especially skilled in "thinking and calculation" may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes that link analytical abilities and technical proficiency with male students, thereby potentially sidelining women's contributions in these domains. This aligns with the findings of Bian, Leslie, and Cimpian (2018) regarding the impact of brilliance-related stereotypes on perceptions of ability and their influence on gendered participation in fields that prioritize analytical thinking.

"Maybe women are more patient than men, which is why they prefer academia or teaching. I have never had a male teacher in my department. So, I think women might prefer these fields because they require more patience." (P16ELLF).

P16ELLF's statement suggests that societal perceptions regarding gender traits, such as the belief that women exhibit greater patience, may impact career preferences, especially within academia and teaching. This is consistent with research showing that traditional gender norms frequently direct individuals toward professions that correspond with stereotypical traits, such as patience and nurturing, typically linked to women (Favara, 2012). The lack of male teachers in the participant's department reinforces gendered expectations and limits diversity in academic role models, as noted by the National Science Board (2018).

These remarks highlight the significant influence of gendered assumptions on students' self-perceptions and their perceptions of peers. Recognizing and valuing diverse contributions is essential; however, it is equally important to challenge stereotypes that associate ambition, analytical ability, or any skill set with gender. The dynamics underscore the necessity for educational and institutional practices that systematically dismantle biases to promote genuinely equitable environments.

Equality in Opportunities

In this part participants' views on gender equality within their fields. It reflects their belief in merit-based opportunities and the need for equal treatment regardless of gender. As major choice is influenced not solely by academic performance, as boys and girls show equal abilities in the same subjects. Instead, gender stereotypes play a significant role in their decisions. The notion of male superiority in technical and quantitative fields lacks empirical backing. While boys typically gravitate towards subjects traditionally associated with their gender, girls are more inclined to choose fields aligned with conventional female roles (Favara, 2012).

> I don’t think so [suitable jobs for men or women in the job market]. I believe everyone can do any job (P17ELLF).
> Most students aim for double majors in software or computer science to enhance their career prospects. Gender doesn't seem to play a significant role in their goals (P9MATF) … No, I don't believe in gender-specific professions. It's more about personal interests and abilities (P9MATF).

P17ELLF and P9MATF argue that personal interests and abilities should guide job choices, not society. Favara (2012) found that gender norms, not academic performance, influence significant decisions. According to Didonato and Strough (2013), their focus on individual capacity and preference is part of a larger trend to rethink gender-typed beliefs that have affected professional choices.

> I don't think there's a gender distinction in this field. It's suitable for everyone (P15ELLM).

> Yes, modern companies are moving towards gender equality. Our company and even big companies like ASELSAN have many female engineers (P2ENGM).
> I don't think there's a gender difference in engineering fields. Software engineering, computer engineering, and information systems engineering are all fields that women can easily pursue. They offer good working hours and environments (P3ENGM).

Students regard modern workplaces as more inclusive and egalitarian. P2ENGM and P3ENGM promote female engineers in big firms and characterize software engineering as accessible and suitable for women. These comments demonstrate an awareness of emerging corporate practices that stress gender diversity and inclusivity, harmonizing with worldwide gender equality efforts in male-dominated professions. The participants stressed merit-based opportunities and the rejection of gender in professional routes, demonstrating their strong support for gender equality in their areas. These views accord with modern discourses that challenge professional gender stereotypes, showing a progressive view of employment.

The belief that “everyone can do any job,” expressed by P15ELLM, P9MATF, and P17ELLF shows a shift in student culture. This attitude challenges gender-typed ideas, which can endure throughout adulthood (Alert & Breen, 1989; Didonato & Strough, 2013). Participants recommend a shift away from traditional roles toward an egalitarian framework based on interests and talents rather than gender conventions.

Finally, P3ENGM's observation that engineering areas are ideal for women due to attractive working circumstances and settings emphasizes the importance of practicality in overcoming gender preconceptions. This mindset supports the cultural shift toward professional settings where women can thrive, diminishing gendered norms in education and employment.

> Gender doesn't seem to play a significant role in job selection. Nowadays, financial considerations are more important than gender in career choices (P7MATM).
> No, I think this is independent of gender. It is more about personal inclinations and interests (P8MATF).
> As I mentioned earlier, it's a matter of personality. I don't think it has anything to do with gender (P11TRAM).

It can be concluded from these statements that participants largely reject the notion that gender significantly influences career choices, instead emphasizing financial priorities, personal interests, and individual personality traits as the main determinants.

These views suggest a progressive attitude toward career selection, reflecting a shift away from traditional gender norms. However, this perspective may overlook the subtle yet pervasive role of societal gender expectations, as highlighted by research showing that cultural stereotypes still shape career preferences and decisions, even if unconsciously (Favara, 2012; Didonato & Strough, 2013).

It is possible to observe gender-typed attitudes about employment in children and adolescents (Alert & Breen, 1989; Archer & Lloyd, 1985; Kriedberg et al., 1978; Li, 1999; Looft, 1971; Siegel, 1973, as quoted in Didonato & Strough, 2013). These attitudes can be detected in children and adolescents. According to the findings of a number of research (Judd & Oswald, 1997; Liben & Bigler, 2002; Wolfe & Betz, 1981, as quoted in Didonato & Strough, 2013), gender-typed views toward profession choices continue to exist throughout the duration of college. According to Didonato (2013), another point that can be made is that it is possible that the perspectives of college students regarding the jobs that are suitable for women and men can provide a glimpse into the degree to which cultural beliefs and values influence decisions regarding the occupations that are most suitable for the individual concerned. In light of this information, the concluding theme, which was referred to as “gender dynamics,” emerged from the interviews that were carried out in order to determine whether or not there is a gender-based disparity in the sources of inspiration for students' career choices. This topic sheds light on the gender-based perspectives held by the students.

In this part that the various perceptions and influences of gender on students' career choices is highlighted. While some students pointed out gender differences in their departments and the nature of their fields, others emphasized that gender does not significantly impact career choices except in physically demanding jobs. The interviews reveal a range of opinions, from those who see traditional gender roles influencing career paths to those who believe personal interests and abilities should drive career decisions regardless of gender.

Job Market Concerns and Financial Expectations

Participants expressed concerns about the competitiveness of their chosen fields, financial prospects, and the challenges of finding suitable job opportunities post-graduation. This theme highlights the anxieties and uncertainties participants face as they prepare to enter the job market. It also reflects their expectations regarding salaries and financial stability in their careers.

Financial Concerns

Participants' concerns about their financial future is represented in this part by examining the data derived from the interviews. Concerns often revolve around low starting salaries, job instability, and the long-term financial prospects of their chosen careers.

Ongoing research of Wiswall and Zafar (2021) on gender reveals two critical insights. First, systemic gender-based differences in attitudes significantly influence the selection of academic majors. Second, while potential earnings serve as a motivating factor in this decision-making process, non-monetary factors - commonly referred to by economists as “preferences” - play a substantial role. This is particularly evident in the higher tendency of women to pursue degrees in the arts and humanities. The findings of Wiswall and Zafar (2021) reveal that women, on average, prioritize flexible working hours and job security more than men, while men exhibit a stronger inclination to invest in roles with higher earnings growth potential. Differences in attitudes and “tastes” can shape the relative importance of monetary versus non-monetary benefits (Turner & Bowen, 1999). In particular, financial incentives alone appear insufficient to motivate girls to pursue and remain in male-dominated academic disciplines (Noe, 2010, as cited in Bordon et al., 2017).

Two key identity types are suggested to influence educational choices: the “career-oriented” and “social-oriented” typologies. For individuals with a “career-oriented” identity, professional achievement and employment are central to a meaningful life. On the other hand, those with a “social-oriented” identity prioritize collaboration, social responsibility, and the welfare of others. These two identity factors systematically influence the level and field of education that individuals pursue, implying that identity-related rewards play a significant role in educational decision-making. Their findings suggest that students' choices in education align closely with their self-concept, with “career-oriented” students making decisions based on perceived financial rewards (Humlum, Kleinjans, & Nielsen, 2012).

“Yes, I think they (my financial expectations] will be [met].” (P19PSYF).

Financial considerations significantly influence the academic and career decisions of the participants, as indicated by their remarks on anticipated salaries, job security, and long-term financial outlooks. P19PSYF, a psychology student, demonstrated confidence in the fulfillment of her financial expectations, indicative of the perceived stability and demand for psychologists, especially considering recent societal changes.

> I hope it will be. It seems financially satisfying right now. Both from what I know and the situation in Turkey. After the pandemic, the need has increased. But in Turkey, there is also a stigma like "Why should I go to a psychologist? Am I crazy?" I hope to work abroad if I can improve myself (P18PSYM).

P18PSYM, a male psychology student, expressed concerns regarding the stigma associated with psychology in Turkey, which could impact his career choices despite the possibility of financial rewards. The consideration of working abroad indicates a proactive strategy to address local challenges in the field. This is consistent with the findings of Wiswall and Zafar (2021), which emphasize that financial incentives and job security are universal factors, though their impact varies by gender. Although women often prioritize flexibility and job security, P18PSYM's emphasis on international opportunities and financial stability indicates the significance of these factors for male students in a competitive professional environment.

"I expect to start with a reasonable salary and see significant increases after the first few years." (P3ENGM).

P3ENGM, an engineering student, expressed optimism regarding an initial salary, anticipating substantial increases over time. This supports the idea that financial incentives and sustained income growth hold significant importance for students who identify as "career-oriented," as articulated by Humlum et al. (2012). The statement indicates a greater emphasis by men on high earning potential, as noted by Wiswall and Zafar (2021), who observed that men prioritize financial incentives more than women.

"Not initially. I'll probably start as an intern with a low salary…" (P15ELLM).

P15ELLM, a student in English Language and Literature, recognized the possibility of beginning as an intern with a reduced salary. This underscores the economic difficulties encountered by students pursuing disciplines with potentially lower financial returns, such as the humanities, particularly for those identified with a "social-oriented" identity, as noted by Humlum et al. (2012).

> …They can translate books or series, but I don't think anyone would prefer that. It doesn't seem to be an area where one gets fair compensation for their effort (P12TRAF).
> I don’t think so because we’re not sworn translators and might work as freelancers or in companies with lower pay (P16ELLF).

Personal interest, perceived talents, and identity-related benefits may affect department choice despite financial constraints. Wiswall and Zafar (2021) show that preferences and intrinsic motives influence field choices beyond financial incentives. According to Humlum et al. (2012), “social-oriented” students may value teamwork, societal contribution, or personal fulfillment over financial gain. Cultural or familial forces may have influenced their choices. Xu (2017) notes that cost-utility assessments including balancing schooling costs and benefits influence these decisions. However, pupils like P12TRAF and P16ELLF may value non-economic rewards or long-term career potential despite initial financial difficulties. These intricacies show how financial, social, and personal factors affect educational decisions.

> It's [financial expectations] hard to say in Turkey's current situation. I hope it does but I will always have tutoring as a backup (P7MATM).
> “I want to be financially stable and not worry about daily expenses. I should be able to reach my goals in a reasonable time.” (P1ENGM).

The participants' financial worries are consistent with Wiswall and Zafar (2021) and (Wells & Lynch, 2012, as cited in Xu, 2017) who emphasize the relevance of financial rewards and job stability in educational and career selections. In professions with uncertain economic consequences, non-monetary considerations like job satisfaction and personal interests also matter. In the context of cost–utility calculations, rational choice models emphasize financial costs (which are debts for education, fees of the institution or backing as a family) and benefits as key factors influencing educational and career outcomes (Wells and Lynch, 2012, as cited in Xu, 2017).

Economic advantages, on the other hand, are typically assessed by post-graduation earnings. Previous studies highlight the substantial role of financial concerns and economic considerations in shaping the educational and career decisions of college students (Xu, 2013, as cited in Xu, 2017).

Job Market Competitiveness

In this part participants' concerns about the competitive nature of the job market in their fields is captured. Participants often feel the pressure to distinguish themselves to secure desirable positions. Women may show diminished performance relative to men in mixed-gender competitive environments, yet their effectiveness matches that of men in non-competitive settings and often surpasses it in single-gender contexts (Gneezy, Niederle, & Rustichini, 2003).

Another perspective attributes gender-based differences in subject selection to workplace discrimination. Anticipating potential bias in the job market, female students tend to avoid fields that disproportionately favor men in terms of opportunities and rewards (Favara, 2012; Bordón, Canals, & Mizala, 2017).

> I don’t think so. It’s especially tough to become a teacher in the public sector. That’s why I’m working hard to stand out, but even then, I’m not sure it will be enough. The university’s reputation also matters, and it’s competitive (P17ELLF).
> No, it [easy to find a job after graduation] will probably be difficult. It’s hard to find jobs these days (P19PSYF).
> No [easily find a job after graduation] … Being intellectual is very important. Keeping up with global events, being knowledgeable about media, TV, and cinema are crucial (P15ELLM).

According to P17ELLF, a female English Language and Literature student, the public sector's competitive teaching market worries her. Her comments emphasize the pressure to succeed academically and stand out in a competitive work environment. This supports Favara (2012) and Bordón et al. (2017) findings that employment prejudice and limited prospects in some sectors may deter students, particularly women, from pursuing these careers. Despite not being in a competitive field, the student is apprehensive about the private sector's competitive work environment due to restricted job alternatives.

P19PSYF, a psychology student, is also apprehensive about finding post-graduation work due to the economy. Student worry over job market competition is common in social sciences. Gneezy et al. (2003) implies that mixed-gender competitive environments may further reduce performance, particularly for women.

Lastly, P15ELLM, a male student in the English Language and Literature department, highlights the importance of intellectual growth and cultural awareness, such as staying informed about global and media-related topics, as critical factors for career success. While his perspective focuses less on financial concerns or gender dynamics, it suggests a stronger attraction to non-pecuniary rewards, such as personal development and intellectual fulfillment. This aligns with the increasing demand for well-rounded candidates in humanities and social arts fields, where soft skills and cultural knowledge are highly valued. His remarks emphasize the need for differentiation in competitive job markets, consistent with findings on the necessity of standing out to secure desirable roles.

> The wide range of opportunities Electric and Electronics Engineering department offers. You have many options to choose from… The wide range of options can also be confusing because you have to make the right choice, which can impact your future career …For the electrical field, there are opportunities in power management and energy sectors. For electronics, there are opportunities in the defense industry and technology sectors (P1ENGM).
> There are many options in the automotive sector, automation technologies, and various industries (P6ENGF).
> The wide range of job opportunities is a major advantage (P5ENGF).

Engineering students like P1ENGM, P5ENGF, and P6ENGF are aware of their many employment options. P1ENGM notes that the multitude of Electric and Electronics Engineering options - from power management to military and technology - can be confusing. This is typical of engineering students, who must make tough decisions to succeed in their careers. Wiswall and Zafar (2021) found that technical students value long-term job options and income potential more than humanities or social science students.

P6ENGF and P5ENGF, both female engineering students, agree that their field's job prospects are great. This confidence contrasts with humanities students' fears about post-graduation job prospects. Engineering students seem to prioritize practical, industry-specific options, showing that their “career-oriented” personality matches the economic incentives and job security of these areas. This emphasis on employment availability and diversity differs from students in translation or social sciences, where job markets may be more competitive or less rewarding.

Masculinized expectations in workplace cultures, structures, and practices often impose constraints on women in science, limiting their professional conduct (Rhoton, 2011, as cited in Xu, 2017). Studies show that women are equally skilled and committed as their male peers. However, the isolation and marginalization they face as a minority group contribute to reduced job satisfaction and a greater likelihood of leaving their positions (Xu, 2017).

Financial Expectations

In this part participants' expectations regarding their starting salaries and financial progression is captured. Participants often balance their passion for a field with the practical need for financial stability. The decision of which college major to pursue, along with the resulting career trajectory, is a highly significant one, shaped by preferences and beliefs developed over the eighteen years before entering college. Additionally, numerous factors influence this choice, ranging from the more apparent ones, such as anticipated earnings and job prospects, to more subtle influences (Patnaik, Wiswall, & Zafar, 2021).

> Not initially. I'll probably start as an intern with a low salary. But I hope to get promoted over time in the private sector (P15ELLM).
> I haven’t had specific financial expectations. I just want to do a job I love (P11TRAM).

Students in the Humanities and Social sciences, including P15ELLM and P11TRAM, demonstrate a more nuanced perspective on financial expectations. P15ELLM, a student of English Language and Literature, recognizes the probability of commencing with a lower salary as an intern, yet remains optimistic about future advancement within the private sector. This suggests a readiness to accept reduced financial compensation initially in return for long-term career advancement, as previously noted under Financial Concerns. This supports the notion that, although short-term financial incentives may be minimal, long-term career advancement continues to serve as a motivating factor, as articulated by Patnaik, Wiswall, and Zafar (2021). P11TRAM, a student of translation and interpretation, articulates no particular financial expectations, instead highlighting a preference for employment motivated by passion. This indicates a possible tendency towards social-oriented motivations, where intrinsic rewards, such as personal fulfillment, may surpass monetary factors. The findings indicate that, for many individuals in these fields, passion and job satisfaction frequently outweigh immediate financial considerations, although the necessity for financial stability continues to influence their career choices.

> I expect to start with a reasonable salary and see significant increases after the first few years (P3ENGM).
> Yes, I believe it [choosing Mathematics career] will [meet your financial expectations]. If not, I have backup plans and multiple sources of income (P9MATF).

> I want to be financially stable and not worry about daily expenses. I should be able to reach my goals in a reasonable time (P1ENGM).

Students in engineering and natural sciences, including P3ENGM, P9MATF, and P1ENGM, exhibit a structured approach to financial expectations, emphasizing earning potential. P3ENGM, an engineering student, anticipates commencing with a competitive salary and expects substantial increases in the initial years of employment. This demonstrates a practical strategy for career advancement and economic security, aligning with the prevailing trend where students in technical disciplines frequently emphasize financial benefits in conjunction with professional development. P9MATF, a mathematics student, expresses confidence that their career choice will fulfill their financial expectations. They also mention having backup plans and multiple income sources, indicating a proactive approach to securing financial stability. P1ENGM, an engineering student, highlights the objective of achieving financial stability, stressing the importance of addressing both short-term and long-term financial requirements. The pursuit of financial stability correlates with the research conducted by Astin & Astin (1993) and Xu (2017), indicating that students, especially in engineering disciplines, prioritize financial incentives in their educational and career choices. Students in engineering and natural sciences exhibit a financially motivated approach to their studies, with career choices influenced by both professional interests and the potential for substantial economic returns. Educational investments are often made with the goal of optimizing the returns in one's chosen profession. This highlights that, regardless of gender, the prospect of higher economic rewards is a key factor in how students assess the utility of their educational and career decisions (Astin & Astin, 1993, as cited in Xu, 2017).

Support Systems

The section highlights the importance of supportive networks, including family, peers, and professors, in helping participants navigate their academic and career paths. It reflects how these support systems provide emotional, practical, and motivational assistance, which is crucial for participants as they pursue their goals. Convenience has been expressed by students as a significant factor when considering university selection. Many students indicated a preference for attending a private university in their hometown over a state university in another city. Reasons for this preference include a reluctance to relocate and the perception that academic processes at private universities are faster and easier. Additionally, they find it advantageous that access to professors is more convenient at private universities. The theme also underscores the role of mentorship in shaping participants' professional development.

Peer Support

The support that participants receive from their peers. Peer support often takes the form of study groups, shared resources, and emotional encouragement, which are vital for success in demanding academic environments. Peer support significantly influences students' academic experiences, as evidenced by the remarks from students in Humanities and Social Sciences as well as Engineering and Natural Sciences. The lack of significant differences among these groups underscores that peer support is a universal element affecting students' academic experiences, aligning with self-determination theory, which stresses the significance of supportive social environments in promoting positive motivational and well-being outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

> We have a WhatsApp group for our class, and we help each other out (P7MATM).
> [helping academic problems] I turn to a close friend in the department or an upperclassman I know (P9MATF).
> I would ask my close friends [whether he needed help with class notes or a problem (P5ENGF).
> Yes, I do [get notes from friends]. And if there's no attendance requirement, I might skip the class (P4ENGM).
> I would ask my closest friends first [whether he could not complete an assignment and needed help], or people I know from class (P19PSYF).

P9MATF, a female mathematics student, and P4ENGM, a male engineering student, ask close friends or upperclassmen for help with class notes and assignments. P7MATM, a male mathematics student, uses a WhatsApp group to share information and handle academic problems. These examples show how peer support networks enable resource-sharing and collaborative problem-solving, supporting Worley et al. (2023) results that regular peer interactions boost self-confidence and academic efficacy. P4ENGM's willingness to use friends for notes shows the informal but crucial importance of peer networks in academic management, even if it means skipping classes.

P5ENGF, a female engineering student, and P19PSYF, a female psychology student, recommend asking close friends for academic help. According to Altermatt

(2019) students with strong peer support networks had stronger academic self-efficacy and motivation. Richard et al. (2022) found that peer support reduces anxiety and enhances well-being in college students, so their dependence on trusted friends may improve mental health.

The participants' dependence on peer networks for academic assistance highlights the essential function of collaborative and trusting relationships in higher education. Interactions, whether in formal group chats or informal exchanges with peers, offer both emotional and academic support, leading to positive outcomes such as enhanced motivation and decreased stress (Jones et al., 2018; Worley et al., 2023). Individuals may conform to peer norms to gain positive utility from aligning their decisions with those of their peers, even when distinct identities are not evident—a process known as social comparison (Cialdini, 1993, as cited in Favara, 2012). The role of peer support across academic disciplines underscores its significance in enhancing positive educational experiences for students.

Family Support

This code highlights the role of family members in providing emotional and financial support. Family encouragement is often a key factor in participants' decisions to pursue certain careers or continue their studies.

Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's development by acting as role models and providing support and direction (Taasoobshirazi & Carr, 2008, as cited in Xu, 2017)

“I also wanted to honor my grandfather's wish for me to study civil engineering… He always had this idea of me building something. It was his dream for me.” (P4ENGM).

The participant's choice to fulfill their grandfather's aspiration underscores the significant impact of intergenerational expectations. The emotional connection and respect for the grandfather's vision of “building something” introduces a sentimental dimension to the decision, illustrating how familial aspirations can influence career trajectories in culturally meaningful contexts.

“My mother supported me. She always wanted me to study languages. She has been abroad but couldn't learn a language. She always says, “I couldn't do it, my daughter, you do it.” (P13TRAF).

P13TRAF, a female student in the Translation and Interpretation faculty, recounts her mother's encouragement to pursue language studies, which is based on her mother's own experiences and unfulfilled aspirations. This illustrates the framework proposed by Eccles and Jacob (1986), highlighting the significance of parental influence in determining children's academic and career decisions via the transmission of gendered expectations and personal values. The narrative of her mother - ”I couldn’t do it, my daughter, you do it” - illustrates the intergenerational transmission of aspirations, wherein parents impose their unfulfilled ambitions onto their children, frequently in accordance with gendered societal norms. The mother's emphasis on language learning, a domain historically linked to women because of its interpersonal and communicative characteristics, underscores societal norms regarding appropriate careers for women. The “Gender Dynamics” section indicates that such guidance, although supportive, frequently reinforces traditional gender roles by promoting careers for daughters that are viewed as stable, nurturing, and culturally appropriate. This case aligns with Favara’s (2012) assertion that adherence to gender norms yields non-pecuniary benefits, including social approval and identity reinforcement, which further influence career trajectories.

> She [participant’s mother] values independence and believes teaching is a reliable profession for women. It’s a mindset stemming from how she was raised (P17ELLF).
>
> My father encouraged me to study mathematics. He [participant’s father] sees mathematics as a field that will always be in demand, especially for teaching. He thinks it's a secure career path for women (P9MATF).

P17ELLF and P9MATF show that parental opinions strongly influence profession choices, especially for girls. Although supportive, family encouragement perpetuates gender norms and steers girls toward secure careers like teaching. These tales support Eccles and Jacob's (1986) findings that gendered expectations and cultural values are passed down. Despite the guidance's support, these behaviors reinforce the social norm that women's careers should be stable and caring, restricting female participation in high-risk fields. Earlier, in the “Gender Dynamics” section, this topic was examined, with an additional emphasis placed on the ways in which societal expectations influence parental advice and contribute to the continuation of gendered career routes.

> My family like most families in Turkey wanted me to become a doctor due to job security. They added those options to my preference list but they also said it was my decision since I would be the one studying. They supported my choice to study engineering (P1ENGM).

P1ENGM, a male engineering student, recounts his family's initial encouragement for him to pursue medicine, citing its perceived job security. This aligns with Aydemir's (2018) finding that families significantly influence academic decisions in 54.3% of cases. His decision to pursue engineering indicates a divergence from Vurucu's (2010) assertion that students frequently base career choices on familial pressure, lacking a comprehensive understanding of their personal interests. P1ENGM exhibited clear preferences and effectively asserted his agency, while his family adjusted to accommodate his decision. This indicates that family influence, although important, does not consistently hinder individual autonomy; rather, it may adapt to support the student's goals.

The stories of participants, such as P1ENGM, demonstrate the complicated interaction of familial direction and personal agency. Aydemir's (2018) statistics underline the ubiquity of familial influence, whilst Vurucu's (2010) findings underscore the possibility of this impact overshadowing individual preferences. However, P1ENGM's story provides a counterexample in which family assistance was tailored to his independent choice, implying a more nuanced dynamic in how families impact academic and career paths. Furthermore, while the study found no substantial association between students' career decisions and their families' educational, vocational, or economic backgrounds, the lack of data do not rule out the possibility of such consequences in specific settings.

> The reason I chose a private university is, first of all, some universities were located in other cities. I don't want to be far from my family. That's why we initially selected a private university in Ankara. For example, there were other departments I qualified for with my score, including the same engineering program here. I don't know, a private university feels more privileged. Maybe I'm thinking too capitalistically, but I wanted my affairs to be handled more easily and with less difficulty. Because I've reached a certain age, I want to graduate, get my diploma, and enter the workforce. It's not just about age; all my friends want the same thing (P6ENGF).

According to Istanbul Planning Agency (IPA, 2023) The annual living cost for a university student living with family in Istanbul increased from 21,918 TL in 2022 to 37,653 TL in 2023. The annual living cost for a student residing in a shared apartment was 64,278 TL in 2022, rising markedly to 150,415 TL in 2023. The data highlight the economic benefits associated with remaining in a familial setting during the pursuit of higher education.

P6ENGF, a female engineering student, identifies various factors that influenced her choice to attend a foundation university in Ankara, with particular emphasis on the importance of proximity to her family. This decision corresponds with the economic benefits highlighted in the Istanbul Planning Agency's report (2023), which emphasizes the markedly lower living costs for students living with their families versus those living independently. Choosing a university near home allows P6ENGF to reduce financial burdens and retain familial support, likely enhancing her overall well-being and academic stability.

Her perception of foundation universities as providing a more streamlined and privileged experience indicates a pragmatic approach to education, emphasizing efficiency and minimizing bureaucratic challenges. Her remarks regarding the desire to graduate swiftly and join the workforce reflect wider student priorities, especially given the increasing costs of education and living expenses. This pragmatic approach illustrates a balance among financial factors, individual convenience, and aspirations for professional growth.

The idea of convenience has a large role in the decisions that students make regarding their university education. This is demonstrated by the fact that students choose to attend private institutions in their hometown rather than public universities located in other towns. This preference can be attributed to a number of factors because: First and foremost, you should think about how close it is to your family. In order to minimize the disturbance that comes with moving to a new place, students choose to remain in close proximity to their families. This is just another reason for its effectiveness and accessibility. It is often believed that private institutions are better able to handle academic affairs and provide easier access to faculty and resources than public universities. In conclusion, the students were concerned about concerns pertaining to their finances. When scholarships are taken into consideration, the difference in cost between attending a public university in another city and a private institution in the same city is rather small. Students have expressed that the reasons for their decision to attend private colleges are persuasive. These reasons include the perceived advantages of private institutions in terms of support and accessibility, as well as the ease of being in an environment that is known to them.

Mentorship

In this part the main focus is on the guidance participants receive from mentors, typically professors or industry professionals. Mentorship provides participants with valuable insights, advice, and connections that help them navigate their career paths.

“One of my teachers who graduated from the English Language and Literature department suggested it to me, saying it was a better department.” (P15ELLM).

“I ask my advisor, Professor Michelle [shadowed for anonymity].” (P18PSYM)

Mentorship significantly influences participants' academic and career trajectories by providing customized guidance and support. The impact of mentors, as demonstrated in these statements, corresponds with the research of Porter and Umbach (2006), highlighting the necessity of recognizing individual student needs for effective guidance. P15ELLM emphasizes the importance of obtaining a targeted recommendation from a teacher, illustrating how mentor guidance can influence major selection based on their assessment of a department's value.

The dependence of P18PSYM on an advisor highlights the significance of direct mentorship in making informed academic choices. This mentorship approach is essential for female students, as research by Carrell, Page, and West (2010) and Griffith (2014) indicates that female mentors in STEM significantly impact female students’ performance and major selections. The underrepresentation of female role models in various fields continues to pose a challenge, potentially restricting the advantages of gender-congruent mentorship for women in traditionally male-dominated disciplines.

These comments highlight the significant role of mentorship in enabling students to make informed decisions and build confidence in their selected paths. Providing accessible and diverse mentoring opportunities, especially for underrepresented groups, is crucial for promoting equity and enhancing participation across academic and professional domains.

“During the preference days, a professor suggested I choose mathematics and then transfer to computer engineering later. I chose mathematics for that reason.” (P8MATF).

It can be understood from this statement that mentorship from professors significantly influences students' academic choices. The professor's guidance provided P8MATF with a strategic pathway, demonstrating how mentors can shape students’ decisions by offering practical advice and aligning their preferences with long-term career goals. This reflects the critical role of mentorship in helping students navigate complex academic systems effectively (Porter & Umbach, 2006).

"I found them more supportive for projects and technical assistance. For example, it's easier to get support from professors at foundation universities because you see them more often." (P1ENGM).

P1ENGM's statement highlights the significance of accessibility and support within mentorship, especially at foundational universities. Frequent interactions with professors enhance technical and project-related support, consistent with Porter and Umbach's (2006) findings regarding the importance of personalized guidance for academic success. Regular mentorship enhances collaboration, which is essential for students' growth and self-assurance in their respective disciplines.

> …I decided on this department while walking to make my university preferences. I took the language exam just in case. But then my ranking came out better than I expected. Because I hadn't received any academic English education for about 5-6 years before choosing this department. So, I thought if I could achieve this much in my current state, I could study it… And since I had given up on psychology at the last moment, I thought maybe I could become a teacher. At least it could be a way for me to communicate with children at any primary, secondary, high school, or university level. So, I chose it a bit based on my ranking being better than expected (P12TRAF).

This statement highlights the role of external factors, such as examination rankings, in shaping students' academic paths. P12TRAF's decision reflects the adaptive strategies students employ when faced with unforeseen circumstances. The participant's exploration of multiple career options, including teaching and psychology, demonstrates the fluidity of career aspirations during this developmental phase, as described by Fouad et al. (2006). The decision also suggests a lack of prior counseling or structured guidance, supporting the idea that career services can play a pivotal role in reducing uncertainty and enhancing informed decision-making (Whiston, Sexton, & Lasoff, 1998).

P19PSYF's statement illustrates the impact of personal aspirations and external influences, such as school quality, on educational decisions. Their career preferences—ranging from creative arts to psychology—highlight the diversity of interests among students and the challenges they face in aligning these interests with available opportunities. This aligns with Fouad et al.'s (2006) findings that emphasize the interconnectedness of psychological well-being, career decision-making, and the availability of structured support systems. The participant's experience also underscores the need for improved career counseling in secondary education, as early interventions can help students navigate these transitions more effectively.

> As I mentioned, my interest in English started in middle school, mainly because of my teacher. I believe teachers have a significant influence. I admired my English teacher. Despite changing schools several times, I always loved my English teachers.... (P17ELLF).
>
> I admired my English teacher and wanted to be an English teacher because I was interested in languages. But that interest faded (P8MATF).
>
> …One of my teachers, who graduated from the English Language and Literature department, suggested it to me, saying it was a better department. I added it to my list and ended up liking it more than translation. Literature interested me more; it's a deeper field (P15ELLM).
>
> Initially, I had negative expectations, thinking it would be difficult and boring. But my perception has become more positive as I got more involved in the field … The professors are highly qualified, many with backgrounds from prestigious universities like METU [Middle East Technical University] (P9MATF).
>
> I initially wanted to study computer engineering, but my scores weren't high enough for a good university. During the preference days.., a professor suggested I choose mathematics and then transfer to computer engineering later. I chose mathematics for that reason. But after starting the program, I realized I really enjoyed math and didn't like the computer engineering-related courses as much. My grades were good, so I decided to continue with mathematics (P8MATF).

Work-Life Balance

Participants in demanding fields, particularly psychology, expressed concerns about balancing their professional responsibilities with personal life. This theme explores the challenges participants face in managing their time, the stress associated with heavy workloads, and the need for career flexibility. It also highlights the strategies participants use to maintain a healthy work-life balance while pursuing their academic and career goals. According to Eccles the educational and occupational choices of young women and men are shaped by feedback from “socializers.” To account for gender differences in persistence within STEM fields, the framework suggests that young women may cultivate lower levels of confidence in STEM coursework. Through a process of subjective valuation, they come to perceive STEM courses and careers as less engaging and personally valuable compared to alternative fields. Additionally, the subjective task valuations of both young men and women are influenced by their gender-role ideologies, particularly their beliefs regarding the viability of career options in light of their relative prioritization of family and child-rearing responsibilities (2011). Work-Life Balance

Concerns and Job Satisfaction vs. Workload are the subtopics that is covered to show a deep understanding of the data.

Work-Life Balance Concerns

In this part the data conducted from the interviews are used to reflect participants' concerns about managing their work and personal lives. It highlights the difficulties of maintaining a healthy balance, particularly in fields with demanding workloads. The selection of science majors is likely to be significantly influenced by the varying work–family valuations observed between genders (Jacobs & Bleeker, 2004). Women, in particular, perceive that pursuing a major in business or science could lead to higher personal earnings but might also result in delayed marriage and fertility, as well as lower marriage rates. Both men and women recognize a “return” in the marriage market linked to high-earning college majors and obtaining a college degree. Since these initial beliefs are systematically tied to actual educational decisions and future life outcomes, it is suggested that considerations regarding career and family are paramount in shaping the decision-making processes of young individuals (Wiswall & Zafar, 2021). Women pursuing careers in STEM often face difficulties balancing family and work commitments. Societal expectations frequently lead individuals to prioritize domestic responsibilities, sometimes at the cost of their professional aspirations (Xu, 2015, as cited in Xu, 2017).

> I don't want to be in a continuous working tempo, especially not in the research tempo. As much as I love it, I don't want to turn it into a job and end up not liking it (P15ELLM).
> It can be busy, but you can still have personal time since you set your own schedule (P8MATF).

The statement from P15ELLM, a male student in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, indicates a concern regarding the potential disadvantages of converting a passion for research into a rigorous career. This statement does not explicitly reflect the “greedy institutions” identified by Coser (1974), such as law or engineering; however, it aligns with the broader notion that excessive professional demands can diminish personal satisfaction. This sentiment indicates a preference for a balanced life, which, although not directly linked to high-income fields, reflects a broader concern regarding over-commitment in professional settings.

P8MATF, a female student from the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences, indicates that she perceives specific professions, especially in STEM fields, as providing flexibility in balancing work and personal responsibilities. This viewpoint is consistent with the findings of Goldin (2014) and Goldin and Katz (2012), which indicate that women frequently prefer careers characterized by predictable hours, including veterinary medicine and pharmacy. P15ELLM expresses concerns regarding intensive workloads, whereas P8MATF emphasizes the autonomy offered by STEM careers, proposing that self-managed schedules could alleviate the difficulties associated with "greedy occupations." This indicates a more favorable perspective on the equilibrium between professional and personal life, potentially serving as a crucial determinant in her choice of major.

The differing perspectives of P15ELLM and P8MATF highlight the varied approaches students take towards workload management in their respective disciplines. The humanities student demonstrates apprehension regarding the effects of ongoing professional obligations, whereas the engineering student conveys assurance in achieving work-life balance via adaptable scheduling. The observed difference may be ascribed to the structural variations inherent in their respective disciplines, with STEM fields typically necessitating a greater time commitment while potentially providing enhanced autonomy in the long run.

> I think it [teaching job in private sector and start as a intern] will be very intense and demanding (P15ELLM).
> In a company, you have to go to work, but the translation itself can take hours or days, so the work hours are flexible and not fixed (P16ELLF).

P15ELLM's concern regarding the intensity of private sector teaching and internships highlights the pressures linked to demanding workloads, consistent with the concept of "greedy institutions" (Coser, 1974), which typically necessitate complete commitment. This concern reflects a wider reluctance regarding high-demand positions, especially when associated with restricted flexibility.

P16ELLF emphasizes the flexibility inherent in translation work, permitting adaptable schedules even in the context of potentially extended hours. This perspective is consistent with findings by Goldin (2014), which suggest that women frequently choose professions that provide predictable and flexible working conditions to manage personal and professional responsibilities.

> I hope my workday will end around 4 or 5 PM. I don't expect it to be too intense (P19PSYF).
>
> Some courses are really hard. Passing and enduring them is tough. You have to read a lot (P15ELLM).

P15ELLM's concern regarding the intensity of private sector teaching and internships highlights the pressures linked to demanding workloads, consistent with the concept of "greedy institutions" (Coser, 1974), which typically necessitate complete commitment. This concern reflects a wider reluctance regarding high-demand positions, especially when associated with restricted flexibility.

P16ELLF emphasizes the flexibility inherent in translation work, permitting adaptable schedules even in the context of potentially extended hours. This perspective is consistent with findings by Goldin (2014), which suggest that women tend to prefer professions that provide predictable and flexible working conditions to manage personal and professional responsibilities.

> Yes, modern companies are moving towards gender equality. Our company and even big companies like ASELSAN have many female engineers (P2ENGM).
>
> I don't think there's a gender difference in engineering fields. Software engineering, computer engineering, and information systems engineering are all fields that women can easily pursue. They offer good working hours and environments (P3ENGM).

The statement from P2ENGM, a student in the Engineering Department, indicates that contemporary companies are advancing gender equality, evidenced by the inclusion of female engineers in leading organizations such as ASELSAN. This indicates progress in promoting inclusivity; however, evidence from Hunt (2016) suggests that women in STEM may still face "chilly climates" in male-dominated workplaces, potentially leading to increased exit rates among women in these fields.

It can be inferred from the statement of P3ENGM, a student in the Engineering Department, that specific engineering disciplines, including software and computer engineering, are viewed as more accessible to women because of their favorable working hours and environments. Research by Lordan and Pischke (2022) indicates that the under-representation of women in these fields may result in lower job satisfaction, underscoring the necessity to address these systemic issues.

Career Flexibility

This code captures participants' appreciation for flexibility in their careers, which allows them to better manage work-life balance. Flexible work arrangements, such as remote work or freelance opportunities, are highly valued.

> Since it's freelance, I think it will be manageable. I can set my own hours to avoid overwhelming myself (P11TRAM).
> …They also expect the flexibility to work remotely (P3ENGM).
> It's mainly for a career plan. After graduating from this department, I'm expected to become an academician or teacher, which I don't really want. I prefer working in the private sector, and with my knowledge of English and Literature, I think I can do something different (P15ELLM).
> In a company, you have to go to work, but the translation itself can take hours or days, so the work hours are flexible and not fixed (P16ELLF).
> [Civil engineers] The harsh conditions of working on construction sites, especially in cold weather (P4ENGM).

It is also important to note that the initial department can be seen as a step for some participants (P7MATM) suggesting that they can continue studying in a related extensive field. For others (P9MATF) and (P11TRAM) teaching profession is the second best plan for their careers in order to ensure a secure job.

Job Satisfaction vs. Workload

Career decision-making is significantly influenced by job satisfaction, which is a crucial non-material factor in professional development. Job satisfaction is characterized as an individual's comprehensive assessment of their work environment, professional standing, accessible resources, and the perceived congruence between personal characteristics and organizational culture, encompassing both concrete and abstract elements. The assessment is influenced by economic factors as well as personal values and beliefs. The interplay of factors significantly influences career choices, particularly for women, who are affected by ongoing pay gaps and the prevalence of male-oriented, unsupportive work environments in STEM fields (Rosser, 2004, as cited in Xu, 2017).

> I think I couldn't handle being a lawyer because of the heavy workload. Other than that, not really (P11TRAM).
> I don't want to be in a continuous working tempo, especially not in the research tempo. As much as I love it, I don't want to turn it into a job and end up not liking it (P15ELLM).

> …I thought maybe I could become a teacher. At least it could be a way for me to communicate with children at any primary, secondary, high school, or university level… (P12TRAF).

Male translation and interpretation student P11TRAM worries about the workload in law, which influences his job choices. This matches Rosser's (2004, as referenced in Xu, 2017) definition of job satisfaction as a holistic assessment of professional conditions, where perceived workload influences career choices. His statement emphasizes the need of work-life balance in professional decisions as more people avoid difficult careers.

P15ELLM, a male English Language and Literature student, fears losing motivation for research-intensive jobs. According to Xu (2017), job satisfaction is subjective and affected by external factors like workload and personal values. The participant's desire to retain a positive relationship with his field without making it an unsustainable duty illustrates the conflict between professional and personal goals.

P12TRAF, a female translation and interpretation student, considers teaching because of its interpersonal and communicative components. Teaching is considered more manageable and fulfilling than other demanding occupations, illustrating the relationship between job happiness and workload. Her opinion agrees with Xu (2017) that women may avoid high-stress, male-dominated situations and pursue careers that match their ideals and work-life balance.

Females are often socialized to prioritize interpersonal values, such as connecting with and helping others. Consequently, they tend to gravitate toward professions that align with these values, including teaching, nursing, and medical science. In contrast, fields like engineering and physical sciences, which are perceived as less aligned with such values, attract fewer women (Su & Rounds, 2015).

Expected financial rewards and the impact on their self-concept are key factors influencing students' choice of subject specialization. When a student aligns with the social norms of their reference group, particularly gender norms, they gain a "non-pecuniary pay-off," enhancing their self-image. In contrast, deviating from these gender norms results in a decrease in utility, as it negatively impacts their self-concept (Favara, 2012).

"Learning new things is very enjoyable and fulfilling." (P3ENGM).

"I love what I'm doing [software development], so I thought, why not study it at university?" (P1ENGM).

P3ENGM, a male software engineering student, and P1ENGM, a male electrical and electronics engineering student, both highlight intrinsic satisfaction as a crucial element in their educational and career decisions. P3ENGM derives satisfaction from the learning process, whereas P1ENGM articulates a strong enthusiasm for his discipline, indicating that his passion for software development was the driving force behind his choice to study it at the university level. These narratives correspond with the observation by Su and Rounds (2015) that individuals are attracted to fields that reflect their values and interests; however, in these instances, the emphasis is on personal intellectual enjoyment rather than on interpersonal values.

Additionally, their statements illustrate Favara's (2012) notion that conformity to gender norms yields a "non-pecuniary pay-off," thereby strengthening their self-concept. The decisions of both participants to enter traditionally male-dominated fields, such as engineering and software development, illustrate the interplay between societal expectations and personal interests in influencing career trajectories. The intrinsic enjoyment derived from studies supports Rosser's (2004, as cited in Xu, 2017) assertion that job satisfaction is affected by both external factors and the congruence of personal values with professional objectives.

Participants demonstrate that intrinsic satisfaction and compliance with established gender norms enhance positive career decision-making. Their viewpoints emphasize the interplay between individual fulfillment, societal norms, and the perceived advantages of engaging in careers that correspond with personal interests and values. This highlights the significance of analyzing both individual and cultural factors in the study of job satisfaction and career decisions. The narratives of the participants illustrate diverse strategies in career decision-making, influenced by their views on workload and the pursuit of job satisfaction. Some individuals seek to evade high-pressure positions to protect their enthusiasm and sustain a balanced lifestyle, while others are drawn to careers that align with their values and interpersonal abilities. The findings corroborate Rosser's (2004, as cited in Xu, 2017) assertion that job satisfaction is a complex construct influenced by personal priorities, professional conditions, and societal norms.

A comprehensive overview of the key themes identified from the 19 participants' interviews has been analyzed thematically. The result of the analysis highlights the diversity of career aspirations among participants, the significant influence of family and education, and the challenges posed by gender dynamics in various fields. Job market concerns and financial expectations are also prominent, reflecting the anxieties participants feel as they approach the transition from academia to professional life. Support systems, including family, peers, and mentors, play a crucial role in participants' academic and career journeys, while work-life balance remains a significant concern, particularly in demanding fields. The findings suggest that while participants are driven by their passions and academic interests, they are also pragmatic about the realities of the job market and the challenges they may face. The importance of support systems and the need for flexibility in managing work-life balance are recurrent themes that underscore the complex nature of navigating academic and professional life.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, the issues presented and discussed in the previous section will be revisited within the framework of the thesis, taking into account the research question. In this context, the observed problems will be conveyed, and necessary recommendations will be made.

Conclusions

The primary objective of this research was to explore the gender-based occupational selection aspirations of foundation university students in Turkey. By delving into the perceptions, motivations, and influences that shape students' educational and career choices, the study sought to uncover the underlying factors contributing to gender inequalities in higher education and the labor market. This study is crucial given that, despite women's increasing participation in the workforce, they remain concentrated in traditionally female-dominated professions, which are often lower-paid and less prestigious compared to male-dominated fields.

The research question guiding this study was: What are the gender-based occupational selection aspirations of foundation university students in Turkey? The problem statement highlighted that although women have made significant strides in traditionally male-dominated fields such as medicine and law, they are still underrepresented in many areas of science, technology, and leadership positions across various sectors. This persistent gender segregation in the workforce underscores the importance of understanding the factors influencing women's career choices, particularly in educational settings.

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Socialist Feminist Theory, which emphasizes the power relations between men and women and the resulting gender inequalities. Jackson (1998) argues that socialist feminist theory aims to analyze the localized contexts of women's everyday existence and the meanings they ascribe to their lives, while also considering the broader structural patterns of dominance and subordination. This framework was instrumental in interpreting the data and understanding the complex interplay between gender, education, and career aspirations.

Six main themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews with foundation university students enrolled in a program in either the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences or Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: Career Aspirations, Influence of Education & Family, Gender Dynamics, Job Market Concerns, Support Systems, and Work-Life Balance. These themes provided a comprehensive understanding of the students' professional choice inspirations and the factors influencing their decisions.

The findings revealed that personal interests related with the field of study play a significant role in shaping students' career aspirations. Many students developed interests related to their fields of study while also engaging in various extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, and music. This theme underscores the importance of aligning personal interests with career choices to achieve job satisfaction and fulfillment. The students' academic skills and prior knowledge about their majors significantly influenced their educational decisions along with their long-term career goals. Those with clearer career plans and more substantial prior knowledge about their chosen fields conducted more comprehensive research and had more specific expectations about their future careers. Conversely, as I experienced personally during the interviews, students with uncertainties about their fields or future professions lacked sufficient research and clear expectations before making their major choices. Students often chose fields where they believed they would be academically successful and where they could see a clear career trajectory. However, it was also observed that these students, who did not conduct sufficient research or have a clear career plan, were often enrolled in programs that did not offer a well-defined career path. Various studies have shown that interest has a substantial impact on educational decisions, degree attainment, career choices in STEM and non-STEM fields, and job satisfaction (Barge & Hough, 1988; Benbow & Minor, 1986; Fouad, 1999; Hansen & Sackett, 1993; Morris, 2003; Parsons, Adler, & Meece, 1984; Strong, 1943; Webb, Lubinski, & Boggs, 2002). The main factor identified for women leaving STEM majors and careers is a lack of enthusiasm for the subject or a stronger inclination towards other fields (Preston, 2004; Seymour & Hewitt, 1997). Interest is commonly acknowledged as a pivotal factor that can lead to the underrepresentation of women in specific fields. Male participants often mentioned being encouraged to pursue stable, high-paying careers, such as finance and engineering, highlighting external motivations driven by societal expectations and financial stability as an indicator of their social position as ‘breadwinners’ (Stromquist, 1989). Conversely, female participants frequently cited role models, such as parents who influenced them to choose careers that align with their personal values and interests, reflecting internal motivations rooted in personal fulfillment and self-expression.

Family influence and role models also played a crucial role in shaping their educational choices. As a second theme Influence of Education and Family was discussed focusing on the sub-topics as Family Influence, Educational Pathways and Teacher Influence. The students' perceptions of their fields varied widely. Some faced misconceptions and societal stereotypes about their majors, which influenced their self-perceptions and career decisions. These perceptions highlight the need for addressing societal attitudes and stereotypes that impact educational and career choices. Many participants expressed the influence and support of their families, peers and teachers on their educational choices. Examining the interviews revealed that guidance and encouragement provided by family members and teachers shape academic choices and related future careers of students.

Gender Dynamics is another crucial theme which explains how students career related choices are shaped by gender stereotypes and gender expectations. It is important to note that Gender Dynamics cannot be hold apart from Family Influence since family is considered as a transmitter of gender roles (Crespi, 2004). It is also clear from the interviews that participants face gender-based assumptions in particularly male-dominated fields which is captured as Engineering and Natural Sciences Faculties. They also emphasize public perception and expectation is in line with traditional gender roles. The interviews revealed gender-typed attitudes toward career choices, with some students expressing gender-related differences in their departments and fields. However, others believed that gender did not significantly impact career choices except in physically demanding jobs. This theme underscores the persistent influence of traditional gender roles and stereotypes on career aspirations. The theme is strongly connected to the Work-life Balance, as it can be understood from the analysis. It can be suggested by the findings that gender-related challenges often result in broader concerns about managing personal and professional responsibilities. Another finding about gender dynamics is that participants' experiences with gender may be shaped early on by family values and educational settings. These influences could either reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles, affecting participants' perceptions and experiences of gender dynamics later in life. While male participants often mentioned that they experience societal pressure to pursue technical or leadership roles, even when these do not align with their personal interests, female participants more frequently encounter direct challenges to their abilities in male-dominated fields.

Financial concerns, job market competitiveness and financial expectation are categorized under the theme of Job Market Concerns which also influence the participants educational choices to secure desirable positions and financial stability in the labor. The theme is strongly connected to Career Aspirations and Work-life balance concerns of the participants. High salary and financial security are more emphasized codes by male participants, however; female participants highlight that they are willing to accept lower income for meaningful work.

Peer support, family support and mentorship are also categorized under the Support Systems Theme which highlights the importance of networks to decide on their academic paths. The Support System and Work-life Balance emerged as the most frequent themes according to the analysis. Support Systems seem to be central to participants' success and career aspirations emphasizing the importance of building strong supportive communities in both educational and professional settings. Participants tend to rely on support systems to help them navigate challenges including gender dynamics and job market concerns. While peer support in the context of collaborative learning and problem-solving, particularly in technical fields is important for male participants, emotional and motivational support they receive from family, especially in overcoming gender-related challenges is emphasized among female participants.

Work-life Balance is the last theme formed by work-life balance concerns, flexibility in career and job satisfaction. Participants expressed their concerns about having a balanced life in the future between their professional and personal responsibilities. The strong relationship between work-life balance and support systems indicates that participants heavily rely on their networks to manage the demands of both work and personal life. This could involve seeking advice, finding role models, or simply having a supportive community to turn to during challenging times. The theme is perceived differently by both genders. Male participants tend to compromise on work-life balance to achieve long-term career goals. On the other hand, work-life balance on career success is main concern of female participants particularly in demanding fields which eventually put them in subordinate position in the labor market.

With the help of this thematic analysis, a comprehensive overview of the key themes identified from the 19 participants' interviews is provided. The analysis highlights the diversity of career aspirations among participants including their interests, ambitions, and career exploration. It also emphasizes the significant influence of family and education, and challenges posed by gender dynamics in various fields. Job market concerns and financial expectations are also prominent, reflecting the perspectives of the participants' transition from academia to labor market. Support systems, including family, peers, and mentors, play a crucial role in participants' academic and career journeys, while work-life balance remains a significant concern, particularly in demanding fields.

In spite of the fact that women are already making up a significant portion of the labor force, they continue to be concentrated in professions that have traditionally been associated with women and that, on average, pay them less than their male colleagues. Despite significant advancements in fields like medicine and law, substantial gender segregation remains in science, technology, and leadership positions within business, government, education, and the military. This persistent gender inequality underscores the importance of women choosing career paths that are not only fulfilling and satisfying but also financially viable. However, as noted by Rojewski (2005), a significant proportion of women still gravitate towards traditionally female occupations, leading to wage disparities compared to men, even when working full-time.

The findings of this study reveal a very complex interplay that exists between gender, educational attainment, and career goals among students attending foundation universities in Turkey. The development of initiatives to enhance gender equality in education and the workforce can be accomplished by educators and policymakers if they have a thorough understanding of the factors that influence the decisions that students make. Students can be assisted in making educated decisions that are in line with their interests and objectives by addressing societal prejudices, improving career advising, and offering role models. This will ultimately contribute to a labor market that is more equal and diversified.

In this study, the Career Centers of the specified universities were examined with regard to predicting the real-world outcomes of vocational inspirations among students attending foundation universities in Turkey, and relevant research concerning these centers' activities and alumni tracking systems was reviewed. The aim was to gain insights into how students' perceptions and expectations regarding their career choices correlate with real-world conditions. Accordingly, the career centers of several universities were contacted, yet it was concluded that existing alumni tracking systems were inadequate in yielding the necessary data. Supporting these findings, a study by Uzan (2023), which sought to identify both the average number of events provided by university career centers and the percentage of alumni recorded in their tracking systems, revealed that the ratio of graduates registered in tracking systems is 38.5% for state universities in Turkey, whereas it is 50.5% for foundation universities.

To advance the literature and enhance its relevance, it is recommended to promote the effective use of alumni tracking systems and to collaborate with relevant institutions to systematically monitor employment outcomes. During the course of this research, it was observed that foundation universities do not fully utilize their current alumni tracking systems and lack sufficient feedback regarding the sectors in which their employed graduates are working. In line with this perspective, Erdoğan (2014) notes that although the responsibilities of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) related to education, research, publications, academic staff, and students are defined in Law No. 2547, the alumni tracking system has not gained an institutional framework; consequently, adequate feedback on graduate employment information cannot be obtained.

Similarly, in a study by Karaaslan (2017), the career centers of both state and foundation universities in Ankara were evaluated in terms of organizational structure, the number and expertise of staff, as well as the services provided or anticipated. The findings indicate that alumni associations at foundation universities appear more active than those at state universities in organizing initiatives such as counseling, coaching, and seminars focusing on graduates' work experiences or areas of specialization. While measures such as forming connections with alumni who have become employers, internship opportunities, and part-time or full-time job placements are evident at foundation universities, the number of students participating in career center activities in these institutions remains notably limited.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study underscore the importance of sustained efforts to challenge entrenched gender roles and stereotypes that continue to influence educational and career choices. By fostering an environment within educational institutions that is inclusive and supportive of all individuals, we can encourage students - regardless of gender - to pursue careers aligned with their genuine interests and potentials.

REFERENCES

Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society*, 4(2), 139-158. doi:10.1177/089124390004002002

Acker, S. (1987). Feminist Theory and the Study of Gender and Education. *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale de l'Education,* 33(4), 419–435. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3444244

Altermatt, E. R. (2019). Academic support from peers as a predictor of academic self-efficacy among college students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research Theory & Practice, 21*(1), 21–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025116686588

Althuser, L and ideological state apparatuses. In L. Althusser (Ed.), Lenin and philosophy and other essays. London: New Left Books, 1971.

Apostal, R., & Bilden, J. (1991). Educational and occupational aspirations of rural high school students. Journal of Career Development, 18, 153–160.

Arnot, M. (1982). Male hegemony, social class and women's education. Journal of Education, 64-89.

Aydemir, L. (2018). Üniversite öğrencilerinin meslek tercihlerini belirleyen faktörlere yönelik bir inceleme. *Anemon Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 6*(5), 713-723.

Barge, B. N., & Hough, L. M. (1988). Utility of biographical data for the prediction of job performance. In L. M. Hough (Ed.), Literature review: Utility of temperament, biodata, and interest assessment for predicting job performance (ARI Research Note 88–020). Alexandria, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute.

Barone, C. (2011). Some things never change: Gender segregation in higher education across eight nations and three decades. Sociology of education, 84(2), 157-176.

Beller, A. (1982). Occupational segregation by sex: determinants and changes. Journal of Human Resources 17(3), 371–392.

Benbow, C. P., & Minor, L. L. (1986). Mathematically talented males and females and achievement in the high school sciences. American Educational Research Journal, 23, 425–436.

Bernstein, B. (2003). Class, codes and control: The structuring of pedagogic discourse (Vol. 4). Psychology Press.

Bertaux, N. E. (1991). The roots of today's 'women's jobs' and 'men's jobs': using the index of dissimilarity to measure occupational segregation by gender. Explorations in Economic History 28(4), 433–459.

Betz, N. E., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1987). The career psychology of women. New York: Academic Press.

Betz, N. E., & Schifano, R. S. (2000). Evaluation of an intervention to increase realistic self-efficacy and interests in college women. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 56, 35–52.

Bhog, D., & Ghose, M. (2014). Writing gender in: Reflections on writing middle-school political science textbooks in India. Gender & Development, 22(1), 49-62.

Bian, L., Leslie, S. J., & Cimpian, A. (2017). Gender stereotypes about intellectual ability emerge early and influence children's interests. Science, 355(6323), 389-391.

Bian, L., Leslie, S. J., & Cimpian, A. (2018). Evidence of bias against girls and women in contexts that emphasize intellectual ability. *American Psychologist*, *73*(9), 1139.

Bobbitt-Zeher, S. 2007. 'The Gender Income Gap and the Role of Education.' Sociology of Education 80:1–22.

Bordón, P., Canals, C., & Mizala, A. (2017). *Gender differences in college major choice. The case of Chile*. mimeo CEA, Ingeniería Industrial, U. de Chile, Santiago.

Bourdieu, P. and Passerson, J.C. Reproduction in education, society and culture. London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1977. (b)

Bowles, S. And Gintis, H. Schooling in capitalist America. Boston and London Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.

Bradley, K. (2000). The incorporation of women into higher education: Paradoxical outcomes? The Sociology of Education, 73, 1–18. doi:10.2307/2673196.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. Qualitative research in psychology, 3(2), 77-101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589-597. doi:10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

Brewster, P. School days, school days. In D. Spender and E. Sarah (Eds.), Learning to lose. London: The Women Press, 1980

Brown, C. and M. Corcoran. 1997. 'Sex-based Differences in School Content and the Male-Female Wage Gap." Journal of Labor Economics 15(3):431–65.

Cardador, M. T., Damian, R. I., & Wiegand, J. P. (2021). Does more mean less?: Interest surplus and the gender gap in STEM careers. Journal of Career Assessment, 29(1), 76-97.

Carrell, S. E., Page, M. E., & West, J. E. (2010). Sex and science: How professor gender perpetuates the gender gap. *The Quarterly journal of economics, 125*(3), 1101-1144.

Ceci, S. J., & Williams, W. M. (2007). Why aren't more women in science? Top researchers debate the evidence. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Ceci, S. J., & Williams, W. M. (2011). Understanding current causes of women's underrepresentation in science. Proceedings of the National academy of sciences, 108(8), 3157-3162.

Ceci, S. J., Williams, W. M., & Barnett, S. M. (2009). Women's underrepresentation in science: Sociocultural and biological considerations. Psychological Bulletin, 135, 218–261.

Çelebi, N. (1990). *Kadınlarımızın cinsiyet rolü tutumları*. Sebat Ofset.

Charles, M. (1992). Cross-national variation in occupational sex segregation. American Sociological Review, 483-502.

Charles, M. 2005. "National Skill Regimes, Postindustrialism and Sex Segregation." Social Politics 12(2):289–316.

Charles, M. and C. Bradley. 2002. 'Equal but Separate? A Cross-national Study of Sex Segregation in Higher Education." American Sociological Review 67: 573–99.

Charles, M. and D. Grusky. 2004. Occupational Ghettos: The Worldwide Segregation of Men and Women. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Charles, M., & Bradley, K. (2002). Equal but separate? A cross- national study of sex segregation in higher education. American Sociological Review, 67, 573–599. doi:10.2307/3088946.

Charles, M., & Bradley, K. (2009). Indulging our gendered selves? Sex segregation by field of study in 44 countries. *American journal of sociology, 114*(4), 924-976.

Chen, Y., So, W. W. M., Zhu, J., & Chiu, S. W. K. (2024). STEM learning opportunities and career aspirations: the interactive effect of students' self-concept and perceptions of STEM professionals. International Journal of STEM Education, 11(1), 1.

Cheryan, S., Ziegler, S. A., Montoya, A. K., & Jiang, L. (2017). Why are some STEM fields more gender balanced than others?. *Psychological bulletin, 143*(1), 1.

Chodorow, N. (2018). Family structure and feminine personality. In Feminism and philosophy (pp. 199-216). Routledge.

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2018). Using thematic analysis in counselling and psychotherapy research: A critical reflection. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 18(2), 107-110. doi:10.1002/capr.12165

Clarricoates, K. (2012). The importance of being Ernest… Emma… Tom… Jane: The perception and categorization of gender conformity and gender deviation in primary schools. In Schooling for women's work (pp. 26-41). Routledge.

Cohn, S. (1985). The Process of Occupational Sex-Typing: The Feminization of Clerical Work in Great Britain. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Cook, T. D., Church, M. B., Ajanaku, S., Shadish, W. R., Jr., Kim, J.-R., & Cohen, R. (1996). The development of occupational aspirations and expectations among inner-city boys. *Child Development*, *67*(6), 3368–3385.

Coser, L. (1974). Greedy institutions: Patterns of undivided commitment.

Crespi, I. (2004). Socialization and gender roles within the family: A study on adolescents and their parents in Great Britain. *MCFA Annals*, *3*(2), 1-8.

Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. The counseling psychologist, 35(2), 236-264.

Davey, F. H., & Stoppard, J. M. (1993). Some factors affecting the occupational expectations of female adolescents. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 43, 235–250.

David, M.E. (1984). 'Women, Family and Education'. In Acker, S. et al. (eds.) World Year- book of Education: Women in Education. London: Kegan Page, pp. 191-2

Davies, M. (1982). Women's Place is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers, 1870-1930. Philadel- phia: Temple University Press.

Davin, A. (1979). 'Mind that you do as you are Told': Reading Books for Board School Girls, 1870–1902. Feminist Review, 3(1), 89-98.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Plenum Press.

Delphy, C., & Leonard, D. (1992). Familiar exploitation: A new analysis of marriage in contemporary western societies.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research. sage.*

Dickson, L. (2010). Race and gender differences in college major choice. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 627, 108–124. doi:10.1177/0002716209348747.

DiDonato, L., & Strough, J. (2013). Do college students' gender-typed attitudes about occupations predict their real-world decisions? Sex Roles, 68, 536-549.

Donovan, J. (2000). *Feminist theory: the intellectual tradition*. New York: the International Continuum.

Dublin, T. (1979). Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860. New York: Columbia University Press.

Dumais, S. A. (2002). Cultural capital, gender, and school success: the role of habitus. Sociology of Education, 75(1), 44. https://doi.org/10.2307/3090253

Eagly, A. H., Wood, W., & Diekman, A. B. (2000). Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: A current appraisal. The developmental social psychology of gender, 12(174), 9781410605245-12.

Eagly, A. H. (1987). Reporting sex differences.

Eccles, J. S. (1987). Gender roles and women's achievement-related decisions. *Psychology of women Quarterly, 11*(2), 135-172.

Eccles, J. (2011). Gendered educational and occupational choices: Applying the Eccles et al. model of achievement-related choices. International Journal of Behavioral Development, 35(3), 195-201.

Eccles, J. S. (1994). Understanding women’s educational and occupational choices: Applying the Eccles et al. model of achievement-related choices. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 18, 585–609.

Eccles, J. S., & Jacobs, J. E. (1986). Social forces shape math attitudes and performance. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, *11*(2), 367-380.

Eisenstein, H. (1984). *Contemporary feminist thought. Science and Society*. G. K. Hall & Co.

England, P. 2005. ‘Emerging Theories of Care Work.” Annual Review of Sociology 31:381–99.

England, P., & Li, S. (2006). Desegregation stalled: The changing gender composition of college majors, 1971–2002. Gender & Society, 20, 657–677. doi:10.1177/08912432 06290753.

Entwisle, D., Karl Alexander, and Linda Steffel. 1994. “The Gender Gap in Math: Its Possible Origins in Neighborhood Effects.” American Sociological Review 59(6):822–38.

Epstein, C. (1993). Women in Law. Second Edition. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Erdoğan, A. (2014). Türkiye'de yükseköğretimin gündemi için politika önerisi. *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi*, (1), 1-17.

Erguvan, İ. D. (2010). Vakıf Üniversitelerinin Türkiye Yükseköğretim Sistemine Etkilerinin İncelenmesi (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi). *Marmara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, İstanbul*.

Erikson, E. H. (1989). Elements of a psychoanalytic theory of psychosocial development. In S. I. Greenspan & G. H. Pollock (Eds.), The course of life, Vol. 1: Infancy (pp. 15–83). Madison: International Universities.

Faulkner, W. 2007. “Nuts and Bolts and People: Gender-troubled Engineering Identities.” Social Studies of Science 37(2):331–56.

Favara, M. (2012). The cost of acting'girly': Gender stereotypes and educational choices.

Firestone, S. (2003). *The Dialectic of Sex: The case for feminist revolution*. 1970. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Flick, U. (2014). *Mapping the field*. The sage handbook of qualitative data analysis.

Forgasz, H. J., Leder, G. C., & Kloosterman, P. (2004). New perspectives on the gender stereotyping of mathematics. Mathematical Thinking and Learning, 6, 389–420. doi:10.1207/s15327833mtl0604_2.

Fouad, N. A. (1999). Validity evidence for interest inventories. In M. L. Savickas & R. L. Spokane (Eds.), Vocational interests: Meaning, mea- surement, and counseling use (pp. 193–209). Palo Alto, CA: Davis- Black.

Fouad, N. A., Guillen, A., Harris-Hodge, E., Henry, C., Novakovic, A., Terry, S., & Kantamneni, N. (2006). Need, awareness, and use of career services for college students. *Journal of Career Assessment*, *14*(4), 407–420.

Fouad, N., Fitzpatrick, M., & Liu, J. P. (2011). Persistence of women in engineering careers: A qualitative study of current and former female engineers. Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering.

Fryer Jr, R. G., & Levitt, S. D. (2010). An empirical analysis of the gender gap in mathematics. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, *2*(2), 210-240.

Gallagher, A. M., & Kaufman, J. C. (2005). Gender differences in math- ematics: An integrative psychological approach. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gilbreath, L. C. (2015). Factors Impacting Women's Participation in STEM Fields.

Glass, C., & Minnotte, K. (2010). Recruiting and hiring women in STEM fields. Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 3, 218– 229. doi:10.1037/a0020581

Gneezy, U., Niederle, M., & Rustichini, A. (2003). Performance in competitive environments: Gender differences. The quarterly journal of economics, 118(3), 1049-1074.

Goldin, C. (1990). Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women. New York: Oxford University Press.

Goldin, C. (2014). A grand gender convergence: Its last chapter. *American economic review*, *104*(4), 1091-1119.

Goldin, C., & Katz, L. F. (2012). The Most Egalitarian of All Professions.

Gottfredson, G. D. (2002). Interests, Aspirations, Self-Estimates, and the Self-Directed Search. Journal of Career Assessment, 10(2), 200–208. https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072702010002005

Gottfredson, L. S. (2002). Gottfredson's theory of circumscription, compromise, and self-creation. *Career choice and development/Jossey-Bass*.

Gottfredson, L. S. (2005). Applying Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise in career guidance and counseling. *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work*, *1*, 71-100.

Gottfredson, L. S., & Becker, H. J. (1981). A challenge to vocational psychology: How important are aspirations in determining male career development? Journal of Vocational Behavior, 18(2), 121–137. https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(81)90001-4

Griffith, A. L. (2014). Faculty gender in the college classroom: Does it matter for achievement and major choice?. *Southern Economic Journal*, *81*(1), 211-231.

Hakim, C. (2002). Lifestyle preferences as determinants of women's differentiated labor market careers. Work and occupations, 29(4), 428-459.

Haladyna, T., & Shaughnessy, J. (1982). Attitudes toward science: A quantitative synthesis. Science Education, 66(4), 547 – 563.

Hansen, J. C., & Sackett, S. A. (1993). Agreement between college major and vocational interests for female athlete and non-athlete college stu- dents. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 43, 298–309.

Hegewisch, A., Liepmann, H., Hayes, J., & Hartmann, H. (2010). Separate and not equal? Gender segregation in the labor market and the gender wage gap. Briefing paper from The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR). Retrieved from http:// www.iwpr.org/

Hill, C., Corbett, C., & St Rose, A. (2010). Why so few? Women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. American Association of University Women. 1111 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Holland, J. L. (1997). Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments. *Psychological Assessment Resources*.

Holland, J. L. (1966). A psychological classification scheme for vocations and major fields. *Journal of counseling psychology*, *13*(3), 278.

Humlum, M. K., Kleinjans, K. J., & Nielsen, H. S. (2012). An economic analysis of identity and career choice. *Economic inquiry*, *50*(1), 39-61.

Hunt, J. (2016). Why do women leave science and engineering?. *ILR Review*, *69*(1), 199-226.

İstanbul Planlama Ajansı (İPA). (2023). *İstanbul'da üniversiteli olmanın maliyeti*. İstanbul Planlama Ajansı. https://ipa.istanbul/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/KENT-GUNDEMI-ISTANBULDA-UNIVERSITELI-OLMAK.pdf

Jackson, S. (1998). Feminist Social Theory. In S. Jackson & J. Jones (Eds.), Contemporary Feminist Theories (pp. 12–33). Edinburgh University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrxc7.4

Jackson, S., & Jones, J. (Eds.). (1998). Contemporary Feminist Theories. Edinburgh University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrxc7

Jacobs, J. 1995. 'Gender and Academic Specialties: Trends among College Degree Recipients during the 1980s." Sociology of Education 68:81–98.

Jacobs, J. E., Davis-Kean, P., Bleeker, M., Eccles, J. S., & Malanchuk, O. (2005). "I can, but I don't want to": The impact of parents, interests, and activities on gender differences in math. In A. M. Gallagher & J. C. Kaufman (Eds.), Gender differences in mathematics: An integrative psychological approach (pp. 246–263). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Jaggar, A. M. (1983). Feminist politics and human nature. Rowman & Littlefield.

Janeway, E. (1971). Man's world, woman's place: A study in social mythology.

Jones, P. J., Park, S. Y., & Lefevor, G. T. (2018). Contemporary college student anxiety: The role of academic distress, financial stress, and support. *Journal of College Counseling*, *21*(3), 252–264. https://doi.org/10.1002/jocc.12107

Judd, P., & Oswald, P. (1997). Employment desirability: The interac- tive effects of gender-typed profile, stimulus sex, and gender- typed occupation. Sex Roles, 37, 467–476. doi:10.1023/ A:1025669801166.

Kahn, S., & Ginther, D. (2017). Women and STEM (No. w23525). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Karaaslan, S. (2017). Ankara'daki üniversitelerin kariyer merkezleri üzerine bir değerlendirme. *ResearchGate*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313051152

King, N., & Brooks, J. (2018). *Thematic analysis in organisational research*. In C. Cassell, A. Cunliffe, & G. Grandy (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative business and management research methods* (pp. 219-236). SAGE Publications Ltd.

Korkut-Owen, F., & Mutlu, T. (2016). Türkiye'de fen bilimleri, teknoloji, mühendislik ve matematik alanlarının seçiminde cinsiyetler arası farklılıklar. *Yaşadıkça Eğitim*, *30*(2), 53-72.

Kugler, A. D., Tinsley, C. H., & Ukhaneva, O. (2021). Choice of majors: Are women really different from men?. Economics of Education Review, 81, 102079.

Levy, D. C. (2006). Private Public Interfaces in Higher Education Development: Two Sectors in Sync. *Paper presented in the Conference on Higher Education and Development: the 2006 World Bank Regional Seminar on Development Economics, Beḣing, China*.

Liben, L., & Bigler, R. (2002). The developmental course of gender differentiation: Conceptualizing, measuring, and evaluating con- structs and pathways. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 67 (2, Serial No. 269). doi:10.1111/ 15405834.t01-1-00187

Lordan, G., & Pischke, J. S. (2022). Does Rosie like riveting? Male and female occupational choices. *Economica*, *89*(353), 110-130.

Lune, H., & Berg, B. L. (2017). Qualitative research methods for the social sciences. Pearson.

Lynch, K. (2000). Research and theory on equality and education. In Handbook of the Sociology of Education (pp. 85-105). Springer, Boston, MA.

Makarova, E., Aeschlimann, B., & Herzog, W. (2019, July). The gender gap in STEM fields: The impact of the gender stereotype of math and science on secondary students' career aspirations. In Frontiers in Education (Vol. 4, p. 60). Frontiers Media SA.

Marini, M., P. Mooney, E. Finley, and A. Beutel. 1996. 'Gender and Job Values." Sociology of Education 69:49–65.

Marsh, H. W. (1986). Verbal and math self-concepts: An internal/external frame of reference model. American Educational Research Journal, 23, 129 –149.

Marsh, H. W., & Yeung, A. S. (1998). Longitudinal structural equation models in academic self-concept and achievement: Gender differences in the development of math and English constructs. American Educational Research Journal, 35, 705–738.

Martin, C. L., & Halverson, C. F. (1981). A schematic processing model of sex-typing and stereotyping in children. Child Development, 52, 1119–1184. doi:10.2307/1129498.

Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography—describing conceptions of the world around us. Instructional science, 10(2), 177-200.

Maynard, M. (1995). Beyond the 'Big Three': the development of feminist theory into the 1990s. Women's History Review, 4(3), 259-281.

McCormick, C. M., Kuo, S., & Masten, A. S. (2011). Developmental tasks across the life span. In K. L. Fingerman, C. A. Berg, J. Smith, & T. C. Antonucci (Eds.), Handbook of life-span develop- ment (pp. 117–139). New York: Springer Publishing Co.

Meece, J. L. (2006). Trends in women's employment in the early 21st century. Educational Research and Evaluation, 12(4), 297-303.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. John Wiley & Sons.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Millet, K. (1972). Theory of Sexual Politics. *American Values in Transition: A*.Millet, K. (2000). Theory of sexual politics. Radical feminism: A documentary reader, 122-153.

Mizikaci, F. (2010). Isomorphic and diverse institutions among Turkish foundation universities. *Egitim ve Bilim-Education and Science, 35*(157).

Morgan, S. L., Gelbgiser, D., & Weeden, K. A. (2013). Feeding the pipeline: Gender, occupational plans, and college major selection. Social science research, 42(4), 989-1005.

Morris, M. A. (2003). A meta-analytic investigation of vocational interest- based job fit, and its relationship to job satisfaction, performance, and turnover. Dissertation Abstracts International, 64, 2428.

Niu, L. (2016). Parental Motivational Practice, Parent Involvement, and Students' Choice of Study Field in College. *World Journal of Education*, *6*(5), 36-48.

Noe, C. (2010). Family background and female's choice of male's subjects: evidence from Italy. *ChilD*, *1*, 2010.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1-13. doi:10.1177/1609406917733847

Nurjanah, N. (2024). Gender equality in civic education textbook. Palastren Jurnal Studi Gender, 16(2), 281. https://doi.org/10.21043/palastren.v16i2.19089

O'Brien, M., Peyton, V., Mistry, R., Hruda, L., Jacobs, A., Caldera, Y., ... Roy, C. (2000). Gender-role cognition in three-year-old boys and girls. Sex Roles, 42, 1007–1025. doi:10.1023/A:1007036600980

Oakley, A. (2016). *Sex, gender and society*. Routledge.

Oswald, D. L. (2008). Gender stereotypes and women's reports of liking and ability in traditionally masculine and feminine occupa- tions. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 32, 196–203. doi:10.1111/ j.1471-6402.2008.00424.x.

Owen, F. K., Kelecioğlu, H., & Owen, D. W. Cinsiyetlere göre üniversitelerdeki on bir yıllık eğilim: Kariyer danışmanlığı için doğurgular1.

Owen, S. (2023). College major choice and beliefs about relative performance: An experimental intervention to understand gender gaps in STEM. *Economics of Education Review*, *97*, 102479.

Özaydınlık, K. (2014). Toplumsal cinsiyet temelinde Türkiye'de kadın ve eğitim. *Sosyal Politika Çalışmaları Dergisi*, (33).

Özkurt, Ö., & Yakın, İ. (2020). 2013-2019 Yılları Arasında Türkiye'deki Üniversitelerin Stem Alanlarında Kayıtlı Öğrenci Sayılarının Cinsiyet Bağlamında Karşılaştırılması. Euroasıa Journal Of Socıal Scıences & Humanıtıes, 7(13), 68-85.

Parsons, J. E., Adler, T., & Meece, J. L. (1984). Sex differences in achievement: A test of alternative theories. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46, 26–43.

Patnaik, A., Wiswall, M., & Zafar, B. (2021). College majors 1. The Routledge handbook of the economics of education, 415-457.

Penner, A. M., & Paret, M. (2008). Gender differences in mathematics achievement: Exploring the early grades and the extremes. *Social Science Research*, *37*(1), 239-253.

Perera, H. N., & McIlveen, P. (2018). Vocational interest profiles/ Profile replicability and relations with the STEM major choice and the Big-Five. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 106, 84-100.

Porter, S. R., & Umbach, P. D. (2006). College major choice: An analysis of person–environment fit. *Research in higher education*, *47*, 429-449.

Powell, R., and Clarke, J. A Note on marginality. In S. Hall and T. Jefferson (Eds.), Resistance through rituals. London: Hutchinson, in association with the CCCS Birmingham, 19

Prediger, D. J. (1982). Dimensions underlying Holland's hexagon: Missing link between interests and occupations? Journal of Vocational Behavior, 21, 259–287.

Preston, A. E. (2004). Leaving science: Occupational exit from scientific careers. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Preston, J. A. (1993). Domestic ideology, school reformers, and female teachers: teaching becomes women's work in nineteenth-century New England. New England Quarterly 66(4), 531–551.

Preston, J. A. (1999). Occupational gender segregation trends and explanations. The Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance, 39(5), 611-624..pdf

Ramirez, F. and C. Wotipka. (2001). 'Slowly but Surely? The Global Expansion of Women's Participation in Science and Engineering Fields of Study, 1972–92.' Sociology of Education 74:231–51.

Reskin, B. (1993). "Sex Segregation in the Workplace." Annual Review of Sociology 19:241–70.

Reskin, B. F., & Roos, P. A. (1990). Job Queues, Gender Queues: Explaining Women's Inroads Into Male Occupations. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Ridgeway, C. and A. Smith-Lovin. (1999). "The Gender System and Interaction." Annual Review of Sociology 25:191–216.

Rojewski, J. W. (2005). Occupational aspirations: Constructs, meanings, and application. Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work, 131-154.

Rosenzweig, E. Q., Chen, X. Y., Song, Y., Baldwin, A., Barger, M. M., Cotterell, M. E., ... & Lemons, P. P. (2024). Beyond STEM attrition: changing career plans within STEM fields in college is associated with lower motivation, certainty, and satisfaction about one's career. International Journal of STEM Education, 11(1), 15.

Saldaña, J. (2021). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Sancar, S. (2016). *Türk modernleşmesinin cinsiyeti: Erkekler devlet, kadınlar aile kurar*. İletişim Yayınları.

Schoon, I., & Parsons, S. (2002). Teenage aspirations for future careers and occupational outcomes. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 60(2), 262-288. https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2001.1867

Schope, R., & Eliason, M. (2004). Sissies and tomboys: Gender role behaviors and homophobia. Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services: Issues in Practice, Policy & Research, 16, 73–97. doi:10.1300/J041v16n02_05.

Scott, J. W. (2007). Gender as a useful category of historical analysis. In *Culture, society and sexuality* (pp. 77-97). Routledge.

Sellers, N., Satcher, J., & Comas, R. (1999). Children's occupational aspirations: Compar- isons by gender, gender role identity and socioeconomic status. Professional School Counseling, 2, 314–317.

Seymour, E., & Hewitt, N. M. (1997). Talking about leaving: Why undergraduates leave the sciences. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Sikora, J., & Pokropek, A. (2012). Gender segregation of adolescent science career plans in 50 countries. Science Education, 96(2), 234-264. Social Psychology, 46, 26–43.

Sinclair, S., Nilsson, A., & Cederskär, E. (2019). Explaining gender-typed educational choice in adolescence/ The role of social identity, self-concept, goals, grades, and interests. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 110, 54-71.

Smith, D. E. (1987). The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology. University of Toronto Press.

Stromquist, N. P. (1989). Determinants of Educational Participation and Achievement of Women in the Third World: A Review of the Evidence and a Theoretical Critique. Review of Educational Research, 59(2), 143–183. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543059002143

Stromquist, N. P. (1990). Gender inequality in education: accounting for women's subordination. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 11(2), 137-153.

Strong, E. K., Jr. (1943). The vocational interests of men and women. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Su, R., & Rounds, J. (2015). All STEM fields are not created equal: People and things interests explain gender disparities across STEM fields. Frontiers in psychology, 6, 189.

Tan, E. M. (1979). *Kadın: Ekonomik yaşamı ve eğitimi*. Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları.

Teichler, U. (Ed.). (2007). *Careers of university graduates: Views and experiences in comparative perspectives* (Vol. 17). Springer Science & Business Media.

Tolan, B. (1991). Aile, Cinsiyet ve Cinsel Roller. Türk Aile Ansiklopedisi.

Turner, S. E., & Bowen, W. G. (1999). Choice of major: The changing (unchanging) gender gap. *ILR Review*, *52*(2), 289-313.

Uzan, M. F. (2023). *Türkiye'de yükseköğretimin genişlemesi ve istihdam edilebilirlik ilişkisi* (Politika Notu 2023/49). İstanbul: İLKE İlim Kültür Eğitim Vakfı. https://doi.org/10.26414/pn049

Vatandaş, C. (2007). Toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinsiyet rollerinin algilanişi. *Istanbul Journal of Sociological Studies*, (35), 29-56.

Vurucu, F. (2010). Meslek Lisesi Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimi Yeterliliği ve Meslek Seçimini Etkileyen Faktörler. Yüksek Lisans Tezi. İstanbul: Yeditepe Üniversitesi

Wahl, K. H., & Blackhurst, A. (2000). Factors affecting the occupational and educational aspirations of children and adolescents. Professional Counseling, 3, 367–374.

Walby, S. (2013). Patriarchy at work: Patriarchal and capitalist relations in employment, 1800-1984. John Wiley & Sons.

Watson, R., McKenna, H., Cowman, S., & Keady, J. (Eds.). (2008). Nursing research: Designs and methods. Elsevier Health Sciences.

Watt, H. M. G., & Eccles, J. S. (2008). Gender and occupational outcomes: Longitudinal assessments of individual, social, and cultural influences. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Webb, R. M., Lubinski, D., & Benbow, C. P. (2002). Mathematically facile adolescents with math–science aspirations: New perspectives on their educational and vocational development. Journal of Educational Psychology, 94, 785–794.

Weisgram, E., Dinella, L., & Fulcher, M. (2011). The role of masculinity/femininity, values, and occupational value affordances in shaping young men's and women's occupational choices. Sex Roles, 65, 243–258. doi:10.1007/s11199-011-9998-0.

Williams, C. L. (1992). The glass escalator: Hidden advantages for men in the "female" professions. *Social problems*, *39*(3), 253-267.

Wilson, K., & Boldizar, J. (1990). Gender segregation in higher education: Effects of aspirations, mathematics achievement, and income. Sociology of Education, 63, 62–74. doi:10.2307/ 2112897.

Wissema, J. G., Verloop, J., Devrim, N., & Belge, T. (2009). *Üçüncü kuşak üniversitelere doğru: Geçiş döneminde üniversiteleri yönetmek*. Özeğin Üniversitesi.

Wiswall, M., & Zafar, B. (2021). Human capital investments and expectations about career and family. Journal of Political Economy, 129(5), 1361-1424.

Wiswall, M., & Zafar, B. (2021). New approaches to understanding choice of major. NBER Reporter, (2), 18-21.

Wolfe, L., & Betz, N. (1981). Traditionality of choice and sex-role identification as moderators of the congruence of occupational choice in college women. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 18, 43– 55. doi:10.1016/0001-8791(81)90028-2.

Woodhall, M. (1973). Investment in women: A reappraisal of the concept of human capital. International Review of Education, 9-29.

Worell, J. (2001). *Encyclopedia of Women and Gender: Sex Similarities and Differences and the Impact of Society on Gender*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Worley, J. T., Meter, D. J., Ramirez Hall, A., Nishina, A., & Medina, M. A. (2023). Prospective associations between peer support, academic competence, and anxiety in college students. *Social Psychology of Education*, *26*(4), 1017–1035. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-023-09798-1

Xu, Y. J. (2017). Attrition of women in STEM: Examining job/major congruence in the career choices of college graduates. *Journal of Career Development*, *44*(1), 3-19.

Yükseköğretim Kurulu. (n.d.). *Yükseköğretim Bilgi Yönetim Sistemi: İstatistikler*. Yükseköğretim Kurulu. https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. Question Form

Gendered Based Occupational Aspirations of Foundation University Students

Question Form

Participant Criteria:

1. Being a student at a foundation university.
2. Studying in one of the undergraduate programs in the specified faculties:
   - Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
   - Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences

Interview Questions
Section 1: Personal Information

1. Can you tell us about yourself? Can you provide information about your age, marital status, languages you know, your family, and your hometown?

2. What talents or hobbies do you have?
   - How do you spend your time outside of school?
   - Do you play any instruments or engage in any art/sports activities?

3. Where did you grow up?
   - In which cities did you spend most of your educational life?
   - Where did you live until the age of 12?

4. Where and with whom do you live? (Home, dormitory, apartment, etc.)
   - What can you say about the area you live in?
   - Did you need to move for your university education?
   - How do you finance your accommodation?

5. What did you want to be when you were a child? Who did you admire the most professionally?

6. Can you tell us about your educational background?
   - Which high school did you attend?

Section 2: Family Information and Financial Status

7. What is your mother’s educational background and profession?
   - Is she currently working?
   - Does she know any foreign languages?
8. What is your father’s educational background and profession?
   - Is he currently working?
   - Does he know any foreign languages?

9. If you have siblings, what are their educational backgrounds and professions?

10. Can you briefly describe the division of labor at home? (Cooking, cleaning, etc.)

11. Where and how do you spend your holidays with your family? Do you participate in cultural activities together? (Concerts, theater, etc.)
- How do you cover your accommodation expenses?
- Do you have any income?
- How much support do you receive from your family?
- Have you ever traveled abroad with your family?

12. How do you cover your educational expenses?
- Approximately how much are your educational expenses?

Section 3: Educational Information

13. What is your major and which year are you in?
- How many years have you been in this major?
- Did you attend a preparatory school?
- How frequently do you attend classes?

14. Why did you choose your major? How did you decide that it was suitable for you?
- What information did you have about your major before choosing it?
- Whose idea was this choice, and who supported you? Did you have any relatives or acquaintances who had studied in this field before?
- Did you consider choosing other majors?
- Did you have the chance to study the same major at a state university?

15. Where was your major on your list of preferences?
- Did you take a gap year?

16. What are your impressions of your major?
- Did it meet your expectations? Why? How?
- What do you think other people think about students in your major?
- What kind of goals do you think male and female students in your major have?

17. How would you describe the male and female students in your major? Do they have any characteristic traits?
- Are the expectations of male and female students in your major different? How?

18. What kind of advantages did you expect to have by choosing your major?
- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of your major?
- What do you like and dislike about your major?
- Are you happy with studying in this major?

19. What were your reasons for choosing your university?
- Did you consider other universities? Which ones?
- What information did you have about your university before making your choice?
- How would you describe your university?

20. Can you tell us about your social life on campus?
- How do you spend your time at the university outside of classes?
- Is there any activity you particularly enjoy doing on campus?
- Is there a special area on campus where you like to socialize?
- How do you commute?

21. Did you attend any preschool education? (Kindergarten, etc.)
- Have you been abroad for educational purposes?
- Can you tell us about your preparation process for the university entrance exam? (Tutoring, private lessons, etc.)

Section 4: Career Plans

22. Are there professions suitable for women or men? What do you think?

23. Is there any profession you would never consider doing?

24. Is there any profession your family would never approve of for you?

25. Have you made a decision about your career? When did you first decide?

26. What job options are available to graduates from your major?
- Do you think you will easily find a job after graduation?
- What kind of job do you hope to find after graduation?
- Which profession do you think you are most likely to pursue? Considering your current education and status at school, which profession do you think you will most likely be in after completing your education?

27. What qualities do you think are necessary to be successful in the profession you plan to pursue?

28. What do you think about people who work in the profession you plan to pursue? Why do you think they choose that profession, or why should they?

29. What are your financial expectations from your future job?
- Do you think your future job will support the lifestyle you aim for?
- What can you say about the working conditions (working hours, pace, etc.) of the job you plan to do in the future?

30. If you were completely free to choose, which job would you prefer to do for the rest of your life?

APPENDIX 2. Ethics Committee Approval

ANKARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ
ALT ETİK KURULU
KARAR ÖRNEĞİ

Karar Tarihi : **17/07/2023**

Toplantı Sayısı : **16**

Karar Sayısı : **169**

169- Üniversitemiz Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, **Öğr. Üyesi Prof. Dr. Mustafa SEVER'**in danışmanlığını yaptığı**,** yüksek lisans öğrencisi **Hilal Ülkü AY**'ın "Vakıf Üniversitesi Öğrencilerinin Cinsiyete Dayalı Mesleki Seçim Esinlenmeleri/ Gender Based Occupation Selection Aspirations of Foundation University Students in Turkey" başlıklı teziniz ile ilgili 21/06/2023 tarihli "İnsan Üzerinde Yapılan Klinik Dışı Araştırmalar Başvuru Formu" Etik Kurulumuzca incelendi.

Üniversitemiz Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, **Öğr. Üyesi Prof. Dr. Mustafa SEVER'**in danışmanlığını yaptığı**,** yüksek lisans öğrencisi **Hilal Ülkü AY**'ın "Vakıf Üniversitesi Öğrencilerinin Cinsiyete Dayalı Mesleki Seçim Esinlenmeleri/ Gender Based Occupation Selection Aspirations of Foundation University Students in Turkey" başlıklı teziniz ile ilgili araştırma protokolüne uyulması ve etik onay tarihinden itibaren geçerli olması koşuluyla uygulanmasının etik açıdan uygun olduğuna oy birliği ile karar verildi.

ASLININ AYNIDIR
17/07/2023

ORIGINALITY REPORT

The main part of my thesis titled "Gendered Based Occupational Aspirations of Foundation University Students" (excluding cover pages, preface, abstract, table of contents, abbreviations/symbols, index of tables, index of figures, footness, appendices, curriculum vitae) through "Turnitin Plagiarism Prevention Program" examined and the relevant report was also checked by my supervisor. During the control (1) "Similarities of less than seven words" (2) "References" (3) "Direct Citations" were excluded. The results obtained from the report on similarity control are presented below.

Submission Date	07.01.2025
Submission ID	2560637220
Page Count	167
Word Count	48,390
Character Count	287,128
Similarity Rate	% 3
Defence Date	09.12.2024

I hereby declare that I have submitted the original report the Turnitin Plagiarism Prevention Program which shows the above-mentioned results, to the Graduate School of Educational Scicences without making any changes in the results, as an appendix to this statement and that I accept the legal responsibility that may arise if it is determined that my thesis contains more than 10% similarity rate, I present my respect.

Name and Surname: Hilal Ülkü AY

Date: 07.01.2025

Signature:

RESUME

Personal Information

Name and Surname : Hilal Ülkü AY
E-mail :
Mobile :

Job Experience :

Position	**Place of Work**	**Date**
Sales Assistant	Schenks' Amusement (the USA)	2011
Educational Consultant	YERO International Education	2010-2013
English Teacher	Private Hayat Schools	2013-2015
Head of English Department	Private Hayat Schools	2015-2018
Instructor	Atılım University	2018-2020
Testing Unit Member	Atılım University	2020-2024
Head of Evaluation and Measurement Unit	Atılım University	

Academic Information

Degree	**Programme**	**Institution**	**Year**
BA	English Language Teaching	Gazi University	2013