

Researching Student Profiles in the Department of Child Development at Istanbul Gelişim University*

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Abstract

Aim: This research is a descriptive study aimed at determining the profile of students enrolled in the Department of Child Development within Istanbul Gelisim University's Faculty of Health Sciences.

Method: The study group consists of 389 students studying in the child development departments providing education in Turkish and English. In the study, 259 students who agreed to participate in the study were included without any sample selection.

Result: Research findings have shown that the majority of child development department students are satisfied with both the department and the university. They choose the child development department voluntarily and rank it among their top three choices in the university preference form. Additionally, they have positive feelings towards both the department and the university.

Conclusion: As a result of the research, it was determined that the students were satisfied with their departments and the university. Personality characteristics, professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of child development professionals directly affect the target audiences with whom they will interact. For this reason, to train qualified child development experts, it is thought that it would be beneficial to take encouraging measures for candidates who will choose the child development profession and to support existing child development experts while doing their profession and help them solve the problems they encounter.

Keywords: Child development department, child development specialist, profile research.

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İstanbul Gelişim Üniversitesi Çocuk Gelişimi Bölümü Öğrenci Profillerinin Araştırılması

Öz

Amaç: Araştırma, İstanbul Gelişim Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi Çocuk Gelişimi Bölümü öğrencilerinin profilini belirlemek amacıyla yapılan tanımlayıcı bir çalışmadır.

Yöntem: Çalışma grubunu Türkçe ve İngilizce eğitim veren çocuk gelişimi bölümlerinde öğrenim gören 389 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmaya herhangi bir örneklem seçimi yapılmadan araştırmaya katılmayı kabul eden 259 öğrenci dahil edilmiştir.

Bulgular: Araştırma bulguları, çocuk gelişimi bölümü öğrencilerinin çoğunluğunun okudukları bölüm ve üniversiteden memnun olduklarını, çocuk gelişimi bölümünü gönüllü olarak seçtiklerini, üniversite tercihlerinde ilk üç tercih arasında yer verdiklerini ve hem üniversiteye hem de bölüme yönelik olumlu duygulara sahip olduklarını göstermiştir.

Sonuç: Araştırma sonucunda öğrencilerin bölümlerinden ve üniversiteden memnun oldukları belirlendi. Çocuk gelişimi profesyonellerinin kişilik özellikleri, mesleki bilgi, beceri ve tutumları etkileşimde bulunacakları hedef kitleyi doğrudan etkilemektedir. Bu nedenle nitelikli çocuk gelişimi uzmanları yetiştirmek için çocuk gelişimi mesleğini seçecek adayları teşvik edici tedbirlerin alınması ve mevcut çocuk gelişimi uzmanlarının mesleklerini yaparken desteklenerek karşılaştıkları sorunları çözmelerine yardımcı olmasının faydalı olacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Çocuk gelişimi bölümü, çocuk gelişimi uzmanı, profil araştırması.

Introduction

The foundations of individuals developing healthy personalities and being productive individuals in society are based on the experiences gained in childhood. Experience is important for the individual to develop a healthy personality¹. Environmental interaction is also known to have a significant impact on individual development². These experiences gained during childhood through interaction with the environment prepare the child to realize and develop his/her abilities and to be included in society³. Negative and changing environmental factors also cause unhealthy development of the individual⁴. To provide a developmentally effective learning environment for the child, it is necessary to have a good command of child development^{5,6}. Today's scientific research have proven that the development of the child is the basis of the development of humanity and social development⁷. Childhood years have extremely critical importance in reaching the developmental potential of the child⁸. Childhood experiences, traumas, neglect, and inadequate fulfillment of needs lie at the bottom of social, emotional, health, and even economic problems in adulthood⁹. "Development" is one of the fundamental rights of the child¹⁰. Child development professionals are also members of a profession that can play a role in realizing this right in the best way, and it is known that the individual, social,

and cultural characteristics of child development professionals have significant effects on children¹¹.

Considering the characteristics of the child development profession, the personality traits of the child development specialist, his/her suitability for the profession, and whether he/she chose this profession voluntarily appear as important factors that affect both the education process at the university and the success of the child development professional. According to Holland's (1976)¹² personality theory, an individual's professional preference constitutes the expression of his/her personality¹³. People who become members of a professional group may have similar backgrounds and personality traits¹⁴. As individuals in a similar group are like each other in terms of some traits, they create their own interpersonal environment by reacting to many stimuli and problems in a similar way¹⁵. Childhood years are the years that form the basis of human life. Qualified "Child Development Professionals" are needed to support the development of children to whom we will entrust our future in every field, to ensure that they grow up very well, and be included in society¹⁶.

A child development professional is a professional staff who provides education in the field of "Child Development" of universities, who graduates from health sciences faculties or health sciences colleges as a health graduate, who includes all children between the ages of 0-18, who takes part in the fields of health, education, and social services, providing services to children, families, professionals, and society through supportive and improving programs by making evaluations and actively monitoring the health of children, and who evaluates the child in terms of cognitive, motor, self-care, language, social, and emotional development from the birth process until the end of adolescence to support children with a holistic perspective, to ensure that children live in a healthy environment, and to increase their living standards¹⁷. We can say that social and cultural features that have been scientifically proven to be effective on children are among the basic features of child development professionals¹⁸. Considering the characteristics of the child development profession, issues such as personality traits, suitability for the profession and whether she/he chooses this profession voluntarily play an important role in choosing the profession¹⁹. One of the most important factors that determine the professional success of a child development specialist is professional competence and love for this job. It is also important for a child development specialist to be at peace with the profession in terms of professional competence and international quality standards²⁰.

Child Development Departments of Universities train Child Development Professionals who can evaluate all development areas, develop, and implement appropriate support programs and monitor the effectiveness of the program, provide service to children, educators, families, and the community, and conduct scientific studies in the field of child development. In addition to raising well-equipped and qualified child development professionals, child development departments develop materials to evaluate the development process of the child, provide consultancy to people or institutions/organizations related to the field, transfer research and publication services, develop and produce projects covering the children, families, educators, and society, reach children and families in every part of the society, and continue making efforts to implement and disseminate these projects in a way that will benefit them. In this regard, child development professionals are very important for the development and health of children as they form the basis of a healthy society.

In profile studies involving individuals at every stage of the education process, the current situation of the target group, which constitutes the universe of the research, is described in terms of different variables, and important results are determined about the individual characteristics of these individuals, cultural context, socio-demographic factors, and similar issues²¹. Profile studies are important for the individual's self-development, renewal, and adaptation to changing innovations in the education process²². The concept of "profile" is explained as a schema that shows the status and change of an observable and measurable quantity or feature.

When determining the development levels of the countries, the quality of the existing human resources is also used, and the profiles of university students are evaluated as one of the best indicators of the existing education system to demonstrate the development level of the society from different dimensions²³. Knowing the profile of university students is important in making prospective decisions for students and in obtaining an idea about the level of development of the ongoing education system and society from different dimensions. Profile studies for university students include studies on the socio-cultural perspective and economic life of the students, their dreams, wishes, expectations, problems, etc., as well as the demographic information of university students. These studies are important in terms of obtaining detailed information about young people and, therefore, better recognition of the student population. Such studies and improving the quality of education are closely related²⁴. Studies on the student profile provide both university administration units and academicians with the

opportunity to get to know the student more closely as an individual and to observe the changes in the student profile over time²⁵. It is possible to observe the changes that occur in the students through such studies carried out at regular intervals. It is important to know the profiles of the students in making decisions to guide and develop these changes²³. Raising qualified and equipped manpower to ensure social development and to continue progress in society is among the duties of the education system. Universities are educational institutions where actions take place to produce and transfer information, reveal the critical thinking skills of students, and develop and disseminate these processes. It plays an extremely important role for students to create their own culture, to question, come to the fore with a critical perspective, and use their knowledge and skills in building the future of the society they are in²⁶. Therefore, there is a close correlation between profile studies carried out with students and increasing the quality of education. In this regard, knowing the student profile is an important milestone when making future-oriented and improving decisions about student resources in universities²⁷. It is considered that it is important to know the socio-demographic, cultural, professional interests, orientation, and personality traits of the students who receive education in this field to increase the quality of child development education in Türkiye and, therefore, to raise qualified child development professionals. In this regard, this study aimed to reveal the profile of the students studying at the Department of Child Development at Istanbul Gelişim University, Türkiye.

Material and Methods

This study is a descriptive study conducted to determine the profile of students studying at the Department of Child Development, Faculty of Health Sciences, Istanbul Gelişim University, Türkiye. The data of the study were collected with a questionnaire developed by the researchers as a result of the relevant literature review. In the preparation of the measuring instrument questionnaire, opinions and suggestions were received from five child development specialists. The data collection tool consisted of four parts (24 questions): “Personal Information Regarding Students” (5 questions), “Information Regarding Educational Background” (5 questions), “Information Regarding Socio-Economic and Cultural Status” (17 questions), and “Information Regarding Child Development Department Preference” (24 questions). There was a total of 51 questions in the data collection tool.

Although it was planned to collect the data by meeting face-to-face with the students, the survey forms were sent to the students on Google Forms due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Questions were answered by the students in an average of 15-20 minutes.

The analysis results of the data obtained from the study were interpreted as frequency and percentage values.

Study Group

Although a total of 389 students attending the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th-grade at the Turkish (245) and English (144) Department of Child Development at Istanbul Gelişim University were included within the scope of this study in the 2021-2022 academic year, a total of 259 students from both departments volunteered to participate. Therefore, this study was conducted with a total of 259 students studying in the Department of Child Development.

Ethical Issues: Ethics committee approval dated 15.04.2021 and numbered 2021-13 was received from the Gelisim University Ethics Committee.

Results

Part I. Personal Findings Regarding Students

The personal information of the students participating in this study was as follows: 96.9% of the students who preferred the child development department were between the ages of 18-25, 22.8% were 1st-grade, 28.9% were 2nd-grade, 18.9% were 3rd-grade, and 29.3% were 4th-grade students. 96.9% of the students were single while 3.1% were married. 96.5% of the students who preferred the child development department were female and 3.5% were male. 67.9% of the students included in the research process lived with their families, 14.2% lived in a private dormitory, and 4.6% lived with a friend at home. Among the students participating in this study, there was no student staying in a guesthouse.

Part II. Findings Regarding the Educational Background of Students

Findings regarding the educational background of the students participating in this study were as follows: 91.1% of the students who participated in this study completed primary school in a city, 93.4% completed secondary education in a city, and 97.6% completed high school in a city. 40.5% of the students graduated from vocational high school and 27.4% graduated from Super High School, Science High School, and Anatolian High School and 50.2% of the students had a secondary education GPA

between (81-100). 41.7% of the students entered the Department of Child Development as soon as they graduated from high school, and 37.8% entered this department one year after they graduated from high school. 58.7% of the students entered this department the first time they took the university entrance exam while 34.7% entered the second time they took the university entrance exam.

Part III. Findings Regarding the Socio-Economic and Cultural Status

Findings regarding the socio-economic and cultural status of the students and their families were as follows: Demographic characteristics of the parents: 62.5% of the mothers and 46.3% of the fathers of the students participating in this study were in the 40-49 age group. Considering the educational background of the parents, 37% of the mothers and 28.9% of the fathers were primary school graduates. 9.6% of mothers and 18.1% of fathers received a university education. In parallel with their educational background, 76.8% of the mothers were not working. In addition to this, %27 of the fathers were not working. Considering the professions of parents, it was determined that 74.1% of the mothers were housewives and 32.4% of the fathers were self-employed.

The distribution of the students by the monthly income of the parents: 42.1% of the families had a monthly income of 2800-5000 Turkish Lira and 32.4% of them had a monthly income of 5.001-10.000 Turkish Lira. 18.1% of families were working for minimum wage.

The distribution of students by the number of siblings: 8.1% of the students were the only child in their family. 33.2% of the students had two siblings, 30.9% had one sibling, and 14.7% had four or more siblings.

The distribution of information regarding the financial potential of the students: 40.2% of the students stated that they did not receive any financial support from their parents while 45.2% stated that they received monthly financial support of 500-1000 Turkish Lira. 52.1% of the students received credit from the credit and dormitories institution. 41.7% of the students did not receive scholarships or credit. 78% of the students were not working while 22% of them were working. 33.3% of students were self-employed, 24.5% were working in a store, and 38.5% of students were working an average of 6-9 hours a day. 42.1% of the students were working for more than 1 year. 20.3% of the students earned between 1001-1250 Turkish Lira per month while 20.3% earned more than 1251 Turkish Lira.

The distribution of students by the budget allocated for social and cultural activities: In this regard, 32.4% of the students stated that they could not spare any money for social and cultural activities. It was determined that 44.4% of the students allocated an average of 100-300 Turkish Lira per month for social and cultural activities. The rate of students who allocated an average of 301-500 Turkish Lira per month for social and cultural activities was 14.7%. 52.5% of the students stated that they found the money they allocated for social and cultural activities insufficient while 47.4% stated that it was sufficient.

The distribution of students by hobbies: It was determined that 24.3% of the students' hobbies were reading books and 23.6% were music/concerts. It was pleasing that there were no students who did not have any hobbies as the participation rates of child development professionals in cultural activities and social areas were directly reflected in educational activities.

The distribution of students by participation in educational activities: 58.7% of the students participated in educational activities inside and outside the school environment while 41.3% of them did not participate in any educational activities.

Part IV. Findings Regarding Students' Preferences for the University and the Department of Child Development

The findings regarding the students' preferences for the university and the child development department were as follows: The distribution of answers about who was influential in students' preferring the child development department: 73.7% of the students reported that they preferred the child development department with their own preferences.

The reasons why students preferred the child development profession: Students reported that they loved children (74.5%) as the first reason for preference. Referral by family (6.6%) and ease of finding a job (6.2%) was among the other reasons for preference. The fact that the students involved in the research process did not prefer the child development department only for the sake of university education was considered a pleasing development for the child development profession and hopeful development for its future. According to the results obtained from the research findings, it was determined that the students preferred this department consciously. The distribution of the students by the preference for the Department of Child Development in the university entrance exam was presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of students by which rank they preferred child development department

Rank	n	%
1-3	174	67.2
4-6	40	15.4
7-10	30	11.6
After the 10th rank	15	5.8
Total	259	100.0

It was determined that 67.2% of the students included this department in the first three preferences while 15.4% included this department in the 4-6 preferences.

The distribution of students' opinions on their satisfaction with studying in the Child Development Department: 94.1% of the students reported that they were satisfied with the Child Development Department they preferred voluntarily and with their own preferences. This finding demonstrated that the students had positive impressions of the departments they included among their first three preferences (67.2%, Table 1).

The distribution of students by taking the university entrance exam again and preferring the Department of Child Development again: 88% of the students reported that they did not want to take the university entrance exam again. If they had the opportunity to prefer the child development department again, 35.1% of the students reported that they would include it among the first three preferences, and 20.5% included it among the first five preferences.

The distribution of students by reasons for preferring the university they were currently studying: 51.7% of the students reported that they preferred Istanbul Gelişim University by means of their preferences within the scope of the SSPC system, 17.7% thanks to the qualified academicians and education, and 15.1% as this university had international accreditation.

The distribution of students by their satisfaction with the university they were currently studying: 90% of the students reported that they were satisfied with the university they were currently studying. 49% of the students reported that the most important factor affecting their satisfaction was the academic staff. 86.4% of the students reported that

they were undecided whether they were satisfied with their club activities at the university or not. It was determined that 85.6% of the students were satisfied with the online education process and 81.1% of the students were satisfied with the activities organized during the online education process.

The distribution of students by their opinions on their professional qualifications: 90.3% of the students reported that they considered themselves successful. 74.1% of the students reported that they believed they were trained adequately and qualified for their profession.

The distribution of students by their opinions on the qualification of the department: 23, 93.4% of the students reported that the department classrooms were adequate, 79.1% of the students reported that the laboratories were adequate, and 78.7% reported that the computers were adequate. 90.3% of the students reported that they found the schedules adequate, 92.2% found the academic consultation adequate, 88.4% found the counseling services adequate, and 79.9% found the social and cultural services adequate.

The opinions of students on the relations within and outside the department: 95.3% of the students found their relations with the teaching staff adequate and 84.1% found their relations with the administration adequate. While 94.2% of the students found the relations with friends inside the department adequate, 85.3% found the relations with friends outside the department adequate.

The distribution of students by their opinions on meeting their expectations from the department: 93.4% of the students reported that their expectations from the department were met. The distribution of students by their opinions on the rank of the Department of Child Development was presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of students by their opinions on the rank of the Department of Child Development among other universities

The rank of the department	n	%
First	33	12.7
First three	120	46.3
I have no idea	106	40.9
Total	259	100.0

46.3% of the students reported that they considered the Department of Child Development in the first three ranks. 12.7% of the students reported that they considered the Department of Child Development in the first place among other universities. 40.9% of the students responded 'I have no idea' to this question.

The distribution of students by their opinions on their plans: 94.2% of the students reported that they planned to work in the field they graduated from. Considering the plans, 32.4% of the students reported that they planned to work as a child development professional and build an academic career at the same time while 21.6% reported that they wanted to work as a child development professional in the public sector.

The distribution of students by their expectations from the department: 61.9% of the students reported that they wanted the department to help them find a job after graduation while 21.2% reported that they wanted scientific seminars and activities related to child development to be organized.

Discussion

This study was conducted to reveal the profiles of the students attending the Child Development Department of Istanbul Gelişim University. In this section, the findings obtained as a result of the study were discussed in line with the relevant literature.

As a result of this study, it was determined that almost all the students attending the Department of Child Development (94.1%) were satisfied with the department they studied in and had positive feelings and thoughts towards the department. 49% of the students reported that the most important factor affecting their satisfaction with the department was the academic staff. In a study conducted by Çiftçi et al. (2011)²⁸, it was determined that the students in the Department of Child Development acted consciously when preferring the department and profession and were satisfied with the preference they made. In a profile study conducted by Erkan et al., (2002)²¹, it was determined that 81.9% of the students had positive opinions about the department. Considering the rank of preferring the Department of Child Development in the university entrance exam, it was seen that the department of child development was among the first three preferences (67.2%) and 73.6% of the students participating in this study preferred this department voluntarily. It was an important finding that 67.2% of the students preferred the Department of Child Development in the first three ranks and voluntarily. In a study conducted by Çiftçi et al. (2011)²⁸, students preferred the department of child development in the first three ranks. The fact that the students participating in this study

did not prefer the Department of Child Development only to have a university education and diploma was considered to be a hopeful finding for the future of the child development profession. In a study carried out by Erdem (2002)²⁹, it was revealed that families significantly supported their children's occupational preferences and welcomed these choices positively. It was determined that the students completed the process of determining their career preferences consciously. Considering the distribution of students by their opinions on their professional qualifications, it was determined that 90.3% of students found themselves successful in the department they studied and 74.1% believed they were trained adequately for the profession. It was determined that students spent their free time reading books (24.3%) and participating in activities such as music/concerts (23.6%).

Considering the income status of the parents of the students in the Department of Child Development, it was determined that 42.1% of the parents had 2800-5000 Turkish Lira income, 32.4% had 5001-10000 Turkish Lira income, and 18.1% had a minimum wage income. 30.9% of the parents had two children and 33.2% had three children. It was concluded that 91.1% of the students participating in the study completed their primary education in the city, 93.4% completed their secondary education in the city, and 97.6% completed their high school education in the city. Considering the distribution of students by the type of high school they graduated from, it was determined that 40.5% of the students graduated from vocational high schools, and 27.4% graduated from Super High Schools, Science High Schools, and Anatolian High Schools. The secondary school grade point average of 50.2% of the students was between 81 and 100 while the secondary school grade point average of 38.2% of the students was between 71 and 80. Considering the gender factor, it was determined that 96.5% of the students who preferred the child development department were female students. Most of the women had occupational preferences actively involving their own gender²⁸. It was determined that similar results were obtained as a result of this study and the department of child development was mostly preferred by female students. Most of the students participating in this study reported that they were knowledgeable while preferring their profession. Similar results were found in other studies conducted in the literature³⁰⁻³². The main reason why the students participating in this study preferred the child development profession was that they loved children (74.5%). Considering the post-graduation plans of the students, working in the field they graduated ranked first (94.2%). It was determined that the second post-graduation plan of the students (32.4%) was to improve themselves by

continuing their graduate education while working as child development professionals. It was determined that the expectations of the students from the department they studied were to help them find a job after graduation (61.9%) and to organize scientific seminars and activities (21.2%). It was determined that the students in the department of Child Development preferred the university they were studying by means of their preferences within the scope of the SSPC system in the first place (51.7%), qualified academicians and education in the second place (17.7%), and the international accreditation of university in the third place. It was determined that the students were satisfied with studying at Istanbul Gelişim University (90%), the first factor that affected their satisfaction with the university was the academic staff (49%), and the second factor was physical conditions and transportation (21.6%).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been determined that the students are satisfied with the Department of Child Development and studying at Istanbul Gelişim University. When we look at the results, academic staff is the main factor affecting the university satisfaction of the students, which is followed by physical conditions and transportation. In addition, it is observed that the students' benefit from educational, social and cultural activities and their participation rates in club activities are effective on the level of satisfaction.

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