

## Factors Influencing Career Choices of Dental Students in a State University in Turkey

### Türkiye'deki Bir Devlet Üniversitesindeki Diş Hekimliği Öğrencilerinin Meslek Seçimini Etkileyen Faktörler

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#### Abstract

**Objective:** The aim of this study was to investigate the factors influencing the career choices of students in Marmara University Faculty of Dentistry in the 2014–2015 academic year.

**Methods:** Data were collected from 468 dental students by using a 55-item questionnaire.

**Results:** The mean age of students was 21.6 y (range, 17–25 y); 300 (64.1%) of them were female and 168 (35.9%) were male. A total of 202 (43.2%) students indicated that their first choice was dentistry. If they were to make a choice for a second time, 196 (41.9%) students would again prefer dentistry as their career. There was a significant difference between the year of study and the statement "I will prefer dentistry again." ( $p < 0.05$ ). In fact, 45 (49.5%) first-year students claimed that they would choose dentistry again, whereas 35 (41.7%) fifth-year students said the opposite. As being passed to higher classes, the percentage of students who would prefer dentistry again decreased. One hundred forty-one (30.1%) of all students reported wanting to change their career. It was stated as reasons for changing careers that being a dental student was stressful. Students were most influenced by their family (61.4%). As much as 408 (87.2%) students were determined to choose dentistry because of its high income; and 399 (85.2%) students said that dentistry is a prestigious profession and this criterion was significant in their career choices.

**Conclusion:** The majority of students who preferred Marmara University, Faculty of Dentistry, were girls, and there were many factors influencing the career choices and future plans of the students, with the most important being families, the high income level, and the prestige of the profession.

**Keywords:** Career choice, dentistry, students, questionnaire

#### Öz

**Amaç:** Bu çalışmanın amacı 2014-2015 eğitim-öğretim yılında Marmara Üniversitesi Diş Hekimliği Fakültesinde eğitim gören öğrencilerin meslek seçimini etkileyen faktörleri araştırmaktır.

**Yöntemler:** Çalışmamıza gönüllü olarak katılan 468 öğrenciye, 55 soruluk anket formu uygulanmıştır.

**Bulgular:** Araştırmaya katılan öğrencilerin yaş ortalaması 21,6 (17-25) olup, %64,1 (n=300)'i kız, %35,9 (n=168)'i erkektir. İki yüz iki (%43,2) öğrencinin üniversite sınavındaki ilk tercihi diş hekimliğidir. "Tekrar diş hekimliği mesleğini seçer misiniz?" sorusuna tüm öğrencilerin %41,9'i (n=196) "tekrar seçerim" şıkkını işaretlemiştir. "Diş hekimliğini tekrar seçerim" tercihi ile öğrencilerin sınıfı arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunmuştur. 1. sınıf öğrencilerinin 45'i (%49,5) tekrar bu mesleği seçeceğini söylerken, son sınıf öğrencilerinin 35'i (%41,7) tam tersini belirtmiştir. Üst sınıflara geçildikçe diş hekimliğini tekrar tercih edecek öğrencilerin yüzdesi azalmaktadır. Ankete katılan öğrencilerin toplamda %30,1 (n=141)'i bölümünü değiştirmek istemektedir. Bu öğrencilerden 113'ü (%24,1) diş hekimliğinin stresli bir bölüm olmasını neden göstermişlerdir. Öğrenciler en çok ailelerinden (%61,4) etkilenmektedir. Dört yüz sekiz (%87,2) öğrenci bu mesleği yüksek gelir getirdiği için tercih ettiklerini belirtirken, üç yüz doksan dokuzu (%85,2) diş hekimliğinin prestijli bir meslek olmasının seçimlerinde etkili bir kriter olduğunu bildirmiştir.

**Sonuç:** Marmara Üniversitesi Diş Hekimliği Fakültesi'ni tercih eden öğrencilerin çoğunluğu kızdı ve öğrencilerin kariyer tercihlerini ve gelecekteki planlarını etkileyen birçok faktör vardı. Bunlar arasından en önemlileri aileler, yüksek gelir seviyesi ve mesleğin prestijiydi.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Anket, diş hekimliği, meslek seçimi, öğrenciler

#### INTRODUCTION

Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions people have to make in their lives. Individuals tend to choose the most suitable profession, which expresses themselves in the best way and which best suits their personality. This provides significant personal and social gains. Job satisfaction fulfills an important inner need. There are many factors affecting the choice of career: personality traits of

individuals, familial status, and income and prestige of the selected profession are among them. Social and epidemiologic studies have documented that demographic characteristics of a population are also an important determinant, which influences the motivations and career expectations of university students. Age, gender, and parents' educational background have been mentioned as factors that may affect the career choices to varying degrees among different populations (1–3). The ethnic culture of the country is also influential in the selection process. In particular, the electoral process in countries, such as Turkey, is affected faster by the familial and environmental factors (4–6).

In recent decades, there has been great emphasis placed on the responsibility of healthcare professionals, including dentists and medical doctors, to protect and enhance the health of the general public (3). Dentistry, at the forefront of healthcare all over the world, has a long and demanding educational process. Dentistry is among the most popular professions for young people in Turkey (7, 8). Dentistry education entails a very difficult process, whereby the individuals must develop their hand skills, improve their knowledge, and experience and memorize the available information.

In Turkey, students, who wants to be a dentist, must take the general national university entrance exam. The competitive nature of this exam entails that only those achieving very high scores are admitted. Students are placed into a state or private university according to their score (9). Dental education is 5 years in Turkey. Dental studies prepare students for careers in the modern world of dentistry by combining clinical training with basic and advanced dental sciences (10).

The aim of this study was to investigate the factors influencing career choices of students in Marmara University Faculty of Dentistry in the 2014–2015 academic year and to determine whether there is a change in student's preferences over this period.

## METHODS

The students of Marmara University Faculty of Dentistry in Turkey were included in the study from the 2014–2015 academic year. The present study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the Marmara University Health Sciences Institute under report number 26.01.2015/19. All students were asked to answer the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Consent forms were taken from students who agreed to participate in the study. The questionnaire used in this study was based on previous studies (3, 5) with the addition of some items related to cultural and family influences and acceptance procedures in the university.

For this study, data were collected from 468 dental students by using a 55-item questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part consists of 18 questions for determining students' demographic variables (age, gender, family income, parents' occupation, etc.) The second part consists of 37 questions for determining the factors that influence students' choice of career.

### Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed, percentages were evaluated using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 (IBM Corp.; Armonk, NY, USA) program. Chi-square test were used for comparison. The level of significance is accepted as  $p < 0.05$ .

## RESULTS

The response rate for the study was 85.1% (468 of 550 students). The mean age of the students was 21.6 y (range, 17–25 y); 300 (64.1%) of them were female and 168 (35.9%) were male. Ninety-one (19.5%) of them were first-year students (31 male and 60 female), 100 (21.4%) were second-year students (26 male and 74 female), whereas third-, fourth-, and fifth-year students accounted for 108 (23.1%) (35 male and 73 female), 85 (18.2%) (44 male and 41 female), and 84 (17.9%) (32 male and 52 female) of the respondents, respectively (Table 1).

### Familial Status

In total, 213 (45.5%) of students' fathers had university-level education and 122 (26.1%) of them had graduated high school. In contrast, 143 (30.6%) of students' mothers had university-level education, 142 (30.3%) high school, and 137 (29.3%) had graduated primary school. Of all the parents, 25 (5.3%) fathers and 56 (12%) mothers had had a profession in health care. However, 207 (44.2%) mothers were housewives (Table 1). One-hundred eighty (38.5%) students reported an income of 2001–4000 q, 105 (22.4%) had 4001–6000 q, 89 (19%) had more than 6000 q, and 70 (15%) had under 2000 q. One-hundred ninety-five (41.7%) students were living with their family.

### Career Choice

Two-hundred two (43.2%) students indicated that their first choice was dentistry. Medicine was the first choice for 217 (46.4%) of those for whom dentistry was not their first choice of career. If they were to make the choice again, 196 (41.9%) of the students would again choose dentistry (Table 2). Forty-five (50%) of that 196 students were first-year students, 40 (40%) were second-year students, whereas third-, fourth-, and fifth-year students accounted for 52 (48.1%), 28 (32.9%), and 31 (36.9%) of the respondents, respectively (Table 2). There was a significant difference between education year and the statement "I will prefer dentistry again." ( $p < 0.05$ ). In fact, 45 (49.5%) first-year students claimed that they would choose dentistry again, whereas 35 (41.7%) fifth-year students said the opposite. As being passed to higher classes, the percentage of students who will prefer dentistry again decreased. There was a significant difference in re-selection between males and females in third year and in total. In the third year, females emphasized that they would not re-select dentistry more than males. And in total, females reported that they would re-select dentistry more than males.

### Career Change Request

One-hundred forty-one (30.1%) students wanted to change their career; of these, 19 (21.1%) were first-year students, 35 (35%) second-year students, 22 (20.6%) third-year students, 35 (41.2%) fourth-year students, and 30 (35.7%) fifth-year students. The desire to change career was most prevalent among fourth- and fifth-year students. As the reason for changing careers, 113 (24.1%) of all the students and 55.1% of the students who want career changing stated that being a dental student is stressful. Other reasons given by some of students were "I don't like the faculty" (8.8%) and "Dentistry is not suitable for their skills" (5.2%) (Table 3). Only 12 (2.6%) of the students answered that they were very satisfied with their career choice.

### Future Plans

According to the future plans, 311 (66.5%) students wanted to specialize in a branch, 94 (14.5%) wanted to work in their own practice, and 68 (8.2%) wanted to work in a private clinic (Table 4). There was

**Table 1.** Distribution of the students according to sex, age, education year, and job of parents

	n	%	Female n (%)	Male n (%)
<b>Sex</b>			300 (64.1)	168 (35.9)
<b>Mean Age</b>	Total (n= 468)	21.6		
	1 <sup>st</sup> year students (n=91)	19.6	60 (65.9)	31 (34.1)
	5 <sup>th</sup> year students (n=84)	23.4	52 (61.9)	32 (38.1)
<b>Number of Students</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> year students (n=91)	19.5	60 (65.9)	31 (34.1)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year students (n=100)	21.4	74 (74)	26 (26)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year students (n=108)	23.1	73 (67.6)	35 (32.4)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year students (n=85)	18.2	41 (48.2)	44 (51.8)
	5 <sup>th</sup> year students (n=84)	17.9	52 (61.9)	32 (38.1)
<b>Job of Fathers</b>	(n)	(%)		
Tradesman	84	17,9	45 (53.6)	39 (46.4)
Health profession	25	5.3	21 (84)	4 (16)
Educator	52	11.1	33 (63.5)	19 (36.5)
Other	233	49.8	162 (69.5)	71 (30.5)
Not answered	74	15.8	39 (52.7)	35 (47.3)
Total	468	100	300 (64.1)	168 (35.9)
<b>Job of Mothers</b>	(n)	(%)		
Housewife	207	44.2	139 (67.1)	68 (32.9)
Health profession	56	12	42 (75)	14 (25)
Educator	16	3,4	13 (81.3)	3 (18.7)
Other	115	24.6	60 (52.2)	55 (47.8)
Not answered	74	15.8	46 (62.2)	28 (37.8)

**Table 2.** Distribution of dentistry re-selection according to the year

Year (n)	Sex (n)	Yes	No	Maybe	Total	p (Chi-square test)
1	Male (31)	18.6	4.4	11.1	34.1	NS
	Female (60)	31.4	5.6	28.9	65.9	
	Total (91)	50.0	10.0	40.0	100.0	
2	Male (26)	8.0	10.0	8.0	26.0	NS
	Female (74)	32.0	19.0	23.0	74.0	
	Total (100)	40.0	29.0	31.0	100.0	
3	Male (35)	23.4	3.7	5.6	32.7	*
	Female (73)	25.2	15.0	27.1	67.3	
	Total (108)	48.6	18.7	32.7	100.0	
4	Male (44)	18.8	22.4	10.6	51.8	NS
	Female (41)	14.1	18.8	15.3	48.2	
	Total (85)	32.9	41.2	25.9	100.0	
5	Male (32)	11.9	16.7	9.5	38.1	NS
	Female (52)	25.0	25.0	11.9	61.9	
	Total (84)	36.9	41.7	21.4	100.0	
Total	Male (168)	16.3	10.9	8.7	35.9	*
	Female (300)	25.6	16.6	21.9	64.1	
	Total (468)	41.9	27.4	30.7	100.0	

For overall class comparison:\*\*

NS: Non significant

\*p&lt;0.05, \*\*p&lt;0.01

**Table 3.** Major reasons for changing career

Year (n)	Sex (n)	This career is not suitable to my skills	I don't like the faculty	I can't adapt to the school/ environment	I'm not successful with this career	This career is too stressed	Total	p (Chi-square test)
1	Male (6)	8.1	7.1	7.1	4.6	4.6	31.6	NS
	Female (13)	6.1	14.3	3.6	6.1	38.3	68.4	
	Total (19)	14.3	21.4	10.7	10.7	42.9	100.0	
2	Male (9)	1.6	5.7	2.3	5.7	10.4	25.7	NS
	Female (26)	6.7	17.7	7.7	4.3	38.0	74.3	
	Total (35)	8.3	23.4	10.0	10.0	48.3	100.0	
3	Male (5)	8.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.7	22.7	NS
	Female (17)	13.1	15.2	9.1	0.0	39.9	77.3	
	Total (22)	21.2	15.2	9.1	0.0	54.5	100.0	
4	Male (16)	5.7	7.9	2.2	2.2	27.7	45.2	NS
	Female (19)	3.2	9.9	2.2	2.2	36.8	54.3	
	Total (35)	8.9	17.8	4.4	4.4	64.4	100.0	
5	Male (13)	7.7	2.6	2.6	0.0	25.6	38.5	NS
	Female (17)	5.1	15.4	2.6	0.0	38.5	61.5	
	Total (30)	12.8	17.9	5.1	0.0	64.1	100.0	
Total	Male (49)	5.4	7.9	3.6	2.9	23.6	43.3	NS
	Female (92)	6.3	12.1	4.2	2.4	31.6	56.7	
	Total (141)	11.7	20.0	7.8	5.4	55.1	100.0	

p>0.05 for overall class comparison  
Students could mark more than one answer in this question

**Table 4.** Future plans

Year (n)	Sex (n)	Working in state clinic	Being specialized in a branch	Opening his/her own practice	Working in a private clinic	Making academic career	Total	p (Chi-square test)
1	Male (31)	2.2	20.9	5.5	5.5	0.0	34.1	NS
	Female (60)	4.4	39.6	15.4	3.3	3.3	65.9	
	Total (91)	6.6	60.4	20.9	8.8	3.3	100.0	
2	Male (26)	7.0	12.0	6.0	1.0	0.0	26.0	*
	Female (74)	4.0	49.0	9.0	5.0	7.0	74.0	
	Total (100)	11.0	61.0	15.0	6.0	7.0	100.0	
3	Male (35)	2.8	20.4	6.5	9.0	1.9	32.4	*
	Female (73)	9.0	50.0	3.7	10.2	2.8	67.6	
	Total (108)	3.7	70.4	10.2	11.1	4.6	100.0	
4	Male (44)	1.2	28.2	8.2	3.5	10.6	51.8	*
	Female (41)	1.2	31.8	2.4	10.6	2.4	48.2	
	Total (85)	2.4	60.0	10.6	14.1	12.9	100.0	
5	Male (32)	1.2	20.2	8.3	6.0	2.4	38.1	NS
	Female (52)	2.4	47.6	7.1	1.2	3.6	61.9	
	Total (84)	3.6	67.9	15.5	7.1	6.0	100.0	
Total	Male (168)	3.0	20.1	7.1	3.0	1.8	35.9	*
	Female (300)	2.6	46.6	7.5	5.2	3.4	64.1	
	Total (468)	5.6	66.5	14.5	8.2	5.2	100.0	

For overall class comparison:\*  
NS: Non significant  
\*p<0.05  
Students could mark more than one answer in this question

**Table 5.** Distribution of clinical branches preferred by students

Year (n)	Sex (n)	Oral and maxillofacial surgery	Oral radiology	Pediatric dentistry	Orthodontics	Endodontics	Periodontology	Prosthodontics	Restorative dentistry	Total	p (Chi-square test)
1	Male (31)	11.0	1.1	1.1	16.5	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	34.1	NS
	Female (60)	14.3	1.1	9.9	36.3	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	65.9	
	Total (91)	25.3	2.2	11.0	52.7	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	100.0	
2	Male (26)	11.0	1.0	1.0	9.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	26.0	NS
	Female (74)	28.0	0.0	5.0	32.0	1.0	1.0	6.0	1.0	74.0	
	Total (100)	39.0	1.0	6.0	41.0	2.0	2.0	7.0	2.0	100.0	
3	Male (35)	16.7	0.0	1.9	8.3	0.9	3.7	0.9	0.0	32.4	NS
	Female (73)	28.7	0.9	6.5	22.2	0.9	4.6	2.8	0.9	67.6	
	Total (108)	45.4	0.9	8.4	30.5	1.8	8.3	3.7	0.9	100.0	
4	Male (44)	22.4	1.2	1.2	18.8	1.2	2.5	2.4	1.2	51.8	*
	Female (41)	12.9	0.0	9.4	11.8	2.4	5.9	3.5	2.4	48.2	
	Total (85)	35.3	1.2	10.6	30.6	3.6	8.4	5.9	3.6	100.0	
5	Male (32)	22.6	0.0	2.4	7.1	1.2	2.4	1.2	1.2	38.1	*
	Female (52)	17.9	1.2	14.3	15.5	3.6	6.0	3.6	0.0	61.9	
	Total (84)	40.5	1.2	16.7	22.6	4.8	8.4	4.8	1.2	100.0	
Total	Male (168)	16.7	0.5	1.9	12.4	0.4	1.9	1.5	0.6	35.9	*
	Female (300)	21.2	0.7	6.8	28.9	1.7	3.2	2.6	1.0	64.1	
	Total (468)	37.8	1.2	8.7	41.3	2.1	5.1	4.1	1.6	100.0	

For overall class comparison:\*\*  
 NS: Non significant  
 \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01  
 Students could mark more than one answer in this question

a significant difference between sex and future plans. While more females wanted to specialize in a branch, males wanted to specialize and open their own practice (Table 4).

One-hundred ninety-three (41.3%) of the students, who wanted to be a specialist, wished to specialize in orthodontics, whereas 177 (37.8%) students preferred oral and maxillofacial surgery, with 8.7% pedodontics, 5.1% periodontology, 4.1% prosthodontics, 2.1% endodontics, 1.6% restorative dentistry, and 1.2% oral radiology (Table 5). There was a significant difference between sex, class, and preferred branch. Especially in the last years (fourth and fifth), orthodontics and surgery became the most preferred branches. Females preferred orthodontics more, whereas males preferred oral maxillofacial surgery (Table 5).

**Factors in Career Choice**

Students indicated that 287 (61.4%) were particularly influenced by their families and 148 (31.6%) by their own dentists. Other influencing factors reported by students are teachers, friends, and social media.

The final section of the survey asked students questions about their attitudes toward the factors affecting the choice of the career and answers were given according to the Likert scale (Table 6). Four-hundred eight (87.2%) students chose dentistry because of its high income; 399 (85.2%) students stated that dentistry is a prestigious profession and 395 (84.4%) stated that dentistry is a fiduciary profession and these is important in their career choice; 390 (83.4%) students chose dentistry because they have a high chance of a guaranteed job, and 380 (81.2%) of the students opted to choose dentistry because they love to serve people. There was a significant difference

between sex, class, and the statement “I love to serve people” (Table 7). It has been found that this thinking is more effective in choosing a career for females. There was significant difference between class and the both statements “Dentistry is a prestigious profession” and “Job guarantee is high in dentistry.” Especially in the first years (i.e., first and second), prestige is more important for the students. But there is no significant difference between sex and these statements. There was significant difference between sex and the statements “I chose this career because its importance growing nowadays” (Table 8). This factor is more effective in females’ job choice than males.

**DISCUSSION**

In recent decades, great emphasis has been placed on the main responsibility of health care professionals, including dentists, to promote the health of the general public (9). In our study that investigates the factors influencing the career choice of students, 78.2% of the students stated that they chose dentistry because it’s importance is growing nowadays. Dentistry has a long, tiring, and demanding educational process, but is considered a desirable career in Turkey. According to the results of this study, 30.1% of students want to change their career. These students are especially in the fourth and fifth years. In order to avoid this situation, it is important that students should examine all the professions in details prior making a career choice.

When analyzing factors affecting the career choice of the individual, our results show the inducement of family (61.4%) and dentists (31.6%), high income (87.2%), and prestige of profession (85.2%) is effective in terms of producing more mature individual vocational decisions.

**Table 6.** Students' attitudes toward the factors affecting the choice of the career

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I love to serve people	16	3.4	22	4.7	50	10.7	253	54.1	127	27.1
My character and skills suit to dentistry	4	0.9	28	6	140	29.9	228	48.7	68	14.5
Dentistry is a prestigious profession	5	1.1	10	2.1	54	11.5	251	53.6	148	31.6
Dentistry is a profession with high income	4	0.9	5	1.1	51	10.9	275	58.8	133	28.4
I choose dentistry because it has flexible working hours	37	7.9	127	27.1	111	23.7	136	29.1	57	12.2
Job guarantee is high in dentistry	3	0.6	17	3.6	58	12.4	267	57.1	123	26.3
I chose dentistry because my score is enough for it	66	14.1	127	27.1	53	11.3	155	33.1	67	14.3
I chose dentistry because I have ambition to white apron	126	26.9	139	29.7	67	14.3	105	22.4	31	6.8
I prefer dentistry to get educated in the city where my parents live	243	51.9	113	24.1	29	6.2	56	12	27	5.8
I chose this career because my parents wanted it	175	37.4	130	27.8	69	14.7	74	15.8	20	4.3
I choose this career because my parents are dentist	339	72.4	104	22.2	6	1.3	14	3	5	1.1
I have an interest in health sciences	14	3	24	5.1	65	13.9	199	42.5	166	35.5
Dentistry provides good social conditions	14	3	23	4.9	79	16.9	268	57.3	84	17.9
I chose this career because I like dentistry	30	6.4	55	11.8	134	28.6	166	35.5	83	17.7
Dentistry is fiduciary a profession	5	1.1	12	2.6	56	12	257	54.9	138	29.5
My preferred school has a strong presence in the field of dentistry	15	3.2	24	5.1	68	14.5	228	48.7	133	28.4
I find job easily when I graduated from a dental school	2	0.4	8	1.7	70	15	280	59.8	108	23.1
Dentistry is a suitable profession for a career	5	1.1	13	2.8	88	18.8	266	56.8	96	20.5
I chose this career because its importance growing nowadays	28	6	52	11.1	23	4.9	206	44	159	34.2

**Table 7.** Students distribution about factor "I love to serve people"

	Year	Sex	Agree/ Strongly Agree	Other	Total	p (Chi-square test)
I love to serve people	1	Male (31)	28.6	5.5	34.1	NS
		Female (60)	59.3	6.6	65.9	
		Total (91)	87.9	12.1	100.0	
	2	Male (26)	11.0	15.0	26.0	*
		Female (74)	61.0	13.0	74.0	
		Total (100)	72.0	28.0	100.0	
	3	Male (35)	26.2	6.5	32.7	NS
		Female (73)	60.7	6.5	67.3	
		Total (108)	86.9	13.1	100.0	
	4	Male (44)	40.0	11.8	51.8	NS
		Female (41)	37.6	10.6	48.2	
		Total (85)	77.6	22.4	100.0	
	5	Male (32)	27.7	10.8	38.6	NS
		Female (52)	53.0	8.4	61.4	
		Total (85)	80.7	19.3	100.0	
Total	Male (168)	26.1	9.8	35.9	*	
	Female (300)	55.0	9.1	64.1		
	Total (468)	81.2	18.8	100.0		

For overall class comparison:\*

NS: Non significant

\*p&lt;0.05

**Table 8.** Students distribution about factor “I chose this career because its importance growing nowadays”

	Year	Sex	Agree/ Strongly Agree	Other	Total	p (Chi-square test)
I chose this career because its importance growing nowadays	1	Male (31)	22.0	12.1	34.1	*
		Female (60)	59.3	6.6	65.9	
		Total (91)	81.3	18.7	100.0	
	2	Male (26)	15.0	11.0	26.0	*
		Female (74)	62.0	12.0	74.0	
		Total (100)	77.0	23.0	100.0	
	3	Male (35)	22.4	10.3	32.7	*
		Female (73)	57.0	10.3	67.3	
		Total (108)	79.4	20.6	100.0	
	4	Male (44)	36.5	15.3	51.8	NS
		Female (41)	38.8	9.4	48.2	
		Total (85)	75.3	24.7	100.0	
	5	Male (32)	25.3	13.3	38.6	*
		Female (52)	51.8	9.6	61.4	
		Total (85)	84.3	15.7	100.0	
Total	Male (168)	23.8	12.1	35.9	**	
	Female (300)	54.4	9.7	64.1		
	Total (468)	78.2	21.8	100.0		

For overall class comparison:\*  
 NS: non significant  
 \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

A total of 64.1% of the students participating in the study were female. This high interest of women entering the field of dentistry is comparable to study populations in Denmark (11), Australia (12), and Iran (9). Similarly, studies in Jordan (13) and Ireland (14) emphasize girls' predomination. In contrast, some studies among medical students stated that male students are more prevalent than females (15). Compared with the medical specialty, dentistry entails more hand skills, it can provide more comfortable working conditions and individual factors, such as the opportunity to open their own practice, are some potential reasons given for why female students prefer dentistry.

The question about the educational level of parents revealed that 79.1% of the students' fathers and 64.7% of students' mothers were graduates of high school and above. Tanalp et al. (16) found in their study that 90.4% of fathers and 89.5% of mothers were graduates of high school and above. Our results were lower than theirs. It is believed that this difference stems from the difference of private versus state universities. Tanalp et al. (16) performed their study in a private dentistry school in Turkey; in contrast, we performed our study in a state university in Turkey. In Turkey, usually families with high income can send their child to a private university. However, according to Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), in 2014, the proportion of the population aged 25 years and older who are illiterate is 5.6% of the total population. This ratio is 1.8% for males and 9.2% for females. The proportion of 25-year-olds and older who graduated from high school and balanced school is 19.1% of the total population, whereas this ratio is 23.2% for males and 15% for females. The ratio of those

who have graduated from college or faculty to the total population is 13.9%, which is 16.2% for males and 11.7% for females. Compared to our study, these results are very low. As a result, we can say that dental students in Turkey come from higher social classes (17). The most influential factor in career choice was found to be family. This demonstrates the importance of the families' high education level.

A very small part of the students' parents have been working in the health field. The rate was 5.3% in the students' fathers whereas mothers were 12%. These results are similar to those reported by the studies conducted by Khami et al. (7%) (9) and Halawany's (6.1%) (6). In contrast, a study that compared Japanese and Swedish dental students showed that nearly 60% of Japanese dental students had at least one parent who was a dentist (18). Compared to our study, this result is very high. There was no significant difference between the profession of father or mother and the first-place preference of dentistry (p>0.05). However, 62.5% of the students whose fathers are health professionals selected dentistry as the first choice. Equally, 86.7% of students whose mothers are health professionals have selected dentistry as the first choice. Both of these are the highest ratio when compared with other professions.

Data regarding the students' type of residence showed that 41.7% lived with their families. This result is similar to that of the study of Marino et al. (19). Students most influenced by families in their career choices, one of the most important reasons for this is the high rate of family life. Consistent with our study, Tanalp et al. (16) revealed in their study 42.8% of the respondents lived with their families. In con-

trast, a study of French dental students reported that only 24% of French students lived with their parents (20). This difference can be explained with cultural differences between countries.

A total of 43.2% of the students chose dentistry as their first choice in the general exam. This score was very high compared with the studies of Bourgzui (10) who scored a response rate of 36% and Skelly (21) who scored a response rate of 33%. Our result is lower compared to a study by Tanalp et al. (16), with a score of 58.5%. In addition, similar to our study, French dental students' first choice showed a percentage of 41% and Jordanian dental students chose dentistry with a score of 46% as their first choice (13, 22).

General medicine was the most popular profession for those who did not initially choose dentistry. Medicine was the first choice for 46.4% of those for whom dentistry was not their first choice of career. This score is consistent with the results of some other studies in Jordan (53%) (13), in Ireland (66%) (23), and in Turkey (60%) (16). In general, the medical profession's income and opportunity to help people are higher than dentistry. Because of this, the first choice of students who attach importance to this criterion becomes medicine. In our country, students receive their points from the general exam. Students whose points are not high enough for medicine prefer dentistry, which is the closest profession to their criterion.

The question whether students would choose dentistry again showed 41.9% of the students agreed. There was a significant difference between the year of study and the statement "I will prefer dentistry again" ( $p < 0.05$ ). As being passed to higher classes, the percentage of students who will prefer dentistry again decreased. Consistent with our study, Al-Bitar et al. (13) reported that the percentage of fifth-year students, who would choose dentistry as a career again, was lower compared to other years. This result can be explained by increasing theoretical and practical density and stress, especially in the fourth and fifth years.

One-hundred forty-one (30.1%) of the students reported wanting to change their career. As the reason for changing careers, 24.1% of the students stated that being a dental student is stressful. A recent study reported that dental students in five European schools showed a negative development through the years from first to fifth year with regard to emotional exhaustion and psychological distress (24). Froeshle et al. (25) determined in their study that dentistry students complain about the excessive workload and stress. This concern diminished their interest in the profession. These results show dental education is very stressful.

According to the results of our study, 66.5% of the students wanted to specialize in a branch of dentistry. Similar to our results, Khami et al. (9) revealed in their study that 70% of students want to enter a postgraduate program. Our results are consistent with the results of a study of dental students in the UK (73%) (26). Students were asked in which specific branch they want to specialize and it was revealed that 41.3% of them preferred orthodontics in the first place, followed by oral and maxillofacial surgery (37.8%). Consistent to our study, Anbu Selvan et al. (27) and Hallanway (6), reported that most of the students in their studies want to specialize in oral maxillofacial surgery, followed by orthodontics. It is emphasized that the high income is the biggest reason for this. In addition, Tanalp et al. (16) expressed in their study 86% of the students wanted to specialize in a branch

and the top-ranked specialties are orthodontics and oral and maxillofacial surgery. These results are consistent with our results. Females preferred orthodontics more, whereas males preferred oral maxillofacial surgery. There is a belief in Turkish society that surgical branches are better suited for males. For this reason, we think that males prefer surgical branches more.

Dentistry offers different options for working environments; working in state or private hospitals, working in their own practice, or making a career academically are among these. When we asked the students their plans after graduation, 66.5% of the students stated they want to specialize in a branch and 20.1% of them planned to open their own practice. Karibe et al. (18) investigated career choice and attitudes toward dental education of students among dental students in Japan and Sweden. In contrast to our study, they reported that only 37% of the Swedish students in their study were planning to become specialists. Similarly, a study in Thai students find out that 39% of the students were thinking about becoming specialists, and these results are very low compared to our study (28). We assumed the cause of this difference is that working as a specialist is more prestigious than being a general dentist in our country.

A total of 61.4% of the students in our study were originally influenced by their family. Equally, studies in Nigeria (29) and in Morocco (10) stated that most of the students influenced by family and friends during career choice. Anbu Selvan et al. (27) and Benjakul et al. (30) reported in their studies that family is the most influential factor in students' career choice. In contrast, a study in the UK showed the impact of the family during career choice was very low (31). It can be considered that this situation stems from cultural differences between the countries. Marino et al. (19) reported that regarding selection of dentistry as a career, parents were more influential among Asian students than among students belonging to other ethnic groups. This report suggests that in Asian countries, family expectations highly influence the students' decisions to choose dentistry as an occupation.

Karibe et al. (18) reported 70% of Swedish students were content with their dental school life, whereas only 32% of Japanese students were satisfied. In our study, only 12% of the students said that they are satisfied with their dental school life. The reason for this can be considered the environmental and technical conditions of the faculty and the strenuous education.

Many factors may affect deciding on a career choice. These are the factors relating to working conditions and financial rewards, security and status, nature of occupation, working with people, use of personal or manual skills, and interest in science and research (13,23, 32).

In the last part of the questionnaire, questions according to Likert scale were asked to students to assess their attitudes toward dentistry as a career. According to the answers, high income (87.2%) ranked first. Following this, prestige of the career (85.2%), job guarantee (83.4%), finding job easily after graduation (82.9%), and helping people (81.2%) showed high scores, respectively. Consistent with our study, Hallssey et al. (14) and Gallagher et al. (31) reported in their studies that the most important factors in career choices of dentistry students are good working conditions, high income, and job guarantee. Al-Bitar et al. (13) reported in their study that the most important factor in career choice is prestige of career with a score of 44.4%. In addition, Hallanway (6) revealed a relatively higher percentage of re-



spondents in his study agreed to a considerable or great extent with "high income" and "high professional status" compared with other motivating factors.

The factor "high income" takes the highest score (87.2%) in the final part of our study. Students have approached the subject honestly and stated that to make money is the most important objective of the profession. These findings are similar to those of many previous studies (9, 14, 18, 21, 32). Nonetheless, our result was higher than that of Canadian (74%) (28) and Swedish students (26%) (18), who indicated economic reason for choosing dentistry as an occupation. This reflects the influence of monetary and social factors on the minds of majority of the Turkish students.

A total of 85.2% of the students in our study stated that they choose dentistry because it's a prestigious profession. This score is ranked second. Equally, Anbu Selvan et al. (27) determined in their study that the prestige of the profession is the most important factor for the students. In contrast, Moroccan dental students had the highest score in the factor "noble function"; the fact that dentistry is "prestigious" was ranked sixth (10). Similarly with Moroccan students, the American dental students (23) stated prestige is the least important factor for them, and 6% of dental students in the UK (32) agreed with that statement. Conversely, for Jordanian students, prestige was cited as the most important factor (13). Additionally, we see in our study prestige is more important for junior students and its importance decline for seniors.

There has been an increase in the number of dental schools in Turkey. A larger number of dental schools will produce a larger number of graduating dentists each year, and these qualified graduates may decide to pursue the postgraduate specialty of their choice, to work in public or private dental facilities, or to enter private practice depending on their academic and clinical achievements, financial resources, and career interests.

In the recent study, almost half of the students chose dentistry as their first choice and 66.5% of them want to be a specialist. It was concluded that the financial gain is the most important criteria in students' career plans.

## CONCLUSION

Students' career choices are influenced by numerous factors including high income; prestige of the profession; family expectations; individual variants, such as gender, personal interests; and environmental factors. Improving the quality of life of their patients was a decisive factor for students choosing dentistry as a career. The results presented here are the first reported data for a Turkish state university population looking at choosing dentistry as a career. These results may help candidates facing career choices to know dentistry students' perspectives toward their career and might reveal students' attitudes toward dentistry education to teachers in order to improve the educational system.

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