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DOES CAREER DECIDEDNESS AFFECT EMPLOYMENT HOPE? THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EDUCATION QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION POTENTIAL OF WORK FROM HOME FOR DETERMINING JOB QUALITY

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Abstract:

In today's conditions, one of the most important issues that confuse students in higher education is their career. With the increasing economic conditions and population growth, it becomes more difficult for them to decide on their careers. Employment perspectives and professional awareness levels are important for job seekers to find a job that meets their knowledge, skills and expectations and to ensure continuity. The general mood for students to have information about finding a job after graduation is expressed as employment hope. The quality of education students receive in higher education will affect their careers and futures. In this study, it is aimed to examine the mediating role of the education quality (EQ) in higher education in the relationship between career decidedness (CD) and employment hope (EH) of university students. The research was conducted with a sample of 476 people which continues to their higher education in different universities in Türkiye. According to the findings obtained; a statistically significant positive correlation was found between CD and EQ, CD and EH, and EQ and EH. In addition, according to the mediation test, it was determined that education quality had a partial and weak mediating role between CD and EH.

Key words: *Career decidedness, Employment hope, Service quality, Education quality, Quality management*

1. Introduction

In Türkiye, the number of unemployed people aged 15 and over decreased by one hundred thirty-six thousand people in June 2022 compared to the same period of the previous year and reached 3 million 541 thousand people. The unemployment rate decreased to 10.3%. In addition, it is seen that the youth (15-24 age group) unemployment rate is around 20.4% (TÜİK, 2022). For this reason, securing the employment of young

people and enabling them to enter the labor market is becoming more and more of a challenge.

The common theme of young individuals, who both benefit from the many resources available and seize business opportunities, is the feeling of hope. Family structures of some may be dysfunctional and chaotic, but their self-esteem and self-efficacy are solid and have the impetus to achieve their goals. They are really struggling with self-sacrifice. Although individuals have these feelings and powers, it also appears that training and pre-placement employment services are not sufficient to help individuals gain and maintain employment (Harvey, Hong, and Kwaza, 2010: 77).

It is common for young people to have difficulties in finding a job after graduation from university and to work in a job other than their own in order not to be unemployed. It is possible to say that this situation arises from various reasons. These are lack of experience due to recent graduation, insufficiency of university education, and adult unemployment is parallel to youth unemployment. There are studies in which the job prospects of young individuals with university-level education are affected and associated by many variables (Seçer and Yazıcı, 2018: 49).

In this study, the relationships between career decidedness (CD), employment hope (EH), and the education quality (EQ) of university students who are still continuing in at least one higher education institution are examined. Informed by social cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994) and hope theory (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002), we further explore the mechanism underlying the above relationships by evaluating the possible mediating effect of education quality. Since there is no other study in which three variables were used together, it is thought that this study is important in terms of its contribution to the literature. It is thought that the data collected in the universities where the study is planned to be implemented will bring a different perspective to both the education managers and the academy. For the analysis, the survey method, which is a quantitative research method, was chosen with a sample group of 476 people formed by convenience sampling.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: It first introduces the theoretical background on career decidedness, employment hope and quality of education and develop the research hypotheses. Next in the methodology part, sample, research model, data collection and measurements were explained. Structural equation modeling was used in the research and likert scale was used in the questionnaire. Then the findings, results and discussion were presented. As a result of the findings obtained from the research; whether or not quality of education has an intermediary role in the effect of students' career decidedness on employment hope has been determined.

2. Theoretical Background And Research Hypotheses

2.1. Career Decidedness

The term career can be defined as a combination and sequence of positions, job roles, and person experiences, some of which occur simultaneously, throughout a person's life (Super, 1980: 286). It is thus possible to define career as a process rather than a concept

as a set of experiences. Yaşar and Sunay (2020: 1615) define the concept of career decidedness as “the individual's commitment to career choice and his satisfaction with this choice.” Career decision process, which is one of the important issues that will affect the whole lives of individuals; requires high commitment. As a result of his literature research, Gordon (1998) summarized career decidedness in seven different categories according to a number of criteria. The categories of career decidedness that seem to emerge from this literature are very decided, somewhat decided, unstable decided, tentatively undecided, developmentally undecided, seriously undecided, and chronically indecisive.

Career decidedness is an important topic to study today due to the changing nature and complexity of the global economy and the current professional market. The demands of this competitive environment require constant adaptation and innovation, making it even more imperative that the next generation workforce be prepared to meet the challenges of a world quite different from previous generations (Smith, 2011: 5).

The SCCT theoretical framework highlights three key constructs, namely self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goal representations (Lent, Brown and Hackett, 1994: 83), which appear to be particularly relevant to career decidedness. It is stated that career determination stems from a large number of studies on career indecision in the general literature (Betz & Vuyten, 1997). Career indecision is generally understood as a temporary, developmental situation until an academic or career decision is made (Larson, Heppner, Ham, & Dugan, 1988; Osipow, 1999). Betz and Vuyten (1997) showed in their studies that an individual's self-efficacy level is one of the strongest predictors of career indecision. According to Lent et al. (1994) individuals who have high self-efficacy frequently see successful outcomes for the activities they complete. This encourages people to concentrate on accomplishing their goals, which becomes important for the career path they select.

Lounsbury et al. (2005: 35) found in their study that five major personality traits are associated with career determination. They found that conscientiousness was consistently positively correlated with career decision, while acceptability and openness were significantly associated with career decision. They stated that it would be interesting to examine the effects of situational variables or career development programs on career stability above and beyond the effects of personality, and suggested that studies could be conducted on this subject.

As a result of their studies adapting the career decidedness scale into Turkish, Akçakanat and Uzunbacak (2019: 166) stated that this scale can allow some guiding inferences to be made, especially by applying it in units of universities such as career centers where the career development of students is planned, directed or followed. Career counseling, which tries to assist students in making decisions about their careers, has a favorable impact on students' career-related exploration, planning, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations (Hirschi & Läge, 2008; McWhirter, Rasheed, & Crothers, 2000).

SCCT monitors the links between individuals and career-related contexts and tries to take into account the entire environment in which they make career-related decisions. Since the quality of education also reflects the factors in the external environment in which students receive education, it can be assumed that it is related to theory in this context. In order to have a positive impact on the career decidedness of the students in universities, it

is a part of the quality of education that the faculty members deal with the students personally, understand their needs, and provide counseling and guidance, thus we propose:

Hypothesis 1. Career decidedness is positively related to education quality.

Holland et al. (1993: 1) defined vocational identity as “the possession of a clear and stable picture of one’s goals, interests, and talents. These characteristics lead to relatively untroubled decision-making and confidence in one’s ability to make good decisions in the face of some inevitable environmental ambiguities.” According to the researches, a positive relationship have been found between vocational identity and career decidedness, hope, comfort, self-clarity, knowledge of options, decisiveness, and certainty (Holland et al., 1993). On the other hand, it is stated in studies that career decidedness increases the probability of obtaining longer-term employment and meaningful career opportunities in the chosen occupational field (Hirschi, 2011; Restubog, Florentino, & Garcia, 2010). The theoretical justifications lead us to the second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. Career decidedness is positively related to employment hope.

2.2. Employment Hope

In the dictionary of the Turkish Language Association (2020), hope is defined as “what is expected or thought to happen”. Hope has been described by numerous philosophers, theologians, educators, and scientists over the years. While there are many different definitions of hope, it can generally be thought of as a positive state of mind about the ability to achieve goals in the future. Since the late 1900s, social scientists have tried to define, measure, and examine hope in a variety of ways, and to that end, hope has been conceptualized as goals and expectations for the future. Some scientists see this structure as an emotion that enables individuals to maintain their faith in difficult times. Although popular literature generally depicts this emotional view of hope, most research has been done on models of hope that are more cognitive in nature (Edwards, 2009: 487).

Dufault and Martocchio (1985: 380) formed a concept of hope as “dynamic life force characterized by a confident yet uncertain expectation of achieving a future good which, to the hoping person, is realistically possible and personally significant”. Snyder, Irving, and Anderson (1991: 287) described hope as “a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful agency and pathways” (p. 287). According to Snyder, Rand and Sigmon (2002), hopeful thinking within the theory of hope reflects the belief that a person can find paths to desired goals and be motivated to use these paths. It also states that hope, defined in this way, serves to direct people's emotions and well-being. To achieve their goals, people must see themselves as capable of generating viable ways towards those goals. This process, called path thinking in Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon's (2002) theory of hope, refers to one's perceived abilities to generate viable paths towards desired goals. According to SCCT, goals are affected by an individual's self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations. Juntunen and Wettersten (2006) considering that hope contributes to the understanding of vocational development, defined work hope as “a positive

state of motivation towards work-related goals". This definition is also compatible with goals, one of the three basic building blocks of the SCCT theoretical framework.

Belen (2016: 11) interpreted the concept of employment hope as follows: "It is the expectation of acquiring a job in order to meet the vital needs of people." In addition, within the framework of employment hope, individuals expressed their thoughts that they would hope to find a job with the necessary equipment and preliminary preparation for the job they want to do. It can be accepted that this equipment and preparation for university students will be directly proportional to the quality of the education they receive. In another study, the relationship between academic achievement level which is also related to quality of education and employment hope variables was examined in order to determine the employment hope of individuals at university level. According to the results obtained in the research, 57.4 percent of those with an academic success level between "74-84" and 60 percent of those with an academic success level between "85-100" have hope of finding a job (Demir & Taşkıran, 2018). Therefore, it has been revealed that as the academic success increases, the hope of finding a job also increases. For these reasons, quality of education is considered as a basic way to achieve the goal of employment hope. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 3. Quality of education is positively related to employment hope.

2.3. Quality of Education in Higher Education

The quality of education, which is seen as a rather ambiguous and controversial concept in policy debates; It is characterized by concepts such as meeting expectations, effectiveness, efficiency, high standards, excellence, high financial return, fit for purpose, adding value. The concept of education quality may differ from individual to individual. The reason for this is related to the process of characterizing the concept with expectation (Atlıhan, 2019: 26).

Although efficiency was the keyword of the 1980s, it is possible to say that quality was the cornerstone of the 1990s. Although most discussions outside the industry have focused on standards, the concern about quality is not new in the education context. In fact, some of the difficulties that educators face in their efforts to demonstrate the quality of the services they provide are based on the tendency to use quality and standards interchangeably (Green, 1994: 9). In addition, as the phenomenon of internationalization and marketing of higher education continues to develop, higher education institutions have to continuously improve the quality of service they provide (Teeroovengadum et al., 2016). Oldfield and Baron (2000: 94) stated that the service experience in higher education is complex and students in higher education also have complex expectations. Despite this, their study revealed that, in general, students have three main criteria to be satisfied. They are differentiated into necessary, acceptable and functional. They also emphasized that students' perceptions of education quality should be focused on and service quality should be measured from their perspective.

Bedi and Edwards (2002) mentioned in their study that the expansion of education has been adopted as an important element in the development strategies of low-income countries. They noted that while there is substantial evidence of the benefits of greater

educational attainment for subsequent labor market gains, empirical evidence on the role that school quality plays is scarce. Their study revealed that students with good quality education earn much better salaries than those with low quality education, and that improving quality in schools is a productive investment for the labor market.

According to Peng's (2001: 40) study, the findings supported like the other studies of researchers that career education courses to college students have a positive impact on career decision making. Giving career education courses can be considered as a positive indicator of the quality of education in higher education. It can be accepted that the quality of education, which is related to career decidedness, will also have a positive effect on employment hope. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 4. Quality of education mediates the relationship between CD and EH.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Model

The model developed to determine the mediating role of education quality in higher education in the effect of career decidedness on employment hope is as shown in Figure 1.

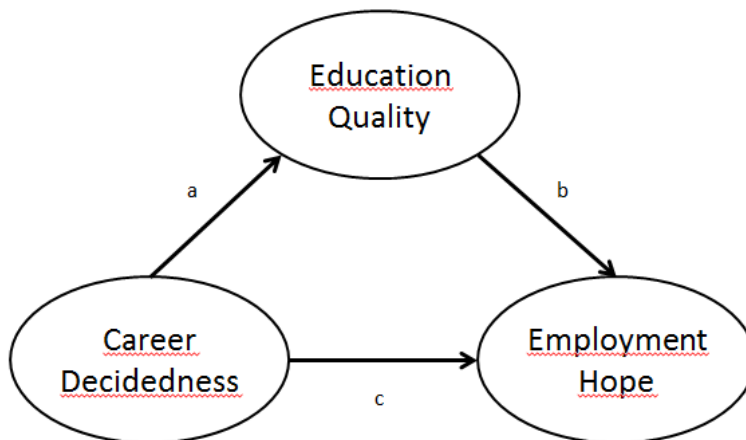


Figure 1: Research Model

The four major hypotheses previously mentioned will be utilized to determine the explanatory nature of this model, which was constructed in accordance with the research aim. Our model predicts that career decidedness can improve employment hope whereas education quality has a mediating role in the underlying relationship between CD and EH. In addition, we examine and explain separately the direct relationships of CD and EQ with EH.

3.2. Sample, Data Collection and Measurements

For this study, which was conducted to determine the mediating role of education quality in the relationship between career determination and job prospect, a questionnaire

was applied to 476 people which continues to their higher education in different universities in Türkiye. We received ethical approval from the Istanbul Aydın University institutional review board at the date of 11.03.2021 with approval number of 2021/03 and all the subjects have provided appropriate informed consent to attend to our survey which was conducted from internet. The questionnaire, which is a quantitative research method, consists of statements with 5-point Likert. In total, 37 expressions were included for three variables. The employment hope variable consists of 6 statements, career decidedness consists of 14 statements and education quality consists of 17 statements. In addition, 11 questions were prepared for the respondents in order to include demographic findings in the form.

The expressions used for the employment hope variable are the same as the the scale included in the study of Akın et al. (2013) titled as "The Turkish Form of Employment Hope Scale: Validity and Reliability". The expressions used for the career decidedness variable are taken from Akçakanat and Uzunbacak's (2019) study which is named as "Career Decidedness Scale: Adaptation to Turkish, Validity and Reliability". The expressions used for the education quality in higher education consists of a dimension of the Hesqual scale in Yılmaz's (2019) study named as "Hesqual-Higher Education Service Quality Scale Turkish Adaptation: Validity and Reliability Analysis".

3.3. Data Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis is applied to test the structural validity of the data obtained in this research. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin coefficient and Barlett's test of Sphericity are examined. Afterwards, the data distribution is examined with the normality test, and it is decided to prefer parametric tests. Next, the reliability of the scales is checked with the reliability test. Demographic differences are examined by independent sample t test, Anova test and difference tests. Correlation analysis is used to examine the relationships between three variables. The model of this research is examined and tested with the structural equation model. Findings and conclusions are revealed as a result of these analyzes.

3.4. Testing for Mediation

This study uses the conditions described as the followings recommended by Sarkis for the test of mediation role. At first, there should be a significant relationship between independent variable and dependent variable. Secondly, a significant relationship between independent variable and mediator, thirdly a significant relationship between mediator and dependent variable should exists. Lastly, the relationship between independent variable and dependent variable must become insignificant after controlling for the effect of the mediator. The effects of the independent variable are said to be completely mediated if these four conditions are satisfied (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Consequently, structural equation model analysis has been proposed as the favored methodology for the mediation role testing (Sarkis et al., 2010).

4. Results And Analysis

4.1. Reliability and Validity of Measures

In order to evaluate the measures' construct validity, exploratory factor analysis was used. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient and Bartlett's test of sphericity (BTS) were checked to determine if the data were appropriate for factor analysis (BTS). In the analysis made on the data of the scales, the factor load of all the statements was above 0.50.

The KMO value of the career decidedness scale is 0.776 and BTS is 779.14 ($p < 0.05$), the KMO value of the employment hope scale is 0.921 and BTS is 5085.03 ($p < 0.05$), the KMO value of the education quality scale is 0.958 and BTS is 7676.50 ($p < 0.05$). Since the KMO value is greater than 0.70, it is deemed sufficient to use the sample's data. The relationship between the scale items may be analyzed using factor analysis because the BTS result is less than 0.05.

As a result of the analysis made in line with the data collected in the research, a single factor is reached like the original career decidedness scale and it explains 47.73% of the total variance. Next, as in the original of the employment hope scale, a single factor is reached and it explains 57.98% of the total variance. At the end, as in the original of the education quality scale, a single factor is reached and it explains 65.02% of the total variance.

Cronbach Alpha coefficients were calculated to determine the reliability of the scales used in this study. Since two statements in the career decidedness scale were negative, they were separated from the other statements. Cronbach's Alpha values were examined separately for negative and positive statements.

Table 1. Reliability analysis results

	Items	Cronbach Alfa	Mean	Standart Deviation	Min.-Max.
Career Decidedness (Negative Statements)	2	0.705	2.47	1.11	1-5
Career Decidedness (Positive Statements)	4	0.729	3.87	0.79	1-5
Employment Hope	14	0.944	4.32	0.63	1-5
Education Quality	17	0.966	3.71	0.85	1-5

As seen in the Table 1, the reliability value of the career decidedness variable for two negative statements (Cronbach Alpha α) was given as 0.705, the career decidedness variable for four positive statements was given as 0.729, the employment hope variable as 0.944, and the quality of education variable as 0.966. It is seen that the internal consistency values of the items in these scales are at a significantly higher level than the generally accepted value of 0.70.

4.2. Analyzes on Demographic Features

The demographic characteristics of the employees participating in the survey of the research are given in Table 2 in detail.

Table 2. Comparison of the Scales According to Demographic Features – 1

Groups	N	Career Decidedness				Employment Hope				Education Quality			
		\bar{x}	Ss	t	p	\bar{x}	Ss	t	p	\bar{x}	Ss	t	p
Sex													
Female	323	3.43	0.42	1.586	0.114	4.34	0.52	0.912	0.363	3.76	0.76	1.880	0.061
Male	153	3.34	0.65			4.28	0.81			3.59	1.01		
Marital Status													
Married	145	3.46	0.39	1.791	0.074	4.56	0.44	5.733	*	3.75	0.79	0.680	0.497
Single	331	3.38	0.54			4.21	0.67			3.69	0.88		
Education in Hometown													
Yes	275	3.42	0.41	0.954	0.341	4.33	0.52	0.266	0.791	3.71	0.75	0.04	0.968
No	201	3.37	0.61			4.30	0.75			3.71	0.98		
Working at a Job													
Yes	266	3.42	0.57	0.969	0.333	4.44	0.65	4.868	0.000	3.76	0.92	1.519	0.129
No	210	3.37	0.41			4.17	0.57			3.64	0.77		
Studying Department Chosen Willingly													
Yes	397	3.41	0.50	0.137	0.891	4.37	0.62	3.688	0.000	3.76	0.84	3.125	0.002
No	79	3.40	0.51			4.09	0.63			3.44	0.87		
Enjoying to Study Selected Department													
Yes	405	3.41	0.50	0.340	0.734	4.37	0.61	4.169	0.000	3.77	0.85	4.144	0.000
No	71	3.39	0.53			4.04	0.66			3.33	0.81		

t: Independent Sample T Test, *:p<0.05 (Significant)

When Table 2 is examined, there is no statistically significant difference between male and female participants in terms of the mean scores of the career decidedness, employment hope and quality of education scales ($p > 0.05$). According to this result, it can be stated that sexuality has not any effect on CD, EH and EQ.

There is no statistically significant difference between married and unmarried individuals in terms of career decidedness and education quality scales' mean scores ($p > 0.05$). There is a statistically significant difference in terms of employment hope scale ($p < 0.05$). Employment hope mean scores of married students participating in the survey are higher than those of singles. According to this result, it can be said that marital status has an effect on employment hope.

When the education in hometown is examined, there is no statistically significant difference between those who continue their education in born city and those who do not in terms of the mean scores of all scales ($p > 0.05$).

In terms of employment status, there is no statistically significant difference in terms of career decidedness and education quality mean scores ($p > 0.05$). On the other hand, there is a statistically significant difference in terms of employment hope mean score ($p < 0.05$). Participants who are working at a job have significantly higher employment hope score average than those who are unemployed. According to this result, it can be said that employment status has an effect on employment hope.

When we look at the participants' choice of studying department, there is no statistically significant difference in terms of career decidedness ($p > 0.05$), but there is a statistically significant difference in terms of employment hope and education quality mean scores ($p < 0.05$). It seems that students who choosed willingly their studying department have significantly higher employment hope and education quality score averages than those who choosed by circumstances. According to this result, it can be said that willingness to choose studying department has an effect on employment hope and education quality perception.

According to Table 2, the results of participants who are enjoying their studying department are same as who choosed willingly their department.

4.3. Relations Between Variables

In order to ascertain if the structural equation model that will be used within the scope of the research model is appropriate or not, correlation analysis was used to discover the correlations between the variables studied. Correlation analysis results applied to show the relationships between variables are included in the Table 3:

Table 3: Correlation statistics between variables

Variables	N	r	p
Career Decidedness Employment Hope	476	0.554**	0.000
Career Decidedness Quality of Education	476	0.285**	0.000
Employment Hope Education Quality	476	0.522**	0.000

**: $p < 0.01$ r: Pearson Correlation Coefficient

r	Relationship Level	Relationship Direction
0.00	None	$r = -$ (negative relation)
0.01 – 0.29	Low	
0.30 – 0.69	Middle	$r = +$ (positive relation)
0.70 – 0.99	High	
1.00	Perfect	

When Table 3 is examined, at first, it is seen that there is a low level of positive relationship between career decidedness and quality of education scores ($r = 0.285$; $p < 0.05$). Secondly, it is understood that there is a middle level of positive correlation between career decidedness and employment hope scores ($r = 0.554$; $p < 0.05$). At the end, there is

also a middle level of positive correlation between employment hope and quality of education scores ($r = 0.522$; $p < 0.05$).

4.4. Structural Equation Model

We are putting the model to the test and using structural equation modeling to look at these relationships in this part. Structural equation modeling is used to identify the model that best matches the existing data. The model of structural equations is created and examined. The research revealed that the model did not match the data well, and as a consequence, a model improvement study was conducted. After looking at the modification index values, covariances between the highly correlated error elements were made, and the model was re-analyzed. Presented below is the confirmed measurement model:

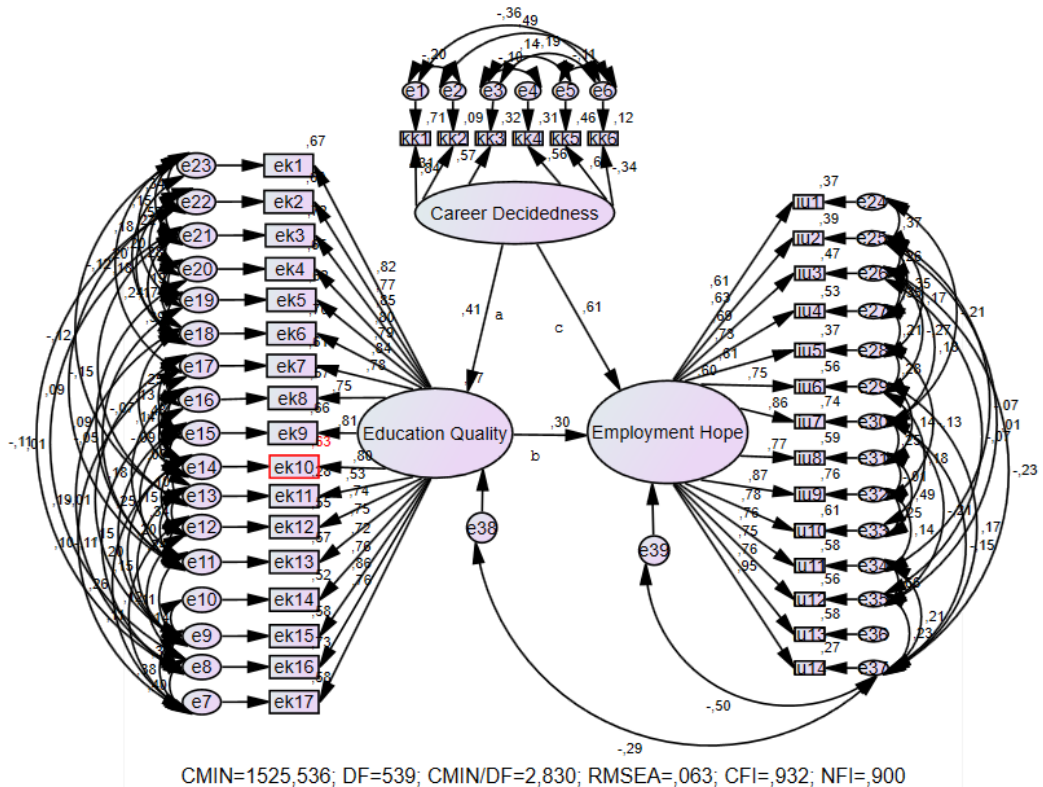


Figure 2: Structural Equation Model of the Study

The values of the fit criteria discovered above were tested for conformity with the research model generated, and Table 4 was created as a result:

Table 4. Structural Equation Model Fit Criteria Evaluation Chart

MODEL FIT SUMMARY					
CMIN					
Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default Model	164	1525.536	539	0	2.830

Saturated Model	703	0	0		
Independance Model	37	15195.375	666	0	22.816
NFI-Baseline Comparisons					
Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default Model	0.900	0.876	0.933	0.916	0.932
Saturated Model	1		1		1
Independance Model	0	0	0	0	0
RMSEA					
Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE	
Default Model	0.063	0.059	0.066	0	
Independance Model	0.216	0.213	0.219	0	

The CMIN / DF value showing the Chi-square goodness-of-fit value is 2.83 which is less than 5. It is seen that Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) values are very close to 1. The fact that both values are close to 90% indicates that the model is compatible. While the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) criterion is 0.063, it can be stated that there is a good fit since it is below of the limit value of 0.08.

The predictive results of the causality relationships between career decidedness, employment hope and education quality are shown in the structural equation model. In order to test the hypotheses created according to theoretical knowledge, standardized β coefficients of the paths specified in the model are examined. When the research model including the findings related to the analysis is examined; a statistically significant positive correlation was found between career decidedness and employment hope ($c = 0.61$). One-unit increase in career decidedness will increase the employment hope by 0.61 units (H2: Accepted). Next, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between career decidedness and education quality ($a = 0.41$). One unit increase in career decidedness will increase perception of education quality 0.41 units (H1: Accepted). Finally, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between education quality and employment hope ($b = 0.30$). It means that a one-unit increase in education quality will increase the employment hope by 0.30 units (H3: Accepted).

As Baron and Kenny (1986: 1176) stated, the path c between independent variable and dependent variable have to be insignificant in order to talk about a single and dominant mediator. The fact that the path from career decidedness to employment hope is significant ($c = 0.61$) indicates that the education quality variable does not have a full mediating effect. In this case, the partial mediating effect of the education quality variable can be mentioned. A bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect estimation is constructed using PROCESS which is a convenient computational add-on for SPSS documented by Hayes (2013). When we analyze the mediating effect of variables, the mediating role of education quality in the effect of career decidedness on employment hope is seen as 10,08%, and this mediating role is expressed weak because it is smaller than 25% (H4: Accepted). The

bootstrap confidence for the indirect effect of career decidedness on employment hope is 0.0586 to 0.1553. As this does not straddle zero, this is accepted as an evidence of a statistically significant indirect effect (Hayes and Rockwood, 2017: 45).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to determine the mediating role of education quality between career decidedness and employment hope among university students in Türkiye. The second aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between those variables. The results of structural equation model supported a partial mediating effect which is considered weak.

Specifically, we found that career decidedness was positively associated with both employment hope and education quality. It is seen that the determination of university students in their career choices contributes positively to their hopes of finding a job in the future. It can be stated that students who know what they want have higher job prospects. In addition, it is seen that students' determination in their careers has a positive reflection on the quality perception of the education they receive. Here, we can evaluate that students who know what they want have higher expectations in the quality of service in the education they receive, and they benefit from university opportunities more consciously to meet these expectations.

Marriage is accepted as a transition to a regular life in Turkish culture. When it is accepted that married people establish an order for their own lives, it can be considered logical that their job prospects are high according to the results of the research. In addition, it can be considered natural that among the participants of the research, those who are already working in a job have high employment hope. Job prospects and perceived education quality scores of those who choose their education voluntarily and those who are satisfied with the department they have chosen are high. The assumption that willingness has an effect on hope can also be acceptable.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

Our research makes several contributions to the career literature. First of all, it advances our understanding about the antecedents of employment hope among university students. Despite seemingly logical linkage between career decidedness, education quality and employment hope, no study has theoretically or empirically linked them together. Our research thus filled a research void. Secondly, we found that career decidedness was predictive of education quality which is an important construct that affect employment hope outcomes in a positive way. In the present study, we also demonstrated that education quality is a distinct construct and clarified their relationships with employment hope and career decidedness. Finally, we investigated the potential mechanism by which career decidedness is connected to employment hope, drawing on SCCT and HAT. According to the SEM findings, the connection between the two was only weakly mediated by education quality. Our study clarified the roles of the various factors by including variables from various theoretical perspectives and evaluated their explanatory ability for employment hope.

5.2. Practical Implications

Our findings highlighted the importance of career decidedness and perceived educational service quality in increasing employment hope among university students. In order to increase the job prospects of students, it is concluded that universities should carry out studies that will enable students to become more decided in their careers. However, it is important for universities to help students direct their careers in a self-directed and value-oriented way (Li, Ngo and Cheung, 2019: 8). For this reason, administrators in educational management should give importance to vocational information activities that will increase the career determination of students. Universities may provide workshops, training, and individual career counseling to assist students in understanding their professional values and creating their own meanings of career success (Greenhaus and Singh, 2007). On the other hand, one of the courses can be added as an internship course in each semester starting from the entrance to the university. When they spend one or two days a week at the workplace where they do their internship, they can be more informed about their careers through on-site practice. This can also be seen as an activity of continuous improvement and development, which is also a vital need for students like the businesses in order to keep up with constantly and rapidly changing conditions (Özkan and Salepçioğlu, 2022). In addition, internship course should be made compulsory for graduate students who do not work in any profession. In order to make the career decidedness of students healthy, changes should be made in education services, which will increase the perceived quality of education. The sine qua non of quality education is to help students plan their future and to ensure that they have specific ideas for their careers. Thus, students will be psychologically stronger and their employment hope will increase.

5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

This study has its own limitations, which in turn provide an opportunity for future research. There was no study in which two or three variables among the variables used in this study were seen together, so no comparison could be made. It is among the suggestions that this research should be conducted with a more specific sample and more respondents. A cross-cultural study will make an important contribution to the literature. Research to be conducted with the variables of career decidedness, employment hope and education quality will support the literature gap and provide a facilitating basis to prove the accuracy of this study.

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