



Socioeconomic Profile of Early Childhood Education Preservice Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Teachers are key determiners of quality education, and regarding young children in particular, the quality of teachers can have a remarkable influence on the quality of education. However, research on the socioeconomic profile of preservice teachers at university remains rare in Turkey, especially eastern Turkey, where living conditions are below of the national average. In our study, the socioeconomic profile of 2,115 early childhood teacher candidates in faculties of education at state universities in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian Regions of Turkey was examined. The study aimed to determine the rank order of students' preferred early childhood education bachelor programs and the reasons for their preferences.

Methods: The descriptive profile research sought to identify the socioeconomic profile of preservice early childhood teachers recruited from 11 state universities. Participating students were asked several questions concerning the socioeconomic aspects of their university life in four domains: demographic and economic characteristics, education budget, family socioeconomic composition, and educational and sociocultural background. Descriptive analyses were performed to analyze the data. **Results:** The findings revealed that the students were mostly from low-income families. Most students ranked an early childhood education bachelor program among their top five choices on university selection exams. The top three reasons for their choosing early childhood education as a profession were love for children and the profession, the convenience of teacher appointment and satisfactory wage levels at state preschools, and the convenience and enjoyment of preschool teaching. **Implications for Research and Practice:** Most students were members of low-income families, for whom social, cultural, and sportive activities need to be more accessible. Similar studies should be repeated in other geographical regions of Turkey with students from other university departments and faculties in order to clarify the socioeconomic composition of university students, develop more effective bachelor programs, and improve student life at Turkish universities.

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Introduction

Early Childhood Teacher Education in the Context of Turkey

Given the importance of the first 7 years of life for a person's overall development, investing in early childhood education (ECE) can result in positive gains for not only the person but also the society (Bakken, Brown, & Downing, 2017; Daglioglu, 2014; Haktanir, 2014; Reynolds, Ou, Mondri, & Hayakawa, 2017; UNESCO, 2016; UNICEF, 2015). During the past three decades, enrollment in ECE in Turkey has increased significantly. The preschool enrollment rate in the 1980-1981 academic year was only 1.90% for all ages, whereas by the 2016-2017 academic year, the rates of preschool enrollment were 35.52% for 3-5-year-olds, 45.70% for 4-5-year-olds, and 58.79% for 5-year-olds (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2010, 2017). Despite significantly increased preschool enrollment rates in Turkey during recent decades, such rates remain below the 95% preschool enrollment target of the European Union (UNICEF, 2013).

At the same time, the increased rates have required more preschool teachers who have graduated from Turkish universities to work as preschool teachers. Since 1981, higher education programs in Turkey have been supervised by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), which is responsible for the planning, coordination, and governance of higher education institutions in Turkey (CoHE, 2014), and the first preschool teachers with bachelor's degrees from 4-year preschool teacher education programs in Turkey graduated in 2002 (Daglioglu, 2014). Acceptance to such bachelor programs depends upon the composite score of the applicant's secondary-school grade point average (GPA) and centralized university Student Selection Exams (SSE) score, which determine the placement of applicants at higher education institutions. According to the Student Selection and Placement Centre (SSPC, 2014), Turkey has 54 state universities and nine private universities that offer undergraduate programs in ECE, and 25 of those state universities offer daytime and evening classes. Students who have graduated from four-year ECE programs are appointed to public preschools and kindergartens depending on their Public Personnel Selection Examination (PPSE) results or employed by private preschools and kindergartens. The PPSE is a centralized examination in Turkey administered by the Student Selection and Placement Centre to appoint state officials; teacher candidates who take the PPSE are assessed in four subjects: general culture (i.e., history, geography, citizenship, and contemporary topics in Turkey and worldwide), general ability (i.e., verbal and mathematical reasoning), educational sciences, and knowledge in specific teaching professions (SSPC, 2013).

Quality of Preschool Teaching Training

Because a major factor in educating a quality labor force is teachers (Erkan et al., 2002; World Bank, 2011), the background of teachers and their university experience seem to be important to the overall quality of education at all levels. Although the satisfaction of students with their university experience is also important to their future professional lives, such an experience can involve a demanding process for young adults, whose matriculation at university often marks the first time that they

have had to bear various academic, financial, and personal responsibilities (Vaez & Laflamme, 2008). Some researchers (e.g. Early et al., 2007; Lin & Magnuson, 2018) have discussed how university-level education or specialization in ECE was not the only determinant of teacher quality, while others have added that preservice and in-service teachers need to be supported by all means to make significant contributions to young children's lives (Egert & Fukkink, 2018). Moreover, universities are regarded to be the most suitable institutions to offer support for late adolescents and young adults who struggle with psychosocial, academic, and career-related problems (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). Given those circumstances, clarifying the socioeconomic profile of preservice teachers can significantly inform strategies to support preservice teachers in general.

Considering the importance of quality ECE, the MoNE (2008) has defined the qualifications of ECE teachers in seven major areas: knowledge of young children's development, competency in communicating with young children's families, support of family involvement and education, advanced communication skills, creativity and aesthetic awareness, collaboration with school staff and communities, and continued professional development. A closer look at those qualifications reveals that a qualified teacher needs to gain a quality ECE bachelor education supported by rich social, cultural, and creative experiences. Accordingly, examining ECE preservice teachers' socioeconomic profiles could be crucial to understanding the composition of the population group and what they need to become competent teachers.

A review of literature on the topic has revealed that socioeconomic profile studies have been more prevalent in developing countries, where problems related to educational attainment and employment are common and where teachers play especially important roles in transforming society (e.g. Akyeampong & Stephens, 2002; Coultas & Lewin, 2002; Su, Hawkins, Huang, & Zhao, 2001). Akyeampong and Stephens (2002) have concluded that to reap more benefits of teacher education, it is imperative to recognize teacher candidates' backgrounds. Similarly, the findings of this study can illuminate the preservice ECE teacher profile of Turkey's Eastern Anatolian Region, as well as ways to enrich students' university lives, which can raise the quality of teachers and education at preschools and kindergartens in Turkey.

However, studies focusing on university students' needs and ways to improve means to meet those needs are sparse in Turkey. A large-scale study with 164 universities in Turkey to determine the satisfaction of students at Turkish universities revealed that 60% of universities in Turkey did not provide a satisfactory university life for their students due to problems related to quality of education, campus life, academic support, the university administration, and the lack of opportunities provided for professional development (Karadag & Yucel, 2017). Furthermore, a preservice preschool teacher profile study conducted by Erkan et al. (2002) with 821 students recruited from eight state universities in Turkey revealed the need for such studies to be repeated with other ECE teacher samples in Turkey. ECE teacher recruitment from eastern regions is significant because, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat, 2015a, 2015b, 2016), the lowest rates of revenue and poorest living conditions were observed in cities in eastern and southeastern Turkey. In response, the purpose of this study was to determine the socioeconomic profile of

preservice ECE teachers and their families in Turkey and identify the rank order of preservice ECE teachers' preferences of preschool education program and the reasons for their preferences.

Method

Research Design

This descriptive profile study aimed to identify the socioeconomic profile of preservice ECE teachers recruited from 11 state universities in the eastern regions of Turkey. The study sought to particularly reveal students' current social, demographic, cultural, and individual characteristics (Erkan et al., 2002). In accordance with the descriptive profile methodology, descriptive analyses were performed throughout the course of the study.

Research Sample

The population of the study encompassed preservice teachers enrolled in ECE programs at state universities in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian regions of Turkey. Data were collected from all universities in those regions with students in their programs during data collection. An academic fellow from each university served as the gatekeeper in applying and collecting the questionnaires used in the study.

Research Instruments and Procedures

A socioeconomic profile questionnaire was developed by the researchers to gather data. The questionnaire involved a wide range of questions in four categories: demographic and economic characteristics (e.g., year of study, age, marital status, and family's monthly income), budget (e.g., amount of monthly financial support provided by the family, type of residence, monthly scholarship or loan, part-time employment status, and monthly income of part-time employment), family's socioeconomic composition (e.g., education status and profession of parents and number of siblings), and educational and sociocultural background (e.g., type of secondary school graduated from, rank order of preschool education program preferences on the centralized SSE, the top three reasons for choosing ECE as a profession, plans to pursue an academic career after graduation, membership in sports or social clubs, completion of ECE as a child, and current GPA). Questionnaire items were prepared by the researchers in the light of previous research (e.g., Erkan et al., 2002).

Permissions for data collection were granted by the universities. Academics from each ECE program were interviewed via phone and informed about the scope of the study. In spring semester 2014–2015, the questionnaires were hard copied and mailed to the responsible academics at each university. The questionnaires were disseminated to students during class, after which the academics collected the completed questionnaires and mailed them to the researchers. In 3 weeks, all questionnaires were collected, and a dataset on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was created in a month. A total of 3,000 questionnaires were sent to the programs, and 2,550 were returned, for a return rate of 85%. Of the 2,550 questionnaires returned, incomplete,

half-completed, and falsely completed ones were excluded. Ultimately, 2,115 questionnaires were included in analysis.

Data Analysis

Since the purpose of study was to describe the socioeconomic profile of students in ECE programs at Turkish universities, descriptive analyses were performed throughout the study period. Frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, ranges, and minimum and maximum values were computed and tabulated. Frequencies were used in the analysis of the qualitative data to clarify the reasons for students' choice of ECE as a profession.

Results

Demographic and Economic Characteristics of the Sample

The sample included students enrolled in daytime and evening ECE programs at Agri Ibrahim Cecen University, Yuzuncu Yil University, Ataturk University, and Inonu University. All other universities had only daytime programs at the time of data collection. At Erzincan University, students were only in their first or second years of study. Descriptive values of the monthly support that students received from their families and their family monthly incomes appear in Table 1.

Table 1.

Descriptive Values of Students' Family Monthly Income and Monthly Support

	Family Monthly Income				Monthly Support		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Adiyaman University	159	2,010.81(1,387.65)	200	10,000	202.76(204.27)	0	1,000
Agri Ibrahim Cecen University	295	1,953.90(1,096.25)	300	10,000	246.27 (244.5)	0	2,500
Ataturk University Erzurum	273	2,302.48(1,170.89)	400	7,000	301.83(226.55)	0	1,500
Dicle University Diyarbakir	136	1971.45 (902.43)	400	5,000	156.06 (150.3)	0	800
Erzincan University	69	1,671.29 (985.72)	200	5,000	227.78(158.50)	0	700
Firat University Elazig	182	2,008.15(1,038.08)	300	5,500	243.79(227.57)	0	2,000

Table 1 Continue

	Family Monthly Income				Monthly Support		
	N	M (SD)	Min	Max	M (SD)	Min	Max
Inonu University Malatya	338	2,191.58(1,770.19)	300	22,000	285.38(278.40)	0	4,000
Kafkas University Kars	132	1,968.96(1,040.50)	250	5,000	318.4 (207.95)	0	1,200
Kilis 7 Aralik University	177	2,027.27(1,363.38)	200	10,000	236.54(226.30)	0	1,400
Mus Alparslan University	130	2,048.53(1,497.80)	300	15,000	222.69(167.51)	0	1,000
Yuzuncu Yil University Van	224	2,105.30(1,132.30)	330	10,000	181.12(210.42)	0	2,000
Total	2115	2,066.67(1,294.27)	200	22,000	245.14(229.21)	0	4,000

*All monetary values in Turkish lira; 1 USD = 2.71 TL (Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey, 2015).

Regarding year of study, 520 students (24.6%) were first-year students, 666 (31.5%) were second-year students, 508 (24%) were third-year students, and 421 (19.9%) were fourth-year students. The students' age range was 17-36 years, and their mean age was 21.02 years ($SD = 2.05$). Most students ($n = 1,715$, 83.7%) were 18-22 years old. By gender, 366 students were men (17.3%) and 1,749 were women (82.7%). Only 3% of the students ($n = 64$) were married, whereas 97% ($n = 2,051$) were single.

Concerning financial support, 317 students (15%) indicated that they had no financial support provided by their families. Roughly a third (34.8%, $n = 737$) of the students resided in state dormitories, whereas another third (33%, $n = 697$) resided in their family homes; 18.2% ($n = 384$) resided with friends, 11.1% ($n = 235$) resided in private dormitories, and the rest (2.9%, $n = 62$) lived alone or with relatives. Most students had a scholarship or loan provided by the state (71.6%, $n = 1,515$) or private organizations (9.3%, $n = 197$). The mean monthly scholarship or loan amount provided by the state was 327.82 Turkish lira (TL) and 389.67 TL by private organizations. Few students (3.8%, $n = 81$) worked part-time, although ones who did earned a mean monthly income of 754.32 TL.

Socioeconomic Composition of Families

To clarify the socioeconomic composition of families, the education and employment status of students' parents are examined in this section. The education levels of their parents are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2*Descriptive Values of the Education Status of Students' Parents*

Education level	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Less than primary school	746	35.2	189	8.9
Primary school	838	39.6	670	31.7
Elementary (Secondary 1st. phase) school	249	11.8	372	17.6
High school (Secondary 2nd. phase) school	198	9.4	483	22.8
Two-year undergraduate (Associate)	29	1.4	111	5.2
Undergraduate (Bachelor)	52	2.5	253	12.0
Master's degree	2	0.1	26	1.2
Doctoral degree	1	0.0	11	0.5
Total	2,115	100.0	2,115	100.0

Among students' parents who had not completed primary education, most mothers ($n = 521, 24.6\%$) had no reading and writing skills at all, whereas 10.6% ($n = 225$) of mothers had basic reading and writing skills. Table 3 shows the employment status of students' parents.

Table 3*Descriptive Values of the Employment Status of Students' Parents*

Employment status	Mothers		Fathers	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Retired	24	1.13	409	19.33
Civil servants	28	1.32	300	14.20
Teachers	40	1.90	140	6.62
Private sector employees	53	2.50	1,079	51.01
Unemployed	1,902	89.90	29	1.37
No response	68	3.21	158	7.47
Total	2,115	100.00	2,115	100.00

Table 3 indicates that most students' fathers (51.01%) were employed in the private sector, whereas most of their mothers (89.9%) were unemployed or housewives. Compared to their mothers, the unemployment of fathers of students in the sample was only 1.37%. To elucidate the socioeconomic composition of families, the number of siblings of the students is tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive Values of the Number of Siblings of Students

Number of siblings	<i>f</i>	%
No sibling	22	1.04
1 sibling	240	11.35
2 siblings	472	22.31
3 siblings	433	20.47
4 siblings	314	14.84
5 or more siblings	634	29.97
Total	2,115	100

*Applicable to the graduates of vocational high schools for girls

Table 4 shows that the students overwhelming came from large families. Only 1.04% of students were from single-child families, whereas 29.97% of the students had 5 or more siblings.

Educational Background and Sociocultural Aspects of the Sample

The majority of students ($n = 1,690$, 79.9%) did not receive any kind of ECE. The students had graduated from various types of secondary schools; 28.3% ($n = 559$) were graduates of vocational high schools for girls, 27.2% ($n = 576$) were graduates of Anatolian high schools, 25.5% ($n = 540$) were graduates of common high schools, 4.1% ($n = 87$) were graduates of high schools for aspiring teachers, whereas the rest (14.9%, $n = 313$) were graduates of health vocational, foreign language intensive, multiprogram, religious vocational, open, private, science-oriented, social studies-oriented, or sports-oriented high schools.

The top three reasons for students' choice of ECE undergraduate program were gauged with an open-ended question, responses to which are presented in Table 5.

Table 5*Reasons for Preferring a Profession in Early Childhood Education*

Reasons	1st rank	2nd rank	3rd rank	Total
	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>F</i>
Love for children and the profession	947 (44.8)	710 (33.6)	542 (25.6)	2,199
Convenience of teacher appointment and satisfactory wage levels at state preschools	485 (22.9)	417 (19.7)	375 (17.7)	1,277
Convenience and enjoyment of early childhood education	90 (4.3)	205 (9.7)	209 (9.9)	504
Recommendations of parents and relatives	114 (5.4)	118 (5.6)	111 (5.2)	343
Predictive power of the centralized university entrance examination	93 (4.4)	51 (2.4)	54 (2.6)	198
Extra score added to the centralized university entrance examination*	62 (2.9)	38 (1.8)	30 (1.4)	130
Enrollment in university in order to relocate away from family	48 (2.3)	27 (1.3)	31 (1.5)	106
Preparation to be a good parent	24 (1.1)	21 (1.0)	15 (0.7)	60

*Applicable to graduates of vocational high schools for girls

Approximately a quarter (25.1%, $n = 531$) of students indicated that they listed their current ECE program as their first choice on the centralized university SSE, whereas 8.7% ($n = 183$) listed the program as their second choice, 8.5% ($n = 179$) as their third, 5.8% ($n = 123$) as their fourth, 6.0% ($n = 126$) as their fifth, and 45.9% ($n = 973$) as their sixth or lower choice. Students were also asked about their current GPA, and their answers appear in Table 6.

Table 6*Descriptive Values of Students' Current Grade Point Averages*

University	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Min	Max
Adiyaman University	159	3.04 (0.32)	2.00	3.80
Agri Ibrahim Cecen University	295	2.97 (0.39)	1.80	2.97
Ataturk University, Erzurum	273	2.91 (0.4)	1.38	3.92
Dicle University, Diyarbakır	136	2.98 (0.25)	1.65	3.96
Erzincan University	69	2.76 (0.58)	1.30	3.80
Firat University, Elazığ	182	3.13 (0.35)	1.88	4.00

Table 6 Continue

University	N	M (SD)	Min	Max
Inonu University, Malatya	338	2.82 (0.43)	1.43	2.82
Kafkas University, Kars	132	2.94 (0.41)	1.50	2.94
Kilis 7 Aralık University	177	2.79 (0.45)	1.50	3.78
Mus Alparslan University	130	2.88 (0.49)	1.50	2.88
Yuzuncu Yil University, Van	224	2.96 (0.34)	1.86	3.83

When asked about their intent to pursue an academic career, 51.3% of students ($n = 1,084$) indicated that they had considered an academic path for the future. In terms of extracurricular activities, 13% ($n = 276$) of students reported being members of social or sports clubs at their universities. The most popular clubs among the students sampled were early childhood societies, community volunteer organizations, clubs stressing social responsibilities, and theater groups.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

As indicated by the demographic and economic characteristics of students in the sample, 17.3% of the students were men. By contrast, in a profile study conducted with preservice ECE teachers, Erkan et al. (2002) showed that only 7.3% of the students were men. The increase in the number of men among preservice ECE teachers is promising given that ECE is largely perceived as a women's field in Turkish society because it demands the nurturing, loving, and caring for young children. However, one's decision to pursue a profession not generally preferred by his or her gender can pose some challenges (Newman & Newman, 1991). Anliak and Sahin Beyazkurk (2008) have discussed that reasons such as stereotypical perceptions of ECE professions, their low pay and status, and hesitation about risking abuse for their choice could explain the lack of increased interest among men in ECE professions in Turkey. Nevertheless, as participants in our study exemplified, an explanation for the increased percentage of men among the ranks of preservice ECE teachers could be an increased interest in the teaching profession due to the perceived convenience of state appointment and the promise of satisfactory wages. Teachers who graduate from faculties of education in Turkey are appointed by the state based on their PPSE scores, which guarantees them jobs upon graduation, as well as several benefits, including defined work hours, a stable salary, social security, and holidays, all of which make the teaching profession appealing to young Turks (Aldemir & Kurt, 2014; Yuce, Sahin, Kocer, & Kana, 2013; Yuksel, 2012).

The mean family monthly income among students in the sample was 2,066.67 TL, 41.8% of the students' family monthly incomes were less than 1,999.00 TL, and the mean number of children in their families was 4.8. Although government data regarding the limits of income levels in Turkey remain unavailable, the limits of low

income levels can be gleaned from data provided by various labor unions. For instance, in May 2015, the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (2015) stated that the starvation level of a four-person family was 1,333.52 TL and that the poverty level was 4,343.7 TL. Compared to those levels, most students in our study were members of large, low-income families. TurkStat (2015c) also revealed that 22.4% of Turkish families functioned below the poverty line in 2014. Although the families of students in our sample were low-income families, the rate of part-time employment among the students was quite low (3.8%), which could have resulted from the limited opportunities for part-time work on university campuses and in nearby cities or students' preference to study for the PPSE instead of engaging in part-time work given their goal to be appointed as an ECE teacher by the state. The mean amount of monthly financial support among students provided by their families was 245.14 TL, and 15% of students stated that they did not receive any support whatsoever from their families. Considering the 2015 starvation level of 1,333.52 TL for a four-person family, the mean amount of financial support for one student is remarkably low. The regional results of a study on revenue and living conditions in Turkey (TurkStat, 2015a, 2016) indicated that the cities of Mardin, Batman, Şırnak, Siirt, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Van, Muş, Bitlis, and Hakkari in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian Regions of Turkey ranked among Turkish cities with the lowest rates of per capita usage of mean annual family income. Low income levels and high numbers of children in their families could explain the low levels of financial support that the students in our sample received.

Findings concerning the socioeconomic composition of families indicated that 24.6% of students' mothers and 4.1% of their fathers had no reading or writing skills whatsoever and that only 2.5% of their mothers and 12.0% of their fathers had bachelor's degrees. Such figures confirm the sharp difference in educational attainment among mothers and fathers of preservice ECE teachers in Turkey. Despite compulsory primary education in Turkey, the illiteracy rate of Turkish women remains a serious problem in the eastern regions of country. As indicated by TurkStat (2015d), the rate of illiteracy was five times greater for women than men in Turkey in 2014. Uccem Karagel (2009) has reported that gender inequality in illiteracy rates has risen in the East Anatolian Region of Turkey to the disadvantage of women. The obstacles to girls' schooling in certain regions of Turkey have also been discussed by Alat and Alat (2011). Our results also revealed that 89.9% of the students' mothers were housewives. That rate of unemployment for women is far below of the European Union average of 58.8% and even below of the 30.8% average in Turkey (TurkStat, 2015d). Most of the students' fathers were employed in the private sector, whereas only 6.62% were teachers. Moreover, the teaching profession of fathers did not seem to be an important factor of students' preference to pursue work as teachers.

The educational and sociocultural background of students in the sample indicates that 79.9% of students did not receive any kind of ECE. UNICEF (2015) has observed a relationship between ratios of preschool enrollment and women's participation in the workforce. In our sample, the students' families might not have sought ECE for their young children given the financial burden of ECE and the mother's traditional role to provide childcare in Turkish culture. Brill, Kulic, and Triventi (2017) have

recently added that the education of mothers determines the age at which their children begin to receive childcare outside the home. Although improved ECE has been geared toward advancing the quality and accessibility of primary education in Turkey and though universal enrollment in kindergarten for children 60–72 months old was a goal of the MoNE at the beginning of the 2014–2015 academic year (World Bank, 2011), ECE has been restructured with the last changes in the education system (MoNE, 2012), and 37–66-month-old children's enrollment in preschool is still not compulsory.

More than a quarter (28.3%) of the sample graduated from vocational high schools for girls. Not only should such students have a better conceptualization of ECE teaching and thus a surer preference to attend an ECE program at university, but the additional points that they automatically received on their SSE scores due to graduating from a vocational school likely supported their preference. Although the types of secondary schools from which students in the sample graduated varied, secondary education in Turkey is generally defined as a 4-year compulsory educational process that prepares students for higher education. Whereas common high schools provide students with general courses and culture, programs at Anatolian high schools are enriched with foreign-language teaching. Conversely, high schools for aspiring teachers and both vocational and technical secondary schools aim to prepare students for occupational fields (MoNE, 2017). The diversity of high schools from which preservice ECE students graduate in Turkey diversifies the composition of ECE students at Turkish universities, although such variety has been criticized as a source of lifelong inequality (World Bank, 2011).

More than half of students (54.1%) declared that they had listed an ECE bachelor program among their top five choices for university education, which reflects the results of Erkan et al. (2002). Furthermore, the mean current GPA among the students was 2.93 on a 0.00–4.00-point scale, and half of them (51.3%) reported their intent to pursue an academic career. Although such findings illustrate the students' eagerness for academic study, as the World Bank (2011) has indicated, only 5.8% of teachers in Turkey had master's or doctoral degrees in 2010, which suggests that additional incentives would raise the number of teachers with M.Ed. degrees in the country.

When asked to state their top three reasons of their preference of ECE teaching, students on average indicated their love for children and the profession, the convenience of teacher appointment and satisfactory wages at state preschools, and the convenience and enjoyment of ECE teaching. Related benefits of state appointment, including defined work hours, a stable salary, social security, and the enjoyment of working with young children, could also explain their responses (Aldemir & Kurt, 2014; Yuce, Sahin, Kocer, & Kana, 2013; Yuksel, 2012). Similar reasons for choosing the teaching profession have been documented in other studies (e.g. Aldemir and Kurt, 2014; Erkan et al., 2002; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). Kilinc, Watt, and Richardson (2012) investigated the rationale for becoming a teacher among Turkish preservice teachers of early childhood, primary, and secondary education, and their results indicated that altruistic social values were the most compelling reasons, followed by job security. Those authors proposed that inequality and

insecurity in developing countries, as well as collectivistic values, could make intrinsic values and teaching abilities less important for Turkish students than for Western ones.

The percentage of students in the sample who participated in social and sportive clubs was low (13%). The student involvement theory developed by Astin (1984) suggests that as the student involvement in academic and extracurricular activities increases at universities, the greater the academic and personal benefits possible. Therefore, as Ersay and Yazcayir (2014) have proposed, universities should not only educate students academically but also provide them with opportunities for personal and socioemotional development. At Turkish universities, including elective courses requiring participation in diverse activities should increase students' participation in social life at university.

Altogether, the most striking findings of the study were low income levels of the families of students in ECE programs at universities in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian Regions of Turkey, their low rate of ECE attendance, participation in social and sportive clubs at university, and engagement in part-time work as well as the high rates of illiteracy and unemployment among their mothers. The findings also indicate that the students pursue university life on very limited budgets. It's clear that social, cultural, and sportive activities are especially important for low-income students who are liable to face barriers in accessing those activities. The quality of university life affects a person's professional life later on, particularly among preservice teachers, and thus exerts long-lasting effects on the lives of the children whom they teach. Studies have revealed that high-quality ECE is significant in helping young children to achieve their full potential (Whitebook, 2003). Considering the increase in ECE attendance in recent decades in Turkey, it is expected that more children will have an opportunity to begin their social and academic lives on the right foot and that women's participation in the workforce and educational attainment will increase in Turkey. Similar studies should be repeated in other geographical regions of Turkey to clarify the socioeconomic composition of students there and thereby develop more effective undergraduate programs and improve students' lives at universities in Turkey.

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Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Aday Öğretmenlerinin Sosyoekonomik Profili

Atf:

Unal, M., & Kurt, G. (2018). Socioeconomic profile of the early childhood education preservice teachers. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 74, 61-80, DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2018.74.4

Özet

Problem Durumu: Okul öncesi eğitimin niteliğinin ve kayıt oranlarının artırılması, gelişmekte olan ülkelerin gelecekteki sosyoekonomik profillerinin şekillenmesinde oldukça belirleyici bir role sahiptir. Eğitimin kalitesinde temel belirleyici unsur öğretmenlerdir. Türkiye’de üniversite öğrencilerinin sosyoekonomik profillerini araştıran çalışmalar oldukça sınırlıdır, özellikle Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu gibi yaşam koşullarının ülke ortalamasının altında seyrettiği bölgeler için bu tip çalışmalar önem kazanmaktadır.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmada, Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu bölgelerindeki üniversitelerin eğitim fakültelerinin okul öncesi eğitimi lisans programında öğrenim görmekte olan toplam 2115 öğrencinin sosyoekonomik profilinin ve öğrencilerin okul öncesi eğitim bölümünü tercih nedenlerinin ve tercih sırasının belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın bulguları, okul öncesi eğitim programlarında öğrenim görmekte olan lisans öğrencilerinin sosyoekonomik profilinin ve ihtiyaçlarının daha iyi tanınmasını sağlayacaktır.

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Bu çalışmada, Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu bölgelerindeki toplam 11 devlet üniversitesinde okul öncesi eğitim bölümünde öğrenim görmekte olan öğrencilerin sosyoekonomik profili betimlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Öğrencilere üniversite yaşamının çeşitli yönlerini irdeleyen ve toplam dört başlıkta sınıflandırılan sorular sorulmuştur; (1) Örneklemin demografik ve ekonomik özellikleri: sınıf, yaş, medeni durum, aile aylık geliri, (2) Öğrencilerin bütçesi: ailenin öğrenciye gönderdiği aylık harçlık miktarı, barınma durumu, aylık kredi/burs durumu, yarı zamanlı çalışma durumu ve yarı zamanlı çalışmadan elde edilen gelir, (3) Ailelerin sosyoekonomik kompozisyonu: ebeveynlerin eğitim durumu, ebeveynlerin mesleği, kardeş sayısı ve (4) Örneklemin eğitsel ve sosyokültürel özellikleri: mezun olunan lise tipi, üniversiteye giriş sınavında okul öncesi eğitim programını tercih sırası, okul öncesi eğitimi seçmek için ilk üç neden, akademik kariyer düşüncesi, spor ya da sosyal kulüplere üyelik, okul öncesi eğitim alma durumu ve halihazırdaki not ortalaması. Üniversitelerden araştırma izinleri alındıktan sonra, her bir üniversitenin okul öncesi eğitim bölümündeki sorumlu akademisyenle telefonla görüşülmüş, araştırmanın amacı ve süreci hakkında bilgi verilmiştir. 2014-2015 eğitim öğretim yılı bahar döneminde toplam 3000 anket bölümlere postalanmış ve sorumlu akademisyenler tarafından uygun görülen ders saatlerinde öğrencilere uygulanmıştır. Geri dönen 2550 adet anketten, doldurulmayan, yarı yarıya boş bırakılan ve yanlış doldurulan anketler

çıkarılmış ve toplamda 2115 anket analize dahil edilmiştir. Veri setini betimsel olarak analiz etmek için; frekans, yüzde, ortalama, standart sapma, ranj, minimum ve maksimum değer analizleri yapılmıştır. Aynı zamanda öğrencilere açık uçlu olarak sorulan bölüm tercihinde en önemli ilk üç nedenin analizinde frekans sayımı yapılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Örneklemdeki öğrencilerin üniversitelere göre dağılımı şu şekildedir: Adıyaman Üniversitesi (n=159), Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen Üniversitesi (n=295), Diyarbakır Dicle Üniversitesi (n=136), Erzurum Atatürk Üniversitesi (n=273), Erzincan Üniversitesi (n=69), Elazığ Fırat Üniversitesi (n=182), Malatya İnönü Üniversitesi (n=338), Kars Kafkas Üniversitesi (n=132), Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi (n=177), Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi (n=130) ve Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi (n=224). Bulgulara göre öğrenciler çoğunlukla düşük gelirli ailelerden gelmektedir ve kısıtlı bir bütçeyle öğrenim hayatlarını sürdürmektedir. Öğrencilerin ailelerin aylık ortalama geliri 2066,67 T.L. (SS=1294,27), aileler tarafından öğrencilere gönderilen aylık harçlık miktarı 245,14 T.L. (SS=229,21) olarak bulunmuştur. Öğrencilerin %71,6'sı (n=1515) devlet bursu ve/veya kredisi kullanırken (ort=327,82 T.L.), %9,3'ü (n=197) özel vakıflardan burs almaktadır (ort=389,67 T.L.). Öğrencilerin çok az bir bölümü (3,8%, n=81) yarı zamanlı çalışmaktadır ve yarı zamanlı çalışan öğrencilerin aylık geliri 754,32 T.L.'dir. Öğrencilerin annelerinin büyük bölümü okuma yazma bilmiyor (n=521, 24,6%); okuma yazma biliyor (n=225, 10,6%); ve ilkokul mezunu iken (n=838, 39,6%), babaların büyük çoğunluğu ilkokul mezunu (n=670, 31,7%); ortaokul mezunu (n=372, 17,6%); ve lise mezunudur (n=483, 22,8%). Öğrencilerin büyük bölümü (n=1690, %79,9) hiçbir şekilde okul öncesi eğitim almadıklarını belirtirken, öğrencilerin mezun oldukları lise tipi büyük çeşitlilik göstermektedir. Öğrencilerin %51,3'ü (n=1084) ileride akademik kariyer düşündüklerini belirtmiştir. Öğrencilerin az bir bölümü (%13, n=276) üniversitelerindeki sosyal ve spor kulüplerine üyedir. Öğrencilerin büyük bir bölümü üniversiteye giriş sınavında okul öncesi eğitimi bölümünü ilk beş sıra içinde tercih etmiştir. Öğrencilerin okul öncesi eğitimi tercih etmek için belirttikleri ilk üç neden sırasıyla; (1) çocuklara ve mesleğe duyulan sevgi, (2) devlet atamalarının kolaylığı ve devlet okullarındaki maaş düzeyinin tatminkarlığı ve (3) okul öncesi eğitimin rahatlığı ve eğlenceli olması, şeklindedir.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri: Araştırmamızın sonucunda öğrencilerin düşük gelirli ailelerden geldiği, annelerin eğitim durumunun düşük olduğu ve çoğunluğun ev hanımı olduğu, öğrencilerin sosyal ve spor kulüplerine üyeliklerinin ve yarı zamanlı çalışma durumlarının oldukça sınırlı olduğu görülmektedir. Öğrencilerimiz çok kısıtlı bir bütçeyle öğrenim hayatlarına devam etmektedir. Sosyal, kültürel ve sportif aktiviteler öğretmen adaylarının eğitiminde, akademik konular kadar önemli görülmektedir. Üniversitelerde öğrencilerin sosyal ve spor kulüplerine üyeliklerini özendirerek finansal desteklerin özellikle dar gelirli öğrenciler için yaratılması gerekmektedir. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, okul öncesi öğretmeninin genel ve özel alan yeterliklerini açıklarken, öğretmen adayının kendisini bu alanlarda geliştirmiş olmasına özellikle vurgu yapmıştır. Bu alanlara yönelik seçmeli derslerin sayısının artırılması, ya da kulüp üyeliklerinin desteklenmesi, öğrencilerin boş zaman değerlendirme alışkanlıklarına da önemli katkılar sağlayacaktır. Ülkemizde okul

öncesi eğitime erişimin yaygınlaştırılması, çocukların hayata daha iyi bir başlangıç yapmasına, kuşaktan kuşağa eğitim ve işgücünün hem niteliksel hem de niceliksel olarak gelişmesine ve özellikle ülkemizin doğu bölgeleri için halen sorun olan kadın okuryazarlığı ve istihdam oranlarının yükselmesine katkı sunacaktır. Benzer çalışmaların ülkemizin diğer bölgelerinde ve üniversitelerinde tekrar edilmesinin, öğrenci profilinin daha iyi tanınmasına ve üniversite yaşamının ne kadar, nasıl ve hangi yollarla zenginleştirilebileceğine katkı sunacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgeleri, Türkiye’de okul öncesi eğitim, Türkiye’de okul öncesi öğretmeni yetiştirme, üniversite öğrencilerinin sosyo-ekonomik profili